



AUCEN is the first network for universities' continuing education and staff development in Austria. The basic aims and the scope of activities are presented in the following AUCEN Mission Statement.

## mission statement

Knowledge-based societies are faced with the challenge of organising Lifelong Learning. For universities, this means providing differentiated learning programmes for target groups in different phases of life. Lifelong Learning has an impact on the competencies, profile and role of the university staff in terms of teaching, research, and services and, consequently, on staff development. Furthermore, Lifelong Learning requires a change in and a broadening of the picture of the student. As a platform, AUCEN deals with the organisation and design of the required transformation processes.

### Continuing Education offered by Universities

Next to research and teaching, Continuing Education is a central task of the universities and covers a wide range of activities. In promoting Lifelong Learning, continuing education offers various formats and programmes for different target groups in order to establish a fruitful interchange of research-based „state of the art“ with the requirements of practice. Continuing Education offered by universities includes activities that make the university accessible to an interested public. Academic programmes awarding a range of certificates/degrees up to international master's degrees are aimed at graduates of higher education institutions and practitioners with adequate professional experience. The interaction of theory and best practice facilitates university continuing education programmes. Tailor-made programmes for specific target groups, e.g. „corporate programmes“ for companies and public institutions, complete the spectrum.

### Staff Development at Universities

The university as an organisation of experts has the key task of providing access to, developing, and communicating knowledge and art. To achieve this task, the know-how and the creative potential of the university staff is a central factor; this is why staff development at universities is of great importance. Staff development facilitates the achievement of the organisation's goals and is the responsibility of the administration of each individual department/unit. The central unit for staff development assists and gives advice to the administrators and develops target-oriented measures. These measures need to comply with the strategic goals of the universities and the ensuing objectives for the organisational units, as well as with the development options and goals of the university's staff.

### AUCEN promotes Continuing Education and Staff Development at universities

- » at policy level – through involvement and lobbying at national and European level in order to establish favourable conditions for University Continuing Education and staff development at the universities
- » at institutional level – through networking and professionalisation of the experts and administrators involved in continuing education and staff development at the universities
- » at content level – through quality development in continuing education and staff development

In addition to this Mission Statement, AUCEN has also published a Mission Statement specifically regarding University Continuing Education. This Mission Statement was agreed at the 12th Meeting of AUCEN on 11 March, 2002.

## **mission statement *university continuing education***

After research and teaching, university continuing education is the third key task of Austrian universities. Through university continuing education, individuals with academic and/or adequate qualifications can participate in universities' learning processes and can continue their academic studies, thus stimulating the influence of experience and approaches from outside on the universities, in the same way the universities influence various professions and areas of life. Besides qualifying individuals, university continuing education contributes to professional cooperation, the formation of groups with common interests, and networking. Consequently, university continuing education also stimulates society to react to these processes.

### **Special characteristics of university continuing education are:**

#### **1. Relation to Research of International Standard**

University continuing education has the advantage of being able to offer a learning process based on the latest internationally recognised standards of knowledge and competency in a particular field. As experts in the field, providers of university continuing education take part in international research; they are able to offer insights into the development of knowledge and to impart research competency as required.

#### **2. Reflexivity in a Social Context**

Academic knowledge is critical and reflexive as it questions the conditions of its formation and effects. This reflexivity asks where the knowledge comes from and what it is for. It also asks questions about subjecti-

ve implications and social situations. Reflexivity is also the most reliable form of mediation between theory and practice: the differences between theory and practice are not rejected or disavowed, but considered a benefit for both learners and teachers in the learning processes. Reflexivity requires candour and freedom in situations of teaching and learning.

#### **3. Common Principle**

Learners and teachers see each other as partners in a common process of teaching and learning: the experience and the knowledge of both parties involved are part of the process right from the beginning. This creates a system that is constantly being improved through the interaction of the persons involved.