

Ergebnisbericht zum Verfahren zur Verlängerung der institutionellen Akkreditierung der Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität

Antragsgegenstand

Die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (AQ Austria) führte ein Verfahren zur Verlängerung der institutionellen Akkreditierung der Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität gem § 24 Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz (HS-QSG), BGBl. I Nr. 74/2011 idgF, iVm § 2 Privatuniversitätengesetz (PUG), BGBl. I Nr. 74/2011 idgF, und iVm § 16 Privatuniversitäten-Akkreditierungsverordnung 2019 (PU-AkkVO 2019) durch. Gem § 21 HS-QSG veröffentlicht die AQ Austria folgenden Ergebnisbericht:

1 Verfahrensablauf

Das Akkreditierungsverfahren umfasste folgende Verfahrensschritte:

Verfahrensschritte	Zeitpunkt
Antrag eingelangt am	15.05.2020
Mitteilung an Antragstellerin: Prüfung des Antrags durch die Geschäftsstelle	13.07.2020
Überarbeiteter Antrag eingelangt am	27.07.2020
Mitteilung an Antragstellerin: Abschluss der Prüfung des Antrags durch die Geschäftsstelle	29.07.2020
Erste Nachreichung vor Vor-Ort-Besuch	31.07.2020
Bestellung der Gutachter/innen durch Board	08.09.2020
Information Antragstellerin über Gutachter/innen	08.09.2020

Erstes virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	12.10.2020
Zweite Nachreichung vor Vor-Ort-Besuch	16.10.2020
Zweites virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	09.11.2020
Drittes virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	03.12.2020
Fragenkatalog an Antragstellerin	07.12.2020
Dritte Nachreichung vor Vor-Ort-Besuch (Antwort auf den Fragenkatalog der Gutachter/innen)	21.12.2020
Vierte Nachreichung vor Vor-Ort-Besuch	08.01.2021
Viertes virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	11.01.2021
Fünfte Nachreichung vor Vor-Ort-Besuch	18.01.2021
Fünftes virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter/innen	19.01.2021
Virtueller Vor-Ort-Besuch	20.-21.01.2021
Erste Nachreichung nach Vor-Ort-Besuch	27.01.2021
Zweite Nachreichung nach Vor-Ort-Besuch	05.02.2021
Vorlage des Gutachtens	23.04.2021
Gutachten an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	27.04.2021
Kostenaufstellung an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	03.05.2021
Stellungnahme Antragstellerin zum Gutachten	11.05.2021
Stellungnahme an Gutachter/innengruppe	11.05.2021
Stellungnahme Antragstellerin zur Kostenaufstellung	-
Rückmeldung der Gutachter/innengruppe zur Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin	31.05.2021
Vorlage geändertes Gutachten nach Stellungnahme	31.05.2021
Übermittlung geändertes = endgültiges Gutachten an Antragstellerin	01.06.2021

2 Akkreditierungsentscheidung

Das Board der AQ Austria hat in der 68. Sitzung am 07.07.2021 entschieden, dem Antrag zur Verlängerung der Akkreditierung der Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität unter Auflagen stattzugeben, da die Kriterien gem § 16 PU-AkkVO 2019 eingeschränkt erfüllt sind. Das Board der AQ Austria hat entschieden, die von den Gutachter/inne/n im Gutachten vom 31.05.2021 formulierten und dem Board vorgeschlagenen Auflagen aufzunehmen. Die Verlängerung der institutionellen Akkreditierung erfolgt gem § 24 Abs 9 HS-QSG unter folgenden Auflagen:

1. Die Privatuniversität weist bis 24 Monate nach Zustellung des Bescheids nach, dass sie den Entwicklungsplan, sog. Development Plan Modul University Vienna 2020/21- 2031/32, mit einem aktualisierten Zielkatalog der Universität adaptiert hat (§ 16 Abs 2 Z 1 PU-AkkVO 2019).
2. Die Privatuniversität weist bis 24 Monate nach Zustellung des Bescheids nach, dass sie den Wirtschaftsplan mit einer aktualisierten Darstellung der finanziellen Situation

angepasst hat, welcher eine Neubewertung und genauere Berechnung des aktuellen Break-Even zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt ermöglicht (§ 16 Abs 8 PU-AkkVO 2019).

Der Verlängerung der institutionellen Akkreditierung der Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität wird gem § 24 Abs 7 HS-QSG, unter den oben genannten Auflagen, für weitere sechs Jahre stattgegeben. Die Verlängerung der institutionellen Akkreditierung umfasst gem § 24 Abs 8 HS-QSG die folgenden Studiengänge:

Bezeichnung Studiengang	Art des Studiums	Organisationsform	ECTS-Anrechnungspunkte	Dauer in Semester	Verwendete Sprache	Akad. Grad (abgekürzte Form)	Ort der Durchführung	Studienplätze (pro Jahrgang)
Tourism and Hospitality Management	Bachelor	VZ	180	6	Englisch	Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality Management (BBA)	Wien	90
International Management	Bachelor	VZ	180	6	Englisch	Bachelor of Science in International Management (BSc)	Wien	120
Tourism, Hotel Management and Operations	Bachelor	VZ	240	8	Englisch	Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism, Hotel Management and Operations (BBA)	Wien	40
International Management with Professional Experience	Bachelor	VZ	210	7	Englisch	Bachelor of Science in International Management with Professional Experience (BSc)	Wien	30
Applied Data Science	Bachelor	VZ	180	6	Englisch	Bachelor of Science in Applied Data Science (BSc)	Wien	60
International Tourism Management	Master	VZ	120	4	Englisch	Master of Science in International Tourism Management (MSc)	Wien	30
Sustainable Development, Management and Policy	Master	VZ	120	4	Englisch	Master of Science in Sustainable Development, Management and Policy (MSc)	Wien	30
Management	Master	VZ	120	4	Englisch	Master of Science in Management (MSc)	Wien	30
Business and Socioeconomic Sciences	Doktorat	VZ	240	8	Englisch	Doctor of Philosophy in Business and Socioeconomic Sciences (PhD)	Wien	10
Business Administration	Universitätslehrgang	BB	90	3	Englisch	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Wien	40
Tourism and Hospitality Management	Bachelor	VZ	180	6	Englisch	Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality Management (BBA)	Nanjing	120
Tourism and Hospitality Management	Bachelor	VZ	180	6	Englisch	Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality Management (BBA)	Dubai	Auslaufend/ Teach-out
International Management	Bachelor	VZ	180	6	Englisch	Bachelor of Science in International Management (BSc)	Dubai	Auslaufend/ Teach-out

Business Administration	Universitätslehrgang	BB	90	3	Englisch	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Dubai	Auslaufend/Teach-out
Sustainable Development, Management and Policy	Master	VZ und BB	120	4	Englisch	Master of Science in Sustainable Development, Management and Policy (MSc)	Dubai	Auslaufend/Teach-out

Die Entscheidung wurde am 22.10.2021 vom zuständigen Bundesminister genehmigt. Die Entscheidung ist seit 05.11.2021 rechtskräftig. Die Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität ist für weitere sechs Jahre, basierend auf dem Eintritt der Rechtskraft im Zuge der erstmaligen Akkreditierung im Jahr 2007, somit bis zum 31.12.2026, akkreditiert.

3 Anlagen

- Stellungnahme vom 11.05.2021 zum Gutachten vom 23.04.2021
- Endgültiges Gutachten vom 31.05.2021, aufgrund der Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin vom 11.05.2021 zum Gutachten in der Version vom 23.04.2021 haben die Gutachter/innen Bedarf zur Änderungen des Gutachtens in der Version vom 23.04.2021 gesehen.

To the Board of the AQ Austria
Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria
Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
1190 Wien

By e-mail: office@aq.ac.at

Vienna, 11 May 2021

Response to the expert report on the accreditation procedure concerning the extension of the institutional accreditation (re-accreditation) of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität

Dear Sir or Madam,

Modul University Vienna Private University would like to relay the following response in reference to the expert report on the accreditation procedure concerning the extension of the institutional accreditation (re-accreditation).

Modul University Vienna Private University would first like to extend immense gratitude to the reviewers for recommending an extension of the institutional accreditation as well as for providing valuable feedback that is both positive and constructive. All recommendations of the reviewers will be carefully considered to further improve the overall quality of research and teaching at Modul University Vienna Private University.

The experts raised concerns about the change of ownership and the new owner's vision and commitment to Modul University Vienna Private University (p. 6-8).

Contrary to what is suggested by the experts on p. 8 of their report, it must be underlined that the profile of Modul University Vienna Private University as an international and research-oriented private university will be maintained by the new ownership.

A possible lack of commitment on the side of the new owner, [REDACTED] was a source of concern for the experts (p. 7-8). Modul University Vienna Private University would like to clarify that [REDACTED] is fully integrated in the day-to-day management of the University while serving in the self-appointed role of Managing Director. He actively engages with staff at all levels and with students in regard to answering questions about their studies. He has introduced additional services for students' health and wellbeing such as a mental health application, an online careers platform, and visa application support. He demonstrates further commitment by personally overseeing day-to-day university operations by travelling (under normal circumstances) to Vienna and working and maintaining an office at the university campus for 10-14 days of each month.

The dedication of [REDACTED] to Modul University Vienna Private University is also visible in the transformation of the internal operational culture as he invites both faculty and administrative functions to participate in management decision-making. Furthermore, he has introduced an open culture of feedback throughout the wider organization to stay in touch with employees' needs and

views and to give them an open forum to ask questions and share ideas about the future of the University with the University Board.

Furthermore, [REDACTED] has invested significant effort into analyzing internal processes to ensure that student recruitment and admissions is fair and efficient and has hereby delivered a higher relative student intake within the 9 months of his management of the University than the organization had achieved in the 14 years since its inception. The intention is to bring diverse student communities to the University so that they may contribute to further developing its international profile.

This also serves the objective of reaching a financial break-even sooner than described in the Development Plan (as highlighted on p. 33 of the experts' report), which was submitted alongside the accreditation application in May 2020. Modul University Vienna Private University indeed acknowledges that the financial goals of the organization will be adapted in order to reach this objective. As the experts highlighted on p. 7, the change of ownership of Modul University Vienna Private University only took place in the summer 2020. This is why not all activities and implications of the new owner could be reflected in the accreditation application. To meet the University's financial goals, [REDACTED] has taken several steps to both increase incomes and reduce the expenses without jeopardizing Modul University's profile.

First, the overall non-degree offer will be further developed. In the Fall 2020 semester, the University Board appointed a Director for Continuing Education. The position is tasked with expanding the non-degree course portfolio and embracing the EU-driven effort to improve recognition of 'micro-credentials', whilst maintaining MU's core values. Modul Online, a targeted and tailored portfolio of non-credit-bearing programs, was recently launched and intends to increase the reach of MU's current expertise and the accessibility of education under the Modul brand.

Second, a strategy for consultancy and advisory services will be developed to more effectively brand the faculty's competencies and enhance knowledge transfer services. To this end, [REDACTED] developed the MU Advisory, an initiative aimed at increasing the global reach of Modul University Vienna Private University's faculty's expertise by capitalizing on the knowledge of internal faculty as expert advisors on tourism and sustainability topics (e.g. building sustainable hotels, rebranding tourism destinations and consulting in countries in areas of new state-of-the-art educational facilities and programs), thereby increasing the recognition of MU research expertise and of Austria on a global scale.

Third, several projects were developed alongside Modul University Vienna Private University, utilizing the recognized brand being built since 2007. [REDACTED] is working on MU Med, a mobile and telemed healthcare service targeted specifically to reinvigorate Vienna's tourism industry, which is based on a model that he has already successfully deployed in London, UK and he would now like to oversee the success of it in Vienna, Austria. Additionally, [REDACTED] has taken over responsibility for the organization's Start-Up Hub and to keep this initiative in operation, he has pledged his personal funds to invest in the most promising outgoing ventures.

Lastly, to be more cost effective, [REDACTED] has initiated strategic changes regarding marketing and students' recruitment with greater emphasis being placed in online marketing. Furthermore, he has made significant investments in a state-of-the-art campus management system (to replace the previous system) that will allow smoother recruitment, onboarding, and student lifecycle management to improve student services at Modul University Vienna. Mr. Sivagnanam is investing in new technology to allow the University to maintain state-of-the-art teaching operations during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most importantly, and beyond the financial commitment of the owner to ensure the financial independence of Modul University Vienna Private University, the academic freedom of the faculty and the self-administration of academic affairs is not endangered and is rather guaranteed by the new

owner. In fact, the presence of [REDACTED] in the University Board and in the daily operations has allowed the faculty to have improved opportunities to discuss their ideas and concerns with the owner and to influence the future of the University more than ever before.

Described by the experts on p. 10, while all these new developments influence the goals of the University outlined in the current version of the Development Plan 2020-2032, Modul University Vienna Private University would like to emphasize that its Constitution (Art. I) foresees a biennial revision of the Development Plan in order to reflect the changes in its strategies and goals. Furthermore, Modul University Vienna Private University would like to rectify the experts' assumption that the University Council receives feedback from the different department and team managers for the revision of the Development Plan. Moreover, it is the University Board who receives the feedback, processes it, and then presents it to the University Senate and the University Council.

With regard to the meetings of the Deans as presented by the experts on p. 14 of the report, these take place once every two months (not just at the beginning of each semester) to ensure a close monitoring of the study programs and of the issues that might arise.

The accreditation of the MBA in Sustainable Development and Management and the MBA in Public Governance and Management, mentioned on p. 16 of the report, was already given back to AQ Austria in 2019. The Board of the AQ Austria officially withdrew the accreditation on March 3, 2019.

While the experts correctly understood that Modul University Vienna Private University aspires to revise the structure of its MBA study program as described on p. 17 of the report, the requested change intended to have three semesters instead of four terms to align it with the general organization of the other study programs offered at Modul University Vienna Private University. The overall length of the study program shall remain the same.

Modul University Vienna Private University would like to thank the experts for their recommendation (found on p. 21) on developing "core" research areas. Soon after the virtual on-site visits, a working group composed of faculty members and led by the Vice-President for Research was established. They drafted a research strategy grouping the research areas described in the re-accreditation application into fewer core research areas. This research strategy also establishes priorities to further develop Modul University Vienna Private University's research profile. The document was discussed in the University Senate in April 2021 and will be incorporated in the next revision of the Development Plan 2020-2032.

Modul University Vienna Private University agrees with the experts' recommendation to further expand the number of papers published in the Modul Open Source Working Paper Series (p. 23) and we are currently evaluating if PhD theses could be included in the future.

Regarding the comments of the high tuition fees of the PhD program, (p. 24-25), a systematic analysis and revision of the PhD tuition fees and scholarships has been put on the University Board's agenda and is given priority for the coming months.

Modul University Vienna Private University would like to confirm that for promotion and nomination procedures, the student representative is nominated by the student union representatives of Modul University Vienna (p. 29). The search or promotion committee is appointed, upon a suggestion by the President, by the University Senate. Contrary to what is suggested on p. 12 and p. 29 of the report given by the experts, it is not appointed by the President. This ensures the academic self-administrative role of the University Senate guaranteed by the University Constitution (Art. V).

On p. 29 of their report, the experts recommended full and associate professors be given the opportunity to attend training courses. It must be noted that all faculty members at Modul University Vienna Private University are regularly offered trainings. For instance, in the summer 2020, several training sessions on hybrid teaching and blended learning were scheduled to better equip faculty with

the necessary tools to face the special COVID-19 teaching conditions. Several associate and full professors participated in these trainings.

The experts' recommendation to organize supervision workshops for PhD supervisors (p. 32) is welcomed and will soon be integrated.

In regard to the experts' comment on the alumni network and feedback (p. 37), Modul University Vienna Private University is currently in the process of hiring a Career and Alumni Services Advisor who will oversee maintaining and developing the alumni network.

The experts' comment on the visual representations on the website (p. 39) was duly considered and the suggested changes were immediately implemented on the website.

We would like to extend our appreciation and thanks once again to the reviewers. In its application for extending its institutional accreditation, Modul University Vienna applied for a 12-year extension and we hope that the Board of the AQ Austria will consider this request in their decision, especially after this very positive overall feedback by the experts.

Sincerely,



President

AQ Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5



Agentur für
Qualitätssicherung
und Akkreditierung
Austria

Expert Report on the Accreditation Procedure concerning the extension of the institutional accreditation (re-accreditation) of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität

pursuant to § 7 of the Accreditation Regulation for Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO)

Vienna, 23/04/2021, edited 31/05/2021

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1 Basic principles for the procedure

The Austrian higher education system

To date, the Austrian higher education system comprises:

- 22 public universities;
- 16 private universities, run by nationally accredited private entities;
- 21 universities of applied sciences, run by state-subsidised entities organised under private law or by nationally accredited public entities;
- the university colleges of teacher education, run by nationally accredited public or private entities;
- the philosophical-theological higher education institutions, run by the Catholic Church;
- the Danube University Krems, a public university for post-graduate continuing education whose structure largely corresponds to public universities;
- the Institute of Science and Technology – Austria, which focusses its tasks on the advancement and appreciation of new fields of research and a post-graduate training in the form of PhD and postdoc programmes.

In the winter semester of 2019/2020, 288,492 students were enrolled at public universities (incl. the Danube University Krems). Furthermore, 55,203 students were enrolled at universities of applied sciences and 15,063 students at private universities.¹

External quality assurance

Pursuant to the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG), public universities shall perform an audit procedure for the certification of their internal quality management system every seven years. There are no legal or financial consequences linked to the decision on certification.

Private universities require institutional accreditation conducted by AQ Austria every six years. After twelve years of uninterrupted accreditation, the accreditation may also be awarded for twelve years. Interim degree programmes and certificate university programmes for further education leading to a degree programme also require accreditation.

Following the six-year period of institutional initial accreditation, universities of applied sciences must be re-accredited. After that, they pass on to the audit system. However, the accreditation is linked to a positive decision on certification in the audit procedure. Before degree programmes may be offered, they must be accredited once.

Accreditation of private universities and their degree programmes

In order to be active as a higher education institution in Austria, private universities require institutional accreditation, which must be renewed on a regular basis. In addition to institutional accreditation, newly established degree programmes must be accredited once before they may be offered by the private university. The Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) is responsible for carrying out accreditation procedures.

¹As at May 2019, data source: Statistics Austria/unidata. Contrary to the data of the public universities, the student numbers of the universities of applied sciences do not include non-degree seeking students. 278,039 degree students were enrolled at the public universities in the winter semester 2018/19.

The accreditation procedures are carried out in accordance with AQ Austria's Accreditation Regulation for Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO). Furthermore, the agency has based its procedures on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.²

The AQ Austria appoints experts for reviewing accreditation applications. Based on the application documents and a site visit at the applicant institution, the experts draw up a joint written expert report. The Board of the AQ Austria then makes a decision on accreditation, which is based on the expert report and takes into consideration the higher education institution's comment on the expert report. If the statutory prerequisites for accreditation are met and the required qualitative requirements are fulfilled, the degree programmes shall be accredited by official notification.

Before its entry into force, the official notification of the Board shall be subject to approval by the competent Federal Minister. After the procedure has been completed, a report on the outcome of the accreditation procedure as well as the expert report shall be published on the websites of AQ Austria and the applicant institution. Personal data and those parts of the report that disclose funding sources as well as business and operational secrets shall be exempt from publication.

The Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) and the Private Universities Act (PUG) form the legal basis for the accreditation of degree programmes at private universities.

2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant institution	
Applicant institution	Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität (MODUL)
Legal status	GmbH
Initial accreditation	30/07/2007
Last extension of accreditation	01/01/2015 (Official notification Reference: I/A09-19/2014 from 19/09/2014)
Sites	Vienna, Nanjing (China)
Number of students	657 (winter semester 2018/2019)
Information on the degree study programmes	
Bachelor programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism and Hospitality Management (BBA), offered at Vienna and Nanjing • International Management (BSc) • Tourism, Hotel Management and Operations (BBA)

² Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

Master programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Tourism Management (MSc) • Sustainable Development, Management and Policy (MSc) • Management (MSc)
PhD programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Socioeconomic Sciences (PhD)
Certificate university programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master of Business Administration (MBA)

The Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität submitted the application for re-accreditation on 15 May 2020. In its decision on 08 September 2020, the Board of AQ Austria appointed the following experts for the review of the re-accreditation application, in alphabetical order:

Name	Function/Institution	Role of the expert
Mag. ^a Dr. ⁱⁿ Brigitte Hahn, MAS	Head of Quality Management and Teaching Development Danube University Krems	Expert with qualification in quality management
Prof. Dr. Rupert Holzapfel	Professor "International Tourism Economics/ International Tourism Management" City University of Applied Sciences Bremen	Expert with qualification in tourism management
Prof. ⁱⁿ Dr. ⁱⁿ Carola Jungwirth	Chair of the Department Business Administration and Governance, Former president of University of Passau	Expert with qualification in economic science, Chairperson
Prof. Dr. Guido Schwerdt	Professor "Public Economics" University of Konstanz	Expert with qualification in economics
Alice Wickström, MSc	PhD candidate at Business School – Department of Management Studies Aalto University	Student Expert

On 20 January 2021 – 21 January 2021 the expert panel and representatives of AQ Austria conducted a virtual site visit at Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität.

3 Preliminary notes of the experts

Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität calls itself an Austrian leading international private university. It is located in Vienna and complements the portfolio of this City of Science.

In 1908, the Tourism College MODUL was founded by *Vienna Chamber of Commerce*. It initially established itself - also internationally - as a vocational training school with a tradition in tourism and hospitality education. Today, the college is a private institution, which presents itself as an internationally recognised modern training and further education centre for tourism and leisure industry. The college is still run by the *Vienna Chamber of Commerce*.

In 2007, Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität (MODUL) was accredited. Since then, MODUL was owned by the *Vienna Chamber of Commerce*. The private university offers diverse study programmes. In addition to hotel management as well as tourism and hospitality management, MODUL offers study programmes, according to the website, in the areas of international management, new media technology, public governance, sustainable development. While the Tourism College MODUL is offering classes and practical exams as a high school, Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität requires a high school certificate for further academic education.

Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität has applied for re-accreditation and submitted the application in May 2020. The expert group has been working with the accreditation documents since October 2020.

A change in ownership took place during this time. In consequence, some key points, e.g. the profile and financial situation, have been changed. This dynamic situation with major changes and many subsequent submissions during the accreditation procedure were challenging for all participants. Nevertheless, most of the experts' questions concerning the application documents were answered in writing by MODUL by December 2020. The expert group was grateful for the smooth co-operation.

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the already planned site visit on 20 and 21 January 2021 had to be conducted virtual. Not only for the expert group, but also for the members of MODUL, this meant extra preparation and effort for the visit. The expert group honoured all committed contributions of MODUL to a fruitful and constructive meeting in different constellations and on different topics. Many thanks for this.

In the following report, readers will find the impressions and assessments of the expert group concerning the re-accreditation of MODUL. Overall, the expert group was fascinated by the insights that the virtual site visit provided. The group was aware of and has intensively discussed the fact that the groups' attention shifted somewhat in this virtual environment and that topics emerged that would not have been equally important in a real site visit. The expert group believes that there is also an opportunity in this change of perspective and presents the following report as result of these particular circumstances and their reflections.

4 Review and assessment based on the assessment criteria stipulated in the PU-AkkVO

4.1 Assessment criterion § 16 (1): Profile and objectives

Profile and objectives

The private university has an institutional profile and has derived objectives suited to the university in the fields of teaching and learning as well as research and development.

Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität (MODUL) is a private university located in Vienna. With over 70% international student body, MODUL is internationally positioned, which it also

demonstrates with a global campus in Nanjing, China, the *Modul School of Tourism and Hospitality Management*. MODUL provides management education and promotes research in international management, new media technology, public governance, sustainable development, and tourism and hospitality management. It offers Bachelor, Master and certificate programmes (*Master of Business Administration, MBA*) as well as a PhD programme in these fields.

MODUL adapts its profile to demand and reshuffles its programme portfolio accordingly. In this respect, older MBA programmes, the *Master of Business Administration in New Media and Information Management* and the *Master of Business Administration in Tourism Management*, expired as the students concerned have graduated. In addition, the *Master of Business Administration in Sustainable Development and Management* and the *Master of Business Administration in Public Governance and Management* are also not to be re-accredited, as no students are enrolled in these degree programmes any more. The accreditation of all four programmes was already withdrawn by AQ Austria.

In fall 2016/2017, MODUL launched a campus in Dubai. Due to violation of the co-operation agreement by Dubai campus, the co-operation was terminated. In order to give students in Dubai the opportunity to complete their studies, a teach-out was agreed that became effective in 2020 and which lasts until 2023. Based on this experience, MODUL revised its agreement with *Nanjing Tech University Pujiang Institute*, Nanjing (NJPJI), China, the second expansion of the university. Requisite evidences of the changes in the co-operation agreements were provided to the experts.

Until mid-2020, MODUL was owned by the *Vienna Chamber of Commerce*. In mid-2020, the ownership changed as the British company *Talents Squared Ltd.* bought the majority of shares from the *Vienna Chamber of Commerce*. The former owner, *Vienna Chamber of Commerce*, now holds a minority position. Nevertheless, this change of ownership came as a surprise to the expert group. No information about the intended change can be found in the original application documents. MODUL submitted all necessary subsequent documents on request.

Thus, the change of ownership became clear. In addition, the change of ownership was a topic discussed in detail during the conversations between the expert group and MODUL within the framework of the virtual site visit in January 2021. The new Managing Director, who is also the owner of the recruitment agency *Talents Squared Ltd.*, was present in two meetings during the virtual site visit. A central, but from the experts' point of view unrealisable challenge is to assess the "true" commitment of the new owner, who would not suffer any damage to reputation in Austria and Vienna by withdrawing from MODUL. Therefore, the expert group puts into question, if MODUL will change its profile and objectives due to the change of ownership.

The institutional profile of MODUL is characterised by a strong focus on internationalisation and management, but during the last re-accreditation period, it shifted from a more specific tourism education to a broader management education. The expert group discussed these decisions on study programmes in detail with the MODUL University Board (President, Vice-President and Managing Director). The reason given to the expert group was a strong competition with Austrian universities of applied sciences, which have a large range of tourism-related degree programs that meet the needs of Austrian students and that are accessible without tuition fee. The development since 2014 is described in detail in the application documents and is plausible related to the competitive situation in the Austrian higher education market.

Concerning the quantitative and the qualitative objectives, the expert group found that the number of students and graduates increased steadily but slowly from a good 600 to just under 800 (exactly 777 based on the figures published by Statistics Austria, created on 11 May 2020), since 2014. During the virtual site visit, the expert group was informed that the break-even of 1,000 students should be reached within three years. The new Managing Director even envisaged a period of 18 months.

There are currently 40 full-time and part-time professors and lecturers at Vienna campus and 8 full-time and part time professors and lecturers at Nanjing campus, supplemented by 80 external lecturers at Vienna and Nanjing. In total, there are 128 persons. Since 2014, the number of full professors (working hours 100%) has increased from four to seven. Some of the professorships were developed and trained at MODUL itself. For experts familiar with the German system, these internal appointments seemed strange at first. The detailed discussions showed that MODUL relies on the tenure career path and has developed and implemented the appropriate procedures for this.

The expert group finds that MODUL has a comprehensible institutional profile and has developed adequate objectives with respect to teaching and research activities from it. The institutional profile is suitable for higher education and meets the competitive conditions in the Austrian and international higher education market.

Nevertheless, as written above, a central, but from the expert's point of view, currently not feasible challenge is to assess the "true" commitment of the new owner. As this takes time and cannot be foreseen by now, MODUL shall closely monitor the commitment of the new owner.

Therefore, the expert group considers the criterion "Profile and Objectives of the Private University" to be **partially fulfilled**.

Condition:

1. The expert group recommends the Board of AQ Austria to issue the following condition: MODUL shall submit an adapted *Development Plan Modul University Vienna 2020/21-2031/32* with an updated outline of the strategic orientation and profile development.

With respect to MODUL's Statement of 11 May 2021, the expert group came to the conclusion that the condition is no longer necessary. The university clarified in its statement that "the profile of Modul University Vienna Private University as an international and research-oriented private university will be maintained by the new ownership" (Statement p.1).

Therefore, the expert group considers the criterion "Profile and Objectives of the Private University" now to be **fulfilled**. Thus, a submission of an adapted Development Plan Modul University Vienna 2020/21-2031/32 with an updated outline of the strategic orientation and profile development is no longer necessary.

4.2 Assessment criterion § 16 (2) 1 to 2: Development plan

Development plan

1. The private university has a development plan, which is in line with its profile and objectives and which specifies longer-term objectives and strategies for their achievement. The development plan describes how the defined objectives can be achieved with the adopted measures and allocated resources within the six years following extension of institutional accreditation. The development plan also comprises measures relating to gender equality as well as to the advancement of women.

MODUL has a development plan, which was discussed and approved by the Senate on 26 March 2020 and by the University Board on 27 March 2020. The development plan has been prepared for the next 12 years and shows strategic planning until 2031/2032.

The university is committed to high standards in terms of its academic teaching, academic staff and research activities. These fields are flanked by a consistent quality management, binding processes and a quality-assured infrastructure. MODUL pays special attention to its stakeholder network, which includes sponsors and alumni, owners and industry, and the scientific community. It regards this network as a guarantee for the sustainability of its success.

In a mission statement and a vision, the university elaborates its claim to internationality of a multidisciplinary management education: multidisciplinary here means international management, sustainability management, service-related industries, tourism, data science and the design of information systems. Of particular importance is addressing the constant change at regional, national and global level, which must be anchored in education and research through internationalisation, lifelong learning, equal opportunities and social justice. MODUL aims to contribute to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals through its work.

From the experts' point of view, the university is committed to fundamental values in its education within the framework of the development plan. In conversations with students in the framework of the virtual site visit, it became clear that they see these values lived out and develop a sense of community and connection to the university as a result. Overall, the vision and mission of the development plan were credibly reflected during the virtual site visit.

The development plan formulates four goals for the university:

- growth in student numbers through an improved programme offer;
- improvement of teaching methods through innovations such as blended learning;
- revision of the international education strategy;
- achieving financial independence.

All four goals are to be applied in four central areas, namely research, teaching, transfer and sustainable development goals. Each of these areas is given a great deal of attention in the development plan and the activities are presented both qualitatively and quantitatively. It is the explicit goal of quality management to review all goals for their achievement and all processes for their permanent improvement. The head of quality management took part in several meetings during the virtual site visit and was a central contact person for all detailed questions regarding infrastructure and processes.

The area of gender equality is also addressed in detail in the development plan. However, based on the insights of the virtual site visit, there was no doubt that equal opportunities are part of everyday life at MODUL.

The development plan addresses all required areas and meets the formulated requirements. The virtual site visit gave the impression that the goals described in the development plan are also lived out at MODUL.

Nevertheless, for the planned, upcoming accreditation period, the expert group questions whether the development plan will remain unaffected despite the change of ownership as pointed out under the criterion above.

Therefore, the expert group considers this criterion to **be partially fulfilled**.

Condition:

2. In respect to the new ownership, the expert group recommends the Board of AQ Austria to issue the following condition: MODUL shall submit an adapted *Development Plan Modul University Vienna 2020/21-2031/32* with an updated outline of the goals of the university.

According to MODUL's Statement, the change of ownership took place in summer 2020 after the application of the extension of the institutional accreditation (re-accreditation) of MODUL was submitted to AQ Austria. As a result, not all activities and implications of the new owner were made available to the expert panel. This includes in particular the development of non-degree offer and the development of the strategy for consultancy and advisory services, several projects such as the mobile and telemed health care service as well as the private universities' Start-Up Hub and the strategic change regarding marketing and students' recruitment. As affirmed in the statement, MODUL's constitution foresees a biennial revision of the Development Plan in order to reflect the changes in its strategies and goals. Built on MODUL's internal revision strategy, the expert group reaffirm the necessity to submit an adapted Development Plan to AQ Austria, to complete the assessment of the criterion.

Development plan

2. The private university uses a regular process of monitoring the achievement of objectives and adapting the development plan as defined.

The development plan is regularly reviewed by various internal bodies, in particular the university management, the University Council and the University Senate. In particular, the preparation of the annual report for AQ Austria makes it possible to summarise and track the implementation of the objectives defined in the development plan.

In addition, the university management plans to conduct a review and revision of the development plan every two years in order to assess the progress of the individual departments of the university. The managers are requested to complete the necessary documents for this purpose and send them to the University Board, who process the feedback and then presents it to the University Senate and the University Council. Through such close monitoring, the implementation of the development plan will be adequately monitored and a differentiated variance analysis will be conducted.

Systematic reports on the implementation of the development plan are also to be made to the University Council and the University Senate to ensure thorough knowledge transfer to all key stakeholders.

This thorough monitoring ensured that the principles and main objectives stated in the development plan were followed and implemented in the past. Deviations from the development plan were regularly discussed in the University Senate and led to adjustments in the university's strategy by the University Council.

The development plan goes into detail about the role of quality management. These explanations and the impression gained during the virtual site visit convinced the expert group that the processes for implementing the development plan and achieving the goals are effective.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

4.3 Assessment criterion § 16 (3) 1 to 2: Organisation of the private university

Organisation of the private university

1. Based on a balanced system of academic self-administrational, governance and strategic management functions, the private university's organisational structure ensures the autonomy of the universities as well as the freedom of science and its teaching, the freedom of artistic activity, and the dissemination of the arts and their teaching, while taking into account the interests of the legal entity.

The system of academic self-governance, governance and strategic management functions is structured as follows: The University Board is staffed by the President, Vice-President and Managing Director. It directly manages the Academic Office and Quality Management, with the Managing Director being directly responsible for the administrative departments.

Below the Presidential level, there are four departments and the library as an independent institution. The Academic Office corresponds to an Extended University Board and consists of the four deans, the Director of Non-Degree Studies and the Director of the Nanjing campus.

In the application documents, the self-governance at MODUL is vividly depicted. In accordance with the academic self-governance logic, the Senate is at the centre of this representation. The Senate consists of the University Board in an advisory capacity and six full or associate professors, four students, six other faculty members, one non-faculty researcher and three members of the administrative staff with voting rights. A number of Senate committees are derived from the Senate, namely a *Sustainability Committee*, a *Merit Scholarship Committee*, the *Institutional Review Board* and the *Studies and Examinations Committee* as well as the *Inclusion and Diversity Committee*, IDA (Art. X Constitution).

Also part of organisational structure is the co-operation with *Nanjing Tech University Pujiang Institute* (NJPJI), China, which is - besides Dubai, as mentioned earlier - the second international expansion of MODUL. At the end of 2020, adjustments on the co-operation agreement between MODUL and NJPJI were made. The changes "result from the specifications of regulation No. 372 of the State Council of the People's Republic of China" (Submission, 27 January 2021). Main important adjustments were the establishment of a joined management

committee, which leads the co-operation between MODUL and NJPJI, the change of the place of jurisdiction from Austria to China and the agreement on the "Nanjing Arbitration Commission" as the arbitration court (Submission 27 January 2021).

The expert group tried to gain an understanding of academic self-governance. During the virtual site visit, it was a central topic of discussion. It became apparent that the professors are very aware of their rights and that they feel free in research and teaching within the conditions of the present structure. It also became apparent that MODULs' financial situation plays a much greater role in the strategic considerations in the committees than in state universities. In comparison to state universities and in accordance to § 6 Private Higher Education Act (PrivHEA), Austrian private universities are prohibited from receiving funds from federal government. MODUL retains a purely private-sector independence concerning its study programmes.

The expert group discussed about the organisational structure of the private university and the multiple performance of tasks by the university members as possibly problematic. Because the budget is tight and many tasks have to be done within the framework of academic self-administration, professors in particular find themselves in a multitude of functions.

The expert group could not find that this system of "everybody does everything" puts academic freedom at risk. Rather, the impression was that this kind of academic self-administration leads to a good understanding of academic processes and promotes academic freedom. The expert group thus concludes that the existing structures and processes ensure the autonomy of the higher education institutions as well as the freedom of science and its teaching, taking into account the interests of the legal entity.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Organisation of the private university

- 2. The organisational structure and the responsibilities of the private university have been laid down in a statute, which governs the following issues as a minimum:*
- a. the guiding principles and tasks of the private university;*
 - b. the private university's bodies, their appointment and tasks;*
 - c. staff categories and set designations for the scientific or artistic staff, respectively;*
 - d. gender equality and the advancement of women;*
 - e. assurance of student co-determination in academic matters;*
 - f. regulations governing the degree programmes, in particular admission and examination regulations as well as the heads of studies;*
 - g. guidelines for academic honours (if applicable);*
 - h. guidelines for the appointment of professors and the procedures of awarding.*

The organisational structure and tasks of MODUL are laid down in the current Constitution of MODUL, which can also be found on its website. The Constitution regulates the following points:

It is the responsibility of the University Board to define the guiding principles and the goals of MODUL. The governing bodies of the private university, their appointment and tasks are described in detail in the current Constitution. The Constitution deals with the categories of staff and describes who has what rights in the appointment of academic staff. Gender equality and the advancement of women is reviewed in a Senate committee set up for this purpose *Inclusion*

and Diversity Committee. The assurance of student co-determination in academic matters is ensured by the student participation in the Senate, where students have four seats. The Senate is responsible for ensuring and providing regulations for the degree programmes, in particular the admission and examination regulations and the programme directors.

There is a Senate committee (*Merit Scholarship Committee*) for awarding academic distinctions and, above all, scholarships. The committee administers two scholarships according to Austrian Student Support Act: The Academic Excellence Scholarship (*Leistungsstipendium*) is awarded to those with high academic performance and the Research Support Scholarship (*Förderstipendium*) is awarded to excellent students to cover research costs associated with a thesis.

Detailed documentation is available for the recruitment and promotion of academic staff as well as for the performance evaluation of professors. In the case of new appointments, the University Council appoints a corresponding commission, upon a suggestion by the president, and has the final decision-making right. Overall, staff development in the academic area is based on the tenure-track model, so promotion and performance evaluation seem to be better formally documented.

The expert group considers the requirements for a statute that regulates the constitutive academic processes to **be fulfilled** by the current Constitution.

4.4 Assessment criterion § 16 (4) 1 to 2: Course offerings

Course offerings

1. The private university offers a minimum of two bachelor programmes with at least one subsequent master programme. Diploma programmes that have already been accredited at the date of entry into force of this regulation, shall be treated as master programmes.

MODUL offers the following degree programmes at the Viennese campus:

Bachelor programmes

- BBA in Tourism and Hospitality Management
- BSc in International Management
- BBA in Tourism, Hotel Management and Operations

Master programmes

- MSc in International Tourism Management
- MSc in Sustainable Development, Management and Policy
- MSc in Management

Doctoral programme

- Business and Socioeconomic Sciences (PhD)

Certificate university programme

- Master of Business Administration (MBA)

In addition, a BBA in Tourism and Hospitality Management is offered at Nanjing campus in China.

All programmes are taught in English. Graduates of the Bachelor programmes can pursue their MSc in one of the three master programmes. There is a clear link between the Bachelor and the Master programmes in terms of the curriculum. In the view of the experts, the learning outcomes of the undergraduate level programmes prepare students well and enable them to pursue their respective master degrees in the study programmes offered by MODUL. Content and learning goals of the programmes correlate logically with the objectives as well as the profile of MODUL.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled** as the private university offers the necessary numbers and kind of programmes.

Course offerings

2. The private university shall ensure that their degree programmes fulfil the criteria for the accreditation of degree programmes. For this purpose, the private university regularly applies its defined processes for the enhancement of degree programmes, which involve the relevant stakeholder groups. These processes and their outcome are documented for the current accreditation period with regard to the following characteristics:

a. Bachelor and master programmes

aa. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme have been clearly defined. They include scientific and/or artistic competencies, personal skills, and social competencies, they meet the professional requirements and are in accordance with the respective level of the National Qualifications Framework. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching. As regards regulated professions, the private university shall furthermore describe how it is ensured that the preconditions for an access to those professions are met.

bb. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies, and in case of part-time degree programmes takes into account any professional activity. The ECTS is applied correctly.

b. Doctoral programmes

aa. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme have been clearly defined. They include scientific as well as artistic competencies, personal skills, and social competencies, they meet the professional requirements and are in accordance with level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching.

bb. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes, and especially preparing a doctoral thesis, can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. The ECTS is applied correctly; in any case to the curricular parts (courses).

c. Certificate university programmes

aa. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the certificate university programme for further education have been clearly defined. They link scientifically as well as artistically based further qualification with the defined target groups' proven professional needs and comprise personal skills as well as social competencies in accordance with level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and

development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching, and are tailored to meet the target group's needs.

bb. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies, and in case of part-time certificate university programmes takes into account any professional activity. The ECTS is applied correctly.

MODUL ensures that the criteria for the accreditation of study programmes are adhered to in its study programmes. In this regard, the private university regularly uses processes for the development and evaluation of its study programmes. These processes include regular meetings of deans held every two months to evaluate the effectiveness of the study programmes, the development of programmes in accordance with the NQF (National Qualification Framework), as well as the appropriateness of courses according to the syllabus of courses in terms of workload and their mapping with the specified learning goals of the respective programme.

In addition, the appropriateness of the workload of students within the study programmes as well as the development of course offerings are discussed in regular school meetings that also include student representatives. Schools at MODUL are the organisational units. As referred to in the application documents, these are Undergraduate School, Graduate School, Professional School, Doctoral School and the Modul School of Tourism and Hospitality Management on the Nanjing campus in China. Other implemented monitoring instruments that are designed to provide valuable feedback for further development of the study programmes include frequent informal meetings between students and faculty members, student evaluations, graduate surveys as well as alumni meetings.

a. Bachelor and master programmes

aa. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme have been clearly defined. They include scientific and/or artistic competencies, personal skills, and social competencies, they meet the professional requirements and are in accordance with the respective level of the National Qualifications Framework. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching. As regards regulated professions, the private university shall furthermore describe how it is ensured that the preconditions for an access to those professions are met.

In the application documents, profiles and intended learning outcomes for each degree programme are clearly defined. The intended imparting and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences are outlined in detail and align with the National Qualifications Framework, NQF-level 6 (Bachelor programmes) and NQF-level 7 (Master programmes).

The degree programmes are structured around the combination of research and student-centred learning and support the development of highly specialised knowledge and critical thinking. The content of the curricula ensure that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved, with special emphasis placed on professional and personal development as well as the employability of graduates.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

a. Bachelor and master programmes

bb. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies, and in case of part-time degree programmes takes into account any professional activity. The ECTS is applied correctly.

Based on the application documents, the structure of the modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. This was confirmed by students (on both Master and Bachelor level) during the virtual site visit. The students expressed the view that both structure and sequence of the modules in their respective degree programme supported their learning process and that the workload was adequate. The ECTS is applied correctly.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

b. Doctoral programmes

aa. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the degree programme have been clearly defined. They include scientific as well as artistic competencies, personal skills, and social competencies, they meet the professional requirements and are in accordance with level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching.

In the application documents, the profile and intended learning outcome of the doctoral programme are both clearly defined. The intended imparting and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies are outlined in detail and align with the National Qualifications Framework, NQF-level 8. The degree programme is structured in a way that supports the generation of knowledge regarding research design, scientific methodology, and methods as well as specialised theoretical knowledge in a chosen field of expertise. The content of the curricula ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved with an emphasis on the development of skills needed to carry out scholarly and applied research individually, as well as in collaboration with others.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

b. Doctoral Programmes

bb. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes, and especially preparing a doctoral thesis, can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. The ECTS is applied correctly; in any case to the curricular parts (courses).

Based on the application documents, the structure of the modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. This was confirmed by doctoral students during the virtual site visit.

The students expressed that they were given adequate time for research and for preparing their doctoral theses. They further noted that the flexible structure of the programme, and its modules, allowed them to tailor their studies in accordance with their individual needs and preferences. The noted flexibility was confirmed in the outline of the doctoral programme

provided by MODUL. Examples of individual paths were provided and described in detail. The ECTS is applied correctly.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

c. Certificate university programmes

aa. The profile and the intended learning outcomes of the certificate university programme for further education have been clearly defined. They link scientifically as well as artistically based further qualification with the defined target groups' proven professional needs and comprise personal skills as well as social competencies in accordance with level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework. The contents and structure of the curriculum ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved, while combining research (research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts) and teaching, and are tailored to meet the target group's needs.

During the last accreditation period between 2014 and 2020, MODUL reduced its offer from five certificate programmes that lead to academic degrees to one, the *Master of Business Administration*. Two former degree programmes, the *Master of Business Administration in New Media and Information Management* and the *Master of Business Administration in Tourism Management*, are no longer offered at MODUL. Their accreditation was already withdrawn by AQ Austria as of November 2020.

The *Master of Business Administration in Sustainable Development and Management* and the *Master of Business Administration in Public Governance and Management* are also no longer offered, as no students were enrolled in these study programs anymore as outlined in the application documents. The accreditation for these two study programmes was officially withdrawn by AQ Austria as of 2019.

To allow students to specialise in different areas anyway, the formerly accredited *Master of Business Administration* (MBA) offers besides the core courses specialisations in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Leadership, Digital Marketing, Innovation and Experience Design for Tourism, Real Estate Management as well as in Sustainable Management and Governance. In addition, students can choose different enrichment courses in these areas to broaden their knowledge beyond their specialisation. These specialisations/enrichment courses are related to the curriculum of MODUL's Master programmes. This is to promote administrative efficiency and quality assurance, as the re-structuring will align the certificate programme with the other degree programmes offered by MODUL.

From 2021, the certificate university programme (MBA) will have a three-semester structure divided over 18 months, instead of the previous four-term structure divided over 18 months. This will also allow for more flexibility with regard to the courses and content of the MBA to better account for the needs of working professionals, who constitute the target group of the programme.

In the application documents, the profile and the intended learning outcome of the programme are both clearly defined. The intended imparting and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies are outlined in detail and align with the National Qualifications Framework, NQF-level 7.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

c. Certificate university programmes

bb. The workload related to the individual modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies, and in case of part-time certificate university programmes takes into account any professional activity. The ECTS is applied correctly.

Based on the application documents, the structure of the modules ensures that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the duration of studies. The restructuring of the programme will allow for further flexibility and thereby meet the varied needs of the target group. The ECTS is applied correctly.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Overall, MODUL offers a sufficient number of Bachelor and Master programmes with distinctive profiles. The intended imparting and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences in these programmes are detailed and align well with the respective National Qualifications Framework NQF-levels.

Iterative evaluation procedures with the objective of continuously improving programmes have been clearly stipulated. The curricula of all degree programmes are adequately structured around the combination of research and student-centred learning with a logical sequence of modules, which supports the acquisition of highly specialised knowledge and the development of critical thinking. Content and structure of the respective curricula suggest that intended learning outcomes can be achieved, with special emphasis on professional and personal development as well as the employability of graduates.

The experts consequentially consider the criterion be **fulfilled** in its entirety.

4.5 Assessment criterion § 16 (5) 1 to 3: Counselling and support for students

Counselling and support for students

1. The private university provides adequate support structures on the subjects and relating to the organisation of studies as well as psychosocial counselling for students.

In the application documents, the support structures for the students' academic and psychosocial counselling are accounted for in detail. At MODUL, the *Student Services and Career Center* is the most important body in this regard. The centre supports the students with and in matters such as counselling, study exchange, academic work, health and community belonging in order to ensure student well-being, growth, and development. This was confirmed by students (on Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level) during the virtual site visit. The students expressed that they highly valued the work of the centre and that they felt much supported at MODUL.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

In the application documents, MODUL also accounted for several development steps with regard to the *Student Service and Career Center* and the academic and psychological counselling for students. These included, but were not limited to, broadening the exchange programme, organising more student events, and improving the feedback mechanisms. The experts support such developments and recommend MODUL continuing these development steps.

Counselling and support for students

2. The private university shall provide for a procedure to handle the complaints of students.

In the application documents, the bodies for handling student complaints are specified and their function noted. MODUL has bodies and procedures in place to deal with complaints regarding education and examination, gender and diversity, and students' life. It is further noted that the *Student Services and Career Center* at MODUL serve as a body for general complaints and feedback.

It thereby functions as an important link, between the faculty at MODUL and the students, that facilitates dialogue and exchange between parties.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Counselling and support for students

3. If the private university offers doctoral programmes, the criteria pursuant to § 18 (3) shall apply accordingly.

4.6 Assessment criterion § 18 (3) 1 to 3: Supervision and counselling services

Supervision and counselling services

1. The private university shall conclude agreements with the doctoral students which govern the respective rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral students and their supervisors.

At MODUL, the respective rights and duties of the private university, the Doctoral students and their supervisors are outlined and supported by two forms of agreements. These were accounted for in the application documents. A general supervision agreement is concluded at the beginning of Doctoral studies. Agreements with a focus on supporting the intended progress are then developed between the supervisor and the Doctoral student each year. These are submitted to the Dean of MODUL.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Supervision and counselling services

2. The private university shall enable the doctoral students to engage in an intensive dialogue with scientists or artists, respectively, by collaborating with higher education institutions and, if applicable, partners outside

the higher education area in Austria and abroad and promote the participation of doctoral students in national and international symposia.

In the application documents, an overview of the study programme "PhD in Business and Socioeconomic Sciences" is offered and the means to support Doctoral students outlined. MODUL supports collaboration and dialogue with researchers, other higher education institutions and the industry by, for example, encouraging their students to participate in research projects, attend national and international symposia, and by taking Doctoral courses at partner universities.

This was confirmed by Doctoral students during the virtual site visit. The students expressed that MODUL offers them institutional and financial support that enables them to seek out an exchange, collaborations, and further development.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Supervision and counselling services

3. The private university shall provide the doctoral students with adequate counselling services, which are tailored to the specific degree programme.

During the virtual site visit and in the application documents, the counselling- and support services for Doctoral students were discussed. Besides the means offered by the *Student Services and Career Center*, MODUL has developed additional services to ensure the personal and professional development of students.

For example, the directors of the Doctoral programme design specialised research seminars to cater to the interests of the student cohort on an ongoing basis. The students are also offered the opportunity to undertake pedagogical training and provided with the means to develop their academic writing skills.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

4.7 Assessment criterion § 16 (6) 1 to 7: Research and development

Research and development

1. The private university's research and development activities are based on its profile and its objectives. For this purpose, it has developed a concept, which comprises at least strategic goals as well as measures for their implementation.

MODUL considers research to be one of its main pillars. In the application documents MODUL states that "research, teaching, and governance are the three main functions of any university, but research is often considered to be the most important and prominent pillar. Since the private university follows a research-driven teaching approach, it is of utmost importance that its faculty is engaged in contemporary, as well as future-oriented basic and applied research. This includes providing a highly conducive working environment for research at the university, as it allows its academic staff to dedicate enough time to these activities. The acquisition of third-

party funded research projects also facilitates the integration of externally funded researchers into the research body."

Traditionally MODUL's focus was on research in tourism, new media technology, sustainable development and governance related research. Recently, the scope of the research agenda extended also to areas reflecting the more diverse research interests of current faculty. Concrete examples are research on entrepreneurial challenges in fast changing environments or on the challenges of time-space-compression in a globalised economy.

In the application documents, MODUL identifies the following 17 current core research areas:

1. "Big Data Analysis – Knowledge Extraction and Information Diffusion;
2. Environmental Communication with a Focus on Climate Change;
3. Energy Finance and Asset Pricing;
4. Digitalization in Marketing;
5. Sustainable Finance, Fund Management and Asset Pricing;
6. The Implications of Blockchain/Distributed Ledger Technology;
7. Sustainable Tourism and Regional Development Policy;
8. Governance for Innovation and Sustainable Development;
9. The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Economic Development;
10. The Measurement of Living Conditions and Quality of Life;
11. Degrowth;
12. Statistical Methods;
13. Program and Public Policy Evaluation;
14. Travel Flow, Trend and Competitiveness Analyses;
15. Development and Evaluation of Information Systems;
16. Persuasive Innovation, Customer Experience Management and Design Thinking;
17. Customer Behaviour and Preference Elicitation."

Given the wide range of topics, this brings in a large scope of different higher education institutions as co-operating partners for MODUL. However, identifying core research areas should help to sharpen the research profile of any research institution, but having defined 17 different research areas as "core" research areas is in the experts' point of view not very helpful in this regard. Quite evidently, the research output is also not equally distributed across these 17 research areas.

In addition to research activities of senior faculty members, the promotion of young academics is an essential objective of MODUL. In 2016, MODUL implemented a new research documentation database that covers a full-fledged overview of each researcher's output, which allows for an easy and effective monitoring of total research output of MODUL.

In the application documents MODUL states that the research output between 2007 and 2019 consists of almost 1,042 publications, one third thereof in peer-reviewed journals, 88 funded research projects, 776 conference contributions, 254 presentations and invited presentations and 72 awards.

Overall, the expert group considers MODUL's efforts to establish itself as a research-oriented institution as successful and to be in line with its profile and its objectives. The experts particularly appreciate that the thematic scope of the research agenda has grown steadily over time in meaningful ways.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The experts encourage MODUL to sharpen its research profile by making a distinction between fewer actual "core" research areas and other areas of research.

Research and development

2. The private university offers services in research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts according to the university's approach and the respective subject cultures.

According to the self-documentation provided, research is at the core of MODUL's identity. Several measures have been generated to further develop and promote research within the university. Research at MODUL is conducted in departments internally and across disciplines. Standard research services are provided by the university's library, which grants access to a variety of databases as well as individual journals. Interdisciplinary collaboration and coordination are fostered particularly since the introduction of the digital platform *PURE*, which has been in use since 2016. The platform provides research active faculty with the means to store publications and research projects in a university-wide database. It furthermore gives MODUL better research visibility and enables the university to promote and document all research work conducted at the university. Regular Department Head meetings are scheduled to discuss respective research progress and projects. Interdisciplinarity is also encouraged by monthly research seminars that allow department members to present their individual research projects.

With regard to one of the core research areas, sustainable development, MODUL has a particular scholarship program, the *Scholarship of Hope*, which is granted to excellent project and research proposals aimed at making a positive sustainability impact. This scholarship is co-administered by MODUL's *Sustainability Committee*. A premium system that rewards publications in all areas, graduated to journal ratings, is also in place. Another service, supporting research, is the explicit teaching free time, reserved for research.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research and development

3. The private university carries out institutionally anchored co-operation projects in research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts with higher education partners and, where appropriate, from outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad adequate to the respective subject cultures.

The experts appreciate MODUL's wide range of co-operation projects in research and development. For instance, MODUL recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RITA (*Research Institution for Transformative Learning and Impact Assessment at the Competence Center for Sustainability Transformation and Responsibility*) at the *Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien*, with the objective of conducting collaborative research projects in the area of sustainability/sustainable development.

Moreover, MODUL is an active educational partner of *klimaaktiv* and uses this co-operation agreement for research and teaching. Furthermore, faculty is involved in institutionalised

research collaborations with several national and international universities, research institutions, consulting firms and other businesses during third-party funded research projects. Finally, MODUL has collaborated with a long list of institutions and organisations for specific research projects in the past.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research and development

4. The private university's permanent scientific and/or artistic staff is involved in the research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts in their specific subject.

A variety of core research areas across disciplines involves all departments and different study programmes respectively, often requiring an interdisciplinary approach. The expert group is satisfied with the overall research output and the distribution of research output across departments and individual researchers at MODUL.

The time that the private university's permanent academic staff can devote to research is clearly outlined and is in line with international standards.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research and development

5. The private university promotes research and/or development activities by providing for appropriate organisational or structural framework conditions.

A range of incentives for faculty as well as several administrative and financial measures exists to actively encourage, accompany and support faculty members in their research activities. For instance, MODUL grants financial premiums, rewarding publications in peer-reviewed journals to incentivise high-quality research. Moreover, to enable faculty members to share their research and discuss it with other researchers, each academic department has an earmarked budget for travel to conferences and conference participation.

Furthermore, MODUL has target agreements with academic staff ensuring a minimum teaching and minimum research obligation. The balance between the teaching obligation and free time for research is clearly outlined for each type of academic job at MODUL. E.g. the study contract of PhD students specifies that PhD students should devote 85% of their time to basic research and 15% to teaching, while full professors are expected to devote 40% of their time to research, 30 % percent to teaching, 20% to administrative duties, and 10% to transfer services.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research and development

6. The private university ensures a transfer of knowledge or technologies to the economy and the society.

MODUL ensures a transfer of knowledge or technologies to economy and society at large through a variety of measures. First, faculty members at MODUL explicitly dedicate some hours

to transfer services such as giving keynote speeches at conferences. Second, MODUL cooperates with corporations in the context of third-party funded research projects. Third, MODUL also cooperates with practitioners in transdisciplinary research projects. Fourth, MODUL organises the *MODUL Research Seminar Series*, which is open to the public and is announced on the university's website. The explicit goal of the seminar series is to exchange knowledge between academics, as well as transfer knowledge to the public. Fifth, MODUL engages in several strategic partnerships (e.g. co-operation agreements with *klimaaktiv*) to use the knowledge of the network partners for the university's sustainability activities and for teaching purposes. Finally, MODUL hosts the *Modul Open Source Working Paper Series* and some articles of faculty members at MODUL are published as open source publications.

Overall, the experts are confident that these measures ensure the transfer of knowledge or technologies to economy and society at large. However, the *Modul Open Source Working Paper Series* is somewhat underutilised with only eight papers being published in the series since 2015.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The experts encourage MODUL to implement measures to increase the number of papers being published in the *Modul Open Source Working Paper Series* before publication in an academic journal. The argument is based on the assumption that any Working Paper Series needs to achieve a critical mass of papers regularly published in the series to boost significantly the visibility of each individual paper in the series. In light of lengthy review processes and to increase overall transparency, journals and publishers across disciplines also increasingly allow papers to appear as working papers before submission to an academic journal.

Research and development

7. If the private university offers doctoral programmes, the criteria pursuant to § 18 (2) 1 to 4 and 6 shall apply accordingly.

4.8 Assessment criterion § 18 (2) 1 to 4 and 6: Research environment

Research environment

§ 18 (2) 1. The private university has developed a research concept, which incorporates the doctoral degree programme, and a development plan, which comprises enhancement measures for the degree programme.

At PhD level, MODUL offers a study programme, which culminates in the award of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Business and Socioeconomic Sciences. It complies with the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 8. MODUL regularly uses processes for the development and evaluation of all of its study programmes, and it is assumed that this also applies to the PhD study programme.

These processes include regular meetings of deans at the beginning of each semester to evaluate the effectiveness of the study programmes, the development of programmes in accordance with the NQF as well as the appropriateness of courses according to the syllabus of

courses in terms of workload and their mapping with the specified learning goals of the respective programme. In addition, the appropriateness of the workload of students within the study programmes as well as the development of course offerings are discussed in regular school meetings that also include student representatives. Other implemented monitoring instruments that are designed to provide valuable feedback for further development of the study programmes include frequent informal meetings between students and faculty members, student evaluations, graduate surveys as well as alumni meetings.

The research concept of the PhD study programme is clearly outlined in the overview of the study programme. The original focus of MODUL on only a few disciplines has shifted and given way to a more interdisciplinary research approach with a diverse range of subject areas being covered as specified in the application documents. In addition to the prescribed curriculum of modules, students are also encouraged to participate in the university's monthly or bi-monthly research workshops.

The development of the study programme, since its last re-accreditation in 2014, is also clearly stipulated, however, rather than based on an actual plan, changes are apparently the result of a continuous assessment of the programme's shortcomings and challenges, and emerge or rather are introduced on a perceived needs base when deemed appropriate. For example, a need of regular dissertation planning meetings was emphasised by the new Dean from 2016 onwards. Overall, the approach taken is deemed an adequate measure to improve and enhance the study programme on a continuous basis.

However, the expert group noticed the high tuition fees for the PhD programme. It considers these fees incompatible with the claim of a PhD programme to make a "best selection" based not on the financial but on the cognitive possibilities of the candidates.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The expert group advocates a fundamental rethink of the fee system for the doctoral programme.

Research environment

§ 18 (2) 2. The private university has defined a research focus for the degree programme, which covers the broadness of the respective discipline as regards content and methods. The focus of the research performance corresponds to the university's approach as well as to the respective subject culture and guarantees international visibility.

The PhD study programme is positioned in the Social Sciences with a focus on business, management and socioeconomics. However, due to the nature of a doctoral research degree, a multidisciplinary approach is emphasised.

The broad character of potential topic areas is evident in the listed concentrations: Information Systems; Marketing; Sustainable Development; Public Governance; Service Management; Tourism; Leisure Science; Quality of Life; Well-being and Environmental Psychology. International visibility is promoted through the annual overseas conference participation of doctoral scholars, fostered and financially supported by MODUL.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research environment

§ 18 (2) 3. The private university has employed permanent professors qualified in the discipline relevant for the degree programme who cover the broad range of the discipline's content and methods. Permanent staff here means working at least 50% of one's total working hours in salaried employment at the private university.

Many permanent staff members at professorial level provide supervision and guidance for PhD candidates. Their employment levels range from 50 - 100% and their qualifications cover a wide range of disciplines as well as a variety of areas of expertise relevant to the doctoral degree programme. The listed range of expertise amongst staff covers all promoted and listed concentrations adequately.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research environment

§ 18 (2) 4. The private university maintains institutionally anchored co-operation projects in research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts, which are relevant for the degree programme and adequate for the respective subject culture.

PhD students at MODUL can benefit from MODUL's wide range of co-operation projects in research and development. For instance, MODUL signed a co-operation agreement with other private universities in Austria that offer PhD study programmes. Thus, PhD candidates at MODUL are able to take courses at *Private Universität für Gesundheitswissenschaften, Medizinische Informatik und Technik GmbH (UMIT)* and *Katholische Privatuniversität Linz (KUL)*, which MODUL proves through co-operation agreements attached to the application documents. In addition, MODUL recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RITA (*Research Institution for Transformative Learning and Impact Assessment at the Competence Center for Sustainability Transformation and Responsibility*) at *Vienna University of Economics and Business (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, WU)* with the objective of conducting collaborative research projects in the area of sustainability research.

Moreover, MODUL is an active educational partner of *klimaaktiv* and uses this co-operation agreement for research and teaching. Furthermore, faculty is involved in institutionalised research collaborations with several national and international universities, research institutions, consulting firms and other businesses during third-party funded research projects. Finally, MODUL collaborated with a long list of institutions and organisations for specific research projects in the past.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research environment

§ 18 (2) 6. The private university's research infrastructure as well as its facilities and equipment are adequate on a quantitative and a qualitative basis for operating the degree programme. In the case that the private university draws on external resources, their authorisation to use them has been contractually secured.

Genuine and excellent research not only requires supervision and guidance, but far and foremost, the candidate's own initiative, drive and stamina. MODUL fosters these pillars of success with a range of institutional measures.

Further to more traditional elements of a well-equipped and functioning research infrastructure, such as a university library, students are welcome to make use of, in addition to the open-door policy of the dean and faculty members, the *Student Services & Career Center*, the *Studies and Examinations Committee*, the *Inclusion and Diversity Committee* (IDC) and the *Open Office Mentoring Program*.

The library is also in charge of a digital platform *PURE*, which serves as a reporting tool for research projects, conference contributions and published research articles. Encouraging the attendance of regular research workshops and the supported participation in international conferences add to the positive impression of a well-functioning research culture at MODUL.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

4.9 Assessment criterion § 16 (7) 1 to 10: Staff

Staff

1. The private university has sufficient scientific and artistic staff as well as sufficient non-academic staff for carrying out its tasks in accordance with the development plan.

MODUL will gradually increase its scientific and non-scientific staff over the next ten years.

According to the application documents and the development plan, which adds up the Viennese and Nanjing campus, the size of faculty is expected to increase from 24.65 full-time equivalents (FTE) in 2020/21 to 36.32 FTE in 2030/31. Administrative staff is expected to increase from currently 41.24 FTE to 45.74 FTE in 2030/31. The current situation is in accordance with the development plan.

Given the number of students at MODUL, the total staff at MODUL falls in the range of what can be expected from a higher education institution. Thus, in the experts' point of view MODUL is more than sufficiently staffed.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

2. The relation between permanent scientific and/or artistic staff and students shall be in accordance with the profile of the respective degree programme. Permanent staff here means working at least 50% of one's total working hours in salaried employment at the private university.

In the application documents, MODUL gives a detailed overview of academic staff categories (headcounts as well as full-time equivalents) in relation to the number of students in Bachelor, Master, MBA and PhD programmes. In addition, the overview presents the ratio of supervision of thesis in all types of degree programmes. As described in the development plan, the ratio of

students (in all programmes) to faculty members is expected to increase from about 28.39 (700/24.65) to about 36.32 in 2030/31 (1,294/36.32).

These ratios are below comparable ratios of public universities in Austria. The relation between permanent scientific staff (full professors, associate professors and assistant professors) and students is in accordance with the profile of the respective degree programme. Concerning the PhD programme, only permanent full and associate professors act as supervisors.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

3. The subject-specific core competencies of the degree programmes are covered by permanent professors.

The research profiles and academic skills of the permanent professors at MODUL match the subject-specific requirements of the degree programmes, which are in accordance with the core research areas, as listed above under criterion § 16 (6) 1. Permanent professors, responsible for teaching in MODUL's degree programmes, are experienced teachers holding academic degrees in the relevant fields.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

4. The scientific staff or the artistic staff, respectively, is qualified according to the requirements of the respective position.

In the application documents, MODUL provides a table showing the level of employment, teaching obligations, functions, field of activity as well as qualifications for all faculty and scientific members for the academic year 2019/2020. The expert group considers the levels of qualifications for the different positions as adequate.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

5. The prioritisation of the permanent scientific or artistic staff's teaching, research, and administrative activities ensures adequate participation in teaching in degree programmes and leaves sufficient time for research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts.

A balance between teaching responsibilities, administrative obligations, transfer services and time for research is envisaged by specifying the percentage of each of these four pillars of academic positions. Commitments and expectations vary, depending on the level of employment. The different ratios, stipulated in the application documents, are deemed adequate.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

6. The private university shall provide for transparent and quality-driven recruitment procedures for hiring permanent and adjunct scientific or artistic staff as well as non-academic staff. The appointment procedures for university professors are modelled at least on the basis of the related requirements stipulated in the Universities Act. In the event that a private university does not have a sufficient number of university professors in order to fill the seats of an appointment committee, external university professors shall be appointed as members of the appointment committee until an adequate professorial body has been built.

According to the current *Constitution of Modul University Vienna*, an appointment procedure for Academic staff is established. Each post at the academic establishment is to be publicly advertised by the University Board within Austria and abroad. In the case of the appointment of full professors and associate professors, the applicants who fulfil the formal and academic requirements must attend an appointments committee hearing.

Each appointments committee consists of three full professors, one associate professor, one other member of the faculty, and one student representative. The committee reaches its decision based on the reports and opinions of its members and external assessors. A minimum of three external assessors must be commissioned by the committee to evaluate, in a written report, the research and scholarly performance of the candidate.

On the Nanjing campus, the Academic Director, or another full or associate professor nominated by the Academic Director, leads the research process. Based on a justified recommendation by the Academic Director, the President of MODUL submits a written confirmation of the selection to NJPJI. NJPJI then executes the appointment.

Following the tenure-track model, the process for the evaluation of internal promotions to full professor are stipulated in a separate document *Procedures for Evaluation of Promotion to Full Professor*. The promotion committee is appointed, upon a suggestion by the President, by the University Senate. The committee consists of three full professors, one associate professor, and one additional faculty member. One of the full professors serves as the chair of the promotion committee. The University Assembly will vote to approve the President's nominees. One student may be elected to become a member of the committee. He/she will participate in all discussions of the committee, but will be able to vote only on the assessment of the candidate's teaching performance. External assessors are also involved in the appointment selection process.

The Managing Director appoints administrative staff after consultation with the other members of the University Board. The Managing Director initiates all other rules and administrative processes after consultation with the other members of the University Board.

These appointment procedures are deemed adequate. MODUL provides transparent and quality-driven recruitment procedures for hiring permanent and adjunct scientific as well as non-academic staff.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

7. The private university provides adequate further training and staff development measures.

In the application documents, MODUL states that the "budget is earmarked for employees to attend trainings when relevant to their positions and for faculty to participate in conferences." In addition, faculty members, except full and associated professors, discuss the evaluation of their progress and performance in terms so teaching and research with their respective Head of Department, once a year. Full and associated professors, however, receive every three years a feedback from the University Board, based on the *Full Professors and Associated Professors Performance report*. Particular trainings are not foreseen for full and associated professors. However, the impressions gathered at the virtual site visit lead the expert group to the decision that these measures are adequate.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The expert group recommends that full and associated professors could be given the opportunity to participate in special training courses as part of staff development in particular in terms of teaching.

Staff

8. *The private university takes adequate measures for the integration of adjunct teachers in the organisation of teaching and in programme organisation.*

The integration of adjunct faculty is outlined in a separate document *Research Associate and Adjunct Faculty Guideline*, available on MODUL's website. The titles *Adjunct Associate Professor* or *Adjunct Full Professor* are honorary appointments awarded by the University Board for distinguished external scholars who have achieved the rank of associate professor or full professor by either MODUL or any other reputable university, and who support MODUL's activities in research, teaching, and internal or external services. The benefits and privileges, stipulated in § 10 of the respective document, in conjunction with the application documents, are deemed adequate for the integration of adjunct teachers.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

9. *The following prerequisites must be met in order for the institution to be entitled to carry out procedures for the award of habilitation degrees:*
a. The private university offers a doctoral programme in a relevant discipline.
b. The private university has laid down rules specifying the university-relevant qualifications and a procedure for the award of a habilitation degree, which are modelled at least on the related requirements mentioned in the Universities Act.

MODUL offers a doctoral programme in Business and Socioeconomic Sciences. This is a relevant programme in the range of disciplines at MODUL. PhD candidates can focus their own doctoral studies from among the following concentrations: Information Systems; Marketing; Sustainable Development; Public Governance; Service Management; Tourism; Leisure Science; Quality of Life, Well-being and Environmental Psychology.

The rules specifying the procedure for the award of a habilitation degree are laid down in the *University Constitution*, Article XIV. For a member of the academic staff with a doctorate who

is particularly distinguished in their field of research and teaching, the President of MODUL, on application and a habilitation procedure, can grant a MODUL teaching licence (*venia docendi*) for an entire academic subject area. The applied for teaching licence must fall within the scope of MODUL's areas of specialisation or usefully complement the area. The granting of the teaching licence is associated with the right to freely practice academic teaching at MODUL using its facilities, as well as to supervise and assess academic theses. These rules are modelled on the related requirements mentioned in the Universities Act.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

10. If the private university offers doctoral programmes, the criteria pursuant to § 18 (5) 2 to 5 shall apply accordingly.

4.10 Assessment criterion § 18 (5) 2 to 5: Staff

Staff

*§ 18 (5) 2. The scientific staff or the artistic staff, respectively, is qualified according to the requirements of the activities provided for in the degree programme. The scientific and/or artistic staff envisaged for the supervision of thesis projects is authorised to teach (*venia docendi*) or has an equivalent qualification for the scientific or artistic subject, respectively. It is involved in the research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts of the respective subject and performs research and development activities which are in accordance with the university's approach and the respective subject culture. The majority of the scientific and/or artistic staff assigned to the supervision of theses has experience in this field.*

The application documents stipulate that scientific/academic teaching staff in the doctoral programme is highly qualified, with 11 permanent staff members at professorial level, all of them holding a *venia docendi* or a qualification that is equivalent to a habilitation.

The supervisors, as stipulated in the application documents, have different areas of expertise and, according to the application documents, engage in research in their respective subject areas. Core areas are covered by the respective specialised professor(s), related courses in the study program as well as related research areas are detailed in the application documents.

Research and development activities, as stated in the application documents, are thus in accordance with the university's approach, also stated in the application documents, to being an international university for business and economics with a strong research focus in a variety of business and/or economics related disciplines and subject areas as well as the respective subject culture.

Nevertheless, only associate and full professors who have been promoted by a promotion committee are allowed to supervise PhD students. Since the guidelines for promotion are very demanding in terms of teaching, research and community service, only an excellent and experienced faculty member can become associate professor and then full professor. This guarantees high-quality supervision for all PhD students at MODUL. According to the information in the application documents, 13 persons can act as PhD supervisors and are experienced in supervising students.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

§ 18 (5) 3. The benchmark for an adequate tutoring ratio for the supervision of doctoral theses is eight doctoral students per supervisor (full-time equivalent).

In the application documents, MODUL gives a detailed overview of academic staff categories, as mentioned before, in relation to the number of students and presents the ratio of supervision in all types of degree programmes. Concerning the PhD study programme in the academic year 2018/2019, the ratio is 1.1 student/faculty. Only permanent full and associate professors act as supervisors.

According to the information during the virtual site visit, six PhD students were studying at MODUL in 2019/2020. As mentioned above, the number of internal supervisors is 13, among which three are employed part-time. In addition, two persons act as external supervisors.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**, because MODUL is significantly below the mentioned benchmark and, as described earlier, well staffed.

Staff

§ 18 (5) 4. The prioritisation of the permanent scientific or artistic staff's teaching, research, and administrative activities ensures that there is sufficient time for research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts as well as the supervision of doctoral students.

A balance between teaching responsibilities, administrative obligations, transfer services and time for research is envisaged by specifying the percentage of each of these four pillars of academic positions. Commitments and expectations vary, depending on the level of employment. The different ratios, stipulated in the application documents, are deemed adequate. In particular, staff at professorial level, are given sufficient time for research and development.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

§ 18 (5) 5. The private university provides for personnel development measures aimed at the supervision of doctoral students.

As stated in the application documents, MODUL does not foresee specific development measures for the professors supervising PhD students. Nevertheless, only associate and full professors who have been promoted by a promotion committee are allowed to supervise PhD students. According to MODUL, this guarantees high-quality supervision for all PhD students at MODUL. The experts agree with MODUL's assessment.

They consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The university should think about opting to introduce a supervision workshop for those involved in PhD supervision. The expert group hence recommends that these professors could be given the opportunity to participate in special training courses as part of staff development in particular in terms of supervision at doctoral level.

4.11 Assessment criterion § 16 (8): Funding

Funding

The private university has a viable and sustainable financial plan, which ensures the performance of its tasks in accordance with the development plan. Provisions have been made to fund expiring degree programmes.

In the application documents, the experts were provided with a business plan, written in the beginning of 2020. The business plan includes the development of student numbers, development of faculty members and non-academic staff, development of research funding and a profit and loss forecast for the upcoming years until 2031/32. As shown in the profit and loss forecast, MODUL will gain a profit for the first time in 2030/31 by a total number of 1,294 students. Given these detailed information, the expert group decided not to request a balance sheet of MODUL.

During the virtual site visit, the experts were informed that the number of students and graduates increased steadily but slowly from a good 600 to just under 800 (exactly 777 based on the figures published by Statistics Austria, created on 11 May 2020), since 2014. In addition, the new Managing Director informed the expert group that break-even will be reached at a total number of 1,000 students. The new owner expects this break-even to be reached within 18 months, but has given MODUL a period of three years to reach break-even as a binding deadline.

To reassess this statement and the profit and loss forecast, as given in the application documents, to a more advanced time, a condition shall be issued by AQ Austria.

In parallel to the institutional accreditation, two programme accreditations were also underway, which were successfully completed at the beginning of March 2021. These were a further strategic step to break down the content-related boundaries of MODUL. Specifically, a Bachelor's degree programme *Applied Data Science* (BSc) and a Bachelor's degree programme *International Management with Professional Experience* (BBA) were added to the portfolio. Therefore, MODUL is optimistic to reach the break-even of 1000 students easier and earlier.

Regarding the financial situation, the expert group relies on the statements of the University Board and in particular on the statement of the new owner. In addition, in the application documents is given that the financial situation is thoroughly examined by the owners, first *Vienna Chamber of Commerce* and now *Talents Squared Ltd*. Based on that, the expert group does not doubt that MODUL is not subject of financial difficulties.

A former Letter of Comfort in 2010 confirmed that "The Vienna Chamber of Commerce as the majority owner of Modul University Vienna GmbH, Vienna (FN 277162t) undertakes to manage and financially equip it in such a way that it is able to fulfil its current and future obligations at any time in due time (obligation to equip). The obligation of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce is in principle unlimited. However, the Vienna Chamber of Commerce has the right to terminate this letter of comfort with three months' notice at the end of each quarter (termination clause)".

An analogous Letter of Comfort, signed by the new owner *Talents Squared Ltd.* and Managing Director of MODUL, was sent to AQ Austria on 28 January 2021 and replaced the Chamber's declaration.

The Letter of Comfort declares, "Talents Squared Limited is a private limited company incorporated in England and Wales under company number 11524092. In its capacity as majority shareholder of MODUL University Vienna GmbH (registered under No. FN 277162t) Talents Squared Limited commits to manage and fund MODUL University Vienna such that the University can at any time fulfil its current and future obligations on a timely basis ('duty of funding'). Talents Squared Limited's commitment in the foregoing paragraph is unlimited in duration for such time, as Talents Squared Limited remains the majority shareholder of MODUL University Vienna GmbH. However, Talents Squared Limited is entitled to terminate this letter of comfort with not less than three months' notice to the end of each quarter. In the event of a termination of the letter of comfort in accordance with the foregoing paragraph and thus the termination of operations of MODUL University Vienna, Talents Squared Limited will make provisions for conducting discontinued study programs until the end of the then current program duration for all on-going study programs." The letter assures that provisions will be made for the financing of expiring degree programmes.

Given the fact, that the break-even now shall be reached years before the predicted the predicted date shown in the profit and loss forecast in the application documents, the expert group recommends a condition in order to revision MODUL's financial development. Due to that, the expert group considers this criterion to be **partially fulfilled**.

Condition:

3. In respect to the new ownership, the expert group recommends the Board of AQ Austria to issue the following condition: MODUL shall submit an adapted business plan with an updated outline of the current financial situation, which should allow for a reassessment and more accurate calculation of the current break-even.

According to MODUL's Statement, the change of ownership took place in summer 2020 after the application of the re-accreditation of MODUL was submitted to AQ Austria. As reported in the statement, the new managing director invested significant effort to reach a financial break-even sooner than described in the Development Plan which was submitted to AQ Austria in 2020. Based on that, the expert group reaffirm the necessity to submit an adapted business plan to complete the assessment of the criterion.

4.12 Assessment criterion § 16 (9): Infrastructure

Infrastructure

The private university's facilities and equipment are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate to ensure the performance of the university's tasks in accordance with the development plan. In the case that the private university draws on external resources, their authorisation to use them has been contractually secured.

MODUL rents the Viennese facility, the rental contracts have been provided to the experts. The on-site infrastructure for faculty and staff members as well as for classrooms and equipment of

lecture rooms are described in the development plan. Due to SARS-CoV-2 restrictions, the location and infrastructure could not be visited by the experts directly. As a substitute, MODUL provided a presentation and videos for the expert group to get an impression, which was helpful for the expert group. A member of the expert group also participated in the last re-accreditation process in 2014 and actively confirmed the impressive infrastructure. In addition, both staff members and students emphasised the excellent facilities and equipment as well as research support infrastructure during the virtual site visit.

The Nanjing campus infrastructure and equipment are guaranteed by the *Nanjing Tech University Pujiang Institute* in the Milestone Agreement. Therewith, the infrastructure is also contractually agreed.

The library of MODUL at the campus Vienna is a member of the *Österreichischer Bibliothekenverbund und Service GmbH (OBVSG)*, a member of the *Austrian E-Media Cooperation (Kooperation E-Medien Österreich, KEMÖ)* and two of its consortia. Thanks to the *Quality Assurance for Tourism Education, Training and Research Programmes* by the *United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO.TedQual)* certification, see also criterion § 16 (11) 3, the university has access to the UNWTO e-library and to *Statista*, a business data platform.

During the virtual site visit, MODUL mentioned that the library equipment of Nanjing campus is difficult to organise, because all books need to be approved by the Chinese government. This situation is in line with the legal conditions that must be complied with co-operating with Chinese higher education institutions. However, the co-operation between MODUL in Vienna and NJPJI should be a topic for the next re-accreditation of the Nanjing study programme.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

MODUL's efforts to develop the library and an Open Access Strategy in the upcoming accreditation period are very much supported and, according to the experts, should definitely be implemented in view of the current open access developments in academia.

4.13 Assessment criterion § 16 (10): Co-operation

Co-operation

The private university maintains collaborations beyond § 16 (6) 3 with higher education partners and partners outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad matching their profile and also promoting the mobility of students and staff.

The importance of co-operation and internationalisation were highly emphasised by MODUL in the application documents and several examples of collaboration beyond co-operation in research and development are described. MODUL also has developed an international strategy for knowledge transfer and sharing. Nevertheless, the most important pillars of internationalisation are the 70% international students and the staff members with mostly international backgrounds and international campuses.

In the winter semester 2016/2017, the resolute international orientation of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität was reinforced with the launch of a campus in Dubai. The following study programs were offered, which were already accredited at the Vienna campus by AQ Austria:

- BBA in Tourism and Hospitality Management;
- BSc in International Management;
- MSc in Sustainable Development, Management and Policy;
- Master of Business Administration.

Due to the violation of MODUL policy by those responsible at the Dubai campus, the accreditation at Dubai campus was withdrawn by 22 March 2019. In order to give the students in Dubai the opportunity to complete their studies, a teach-out was agreed that became effective in 2020 and will last until 2023.

However, MODUL learned its lessons. Based on the difficulties with Dubai, MODUL revised its agreement with *Nanjing Tech University Pujiang Institute (NJPJI)*, the second expansion of the university. Furthermore, few adjustments on the co-operation agreement were made at the end of 2020. The changes "result from the specifications of regulation No. 372 of the State Council of the People's Republic of China". Main important adjustments were the establishment of a joined management committee, which leads the co-operation between MODUL and NJPJI, the change of the place of jurisdiction from Austria to China and the agreement on the "Nanjing Arbitration Commission" as the arbitration court (Submission 27 January 2021).

In addition, MODUL has several Erasmus partnerships with European higher education institutions as well as partnerships with Asian and American universities and business schools. MODUL has also developed means to further support the mobility of both students and staff, for example, through internships, exchange studies, and possibilities to work at partner universities.

This was further discussed with staff members during the virtual site visit. The members of staff expressed that MODUL offers them institutional and financial support that promotes their mobility and collaboration opportunities. They also gave detailed examples and further explanations of their participation in various national and international, and cross-disciplinary research collaborations. They, for example, noted how they worked closely on research projects with colleagues from other European institutions as well as within MODUL and how this helped them to advance their research agendas. They also explained that MODUL offers financial means and support for conferences and other research-related travels, which further promoted their mobility.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

4.14 Assessment criterion § 16 (11) 1 to 4: Quality management system

Quality management system

1. *The private university uses a quality management system, which has been incorporated in the higher education institution's strategic management. Based on the private university's objectives, it ensures that the*

quality of studying and teaching as well as of research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts, respectively, and of the supporting tasks are assessed on a regular basis. It furthermore guarantees that the assessment criteria are met and promotes the private university's enhancement.

As explained in the application documents, the development of the quality management system is the primary responsibility of the University Board, which works with the university's various committees and decision-making bodies in carrying out the university's quality management-related initiatives.

MODUL uses a quality management system, which has been well incorporated in the higher education institution's strategic management. The staffing of the quality management team supporting the University Board (Quality Support Manager, Assistant to the President, Sustainability Manager) is adequate for the size of the private university and the assigned tasks.

Obviously, MODUL is committed to quality assurance and continuous institutional improvement and relies upon a diverse set of policies, organisational bodies, and reporting mechanisms to ensure quality in its various operations. The *Quality Management Handbook* is comprehensive and covers the organisational/structural anchoring, procedures and guidelines to ensure the quality of studying and teaching, as well as of research and supporting tasks.

Since the last re-accreditation in 2014 and based on the experiences with Dubai campus, further quality management activities were introduced. As described in the application documents (Milestone Agreement) and already mentioned before under criterion § 16 (10), also a number of measures have been taken to ensure that the international campus in Nanjing is better integrated into the quality management system of MODUL. These measures include e.g. a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities of both parties, NJIPIJ and MODUL, an annual audit by a senior faculty Member of MODUL, a permanent online access of MODUL to relevant information of NJIPIJ.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The current development concerning the integration of the Nanjing campus should be continued and intensified in order to ensure that the study programme in Nanjing meets the same quality standards as its Austrian equivalent. This will also apply to additional future foreign programmes and campuses, if MODUL decides to expand.

Quality management system

2. The private university periodically and systematically collects information on the quality of studying and teaching as well as research and development or the advancement and appreciation of the arts as well as supporting tasks performed within the quality management procedures.

MODUL considers the course evaluation system as the core of quality assurance procedures to ensure and enhance the quality of studying and teaching. The described course evaluation system and the improvement process in the last year, switching to an electronic system, is adequate in the experts' point of view. The university also emphasises the importance of the employability of its graduates, but so far, there is no reliable data on whether this has actually been achieved.

Since 2016, the library is in charge of maintaining the *PURE* platform to collect information on the quality of research. The platform serves as a reporting tool for research projects, conference contributions and published research articles of the faculty. The experts consider this platform as a good development step.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

In the future, more attention could be paid to obtaining feedback from MODUL's alumni.

Quality management system

3. The private university assesses the effectiveness of its quality management system on a regular basis and enhances it as required, drawing on the knowledge of internal and external experts.

As described in the application documents, the private university uses external advice and evaluation to develop its quality management system further. For instance, MODUL undertook the volunteer certification *Quality Assurance for Tourism Education, Training and Research Programmes* by the *United Nations World Tourism Organisation* (UNWTO.TedQual), a programme whose main objective is to improve the quality of the tourism education, training and research programmes. For this purpose, evaluation criteria have been defined to seek, among other things, to measure the efficiency of the academic system, as well as the degree of incorporation of the tourism industry and students needs to those programmes.

In addition, two Bologna Experts from of the European Higher Education Area in framework of Bologna Accord discussed with MODUL the private university's development regarding university didactic, joined degree programmes, student and staff mobility and the development of MODUL's quality management system.

The internal assessment of the effectiveness of its quality management system is supported by well-developed internal governance and co-operation structure, as well as the information exchange structures and procedures, both described in the *Quality Management Handbook* (e.g. Industry Advisory Board, Semester Conferences).

The quality management procedures ensure the participation of relevant internal and external groups and internal communication to promote the private university's enhancement.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Quality management system

4. The private university has implemented structures and procedures to ensure that the rules of good scientific practice are adhered to.

As shown in the application documents, as well as in the *Quality Management Handbook*, MODUL has implemented structures and procedures to ensure that the rules of good scientific practice are adhered. The *Institutional Review Board* (IRB) is in charge of guaranteeing ethics in research involving human subjects.

A key actor in the area of good scientific practice and academic integrity in teaching and studies is the *Studies and Examination Committee*. Several measures are taken to prevent, monitor, and control plagiarism at MODUL. The rules of good scientific practice are introduced to the students in the study course modules Bachelor-/Master-Thesis Tutorials and *Academic Writing*. Lecturers and thesis supervisors are encouraged to remind students about the standards of plagiarism and to provide additional support when needed. Plagiarism detection software is used to check every thesis and lecturers are encouraged to include plagiarism checks for seminar papers and similar coursework. In the case of detected plagiarism or academic misconduct, the *Studies and Examination Committee* is informed and has to decide on the submitted case. In the scenario of multiple cases of academic misconduct, the student may be expelled from the university.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled** as the private university has implemented adequate structures to ensure that the rules of good scientific practice are adhered to.

4.15 Assessment criterion § 16 (12): Information

Information

The private university publishes easily accessible and up-to-date information on its services on its website, including, as a minimum, the statute, the curricula and study regulations as well as examination regulations, model written training agreements and an outline of the quality management system.

MODUL publishes easily accessible and up-to-date information on its website. Namely among other things its curricula and the range of courses, which can be accessed under the tab *Study Programs*. Under the tab *Student Life* the study and examination regulations can be found as well as the model of a written education contract, which includes the following:

- Obligations of the higher education institution and the students;
- Reference to study regulations and house rules;
- Financial obligations;
- Reasons for the termination of a contract;
- Use of personal data.

Under the tab *About*, statutes and the development plan are to be found. There, MODUL also publishes an overview of the quality management system.

Regarding gender equality, in the experts' point of view the private university does not completely follow its own goals. Images on the website show female students enrolled in Bachelor and Master programmes. On the other side, only male students are represented as candidates for PhD and Executive programmes. In this regard, MODUL should think about reconsidering its visual representation on its website.

Nevertheless, the experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

The expert group recommends reconsidering design and content of its website in terms of fostering gender equality and promoting cultural diversity, e.g. by using gender and culture sensitive images.

According to MODUL's Statement, the visual representation on the website was considered by MODUL and suggested changes were immediately implemented on the website.

5 Summary and final evaluation

Based on the findings from the application documents and the virtual site visit, the expert group came to the following assessments, recommendations and conditions regarding the criteria stipulated in PU-AkkVO.

MODUL is an internationally oriented higher education institution for research and education on tourism, sustainable development, new media technology, and public governance. It was established by the *Vienna Chamber of Commerce* and approved by the former *Austrian Accreditation Council* in 2007.

After the change of ownership in 2020, MODUL ventures a new strategic orientation and strives for financial independence. The *Vienna Chamber of Commerce* as the previous majority owner had financially supported the project since 2007 in order to be able to train highly qualified personnel for tourism. Reaching a financial break-even has not been the focus of strategic measures so far and was a rather long-term goal.

The change of ownership thus means not only a strategic reorientation for MODUL, but also a cultural reorientation: instead of being led by a venerable Austrian institution, MODUL is now being led resolutely towards financial independence by a British investor. The university management of MODUL is aware of these challenges and is intensively engaged in repositioning all areas of the university.

During the virtual site visit, the new owner *Talents Squared Ltd.* informed the experts that the necessary break-even will be reached much earlier than outlined in the application documents. Parallel to the institutional accreditation, two programme accreditations were also underway, which were successfully completed at the beginning of March 2021. Measures like these make MODUL optimistic that it will reach the break-even sooner.

(1) Profile and objectives

The expert group considers the criterion "Profile and objectives of the private university" to be **fulfilled**. MODUL has a comprehensible institutional profile and has developed adequate objectives from the profile with regard to the teaching and research programme activities. The institutional profile is adequate for higher education institutions and corresponds to the competitive conditions on the Austrian and international higher education market. However, the expert group puts into question, if MODUL will change its profile and objectives due to the change of ownership, which cannot be foreseen by now. In this respect, MODUL shall closely monitor the commitment of the new owner and therefore recommends a condition.

Due to MODUL's statement of 11/05/2021 the expert group changes the evaluation and considers the criterion **to be fulfilled**, thus **no condition** is recommended.

(2) Development plan

The expert group considers the criteria concerning the development plan to be **partially fulfilled**. The development plan addresses all necessary areas and fulfils the formulated requirements. The virtual site visit gave the impression that the goals described in the development plan are also lived at MODUL. The development plan also goes into detail about the role of quality management. These explanations and the impression gained during the virtual site visit convince the expert group that the processes for implementing the development plan and achieving the objectives are working well. For the planned, upcoming accreditation period, the expert group questions whether the development plan will remain unaffected despite the change of ownership and therefore recommends a condition.

(3) Organisation of the private university

The expert group considers the criteria to be **fulfilled**, as the existing structures and processes ensure the autonomy of higher education institutions and the freedom of research and teaching, while also taking into account the interests of the legal entity. Staff development in academia based on the tenure-track model, i.e. promotion and performance evaluation, is also well documented.

(4) Course offerings

The expert group consider the criteria concerning course offerings to be **fulfilled**, as MODUL offers a sufficient number of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes as well as a doctoral programme with distinct profiles at the Viennese and the Nanjing campus. The intended teaching and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences in these study programmes are detailed and correspond well with the respective levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Iterative evaluation procedures with the aim of continuous improvement of the study programmes are clearly established. The curricula of all study programmes are appropriately structured and combine research- and student-centred learning with a logical sequence of modules that supports the acquisition of highly specialised knowledge and the development of critical thinking. The content and structure of the respective curricula showed that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved. There is a particular focus on the professional and personal development and employability of graduates.

(5) Counselling and support for students

The expert group considers the criteria to be **fulfilled**, as the support structures for academic and psychosocial counselling of students are detailed in the application documents. At MODUL, the *Student Services and Career Center* is the most important institution in this regard. The centre supports students with and in matters such as counselling, study exchange, academic work, health and belonging to the community to ensure students' well-being and personal development. This was confirmed by students at all programme levels during the virtual site visit.

(6) Research and Development

The expert group considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**, as MODUL's claim to establish itself as a research-oriented institution is reflected in its profile and goals. The expert group particularly appreciates that the thematic breadth of the research agenda has grown organically over time. Nevertheless, the experts encourage MODUL to sharpen its research profile by making a distinction between fewer actual "core" research areas and other areas of research.

A significant contribution to research is made by MODUL's PhD programme, which is also thematically broad and provides PhD students and researchers with numerous incentives, co-operation opportunities and support. However, the expert group noticed the high tuition fees

for the PhD programme. It considers these fees incompatible with the claim of a PhD programme to make a "best selection" based not on the financial but on the cognitive possibilities of the candidates. Therefore, expert group advocates a fundamental rethink of the fee system for the doctoral programme.

(7) Staff

The expert group considers the criteria to be **fulfilled**, as MODUL's overall staffing is within what can be expected of a higher education institution and the current situation is in line with the development plan. The qualification levels for the various positions are also adequate and the appointment procedures meet the required standards, which are clearly explained in the application documents.

MODUL has adequate training and staff development measures and offers a doctoral programme. The regulations on qualifications relevant to higher education and on the habilitation procedure are based on the corresponding requirements of the University Act.

Critically, MODUL does not provide for specific development measures for professors supervising doctoral students. Nevertheless, only associate and full professors who have been promoted by a doctoral committee may supervise doctoral students. According to MODUL, this guarantees high-quality supervision for all doctoral students. The expert group agrees with MODUL's assessment. Nevertheless, the university should think about opting to introduce a supervision workshop for those involved in PhD supervision.

(8) Funding

The expert group considers the criterion as **partially fulfilled**. For the expert group, the financial situation of MODUL was quite difficult to assess. The expert group has discussed the situation in detail. While the financial situation was covered by the *Vienna Chamber of Commerce* until mid-2020, it is now covered by *Talents Squared Ltd*. As already mentioned, break-even may be reached earlier than stated in the application documents.

The most important document from the experts' point of view group is the Letter of Comfort signed by the new owner *Talents Squared Ltd*. and Managing Director of MODUL, which guarantees to make provisions for all current degree programmes for the implementation of the discontinued degree programmes until the end of the remaining programme period. Such a document ensures that all students will be able to complete their studies at MODUL and is thus crucial for the assessment of the expert group.

The expert group noticed that there is a difference between a profit and loss forecast in the application document and the aimed break-even, which was mentioned by the new Managing Director during the virtual site visit. Given the fact, that the break-even now shall be reached years before the predicted date shown in the profit and loss forecast in the application documents, the expert group recommends a condition in order to revision MODUL's financial development.

(9) Infrastructure

The expert group considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**. The experts were provided with sufficient information in the application documents as well as videos showing the infrastructure. During the virtual site visit, both staff members and students highlighted the excellent facilities and equipment as well as the research-supporting infrastructure. Regarding the Nanjing campus, infrastructure and equipment are guaranteed by the *Nanjing Tech University Pujiang Institute* in the Milestone Agreement.

(10) Co-operation

The expert group considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**. MODUL has developed an international strategy for knowledge transfer and exchange. The main pillars of internationalisation are the 70% international students, the staff members with mostly international backgrounds and the international campus. In addition, MODUL has several Erasmus partnerships with European higher education institutions as well as partnerships with Asian and American universities and business schools. MODUL has also developed means to further support student and staff mobility, for example through internships, exchange studies and opportunities to work at partner universities.

(11) Quality management system

The expert group considers the criterion to be **fulfilled** because MODUL's quality management system is well integrated into the strategic management of the higher education institution. Quality assurance and continuous institutional improvement is the responsibility of the university management. This relies on a diverse set of measures, organisational bodies and reporting mechanisms to ensure quality in the different areas. MODUL also uses external advice and evaluation to develop its quality management system further. It has implemented structures and procedures to ensure that the rules of good scientific practice are followed.

Since the last re-accreditation in 2014 and based on the experiences with the Dubai campus, new quality management activities on the Vienna campus were introduced. In addition, a number of measures have been taken to ensure that the international campus in Nanjing is well integrated into the quality management system of MODUL.

(12) Information

The expert group considers the criterion to be **fulfilled** as MODUL publishes easily accessible and up-to-date information on its website. This includes an overview of the quality management system, which can be accessed in detail. However, with regard to gender equality, MODUL does not fully follow its own objectives in the view of the evaluators. The pictures on the website show female students enrolled in Bachelor- and Master programmes. On the other hand, only male students are represented as candidates for PhD and executive programmes. In this respect, MODUL should think about reconsidering its visual representation on its website.

Overall, the experts **recommend the Board of AQ Austria to extend the institutional accreditation** of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität under the **following conditions**:

1. Concerning § 16 (2) 1 'Development plan' PU-AkkVO, MODUL shall submit an adapted *Development Plan Modul University Vienna 2020/21-2031/32* with an updated outline of the goals of the university.
2. Concerning § 16 (8) 'Funding' PU-AkkVO, MODUL shall submit an adapted business plan with an updated outline of the current financial situation, which should allow for a reassessment and more accurate calculation of the current break-even to a more advanced time.

6 Documents reviewed

- Application Documents of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität from 15/05/2020 in the version of 27/07/2020 for the extension of the institutional accreditation and appendix I to XVII, as a separate document appendix II (*Development Plan Final*) and appendix XII (*Quality Management Handbook*).
- Submission of further information before the virtual site visit:
 - 1st Company Register Excerpt from 31/07/2020
 - Revision of the University Constitution from 16/10/2020
 - Revision of the certificate programme "Master of Business Administration" from 16/10/2020
 - Subsequent submission concerning the experts' questionnaire from 21/12/2020
 - 2nd Company Register Excerpt from 08/01/2021
 - New Company Logo from 08/01/2021
 - Updated list of the administrative staff and faculty of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität from 18/01/2021
- Submission of further information after the virtual site visit:
 - Subsequent submission concerning the change to Nanjing co-operation agreement and financial information from 27/01/2021:
 - Milestone Agreement in Chinese and English
 - Guidelines of Academic Collaboration in Chinese and English
 - Teach-out Agreement in Chinese
 - Regulations of the People's Republic of China in Chinese and English
 - Dismissal of former Managing Director
 - Shareholder's Resolution
 - Special Power of Attorney of Talents Squared Limited
 - Notary Public Certification Talents Squared limited
 - Power of Attorney of Vienna Chamber of Commerce
 - Letter of Comfort
 - 3rd Company Register Excerpt from 05/02/2021
 - Response to the expert report on the accreditation procedure concerning the extension of the institutional accreditation (re-accreditation) of Modul University Vienna Privatuniversität from 11/05/2021