



International Equine Science Meeting 2008
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Equine Science and Management Programme in
Vienna
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With a growing importance of equestrian sports and horse breeding, there is an increasing need for well-trained professionals in the equine sector. While well-established vocational training programmes exist in Germany, they do neither provide qualifications for leading positions nor train for scientific work on the horse. The need for specific equine university programmes has been questioned occasionally, however, neither university programmes in equine veterinary medicine (focussing on diseased horses) nor animal science (focussing on food-producing farm animals) meet the broad requirements of today's equine industry.

The first academic programme in equine science and management in the German-speaking countries was established in 2003 by the Universities of Veterinary Sciences and Agricultural Sciences in Vienna, Austria. The 3-year bachelor programme (180 ECTS points) includes sciences, anatomy, physiology, genetics, nutrition, ethology, economics, marketing, management, legislation, reproduction, healthcare, equitation science and organisation of breeding and equestrian sports. Courses are provided by the partner universities and by lecturers from practise and equestrian organisations including the German and Austrian equestrian federations. Lectures and seminars are complemented by a scientific thesis and placements in the equine industry.

Out of 100-150 applicants each year, 50 students are selected on the basis of their previous activities, a written test and interviews. Students are coming from Austria (40%), Germany (50%) and other countries (10%) ensuring a truly European programme. The majority of students enter the programme directly after leaving secondary school, but approx. 20% have undergone previous vocational training (e.g. *Pferdewirt*).

About 40% of the graduates enter into subsequent MSc programmes in animal science or agribusiness. Others are studying for an MBA or a degree in veterinary medicine, journalism, law and other disciplines. Graduates from the 2003 class finish their MSc in agriculture this year at universities in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom and some of them will continue with a doctorate. Students not entering graduate programmes after obtaining their BSc do work as stud managers or management assistants in Germany and English-speaking countries or are employed by equestrian organisations such as the German and Austrian national federation, equestrian journals, equine nutrition companies, non-university research and consulting institutions, the Ministry of Agriculture and in a variety of other fields. The success of the Vienna equine programme has also encouraged activities at other universities and programmes with near-similar curricula have recently been established in Germany and Switzerland.

In conclusion, graduates of the Vienna equine science programme follow a wide-range of professional and academic activities within the equine industry. This spectrum is by far more extensive than the sector covered by professionals from traditional vocational training. With practical experience obtained on the job, adequately qualified graduates will more and more obtain leading positions. In addition, the programme is a first step in the training of future researchers and teachers. By promoting and conducting research on the horse, equine science programmes do also secure the leading role of the European equine industry for the future.