

Ergebnisbericht zum Verfahren zum Antrag auf Akkreditierung des Bachelorstudiengangs "International Relations and Sustainability", durchgeführt in Wien, der Modul University Vienna GmbH

1 Antragsgegenstand

Die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (AQ Austria) führte ein Akkreditierungsverfahren zu oben genanntem Antrag gemäß § 24 Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz (HS-QSG), BGBl I Nr. 74/2011 idgF, iVm § 2 Privathochschulgesetz (PrivHG), BGBl. I Nr. 74/2011 idgF sowie § 17 Privathochschul-Akkreditierungsverordnung 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021) durch. Gemäß § 21 HS-QSG veröffentlicht die AQ Austria folgenden Ergebnisbericht:

2 Verfahrensablauf

Das Akkreditierungsverfahren umfasste folgende Verfahrensschritte:

Verfahrensschritt	Zeitpunkt
Antrag eingelangt	Version vom 11.10.2024, eingelangt am 14.10.2024
Mitteilung an Antragstellerin: Prüfung des Antrags durch die Geschäftsstelle	28.11.2024
Überarbeiteter Antrag	Version vom 11.12.2024, eingelangt am 06.12.2024

Mitteilung an Antragstellerin: Abschluss der Antragsprüfung	20.12.2024
Bestellung der Gutachter*innen und Beschluss über Vorgangsweise des Verfahrens	12.12.2024
Information an Antragstellerin über Gutachter*innen	09.01.2025
Nachreichung eingelangt am	17.03.2025
Virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter*innen	25.02.2025
Vorbereitungstreffen mit Gutachter*innen	18.03.2025
Vor-Ort-Besuch	19.03.2025
Nachreichung eingelangt am	26.03.2025
Virtuelles Nachbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter*innen	29.04.2025
Vorlage des Gutachtens	19.05.2025
Übermittlung des Gutachtens an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	22.05.2025
Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin zum Gutachten eingelangt am	05.06.2025
Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin zum Gutachten an Gutachter*innen	06.06.2025
Übermittlung der Kostenaufstellung an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	03.06.2025

3 Akkreditierungsentscheidung

Nach Durchführung des Ermittlungsverfahrens steht folgender Sachverhalt fest:

Die folgenden Kriterien wurden im Gutachten als erfüllt eingestuft:

- § 17 Abs. 2 Z 5 bis 9 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Studiengang und Studiengangsmanagement)
- § 17 Abs. 4 Z 4 bis 7 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Personal)
- § 17 Abs. 7 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Kooperationen)

Die folgenden Kriterien wurden im Gutachten als nicht erfüllt bzw. mit Einschränkung erfüllt eingestuft:

- § 17 Abs. 2 Z 1-4 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Studiengang und Studiengangsmanagement)
- § 17 Abs. 3 Z 1-2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Forschung und Entwicklung)
- § 17 Abs. 4 Z 1-2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Personal)
- § 17 Abs. 5 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Finanzierung)

In ihrer Stellungnahme vom 05.06.2025 geht die Antragstellerin besonders auf die negativ beurteilten und auf das mit Einschränkung erfüllt beurteilte Kriterium ein. Die wesentlichen inhaltlichen Informationen aus der Stellungnahme sind die Überarbeitung des Curriculums und die teils frühzeitige Bestellung von drei qualifizierten Lehr- und Forschungspersonen.

Das Board der AQ Austria behandelte am 25.06.2025 den Antrag auf Akkreditierung. Es sah trotz der wesentlichen Kritikpunkte der Gutachter*innengruppe unter Berücksichtigung der Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin wesentliche Weiterentwicklungen bezüglich der kritisch bewerteten Kriterien. Insbesondere durch die erfolgte Einstellung von drei fachlich ausgewiesenen, international erfahrenen Lehr- und Forschungspersonen und dem begonnenen Überarbeitungsprozess von Studiengangsprofil und -curriculum sah das Board der AQ Austria die Qualität als so ausreichend gesichert an, sodass eine Akkreditierung unter Auflagen möglich war. Somit wich das Board der AQ Austria von der durch die Gutachter*innengruppe formulierten abschließenden Gesamtbewertung ab und beschloss eine Akkreditierung unter vier Auflagen.

Demnach waren die folgenden Kriterien der PrivH-AkkVO 2021 als erfüllt einzustufen:

- § 17 Abs. 2 Z 2, 3 und 5 bis 9 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Studiengang und Studiengangsmanagement)
- § 17 Abs. 4 Z 1 und 4 bis 7 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Personal)
- § 17 Abs. 5 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Finanzierung)
- § 17 Abs. 7 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Kooperationen)

Darüber hinaus stufte das Board der AQ Austria die folgenden Kriterien als erfüllt ein:

- § 17 Abs. 1 Z 1 und 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Entwicklung und Qualitätssicherung des Studiengangs)
- § 17 Abs. 6 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Infrastruktur)

Die folgenden Kriterien waren nach Entscheidung des Boards der AQ Austria als eingeschränkt erfüllt einzustufen:

- § 17 Abs. 2 Z 1 und 4 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Studiengang und Studiengangsmanagement)
- § 17 Abs. 3 Z 1 und 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Forschung und Entwicklung und/oder Entwicklung und Erschließung der Künste)
- § 17 Abs. 4 Z 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Personal)

Die Programmakkreditierung erfolgt gemäß § 24 Abs. 9a HS-QSG unter folgenden Auflagen:

1. Gemäß § 17 Abs. 2 Z 1 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 12 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass der Studiengang in die strategischen Ziele der Hochschule integriert und institutionell verankert ist. Dies kann in einer fachlich einschlägigen institutionellen Einheit (School) umgesetzt werden.
2. Gemäß § 17 Abs. 2 Z 4 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 12 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids eine Studiengangskonzeption nachzuweisen, die den wissenschaftlichen und didaktischen Anforderungen der Fachgebiete (Internationale Beziehungen, Nachhaltigkeit), den zu erwerbenden Kompetenzen und der Verbindung von Forschung und Lehre auf NQR-Niveau 6 entspricht. Hierzu muss auch ein Modulhandbuch vorgelegt werden, aus dem die jeweiligen intendierten Lernergebnisse der Module und Lehrveranstaltungen sowie adäquate Prüfungsformen hervorgehen.
3. Gemäß § 17 Abs. 3 Z 1 und 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 12 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids ein Forschungskonzept mit konkreten Forschungsvorhaben für diesen Studiengang nachzuweisen. Aus diesem muss hervorgehen, welche Forschungsvorhaben bereits in Umsetzung sind, mit welchem hauptberuflichen Lehr- und Forschungspersonal und, falls vorhanden, mit welchen Förderungen oder Kooperationen.



4. Gemäß § 17 Abs. 4 Z 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 24 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass alle Kernbereiche des Studiengangs durch hauptberufliche Professor*innen im Umfang von mindestens einem Vollzeitäquivalent sowie durch weiteres wissenschaftliches Lehr- und Forschungspersonal im Umfang von mindestens einem Vollzeitäquivalent abgedeckt sind. Für dieses hauptberufliche Lehr- und Forschungspersonal sind Lebensläufe und das Beschäftigungsausmaß nachzuweisen.

Die Entscheidung wurde am 26.08.20205 von der*vom zuständigen Bundesminister*in genehmigt. Der Bescheid wurde mit Datum vom 01.09.2025 zugestellt.

4 Anlage

- Gutachten vom 19.05.2025

Expert report on the accreditation procedure for the bachelor programme "International Relations and Sustainability", conducted in Vienna by the Modul University Vienna GmbH

pursuant to § 7 of the Accreditation Decree on Private Higher Education 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021)

Vienna, 19.05.2025

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1 Overview of the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant institution	
Applicant institution	Modul University Vienna GmbH
Sites of the higher education institution	Wien, Nanjing
Legal status	GmbH
Initial institutional accreditation	2007/08
Latest extension of institutional accreditation	2020
Number of students	653 (2023/24)
Accredited study programmes	12

Information on the accreditation application	
Programme title	International Relations and Sustainability
Type of study programme	Bachelor programme
ECTS credit points	180
Standard duration of studies	6 Semester
Planned number of students per academic year	60
Academic degree	Bachelor of Arts, short form: BA
Organizational form	fulltime
Language/s	English
Sites of the study programme	Vienna
Tuition fee	8000 Euro

The applicant institution submitted the accreditation application on 14.10.2024. According to the decision of AQ Austria's board on 12.12.2024, the following experts were nominated for this procedure:

Name	Function and Institution	Area of competence
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Ratka , LL.M.	Head of Department for Law and International Relations, Donau Universität Krems (UWK)	scientific qualification in the field of Law and International Relations and chair
Prof. Dr. Sandra Destradi	Professor for Political Science with focus on International Relations; Universität Freiburg	scientific qualification in the field of Political Science with focus on International Relations
Mateo Adan Candia Ferreira	Student of Politics and Economics, Universität Münster	experience as a student in the field of Politics and Economics

On 19.03.2025 a site visit on the applicant institution's premises took place, at their Vienna location.

2 Assessment and evaluation according to assessment criteria specified in PrivH-AkkVO 2021

2.1 § 17 para. 2 subpara. 1–9: Degree programme and degree programme management

Taking into account a heterogeneous student body, the following criteria shall apply. In the case of degree programmes with special profile elements, the descriptions shall address these characteristics defining the profile. Special profile elements are, for example, access to a regulated profession, mandatory vocational practice, study formats alongside professional activity, dual degree programmes, distance-learning degree programmes, joint study programmes or jointly offered study programmes.

1. The degree programme is oriented towards the profile and the strategic objectives of the private university college.

The profile of MODUL University (MU) is reflected in its structure, its departments and schools as well as its study programmes. The institution is divided into the Department of Tourism and Service Management, the Department of Applied Data Science, and the Department of Sustainability, Governance and Methods. Furthermore, there exist five different academic schools:

1. International Management
2. International Research Centre of New Media Technology
3. Applied Data Science
4. Tourism and Service Management

5. Sustainability, Governance, and Methods

According to the university, the study programme International Relations and Sustainability should first be integrated into the School of International Management and, potentially, may later be implemented into a new school that is still to be established. As the degree programme International Relations and Sustainability is related to the fields of International Relations, Political Science, Law, Economics and Environmental Studies the experts could see no affiliation in terms of the taught content or the research areas to the School of International Management. Although the School of International Management can show expertise in Economics in an international context, there is neither expertise nor any field-relation to International Relations which forms the foundation of the degree program. The embedding of the study program should in terms of content urgently align with the teaching and research focus of the affiliated school in order to ensure both expertise and the long-term establishment of the program within the institution.

The university currently offers six different Bachelor's, four Master's, and one PhD program, which are mainly focused on Business and Hospitality Management. Furthermore, Modul University has a sustainability focus through its School of Sustainability, Governance, and Methods, established in 2008, which is also reflected in a variety of courses within the business and hospitality management degree programs. The sustainability focus is also evident in the university's research projects.

Modul University's development targets from August 2023 primarily focus on tourism, new media technology, sustainable development, and governance-related research for the study years 2020/2021–2026/2027. The university summarized the following five core research areas in its Development Plan:

1. Digitalization and business transformation
2. Big data analysis, artificial intelligence, and blockchain
3. Governance for innovation and sustainable development
4. Socioeconomic aspects of climate change
5. Travel behaviour, trend, and competition analysis

Additionally, Modul University has founded the Vienna Institute of Global Studies, which, according to its website, focuses on business digitalization and digital technologies, entrepreneurial ecosystem research in the CEE region, complexity and network studies, startup ecosystem development and network building, health and well-being, sustainable tourism and hospitality business, and international relations. During the site visit, the university could not provide detailed information on planned projects of the institute yet, as it has only recently been established.

Based on the provided information and the site visit, the experts could not be convinced of the suitability of an International Relations-focused degree program within MU's profile. Although MU has a substantial focus on sustainability, the experts could see no indication of a profile or strategic planning aimed at a stronger concentration on International Relations.

The expert panel therefore considers the criterion as **not fulfilled**.

2. The profile and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined;
- b. comprise discipline-specific-scientific and/or scientific-artistic as well as personal and social skills;
- c. comply with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities and
- d. comply with the respective qualification level of the National Qualifications Framework.

In the application for accreditation, this is how the BA Programme in “International Relations and Sustainability” is described: “Students in this program gain a comprehensive understanding of economic development and International Relations through courses in macroeconomics, microeconomics, and international economics. They explore environmental security, societal transitions, climate policy, and governance for sustainability. The curriculum emphasizes critical thinking and ethical decision-making through courses in international management, governance, and the philosophy of science. Students *also* [emphasis added] study International Relations, global governance, human rights, and international law, providing a well-rounded perspective on global issues”. Based on this description of the programme, the experts gained the impression that the profile of the programme has not been defined clearly. There seems to be an overwhelming emphasis on various subfields of economics, as well as on international management – that is, on fields that are entirely distinct from International Relations as a discipline in the Social Sciences (as it is understood in the Anglo-Saxon tradition) or as a sub-discipline of Political Science (as it is understood in the German tradition).

During the on-site visit, university representatives were not able to convincingly correct the impression conveyed by this written description of the profile of the study programme. They did not convey the impression that the profile of the degree programme was defined clearly and in a consistent manner. In fact, different members of the university defined the programme in entirely different ways, or even refrained from providing a clear definition by arguing that this task should be left to the soon-to-be appointed professor of International Relations. While a refinement of the profile of a study programme is certainly something that can be done once the permanent personnel is hired, a clear definition of the outline of the programme in line with disciplinary standards is a fundamental requirement in order to transparently convey what the programme is about. Thus, the experts come to the conclusion that the profile of the degree programme has not been defined sufficiently clearly.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are clearly defined, but their definition is not in line with discipline-specific skills. In the application, the institution differentiates between learning outcomes in Knowledge, Skills and Competences. In the application, the first learning outcome mentioned is the following: “Students in the Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Sustainability have acquired foundational knowledge and practical skills across key areas such as economics, global governance, and environmental policy”. Again, the discipline of International Relations (IR) is missing from this first key learning objective, since global governance is just one among many topics that the discipline of IR addresses. The primary emphasis placed on economics is not in line with discipline-specific knowledge. Further in the application, the fourth element of knowledge expected from graduates of the programme is: “Be able to apply a range of management concepts from environmental security, international economics, and sustainable governance [...]”. This goal is also entirely unrelated to the discipline

of International Relations, which does not work with "management concepts", but with a range of concepts and theories that are specific to this discipline. The language used in defining the learning outcomes comes from management studies and is not related to International Relations.

The learning outcomes in terms of competences are expressed in a suitable manner. In terms of skills, they are expressed in rather general terms and in a language that is incongruous with the field of International Relations. For example, the application mentions that students should "[d]evelop an understanding of key concepts and technical approaches in International Relations and Sustainability". The expression "technical approaches" is not used in the social sciences, and it is not further defined in the application. Also the goal "Competence in applying governance, diplomacy, economic analysis, and sustainability practices" is not defined, as it is unclear what "applying practices" means.

The aspired professional fields of activities are defined as such: "impactful roles in a variety of settings, including international organizations, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks, and the corporate sector". Graduates are expected to work as "Foreign Policy Advisors, Democracy Program Coordinators, or Political Affairs Consultants, (...) Human Rights Advocates, Conflict Resolution Specialists, (...) Global Communications Managers, International Policy Researchers or Democracy and Governance Research Analysts". Further, a number of potential employers are mentioned, including the United Nations, the World Bank, or the European Union, and NGOs such as Amnesty International and others. The learning outcomes only partially comply with the requirements of these aspired professional fields of activities, as they are not explicitly framed in terms of outcomes in the specific field of International Relations and sustainability.

Finally, the profile and learning outcomes do not comply with the National Qualifications Framework-level 6. This non-compliance is twofold. On the one hand, the programme does not provide an in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of International Relations and Sustainability as it is impossible to provide students with an in-depth foundational training in both IR and sustainability studies at the BA level while still providing a number of general courses that lay important foundations such as International Law or Macroeconomics, etc. The amount of ECTS credit points in a BA is simply not sufficient to provide enough space to teach broad foundational courses in the social sciences as well as courses that convey and in-depth theoretical knowledge of both International Relations and sustainability. This is reflected in the fact that the area of sustainability plays only a subordinate role in the curriculum, which entails a module called "Environmental Studies" that provides for 14 ECTS credit points, and beyond that, one course called "Governance for Sustainability Transitions" with 6 ECTS credit points. Further, one specialization course called "Critical Reflection on Technological Innovation for Sustainability" (4 ECTS credit points) is mentioned. During the on-site visit, members of the university told the experts that the issue of sustainability will be touched upon in several other courses, but it is difficult to see a systematic development of in-depth theoretical knowledge of sustainability, which would be required to comply with NQF-level 6 standards if this is a key component of the curriculum. Ultimately, adding further courses on sustainability would force the programme to renounce key introductory courses that cannot be removed. At the same time, the programme lacks a suitable basic introduction into the social sciences, as for example the course "Philosophy of Science" is not targeted specifically at the BA students, but at Bachelor of Science students from the BSc in International Management.

On the other hand, the programme is too specialized and in parts rather resembles an MA programme, which would involve NQF-level 7 standards. For example, the students are

confronted with a highly specialized course titled "Human Rights and Economic Development" as early as in the second semester, or with another highly specialized course titled "Environmental Security and Conflict Resolution" in the third semester (for more details on these courses, see below). This again runs against the qualification level that is required at the Bachelor/NQF6 level. During the on-site visit, members of the university also agreed with the reviewers' remarks concerning the high degree of specialization of the programme, which makes it resemble an MA programme.

Against the backdrop of these multiple flaws in the profile and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme, the experts consider this criterion to be **not fulfilled**.

3. The name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile and intended learning outcomes.

The name of the degree programme is "International Relations and Sustainability". This suggests that both subject areas, International Relations and sustainability, play a key role in the programme, and that students also learn about how they are connected. However, the programme assigns very unequal weight to these components. The module on International Relations has as many as 64 ECTS credit points if students pursue the internship option or 34 ECTS credit points if they choose the thesis option. By contrast, sustainability is not even a module as such. Instead, there is a module called "Environmental Studies", which amounts to 14 ECTS credit points, plus a course called "Critical Reflection on Technological Innovation for Sustainability". When asked about the prioritization of the areas and their understanding of the nature of the programme, members of the university conveyed that this would be a social sciences programme with a focus on sustainability. They argued that sustainability issues would be addressed across courses in the project because climate change and related issues are so important and pervasive that they relate to virtually everything. However, this is not reflected in the planned curriculum, and it does not do justice to more specific approaches to the academic study of sustainability. While the name of the degree programme thus conveys the impression that this is a programme that gives equal weight to International Relations and to sustainability issues, the actual profile and structure of the courses do not reflect this clearly. Students who are interested in sustainability issues might be disappointed that sustainability only amounts to a very limited part of the overall curriculum.

At the same time, as was mentioned above, the programme presented in the application for accreditation does not convincingly reveal an understanding of the discipline of International Relations as an independent social science discipline or as a sub-field of Political Science. Excessive emphasis is placed on adjacent disciplines such as economics, while the foundations of social science are not convincingly included in the curriculum.

Ultimately, the programme aims for too much, by bringing together two complex and specialized fields, IR and sustainability studies, in a BA programme that also has to provide students with all sorts of foundations, from statistics to macroeconomics, international law, political theory, etc., with an overall limited number of ECTS credit points available.

Since the name of the programme does not accurately reflect the degree programme's profile and learning outcomes, this criterion is **not fulfilled** in sight of the experts.

4. The degree programme

- a. complies with the scientific and/or scientific-artistic and didactic requirements of the respective subject or subjects;
- b. comprises defined core subject areas which represent the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competences to be acquired;
- c. ensures by its content and structure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- d. comprises modules and/or courses with learning and teaching as well as examination methods suitable for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and build on the overall concept of the degree programme;
- e. takes into account the connection of research and teaching and/or research and the appreciation of the arts and
- f. encourages the active involvement of students in the learning process.

Based on the application for accreditation and on the conversations held during the on-site visit with members of the university, the assessment is reached that, overall, the programme only partially complies with the scientific requirements of the respective subjects. This is primarily due to the unclear understanding of what constitutes International Relations as a discipline. In the application for accreditation, the discipline is mostly described as entailing issues related to economics and economic development, or primacy is given to economic factors. For example, in the application it is stated that the programme will train "experts who can navigate the complexities of global challenges with a comprehensive understanding of economic, environmental, and political factors" – with economics being given the primacy over other issues. Further, this becomes even more evident, as it is stated: "The program provides a holistic approach to understanding and addressing global challenges by integrating economic theories with environmental and sustainability issues". The point is that International Relations as a social science discipline or as a sub-field of Political Science works with its own distinctive set of theoretical and conceptual approaches, and not with "economic theories". In other words, the programme fails to adequately emphasize the specific scientific profile of International Relations as a discipline. The lack of understanding of what is peculiar of the field of International Relations was confirmed during the discussions with university members during the on-site visit, as they gave a range of contrasting answers about their understanding of what constitutes the discipline of International Relations. Also, there is no basis to expect the new professor, whom the university expects to hire before the start of the programme, to be able to clarify these points. In fact, the university leadership explained that the job was advertised very broadly and that candidates with a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds have been shortlisted and invited to interviews. These included candidates "from academia and also people with a lot of consulting and industry background. [...] Some have a legal background". When asked again if the new professor of International Relations might be someone from the field of International Law, the university leadership confirmed this. If a professor of International Law

is ultimately hired for a position in International Relations (and if this professor will even have a large say in the recruitment of the following positions, as was told by the university leadership), a more explicit compliance of the profile with the basic scientific requirements of the discipline is not to be expected within the next two years. More generally, the selection committee for the professorship does not seem to have members who are experts of International Relations and would thus be able to assess the standing of a candidate in the discipline. During the on-site visit, the information was given that there will be three external reviewers who will assess shortlisted applications, but it could be confirmed that only one external reviewer is already determined and is a political scientist. It is thus impossible to be certain that the programme will be revised by experts of International Relations who could make it comply with the scientific requirements of the discipline.

Concerning the didactic requirements, these are overall met, as the teaching formats do not significantly diverge from the standard formats that one would expect from a BA in these fields.

The degree programme has a number of weaknesses and lacunae when it comes to the most important subjects of the degree programme and, relatedly, to the main competences to be acquired by students. The core subject areas are defined as follows: Economic Development; Environmental Studies; International Relations; Law and Governance; Political Science; Research and Methods. This understanding of the core subject areas for a BA programme in International Relations and Sustainability is very broad. Research and methods are usually key accompanying elements of any university degree programme, and it is thus unclear why they need to be particularly emphasized by becoming a core subject area. Further, the inclusion of an adjacent discipline such as economics at the level of core subject area is not sufficiently justified and reflects the confusion about the understanding of International Relations and Sustainability in this programme. At the same time, Sustainability is not classified as a core subject area, and it is not clear how this relates to Environmental Studies. More specifically, the field of Sustainability is not addressed in sufficient detail. Only two courses are specific to sustainability issues, that is, the course on "Climate and Energy Policy" and the course on "Societal and Environmental Transitions". The course titled "Environmental Security and Conflict Resolution" is a highly specialized course in a specific sub-field in peace and conflict studies (which itself is a subfield of IR) that addresses issues like resource wars or environmental peacebuilding. Topics like introductions to sustainability, to earth systems science, to ecology, to water resources, etc. are entirely missing. During the on-site visit this was confirmed by members of the staff who stated that in the programme, "we don't have any basic courses about Sustainability". When it comes to the subject of International Relations, the curriculum broadly corresponds to the scientific requirements of the discipline, but with an important lacuna. What is entirely missing is an introduction into the European Union. This kind of course is a core component of most BA programmes in Political Science, and even more so in International Relations, at European universities, also at those with a global view. During the on-site visit, university members motivated this choice with the fact that, given MU's very international student body, the students' interest in the EU and in European matters might be limited. While tailoring a course primarily to the students' preferences instead of following the prevailing canon looks questionable, an alternative could still have been a course on Comparative Regionalism, a subfield of International Relations that looks at regionalism from a cross-regional comparative perspective, thus studying Europe as one region among others and also delving into the features of regionalism in other parts of the world. However, this is not included in the curriculum. Only one session in the course titled "International Organizations" will be devoted to regional organizations. There is a course titled "European Integration in a Globalized World", but it comes very late, as a specialization course in the 5th semester. Also

matters of EU law, which are highly relevant to sustainability issues in Europe, are not addressed in the curriculum.

The structure and contents do not allow for the achievement of the learning outcomes of a programme on International Relations and Sustainability. In terms of contents, a solid foundation on matters of sustainability cannot be expected to be conveyed via only two courses that introduce into environmental issues ("Societal and Environmental Transitions" and "Climate and Energy Policy"; the courses "Environmental Security and Conflict Resolution" and "Critical Reflection on Technological Innovation for Sustainability" are highly specialized).

In terms of structure, the setup of the curriculum does not enable students to gradually acquire the knowledge and skills that are needed to achieve the learning outcomes. In fact, the sequence of the courses is problematic in several instances. Students have a course on "Human Rights and Economic Development" in the 2nd semester, but the course "International Law", which would be needed to lay a foundation for the understanding of human rights is taught only later, in the 4th semester. In the 3rd semester, the students have a course titled "Environmental Security and Conflict Resolution", which is a highly specialized course that would need to build upon an introductory course on peace and conflict studies since it entails very specific topics such as resource wars and environmental peacebuilding. However, there is no introduction into peace and conflict studies, and the course on International Security that is taught in the 2nd semester only entails one unit titled "Peace studies & Postcolonialism" and one titled "Environmental and Economic Security", which can hardly provide a sufficient foundation for the very specialized course on "Environmental Security and Conflict Resolution". The study programme thus entails courses that fail to adequately build upon each other, making it impossible for students to gradually develop their knowledge and skills.

Finally, the Capstone Project, which is a potentially very interesting format, will require a close supervision by the international institution hosting the students, who are expected to work on a "project" with their host institution. During the site visit, the reviewers were informed that the university has not set up any MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with potential host institutions yet, arguing that it would be too early to do so now as the students would perform the project only in a few years. Nevertheless, since the Capstone Project is a key component of the curriculum that cannot be replaced by some other course, it seems important to have a guarantee that students will find a host institution allowing them to gain those required ECTS credit points.

The learning and teaching as well as examination methods described in the application for accreditation are overall suitable for the achievement of learning outcomes. They entail a combination of different teaching formats, and the examination formats display a remarkable variety as well, thus assessing the training of different skill sets on the part of the students. At the same time, as was detailed above, the programme lacks a convincing overall concept. The limited number of long written papers to be submitted by the students constitutes one weakness. In particular, students who choose to write a BA thesis would need to get used to write relatively long term papers in the years preceding the thesis. BA students generally consider the production of a BA thesis of around 40 pages quite challenging, and asking them to write research papers of around at least half of that length at least once or ideally twice in the preceding semesters proves helpful in preparing them. By contrast, in the proposed curriculum, most written assignments are shorter. The Bachelor Thesis Tutorial is a useful tool to help students, but it comes very late, as writing is a practice that needs to be built over a longer time period.

The programme fails to take into account the connection of research and teaching in the main field of International Relations. This is obviously due to the fact that, so far, the subject of International Relations was not part of the thematic foci at MU, whereas some research has been done on sustainability. At the same time, the close connection between research and teaching is a key component of what characterizes university-level education. In the application for accreditation, in the documents that were submitted at a later stage at the reviewers' request, and as a result of the conversations during the on-site visit, the impression was confirmed that the students within at least the first few years cannot expect to learn in an environment in which research in IR is done (see details below). The recruitment of new professors will at some point compensate for this lacuna. However, it was impossible to gain a credible impression that this could happen within the next two years, as the shortlisted candidates for the professorship for International Relations come from a number of fields and it could happen that a candidate who works on International Law – an entirely different discipline, distinct from IR – will be hired for this position, as the university leadership explained. Also, the university leadership did not make a clear statement on hiring a person with a clear disciplinary profile in IR in the successive round of hiring after a year. As only one external reviewer of the applications for the professorship has already been named and is a political scientist (possibly not from IR, this information was not given), the selection committee seems to lack the expertise to hire a person with a clear profile in IR who would then contribute to the connection of research and teaching in the key field of IR in the proposed programme. It also cannot be expected that external lecturers with an expertise in IR will be recruited from the network of the newly established Vienna Institute of Global Studies (VIGS), which only mentions IR at the end of a list of subjects and has not built a network on IR but rather on other subjects (see more details below). Finally, among the few teaching staff members who are supposed to teach IR-related courses as per the Application for Accreditation, the connection between research and teaching is not always visible. According to the application, the course on International Security is planned to be assigned to an expert on start-ups. During the on-site visit, university members could not clearly convey how it would be assured that only experts teach specific courses, as "it's the responsibility of the personnel to tell us what they are able to teach".

The programme overall encourages the active involvement of students in the learning process, especially given the rich variety of examination formats and continuous grading as well as the Capstone Project.

Given the very substantial weaknesses in several of these areas and the impossibility of addressing all of them in a short period of time, this criterion is considered by the experts as **not fulfilled**.

5. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is applied correctly to the degree programme. The workload related to the individual modules and/or courses, expressed in ECTS credits, makes it possible that the intended learning outcomes are achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. In the case of degree programmes for working professionals, the professional activity is taken into account.

For this BA Programme MU calculated a total of 180 ECTS credit points, which equals around 30 ECTS credit points per semester.

The University calculates 25 hours of workload per ECTS credit point, which is in line with the European standard. The workload encompasses all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, homework, readings, projects, practical work, and individual study time.

The degree programme contains six modules, with credit points ranging from 8 to 64 due to differing requirements and content. The large difference can also be explained through the division of the curriculum into an internship option on one hand and a thesis option on the other. The courses themselves are assigned between 1 and 29 credit points, while most of the courses have between 4 and 12 credit points. The allocation of credits for the exceptional courses, such as the Internship Preparatory Course (1 ECTS credit point) and the Internship Course (29 ECTS credit points), could be well justified within the overall curriculum and course structure. The bachelor thesis is calculated with 12 ECTS credit points. Furthermore, the University was able to convince the expert panel during the site visit of its accurate calculation and regular evaluation of the workload. At the same time, the ECTS credits are evenly distributed across semesters, ranging from 28 to a maximum of 32 ECTS. In conclusion, the experts consider the degree programme to be well manageable with the given workload.

Thus, the expert panel considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

6. The Diploma Supplement is specific to the respective degree programme and suitable to support international mobility of students as well as graduates and facilitates academic and professional recognition of the acquired qualifications.

The MU presented an anonymized Diploma Supplement, which corresponds to the requirements of the Austrian law and to the Model of the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPE. It is provided to graduates in English.

The diploma supplement contains all the necessary information about the graduate, the named degree programme and further on the contents and results gained. Furthermore, a Transcript of Records is attached to the Diploma Supplement. Thus, the experts consider the Diploma Supplement suitable for the recognition of acquired qualifications as well as to support international mobility of students.

The expert panel considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

7. The requirements for admission to the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined and
- b. contribute to the achievement of the qualification objectives.

According to the application, the admission requirements for the degree programme in International Relations and Sustainability include proof of a secondary school leaving certificate equivalent to a general university entrance qualification, as well as an English proficiency level

of B2, which must be proven by an international language certificate or alternatively by attending an English-speaking high school. Furthermore, applicants must submit a motivation letter in English and a letter of recommendation to the Admissions Committee. This ensures the successful completion of the English-speaking Bachelor degree.

Thus, the admission requirements are clearly defined in the application, and the proof of an English proficiency level, along with the English-written motivational letter, contribute to the qualification goals of the degree programme while complying with national standards.

The expert panel considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

8. The admission procedure to the degree programme

- a. has been clearly defined;
- b. is transparent for all involved and
- c. ensures a fair selection of the applicants.

The admission procedure to the degree programme is defined in the University Constitution. The University Board appoints an Admissions Committee for each individual degree programme, which consists of the dean of the respective degree programme, a representative of the administrative staff, and a student representative.

According to the University Constitution, the Admissions Committee creates a ranking and waiting list based on previous academic achievements, the letter of motivation, English proficiency level, and overall performance if the number of accepted students at a given time indicates that the final number of accepted students may be exceeded. However, during the site visit, MU declared that this has not yet been necessary, as there has never been a situation where the number of study places exceeded the number of applications. Additionally, there is no predefined ranking of the criteria for the creation of the ranking and waiting list. While the admissions procedure is sufficient to ensure a fair selection of study places under normal circumstances, a predefined ranking of the criteria should be established to ensure clarity and fairness in the admission process when applications exceed available places. The procedure is transparent for the applicants as the University Constitution is published publicly on the web page of the MU.

The expert panel considers the criterion **fulfilled**.

Recommendation:

In order to further ensure a transparent and fair selection process for all applicants, the expert panel recommends defining the criteria for the ranking and waiting list.

9. The procedures for the recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences in terms of crediting towards examinations or parts of the degree programme

a. have been clearly defined

b. and are transparent for all involved

The Modul University has a clearly defined procedure for the recognition of formally, non-formally, and informally acquired competences. It begins with a formal check of the completeness of the documents submitted with the application for recognition by the Academic Office. For the recognition procedure of formally acquired skills, the dean then reviews transcripts and course syllabi to ensure alignment with institutional requirements, consulting faculty experts if needed. Based on the evaluation, the dean approves or rejects the request. For the recognition of non-formally or informally acquired skills, the dean and a field-specialized faculty member arrange a meeting with the candidate to discuss whether the learning outcomes outlined in the course syllabi have been met through the candidate's professional experience. This is done through an open discussion where the candidate explains how their experience aligns with each learning outcome. Following the meeting, they assess whether the candidate's professional experience satisfies the learning outcomes of the course, considering both the evidence provided and the candidate's explanation. Students have the option to request an explanation in case of a refusal and may submit new evidence for re-evaluation. Furthermore, the student representatives confirmed a detailed explanation of rejecting or accepting recognition decisions during the site visit.

The procedure is transparently written down in the Examination Regulations and follows national and international standards.

The expert panel considers the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

2.2 § 17 para. 3 subpara. 1-2: Research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts

1. Subject-specific research or development activities, respectively, in compliance with the scientific standards of the respective subject or the respective subjects have been planned for the degree programme.

At MU, research on sustainability is being done. However, no research is being performed in the field of International Relations. Prior to the site visit, the university provided a document with details on a number of research areas, claiming that "Already prior to establishing a working group for developing this study degree programme, Modul University Vienna has actively engaged in research at the intersection of international relations and sustainability". However, by looking into detail at the research fields described and at the list of publications mentioned, this statement cannot find a confirmation. Topics like "The Implications of Blockchain/Distributed Ledger Technology", "The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Economic Development", or "The Measurement of Living Conditions and Quality of Life" are simply not related to the discipline of International Relations. Also a topic like "Sustainable Tourism and Regional Development Policy" is unrelated to International Relations since "regions" like Southwest Ireland, i.e. sub-state units, would not correspond to the understanding of "regions" in IR, which are understood as larger entities composed of several

states. This research might thus speak to the field of studies on multilevel governance in political science, but not to IR. Further, a number of publications are listed that refer to Latin America, but a focus on cases from extra-European world regions, or a focus on the Global South, does not make research on other topics automatically become research on International Relations – in other words, not everything that is “international” in the broadest possible terms is also “International Relations”. Also the “New Research Fields” mentioned at the end of the document, which are again defined as being “at the crossroads of International Relations and Sustainability”, are de facto only very vaguely related to International Relations.

Another weakness in terms of the connection of research and teaching with the proposed programme is the fact that the newly founded Vienna Institute of Global Studies (VIGS) also only mentions International Relations as the last point in a list of topics, without any concrete reference to IR projects in its brochure or on its website. While a number of scholars from a range of fields who are associated with VIGS or part of its emerging network were included in the brochure, these scholars come from mostly rather distant fields in which MU has its strengths, such as management and economics, but not from IR. If the establishment of a research environment on IR topics had been a core objective aimed at providing prospective students with a conducive environment in the connection between research and teaching, possibly also for the recruitment of external lecturers, then one would have expected IR to be prioritized in the establishment of a network of scholars in VIGS

In sight of the above mentioned shortcomings, the experts consider this criterion to be **not fulfilled**.

2. The permanent research and teaching staff assigned to the degree programme is involved in these research and development activities.

At the moment, MU's existing permanent research and teaching staff is not involved in research and development activities in the field of International Relations. This is due to the fact that there are still important vacancies especially in the core area of "International Relations" and "Law and Governance". In principle, enough personnel is being planned for teaching in the BA programme on International Relations and Sustainability in the long term. However, based on the application for accreditation and the conversations during the on-site visit, it was not convincingly conveyed that the university will be able to hire permanent research and teaching staff who will possess the necessary qualifications to research and teach in the field of International Relations. According to the university leadership and the head of the selection committee, a total of 83 applications were received for a position advertised extremely broadly, from the full professor to the lecturer level and not only for scholars of International Relations or Political Science, but also International Law and other fields. The university leadership declared that it could happen that the position will be filled by a scholar of International Law – that is, by someone who does not do research in the field of International Relations. Of the three planned external reviewers in the selection committee, only one has been selected so far (a political scientist, but it is not clear if an expert in IR) and it is not clear where the expertise in IR in the selection committee will come from. In other words, there is no credible commitment by the university to hire a scholar from the discipline of International Relations and there are no credible indications that an excellent scholar can be hired who might be able to perform research on IR at a suitable level. In fact, the number of applications is relatively limited for a call formulated in such broad terms. This does not give clear hope that the permanent teaching

staff will be involved in cutting-edge research in International Relations. Further, as was mentioned, there are plans to let personnel who does research in an entirely different discipline teach courses in IR.

Against this backdrop, the criterion is **not fulfilled** in the view of the experts.

2.3 § 17 para. 4 subpara. 1-2, 4-7: Staff

1. At all sites at which studies are offered in accordance with the development plan
 - a. sufficient scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively, has been planned for the degree programme,
 - b. the staff members are subject-specifically as well as didactically qualified according to the requirements of the respective post.

The private university college makes sure that at least 50 per cent of the volume of teaching is covered by permanent scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively. Permanent teaching and research staff means employees working at least 50 per cent of their working hours (usually at least 20 hours per week) in permanent employment at the private university college.

According to the application documents and the on-site visit at MU, the current development plan of MU "for the study years 2020/21-2026/2027", which was last adopted in August 2023, had not yet planned for the creation of a separate Bachelor of Arts degree programme in "International Relations and Sustainability". Accordingly, the current development plan does not yet provide for the positions required for the submitted degree programme.

The application documents show that there are core areas of the study programme that can fully or predominantly be covered by existing permanent scientific staff as well as external lecturers. This concerns the areas of Economic Development, Environmental Studies and Research and Methods. The following areas are only partially covered or not yet covered at all by permanent academic staff: Law and Governance, Political Science and the area of International Relations (See § 17 para. 4 subpara. 2); the last two core areas are essential for the degree programme applied for.

Overall, for the areas Law and Governance, Political Science and International Relations there is currently no sufficient subject-specifically qualified in-house staff, nor is this envisaged in the current development plan.

However, the accreditation application shows planned appointments for the following positions that are or will be advertised at the university:

"Assoc./Full Professorships" for

- International Relations (this professorship is currently being advertised, appointment Sept. 2025)

- Law and Governance (app. Sept. 2026)
- Political Science (app. Sept. 2026)

and "**Assistant Professorships**" for

- Environmental Studies (this professorship is currently being advertised, app. Sept. 2025)
- Law and Governance (app. Sept. 2027)

as well as a new researcher/lecturer position with a focus on Political Science (app. Sept. 2027).

During the on-site visit, MU stated that the advertising process for the positions that should be filled after September 2025 should begin in autumn 2025. It is not clear why these potentially important positions, which could also secure internal teaching, are being advertised so late.

With regard to the currently advertised positions, the university leadership assured during the on-site visit that there are many qualified applicants for the professorship "International Relations" (a filling of the positions is to be made this summer/autumn). The hearings had already taken place and were, according to the university leadership, very promising. On the other hand, however, it must be said that the position was advertised too broadly, content wise as well as in terms of rank, so that it is not entirely certain that it will really be filled on a subject-specific basis. According to the published advertisement and the interviews during the on-site visit, there is a possibility that the professorship of "International Relations" might be appointed to someone with a different academic background (e.g. International Law); as stated above, 'International Relations' is an independent academic subject, and International Law is only a sub-segment of it. Further, the experts doubt the necessary expertise of the selection committee for the respective post to find a subject-specifically and academically qualified person. The assistant professorship for "Environmental Studies" is also currently being advertised. However, since there is already permanent academic staff available for this area, the necessity for a soon appointment is not as urgent as for International Relations.

Concerning the qualifications of the existing in-house scientific staff for this programme, it can be attested that they are able to cover the research and teaching areas of MU' existing studies offered at present (especially subjects such as business administration, economics and tourism). However, this does not apply to the core subjects of the programme to be created in "International Relations and Sustainability". Especially in the specifically relevant subject areas "International Relations", Law and Governance and Political Science, the in-house permanent lecturers already employed at the university listed in the application are overall not sufficiently qualified. For example, one of the lecturers responsible for some courses in the core area "International Relations" focuses on "start-up companies" and their "success factors mainly in the Hungarian ecosystem", according to their previous research. Furthermore, there are many vacancies, very broadly advertised, for which the qualifications cannot be evaluated yet.

This finding is further confirmed when looking at the following courses that are currently without lecturers (neither in-house nor external), despite their importance for the core curriculum in connection with "International Relations and Sustainability":

- Environmental Security and Conflict Resolution
- Societal and Environmental Transitions
- Climate and Energy Policy

- International Relations
- International Organisations
- Human Rights and Economic Development
- Global Governance
- Governance for Sustainability Transitions
- International Law
- International Politics of Development
- The "Capstone Project in International Relations and Sustainable Transitions"

One in-house lecturer is named for the course "International Security"; however, the necessary expertise is not reflected in their research specialisations and publications.

The important (but underrepresented) subject of "European Integration in a globalised world" is also currently not covered.

The lack of named lecturers is particularly evident in the semester overview (Martrix) of the application:

- In semester 1, the lecturers for "International Relations" and "Fundamentals of Political Theory" are missing,
- in semester 2 for "Human Rights and Economic Development"
- in semester 3 for "Global Governance", "Societal and Environmental Transitions", "Political Economy" and "Comparative Politics".

Only for subjects such as Micro- and Macroeconomics, Statistics, Scientific Writing, Technological Innovation for Sustainability, etc. there is already existing coverage by qualified in-house (or external/adjunct) lecturers and the courses are covered accordingly. However, this does not in itself constitute sufficiently qualified in-house staff for the central topics of the submitted study programme in the sense of the legal criterion.

When asked about these obvious gaps in existing in-house staff, both the Rector and the other members of the university management stated that, as a "Plan B", the still unoccupied subjects could be filled with appropriately qualified external lecturers. From the experts' point of view, this would be - in principle - temporarily possible: In fact, there are lecturers in almost all subjects at other universities and universities of applied sciences – also in Vienna – who could potentially cover the currently vacant subjects mentioned. However, it is not certain whether these external lecturers would actually be available, recruitable and "instructable" in such a short time. The question must also be asked as to why no thought was given to this in the submission documents; such a 'Plan B' seems too optimistic or too vague at this advanced stage, when the start of the study is already planned for autumn 2025. Furthermore, this can only be a temporary solution and only for a limited number of vacant posts.

To sum up:

- The necessary sufficiently qualified academic teaching and research staff is currently not provided for in the development plan.
- In quantitative measures, there is sufficient scientific staff planned for the respective programme.

- However, the existing permanent academic staff misses crucial subject-specific qualifications in the core areas of the study programme.
- There are many vacancies which are too broadly advertised to ensure subject-specific coverage.
- Further, the experts deem the timing for some of the planned appointments too late.

Even though the current development plan does not include this BA programme, during the on-site visit, the Rector and several university representatives gave credible assurances that the next development plan will provide for the anchoring of both the "International Relations and Sustainability" Bachelor programme itself (with a corresponding modification of the research focus) and the correspondingly qualified academic teaching staff. However, it was not promised that the development plan would be adjusted in good time before the start of the programme. Although - with regard to the wording of this criterion - it is not absolutely necessary for the teaching staff to already be employed by the university at the time of the application or during the ongoing accreditation procedure, the appropriately qualified teaching staff for the core areas should at least be available when the degree programme begins or take place. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case.

Apart from this, however, it can be attested that it seems to be a goal of MU (if not from the development plan) that the University intends to ensure that at least 50 per cent of the teaching volume is covered by full-time teaching and research staff in accordance with the criterion in the future, although this comes too late for a proper start in autumn 2025. It should be mentioned at this point, however, that the necessary in-house staff for Economic Development, Environmental Studies and Research Methods are already planned and available; it is just that these areas are not central to the submitted study programme.

However, in terms of academic qualification, the experts strongly emphasize the necessity to fill the advertised and planned vacancies with subject-specific and scientifically qualified personnel as soon as possible.

The criterion is therefore not yet met at this point in time, and the measures initiated or planned by the university are too late to ensure the proper implementation of the degree programme from autumn 2025.

Therefore, the experts consider this criterion as **not fulfilled**.

Recommendations:

The MU should accelerate the recruitment plan for all planned academic vacancies as well as adapt the advertisements that indicate a refinement of the respective scientific and subject-specific qualifications expected in candidates, in order to ensure an adequate appointment.

The experts strongly recommend MU to adapt its development plan as soon as possible, so that the fields of International Relations, Political Science (as well as subjects on Sustainability in sense of the new Study programme), including the according teaching and research staff are anchored in MU's strategic planning.

2. The subject-specific core competences representing the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competences to be acquired are covered by

a. permanent professors corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent as well as

b. other permanent scientific and/or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent.

With regard to the contents of the study programme, MU describes the following areas as "core areas" (in the sense of "main competences") in its application documents and in how far they are covered by permanent academic staff:

- **Economic Development:** here the subjects are entirely covered by in-house professors and further academic staff.
- **Environmental Studies:** this core area is covered by two existing in-house professors; an assistant professor is yet to be appointed.
- **International Relations:** for this area, a new full or associate Professor was advertised but not yet appointed. Further permanent and external academic staff is supposed to cover this core area, however the experts consider their expertise not adequate.
- **Law and Governance:** this area is also not fully covered by academic in-house staff. One professor (50%) in the field of Governance is named in the application. Another new full or associate professor as well as one new assistant professor are to be appointed.
- **Political Science:** this core area is currently not covered by in-house academic staff. A lawyer is stated as an external lecturer, a new full or associate professor as well as a new researcher/lecturer are yet to be appointed.
- **Research and Methods:** this core area can be fully covered by in-house academic staff. However it is doubtful whether this can really be considered as "core area", in the sense of subject-specific content (see § 17 para. 2 subpara. 4).

As mentioned above, it is unclear to the experts why "Sustainability" (in its connection to "International Relations") as a scientific subject is not listed as a "core area".

Although two in-house staff members are assigned to the two core areas "International Relations" and "Law and Governance" in the application, they are not full professors and their previous teaching and research activities are not in line with the subject specific requirements.

Thus, the core areas of "International Relations", "Political Science" and "Law and Governance", and in the opinion of the experts also "Sustainability"-issues, are currently essentially without sufficient in-house lecturers and professors.

The accreditation application shows that many core subjects are to be covered by lecturers and professors who will still have to be appointed in the future. This applies in particular to the (especially prioritised) subject area of "International Relations". In the application, MU provides information on further planned academic staff. Full or associate professorships are to be appointed for International Relations, Law and Governance and Political Science. Further assistant professorships or lecturer positions are to be filled for Law and Governance, Environmental Studies and Political Science. As has already been stated above, the professorship for International Relations as well as the assistant professorship for

Environmental Studies are currently advertised and job interviews with respective candidates had already taken place.

However, as has also been stated above, the experts have serious doubts about the subject-related academic and scientific qualification of the newly appointed professors in IR due to the broad advertisement of the post. Furthermore, even if the (assistant) professorships for "International Relations" and "Environmental Studies" are appointed by the start of the degree programme in autumn 2025 with adequate candidates, there is still a very large number of core subjects and areas that are not covered soon enough (e.g. in Law and Governance). The other required professorships are not to be fully appointed until autumn 2027, at a time when the students of the first year (= the first cohort) would already be in their 5th semester and a large proportion of the courses would have already taken place.

If the required full professors and assistant/associate professors are only gradually appointed by autumn 2027, it is currently not possible to guarantee the start of a degree programme that would take place in autumn 2025, as described above.

During the on-site visit, MU also referred to the research staff of the Vienna Institute for Global Studies (VIGS), which is affiliated with MU, and to the fact that their expertise could benefit the "International Relations and Sustainability" degree programme not only in research but also in teaching. According to the MU's representatives, persons who would be assigned to the VIGS could also serve as lecturers for the programme. It is not clear to the experts why this was not further pursued in order to ensure an adequate coverage for the courses.

In this context, it should be borne in mind that, as shown above, there are already considerable subject-related gaps in the first three semesters. Almost all courses of the "core area" International Relations (and to a certain extent also Sustainability) are currently completely vacant in terms of professorial coverage. Nevertheless, MU would like to start the programme as early as autumn 2025.

Further, the recruitment plan for the required positions by autumn 2027 disclosed in the application documents is, as shown above, not fast enough to enable the "core areas" to be adequately covered.

To sum up, a significant number of subject-specific core areas are currently not adequately covered by qualified existing permanent professors and further academic staff. Further, due to the broad advertisement of the vacant posts, the experts are not convinced that subject-specifically qualified academic personnel can be appointed in time.

Thus, the experts consider this criterion to be **not fulfilled**.

4. The composition of the adjunct and permanent teaching and research staff shall ensure a student-teacher ratio appropriate to the profile of the degree programme.

According to the application documents, this study programme shall mostly be taught by permanent teaching staff. With regard to the student-staff ratio, there are only 6.7 students per full and associate professor (each calculated as full-time), only 15 students per assistant professor, 30 students per pre-doc researcher, 20 students per other in-house lecturer and 12

students per external lecturer. If one calculates the predicted 60 students for the proposed International Relations and Sustainability programme, this results in a total (full-time equivalent) ratio of 3.4 staff to one student; if one calculates per capita, this ratio is still to 2.4. These advertised new positions are already taken into account in this calculation. This represents a truly excellent and exemplary ratio of students to teaching staff as well as students to general administrative staff. This finding was also confirmed during the on-site visit by the representatives of the ÖH for the existing degree programmes at the MU.

The composition of full-time and part-time staff, as presented in the application documents, also fulfils the requirements, provided, however, that the professorships advertised and to be advertised are actually filled. Further, as the experts have already noted, hiring qualified guest lecturers might be a temporary solution for the still missing academic staff.

The experts therefore consider this criterion to be **fulfilled**.

5. Adequate measures are planned for the integration of adjunct teaching staff into the organisation of teaching and into programme organisation for the degree programme.

In the application, the MU names several measures that are taken to involve the external lecturers ('adjunct staff') in teaching and in programme organisation. For example, they are involved in the Study Programme Conference. According to the Quality Handbook, the Study Program Conference consist of "the Dean, all faculty members who have taught or will be teaching in the previous, current, or next semester in any of the respective degree study programs, the respective Program Managers, all Full and Associate Professors, the Internship Coordinator (if any of the degree study programs covered by the Degree Study Program Conference includes an internship opportunity), and two student representatives." Adjunct staff has no vote in this conference, but can be included by the dean with an advisory vote. Adjunct staff is in this way allowed to contribute to the further development of a study programme. That is a reasonable measure.

Furthermore, new external lecturers are trained by the Academic Office. The application documents show that there is an onboarding session to provide information about the University, grading, and classes for each new lecturer. It is stated that also informal discussions take place, as well as ongoing formal feedback rounds to ensure that all external lecturers are aware of Modul University's objectives and teaching approaches. Adjunct lecturers are also involved in the development of course syllabi, and suggestions for improvements to the Dean of the relevant study program.

Moreover, all external lecturers are invited to participate in the Semester Conference so that they can also give their opinions about the students discussed in the Semester Conference.

All of this corresponds to the current international standards for comparable study programmes. The experts consider the named measures to include adjunct staff as sufficient.

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

6. The private university college shall allow for an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and administrative activities of the permanent scientific or scientific-artistic staff to ensure adequate participation in teaching but also leaving sufficient time for research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts.

According to the quality handbook of MU, permanent scientific staff enjoys an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and administrative activities. For full professors the following ratio is aspired: 40% research, 30% teaching, 10% transfer services and 20% administration. The foreseen ratio is the same for assistant and associate professors. There is no doubt that this also applies to the newly appointed professors and for the teaching staff who will be responsible for the bachelor's programme submitted in future.

In national and international comparison, the experts consider the aspired balance of teaching, research and administrative activities as appropriate to ensure that besides teaching there is also sufficient time for research and development.

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

7. Sufficient non-academic staff has been planned for the degree programme.

During the on-site visit at MU, the student services were clearly visible; the students also confirmed that the non-academic staff take exemplary care of the organisation of their studies.

The submission documents clearly show that all the offices required to support students, as well as in-house and external lecturers, are in place: For example, the Academic Office, which is headed by a Head of Student Affairs, a Study Programme Manager Team, an Admissions and Student Accounting Office (with a Student Accounts Advisor), a Facility, Event & Campus Management, an Information Systems Services, a Library.

According to the accreditation application, MU has almost 50 full-time equivalents administrative staff, which the experts consider is appropriate for the size of the university.

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

2.4 § 17 para. 5: Funding

The degree programme's funding

1. is secured for a period of six years and
2. makes it possible that students complete their degree programme even in the event of its discontinuation.

The financial plan for the degree programme comprises a realistic and plausible balance of all expected revenues and expenses in connection with the planned degree programme.

Financing commitments of all funding bodies listed in the financial plan shall be attached to the application.

In the appendix to the application, a finance plan for this programme is given. The financial plan for the degree programme comprises a plausible balance of all expected revenues and expenses in connection with the planned degree programme. According to the finance plan, the most important revenues are study fees. However, especially in the beginning, the expenses are calculated much higher than the revenues which leads to a deficit for the first three years. Nevertheless, during the on-site visit, the university leadership declared that funding is secured for a period of six years. The deficit in the first three years will either be covered by the university or by its majority owner, Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC). MCC has further issued a letter of comfort to fund the university's operations. Furthermore, the letter of comfort by MCC ensures that students can complete their studies in case this programme is to be discontinued.

In the finance plan, the institution calculates expenses for HR and Materials. By an increase in student numbers and thus in revenues through study fees, the institution plans to meet all required costs. While the revenues and expenses seem to be plausibly calculated, this calculation is based on the assumption that several professor and lecturer positions will be filled at later stages. However, as was discussed above, more professors and lecturers would need to be hired earlier than stated in the finance plan, if the BA programme is to fulfil the requirements about the share of teaching delivered by in-house staff.

On this basis, the experts consider this criterion to be **fulfilled with the following condition.**

Condition:

Within the period of one year, the private university provides an adapted financial plan, which takes into account all changes in personnel costs due to earlier hirings of academic staff.

2.5 § 17 para. 7: Co-operation

Co-operation projects with other higher education institutions and, if applicable, partnerships with institutions outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad that match the degree programme's profile are provided for. The mobility of students and staff is being promoted.

Both during the on-site visit in discussions with the teaching staff and students, as well as from the application documents and the development plan, it is clear that the MU is a very internationally oriented university. It has strong bonds and cooperations with different partners not only in academia, but also in industry and civil society. The international networks of the university listed in the application are impressive in relation to the relatively small size of the university.

The academic collaboration between the Nanjing Tech University Pujiang Institute, Nanjing, China and MU, as can be seen from many course and module descriptions, should also and especially benefit future students of the Bachelor's degree programme "International Relations and Sustainability".

According to the submission documents, the MU also cooperates internationally with a lot of partners. The submitted list shows that the partner institutions are largely geared towards the field of hospitality management and business and that there are currently still few collaborations related to the degree programme. Nevertheless, some of the collaborations mentioned could also be relevant for the submitted programme "International Relations and Sustainability", especially the

- European Universities Consortium (EUC) or
- The Council of International Schools (CIS).

The expert group believes that integration into the European Universities Consortium in particular is a good basis for generating student mobility: EUC member universities collaborate on recruitment initiatives, travelling around the world together to speak directly with students and educators about study opportunities in Europe.

Although MU was excluded from the EU's Erasmus+ programme due to the change of the majority ownership (Mathias Corvinus Collegium), possibly only temporarily since MU filed a legal complaint against this with the ECJ, the university management explained during the on-site visit that MU benefits from the Hungarian government's recovery programmes ("Pannonia agreement"), which substitute the loss of EU Erasmus+ 1:1 in terms of student mobility. The scholarships now not paid out by the European programmes will be taken over by the MU, which means that the mobility of students will not be affected for this reason. However, the MU's international reputation has suffered as a result. It should also be noted that two research projects had to be terminated due to the cancellation of EU funding.

Although the exclusion from EU mobility funds is certainly not ideal for student mobility and also quite not ideal for the reputation as an international oriented university, this criterion is (due to the substitution of subsidies) still **fulfilled** in the view of the experts.

3 Summary and final evaluation

The expert group was able to gain a comprehensive picture of the Bachelor's degree programme 'International Relations and Sustainability' to be accredited at Modul University (MU) Vienna on the basis of the extensive documentation and the detailed interviews and discussions during the on-site visit.

The evaluation of the individual criteria is summarised below and finally a recommendation is made by the expert panel to the Board of AQ Austria.

(2) Degree programme and degree programme management

The degree programme is neither reflected in the strategic objectives written down in the Development Plan, nor could the MU convince the experts that the degree programme fits into the profile of the University. Although the clear focus on sustainability is recognised by the experts, no reference to international relations in research or teaching at the MU is evident.

The profile and intended learning outcomes of this degree programme lack a clear understanding of International Relations and do not adequately reflect the field of sustainability sciences. Furthermore, the intended learning outcomes only partially meet the requirements of the targeted professional fields. Finally, the degree programme does not align with the

qualification level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 6. It fails to offer sufficient theoretical depth in International Relations and sustainability sciences, while also including highly specialized courses that are more appropriate for a Master's level programme.

The degree programme includes components from International Relations, Sustainability, Economics, and Law. However, there is a noticeable imbalance in the focus between the two main components: International Relations (IR) and Sustainability. While the programme allocates a significant number of 34-64 ECTS credits to International Relations, the corresponding 14 ECTS credits for Sustainability are markedly fewer. This imbalance reflects an unequal representation of the two disciplines in the curriculum. Furthermore, the International Relations component of the programme continues, but it does not adhere to the standards typically expected in the field. Thus, the name of the degree programme is only partially reflected in the curriculum.

It fails to adequately reflect the scientific requirements of International Relations as a sub-discipline of Political Science. It lacks a clear understanding of IR as a discipline and places an undue emphasis on economics. The core subjects of the programme, particularly those related to sustainability and EU studies, are underdeveloped. Furthermore, there is a lack of coherence in the curriculum, with courses that do not effectively build upon one another.

However, despite these issues, the programme offers a broad and appropriate range of learning, teaching, and examination methods. It encourages students through interactive courses and teaching methods to engage actively in the learning process.

For this BA programme, MU calculated a total of 180 ECTS credit points, which equals around 30 ECTS credit points per semester with 25 hours of workload per ECTS credit point. The experts consider the degree programme to be well manageable with the given workload. MU also provided an anonymized Diploma Supplement with all necessary information, which corresponds to the requirements of Austrian and European law. Further, the requirements for admission to the degree programme have been clearly defined, and through the proof of an English proficiency level, along with the English-written motivational letter, it contributes to the achievement of the qualification objectives and the successful completion of the English-speaking Bachelor degree. The admissions procedure is clearly defined in the University Constitution and is sufficient to ensure a fair selection of study places under normal circumstances. The experts still recommend to establish a predefined ranking of the criteria, to ensure clarity and fairness in the admission process when applications exceed available places. Finally, MU has a clearly defined procedure for the recognition of formally, non-formally, and informally acquired competences.

(3) Research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts

MU could not prove research in the field of International Relations, although there is already expertise in the field of sustainability. The experts could also not be convinced that the newly founded VIGS Institute would contribute to research in the field of IR. Due to the vacant core professorship and the lack of expertise of the appointment committee described in the report, the experts do not consider discipline-related research to be achievable.

(4) Staff

The Development Plan of The MU does not anticipate the creation of a degree programme in "International Relations and Sustainability", which is also reflected in the staff planning for this

programme. While MU already has sufficient qualified academic staff in the core areas "Economic Development", "Environmental Studies" and "Research and Methods", especially significant gaps can be identified in the core disciplines of "International Relations", "Law and Governance" and "Political Science". While the university plans to fill these open positions, including the professorship for International Relations, many key courses remain without lecturers for the programme's planned start in autumn 2025. The university aims to fill these gaps with qualified external lecturers if needed. However, the experts doubt that this is possible in such a short amount of time. Further, the appointment plan for the open positions is not fast enough and the advertisements of the posts too broad to ensure a timely appointment with subject-specifically qualified personnel. With regard to the composition of permanent and adjunct staff, the experts further conclude the planned student-teacher ratio to be appropriate. Further, MU names several measures that are being taken to involve the external lecturers in teaching and in programme organization. According to the quality handbook of the MU, permanent scientific staff enjoys an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and administrative activities. During the site visit, the experts were also able to confirm that there is enough non-academic staff available and planned for the programme's organization.

(5) Funding

The financial plan provided to the experts shows a balance of all expected revenues and expenses in connection with the planned degree programme. Although the MU anticipates deficits for the first three years, these will be offset in the following three years through increased revenue from tuition fees and the growing number of students, thus balancing out the overall financial situation. As discussed above, this assumption is based on the premise that several professor and lecturer positions will be filled at later stages. However, in the experts' opinion more professors and lecturers would need to be hired earlier than initially planned, which directly changes the financial plan. A financing commitment in form of a letter of comfort by MU's majority owner, Mathias Corvinus Collegium, ensures the funding of the degree programme and enables students to complete their degree programme even in the event of its discontinuation.

The criterion is fulfilled under the following conditions:

Within the period of one year, the private university provides an adapted financial plan which takes into account all changes in personnel costs due to earlier hirings of academic staff.

(7) Co-operation

The MU could present the experts an international network of partners in science, industry, and universities worldwide. MU is being temporarily excluded from the EU's Erasmus+ programme due to the 90 % ownership of the Mathias Corvinus Collegium. The removal of funding undoubtedly has significant negative impacts on the university's internationalization and especially on the international research collaborations and funding even though the university is proactively seeking strategies substitute EU research funding. Nevertheless, the university management clarified during the on-site visit that the Hungarian government's recovery programmes, specifically the "Pannonia Agreement", help mitigate the loss of EU Erasmus+ funds on a 1:1 basis for student mobility.

Due to numerous unfulfilled criteria, the experts come to the following conclusion:

The experts **do not recommend** to the board of AQ Austria the accreditation of the bachelor programme "International Relations and Sustainability", conducted in Vienna by Modul University Vienna GmbH.

4 Viewed documents

- Application for accreditation of the bachelor programme "International Relations and Sustainability", conducted in Vienna, by the Modul University Vienna GmbH received on 14.10.2024 in the version of 11.12.2024
- Subsequent documents submitted prior to the site visit, received on 17.03.2025:
 - Development Plan
 - Response to Questions
 - Quality Management Handbook 2025
- Subsequent documents submitted after the site visit, received on 26.03.2025:
 - UC Minutes
 - QM Survey (Graduation Checkout)
 - Information on further Documents
 - Graduation Report
 - Diploma Supplement
 - Summary of Changes in Development Plan