

# Summary and evaluation of the expert opinion on the accreditation procedure for the Master’s degree programme “European Economic Policy” in a cooperation between the Fachhochschule des BFI Wien GmbH (University of Applied Sciences) and the Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin (University of Applied Sciences) in the form of a Joint Programme conducted in Vienna and Berlin

(in accordance with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes)

The experts concluded that the **assessment criteria for the accreditation of the Joint Master’s Programme “European Economic Policy”** (assessment and evaluation based on the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA) are **fulfilled**.

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**Information on the applicant organisation: Fachhochschule des BFI Wien Gesellschaft m.b.H. (University of Applied Sciences)**

<b>Legal form</b>	Limited liability company
<b>Start of the study programme</b>	1996/97
<b>Number of students</b>	2,226 (of which 1,113 f/ 1,113 m/d*; as of the winter semester 2022/23)
<b>Accredited study programmes</b>	14

**Information about the partner university: Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin (University of Applied Sciences)**

<b>University type</b>	State University of Applied Sciences
<b>Number of students</b>	approx. 14,000
<b>Number of study programmes</b>	38 Bachelor's degree programmes and 32 Master's degree programmes

**Information on the application for accreditation**

<b>Programme name</b>	European Economic Policy
<b>Type of study programme</b>	UAS Master's programme
<b>ECTS credits</b>	120 ECTS credits (UAS BFI Wien GmbH) /90 ECTS credits (HTW Berlin)
<b>Standard duration of study</b>	4 semesters (UAS BFI Wien GmbH) /3 semesters (HTW Berlin)
<b>Planned number of study places per academic year</b>	22 places for beginners in Vienna and 20 places for beginners in Berlin
<b>Academic degree</b>	Master of Arts, M.A.
<b>Organisational form</b>	Full-time study programme
<b>Language/s used</b>	German (2nd language English)
<b>Location(s) where the study programme is executed</b>	Vienna and Berlin
<b>Tuition fee</b>	363.36 euros per semester (BFI Wien GmbH)

**Assessment and evaluation in accordance with the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA**

The experts highlight as an example of good practice that the applicant universities of applied sciences, the UAS BFI Wien GmbH and HTW Berlin, have created an innovative Joint Master's Programme during the course of an extensive preparation phase based on a committed and proven partnership, which transcends the legal and institutional differences and represents an attractive educational offer for students.

The experts recommend the accreditation of the degree programme to the board of AQ Austria (Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency).

## A. Eligibility

The UAS BFI Wien GmbH and HTW Berlin are accredited universities of applied sciences whose legal foundations make it possible to offer a joint curriculum, which is completed at both locations, and thus to award a joint degree. The award is made in accordance with the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) at level 7 for Master's degree programmes, which is analogous to the qualifications framework of the two participating countries. Both in the context of documentation submitted and during the on-site visit, the two universities of applied sciences succeeded in convincing the experts that the planned Master's degree programme builds on a long-standing, proven partnership, thus paving the way for successful implementation. The cooperation agreement was signed by both University Boards in September 2022 and includes the standard contractual content. The academic degree to be awarded is contractually designated as "Master of Arts".

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

**Recommendation:** the experts stated that the separate issue of the Diploma Supplements (instead of a joint document) reduces the transparency of the final documentation in terms of further use (for potential employers, further qualifying studies) and recommend a review of possibilities in the interests of the better integration/standardisation of the final documentation. In the same context, it is recommended that the certificate planned as a joint degree is optimised to ensure that the UAS BFI Wien GmbH does not issue an additional Master's certificate, as this contradicts the concept of the joint degree on the one hand and may show different overall grades on one certificate and on the other.

## B. Learning outcomes

The degree programme consists of two core areas: economics and political science with a focus on institutional frameworks in the EU and on interactions between national and European decision-makers. The degree programme places particular emphasis on a polyparadigmatic approach. As potential employers often differ from one another in ideological terms, the experts believe that graduates are prepared to understand not only the ideological stances of their employers, but also those of other stakeholders and decision-makers or counterparts. Another special feature of the degree programme is its comparative approach, which gives students a direct understanding of different ways to access European economic policy in Berlin and Vienna. The two locations are very well-suited to this approach. The curriculum includes essential theories and methods, enabling graduates to analyse issues of European economic policy and to work in an advisory capacity, unless advanced academic work is required. Knowledge of project planning and project management rounds off the profile, as this makes it easier to enter various professional fields. The qualification objectives are clearly formulated and presented in the context of different professional fields. They are based on the EQF guidelines and the Dublin Descriptors. The instruments used to achieve the learning outcomes are both suitable and state-of-the-art. The combination of different course and examination designs should be emphasised here as being particularly successful, as it ensures that the learning outcomes meet the stated qualification objectives.

The experts regard the different ECTS requirements at the two home institutions (90 ECTS credits in Berlin and 120 ECTS credits in Vienna), which result from the national requirements, as a challenge in terms of implementation.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

**Recommendation:** the experts recommend that the applicant institutions use monitoring instruments (grade differences, drop-out rates) to ensure that the 30 ECTS credit difference does not affect learning outcomes. The experts also recommend that all students, regardless of admission and location, have access to the teaching materials for the introductory semester.

### C. Study programme [ESG 1.2]

The study programme consists of an introductory semester (only in the case of the home institution the UAS BFI Wien GmbH), two specialisation semesters and a final semester. In the two specialisation semesters, students choose two of the four elective modules on offer. Some courses of the compulsory elective modules are offered exclusively in English, but students have the option of completing compulsory elective modules exclusively in German. Students work exclusively on their Master's theses during the final semester. The content, structure and didactic design of the curriculum and the modules it contains correspond to the professional (academic) and practical requirements. Appropriate numbers of ECTS credits are allocated to the modules. The content and learning objectives and the associated courses are presented clearly and comprehensibly. The course content appears to be well coordinated. Any further need for coordination can be managed well through close cooperation between the applicant universities of applied sciences.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

### D. Admission and recognition [ESG 1.4]

The admission criteria are aligned with the legal requirements of the respective countries of the applicant universities of applied sciences, and the application and admission procedures are carried out accordingly by the respective home institution. However, the partner institution is authorised to send observers. The admission requirements, although very different at the two locations, are clearly and comprehensibly stated. During the on-site visit, it was assured that the excess capacity integrated as an option in the contract can be absorbed by both sides. The only challenge ascertained by the experts was the lack of proof of English language skills on the part of the applicants. The experts consider that a minimum linguistic requirement of proof of B2 English language skills, in addition to the existing recommendation for C1, is advantageous in order to ensure that students can comprehend the recommended English-language literature and participate in English-language courses. The approval procedures are described transparently in the application, whereby a distinction is made between approval in terms of the admission procedure and approval in terms of the study programme. The applicant institutions recognise each other's modules and academic courses. Recognition of achievements from study mobility or from the non-university sector is possible.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

**Recommendation:** with regard to English-language skills, the experts recommend a binding requirement that exceeds the nature of a recommendation. The experts recommend including a minimum requirement for English including proof of B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

### E. Learning, teaching and assessment [ESG 1.3]

The quality of teaching and academic success are seen as a joint task for both universities of applied sciences. The complementary teaching and research profiles of the two universities of applied sciences provide a good basis for the successful implementation of the joint programme. The Master's programme is based on a combination of student-centred and self-organised learning. The combination of academic and practical professional requirements is reflected in the courses offered and the teaching and examination methods chosen. The practical professional orientation described above is to be reinforced by means of guest lectures and excursions as well as the involvement of experts in teaching. The planned Master's degree programme will chiefly be offered in an in-person format. E-learning and blended learning complement classroom teaching. This is intended to ensure independent and autonomous learning on the one hand and group cooperation on the other. Innovative didactic approaches such as simulations and business games, which are welcomed by the experts, are particularly positive.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

## **F. Student support [ESG 1.6]**

Students can address any questions regarding the organisation of the degree programme to the head of the degree programme (UAS BFI Wien GmbH) or to the Student Advisory Service (HTW Berlin). Students reported a friendly atmosphere at both universities of applied sciences. There are regular feedback sessions between students and programme directors. Psychological student counselling is available. In addition, both establishments are equipped to deal with the increased need for information and coordination that comes with the relocation of students. The International Offices of both universities of applied sciences are involved here.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

## **G. Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]**

The lecturers named in the application have the necessary qualifications, professional experience and international experience to teach the content of the Master's degree programme. The programme director (UAS BFI Wien GmbH) and the programme representative (HTW Berlin) are already employed at the respective universities of applied sciences and played a key role in the conception and planning of the programme. The concerns expressed by the experts during the on-site visit regarding the high workload of the two programme directors were defused. Both establishments have sufficient, state-of-the-art infrastructure required to ensure successful study programmes.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

## **H. Transparency and documentation [ESG 1.8]**

All necessary information is carefully documented and published transparently. The websites of both universities of applied sciences contain all the requisite documents for the new degree programme, which are easy to find.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

## **I. Quality assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]**

The degree programme is integrated within the quality management system of both universities of applied sciences and quality assurance is perceived as a joint task. Teachers, students and external stakeholders play an active role in the quality management system. The development team meets every two years to further develop the degree programme.

**In the view of the experts, this criterion is fulfilled.**

## **Experts**

The applicant institution submitted the accreditation application on 17 October 2022. By resolution of 15 February 2023, the board of AQ Austria appointed the following experts:

**Prof. (UAS) Dr Alina Schoenberg**, Head of the International Business and Economic Diplomacy programme, UAS Krems (area of expertise: academic qualification and chair)

**Junior Professor Dr Kaan Celebi**, Junior Professor of International Business with a focus on Europe, Chemnitz University of Technology (area of expertise: academic qualification)

**Tabea Mager, M.A.**, advisor for International Study Programmes, Leipzig University (area of expertise: expertise in joint programme management and quality management)

**Wolfgang Pointner, Master's degree**, advisor, Department for Economic Analyses, Austrian National Bank (area of expertise: expertise in the relevant professional field)

**Julia Trautendorfer, MSc**, PhD student/university assistant (prae doc), Johannes Kepler University of Linz (area of expertise: student experience)

A visit to the premises of the applicant institution in Vienna took place on 23rd and 24th March 2023.