

China, Recognition of Examinations and Diplomas (*Anerkennungsempfehlung China*)

The Federal Ministry for Science and Research, acting in its capacity as ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA, herewith issues the following recommendations regarding the recognition of examinations and diplomas from China:

A. Scope

1. Legal situation:

- a. According to the Universities Act 2002 – UG, BGBl. I No. 120/2002 (Federal Law Gazette), and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act – FHG, BGBl. No. 340/1993, as amended, all recognition procedures depend on whether an institution is a recognized institution of post-secondary education (art. 51, para. 2, subpara. 1 UG; art. 4 para. 2 FHG).
- b. According to art. 2 para. 1 of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Austria and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Mutual Recognition of Equivalences in Higher Education, BGBl. III No. 80/2006 (hereinafter called the „Agreement“), the special provisions of this Agreement concerning recognition apply to all public and private Chinese institutions of higher education as well as Chinese research institutions entitled to award academic degrees. In principle, they also apply to Chinese Junior colleges (*Zhuanke*) subject to an assessment of academic achievements on a case-by-case basis.
- c. In its art. 1, para. 1, the Agreement contains recommendations for institutions of higher education regarding general recognition without detailed review; nevertheless, it imposes an obligation upon the receiving institutions to base their decisions on the requirements of their own curricula.

2. Recommendations:

- a. All study programmes offered at public and publicly recognized Chinese institutions of higher education as well as Chinese research institutions entitled to award academic degrees qualify for recognition according to the Agreement.
- b. The Chinese Bachelor degrees (*xueshi*), Master degrees (*shuoshi*) and Doctor degrees (*boshi*) are academic degrees as defined by the Agreement and the other legal provisions applicable in Austria.
- c. The Agreement applies to all persons regardless of their citizenship. However, study programmes are covered by the Agreement only if they have actually been attended at Chinese or Austrian higher education institutions. If study programmes have only been partially attended in either of the two countries, the Agreement only applies to these parts.

B. Recognition of examinations

1. Legal situation:

- a. According to art. 3 para. 1 and 2 of the Agreement, relevant courses and examinations are mutually recognized upon the student's request on the basis of the requirements of the respective curricula; courses/examinations not attended/taken have to be attended/taken at the receiving institution. The question of whether a study programme is relevant to the subject studied is decided by the higher education institution to which the application for recognition has been addressed.
- b. art. 3 para. 3 of the Agreement specifies that Junior colleges (*Zhuanke*) are part of the Chinese system of higher education and qualify as institutions of post-secondary education under Austrian law.

2. Recommendations:

- a. Recognition should be granted without detailed review of the contents, provided that the prerequisites of lit. a above are fulfilled. This holds, in particular, if the examinations
 - are subject-relevant;
 - have a comparable position within the curriculum, i.e. the same, more or less central significance (e.g. focal subject, supplementary subject, subject with peripheral subject-relevance) for the given study programme;

- cover the full range of the respective subject within the study programme, i.e. no further examination procedure in this subject foreseen in the course of study;
 - have apparently been taken on a comparable standard.
- b. In any case, the study programme must be relevant to the subject studied. The question of whether a study programme is a relevant one is decided by the receiving higher education institution on the basis of a summary assessment of the overall content (not on the basis of a detailed review). Differences in titles and headings of the study programmes of the two countries ought to be disregarded in this context.
- c. As regards the actual level of education provided by Chinese Junior colleges (*Zhuanke*), a detailed appraisal is to be performed on a case-by-case basis, given the fact that admission requirements of such institutions are less stringent than those of Chinese universities.
- d. Examinations not yet taken in the course of studies in China, but required according to the curriculum of the receiving Austrian institution, have to be taken at the Austrian institution.

C. Admission to postgraduate studies

1. Legal situation:

- a. According to art. 4 para. 1 and 2 of the Agreement, Chinese bachelor degrees qualify their holders for admission to a master programme or an equivalent programme in Austria. The assessment of the degree is performed by the receiving Austrian institution on the basis of its own curriculum.
- b. According to art. 5 para. 1 to 3 of the Agreement, Chinese master degrees as well as bachelor degrees awarded upon presentation of a „thesis“ qualify their holders for admission to a doctoral programme in Austria. The assessment of the degree, including the need for additional studies, if any, is subject to a decision by the receiving Austrian institution on the basis of its own curriculum.
- c. According to art. 64 para. 5 UG, the graduate of a foreign study programme is deemed to fulfil the general university entrance requirements for admission to a master's programme in Austria, if the foreign study programme is equivalent to a relevant Austrian bachelor's programme or universities of applied sciences bachelor's programme.

According to art. 4 para. 2 FHG, the graduate of a foreign study programme is deemed to fulfil the general university entrance requirements for admission to a universities of applied sciences master's programme in Austria, if the foreign study programme is equivalent to a relevant Austrian universities of applied sciences bachelor's programme.

According to art. 64 para. 4 UG, the graduate of a foreign study programme is deemed to fulfil the general university entrance requirements for admission to a doctoral programme in Austria, if the foreign study programme is equivalent to a relevant Austrian diploma programme, master's programme, universities of applied sciences diploma programme or universities of applied sciences master's programme.

2. Recommendations:

- a. Admission to a postgraduate study programme should be subject to completion of a previous study programme in China which demonstrably qualifies the graduate for a corresponding postgraduate study programme without further examinations or other subject-relevant achievements and apparently has been completed on a comparable standard. If possible, a detailed review of the previous course of study completed in China should not be performed.
- b. In both cases, completion of a relevant study programme is essential. For admission to a postgraduate study programme, evidence of previous studies in a related subject is sufficient, as would be required of a previous study programme completed in Austria; strict correspondence, as required for the purposes of validation (*Nostrifizierung*), is not necessary.
- c. If equivalence in principle, as defined in items a and b above, has been established for admission to a doctoral programme and only individual items are missing for full equivalence, the decision on equivalence, as defined in the Agreement and in Sect. 64, sub-sect. 4, last sentence, of the Universities Act 2002, should be subject to the examinations and other achievements required in the course of the respective doctoral programme.
- d. In the case of admission to a doctoral programme on the basis of a Chinese bachelor degree, it is essential to verify whether or not the „thesis“ corresponds to the requirements of an Austrian master thesis.

D. Use of academic degrees

1. Legal situation:

- a. According to art. 7 para. 1 of the Agreement, holders of Chinese bachelor degrees (*xueshi*), master degrees (*shuoshi*) and doctoral degrees (*boshi*) are entitled to indicate their degrees in Austria in the English form after the name.
- b. According to art. 88 para. 1 UG, persons who have been awarded an academic degree by a recognized Chinese higher education institution are entitled to use this degree in the form shown in the awarding document. The right to demand registration of the degree in public documents in abbreviated form applies only to academic degrees of higher education institutions in the EU or EEA.

2. Recommendations:

- a. The use of Chinese academic degrees in Austria in the English form after the name is possible according to the legal provisions referred to under lit. 1. Registration in public documents, however, is not possible.
- b. For details, please refer to the Guidelines for the Registration of Academic Degrees in Public Documents and the recommendation on the „Use of Academic Degrees [Link: 2.4.13.1E].
- c. The right to use a Chinese academic degree does not comprise any assessment of the substance of this degree.
- d. Academic degrees awarded in a third country and vested in China with the same legal effects as the corresponding Chinese academic degrees by an administrative act (e.g. conversion) are not covered by the Agreement.
- e. The Agreement does not apply to questions concerning the use of professional titles.