

**Austrian Professional  
Hotel Association**

**Hotel Classification  
Procedure  
2020-2025**



*Information, 14 June 2020*

---

## 1. The system

- 1.1. The Austrian Hotel Classification is a standardised system, valid all over Austria, which offers guests a reliable guide to hotels and other accommodation. In addition, the Austrian Hotel Classification is a member of the Hotelstars Union, which now has eighteen participating countries.
- 1.2. Classification into a particular star category is carried out, upon application by the establishment, by independent commissions (see Rules of Procedure Classification Commission). Regular inspections and a system of on-going self-assessment ensure quality.
- 1.3. Member businesses can choose to make use of this service feature of the Professional Groups of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.
- 1.4. The classification of hotel and accommodation establishments distinguish between 'full service establishments' (e.g. hotel, pension, guesthouse) and establishments with limited gastronomic offer (formerly hotel Garni, bed and breakfast). The difference between both types concerns the catering services. Establishments with limited gastronomic offer is restricted for the categories 1\* to 4\*.
- 1.5. This criteria catalogue for the Austrian Hotel Classification does not apply to apartment houses or similar establishments that offer little or no service. There is a special criteria catalogue for these establishments.
- 1.6. The classification criteria are revised every five to six years, are based on current market observations and reflect guests' expectations.
- 1.7. The criteria catalogue for the Austrian Hotel Classification consists of a mixed system with minimum criteria that must be fulfilled without fail, a minimum number of points and additional points. This mixture results in the number of stars to be awarded.
- 1.8. Hotels and other accommodation are divided into five categories.
- 1.9. In all star categories (1\*-5\*) establishments can achieve, after inspection and fulfilment of the respective requirements, the additional "Superior" quality mark.
- 1.10. The Superior grades are quality and marketing labels for top establishments in their respective categories and offer a high degree of service. Superior grades are not star categories in themselves.

- 1.11. To achieve Superior grades - in addition to the respective criteria in the criteria catalogue of the hotel classification - the following requirements are necessary:
- 1\*Superior: The addition ‚Superior‘ is awarded fundamentally on the number of points.
  - 2\*Superior: The addition ‚Superior‘ is awarded fundamentally on the number of points.
  - 3\*Superior: Restaurant<sup>1</sup> (criterion 206), Quality Report (criterion 239)
  - 4\*Superior: Restaurant<sup>1</sup> (criterion 207), Quality Report (criterion 239)
  - 5\*Superior: Restaurant<sup>1</sup> (criterion 208), Quality Report (criterion 239)
- In each case, a commission will decide on the conferring of the Superior grade.
- 1.12. For over 20 years the "Austrian Hotelstars" - which have been used until the end of 2013 - have been a registered trademark in Austria. The successive change to Hotelstars Union-design has started in Austria in January 2014. The new trademark of the Hotelstars Union - „HOTELSTARS.EU“ - is an internationally registered trademark as well. Hotels now are committed to exclusively use the new Hotelstars Union-design. This registered trademark gives guests and hoteliers the guarantee that hotelstars are only used by classified hotels. Consequently, guests can be sure that Austrian hotel establishments are only allowed to use the trademark if they can satisfy the high quality requirements of the Austrian hotel classification system.
- 1.13. In case of a downgrading or a total withdrawing of the stars, hotels are committed to use the trademark/logo of the new classified star-category, respectively to refrain from using the stars at all. In case of insolvency or closing of the establishment, it is forbidden to use the trademark „HOTELSTARS.EU“ until a new classification - this applies to hotels/apartments/holidayhomes. Moreover, the [rules for the use of the star-signs and the trademark "HOTELSTARS.EU"](#) in the current version apply.
- 1.14. For 3\*S, 4\*S, 5\* and 5\*S there are administration fees according to the Austrian Hotel Classification. The fee may vary between the Federal States. Detailed information can be requested at the respective Professional Group. The Professional Groups are a public corporation and not an entrepreneur within the meaning of the VAT Act. This bill does not authorize for deduction of input tax.

---

<sup>1</sup> The restaurant has to be within the premises or wall to wall, preferably with indoor passage. The restaurant bill can be settled through the hotel.

## 1. General criteria for evaluation

### 1.1. The overall impression

Overall impression and condition (furnishings and fixtures & fittings) and immaculate standards of cleanliness and hygiene are basic pre-conditions for entry into the Austrian Hotel Classification.

### 1.2. Over and above those criteria, the following are also important for classification into the particular categories:

- 1.2.1. Quality of service and this includes demeanour, dress, friendliness and professionalism of management and staff.
- 1.2.2. External appearance, including access/access road, the drive up to the building, parking and garden.
- 1.2.3. The hotel's own leisure and additional facilities, for example an indoor pool, sauna, meetings rooms, garden and garage parking.
- 1.2.4. Guest satisfaction, the number of complaints and handling thereof.

## 2. Guidelines for the classification of hotels and other accommodation

### Definition and differentiation of the individual categories<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.1. One star

Simple fixtures and fittings, amenities necessary for a conventional overnight stay at the establishment are very clean and in immaculate condition.

#### 2.2. Two star

Functional and comfortable fixture and fittings, besides overnight stay service limited services are offered. The quality of the fixtures and fittings is measured by their functionality and cleanliness, the materials used are of lesser importance.

#### 2.3. Three star

Refined and uniform fixtures and fittings in the visual field of guests, home-like character. Hardware in good condition, good service.

#### 2.4. Four star

First-class fixtures and fittings, generous spaces with qualitatively high and up to date fixtures and fittings, good noise insulation, high level service, hardware in very good condition.

#### 2.5. Five star

Exclusive, luxurious fixtures and fittings, refined, high quality and elegant materials with integrated design, hardware in immaculate condition throughout. Architecture, fixtures and fittings, ambience and services offered of international luxury hotel standard.

Perfect service with high staffing levels. Service quality checked according

---

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed definition see Information "What do the stars stand for" at [www.hotelsterne.at](http://www.hotelsterne.at)

to the procedure of the Austrian hotel classification in the respective applicable version.

## **2.6. Superior**

In all star classes (1 - 5\*) there is an additional quality mark - "Superior". The "S" in each of the star classes denotes "Superior", "service", "subjective perception" and "soft criteria" and defines a clear "extra" in service provision and quality. In order to achieve this addition, for 3\*Superior and 4\*Superior as well as 5\* and 5\*Superior a positive inspection of the service quality according to the respective submitted Quality Report is necessary.

## **3. The classification process**

### **3.1. The application**

The hotel owner applies by sending a completed application form to the relevant Professional Group for entry into the Austrian Hotel Classification and declares that he/she is in agreement with the criteria catalogue and rules of procedure for the Austrian Hotel Classification. Application forms are available for downloading from [www.hotelverband.at](http://www.hotelverband.at). After forwarding, and application checks by the relevant authorities the applicant's access will be unlocked in order to enable him/her to fill in the data entry form for classification electronically. In the case of new buildings, conversions and extensions of accommodation, an application can be filed to promote the expected star category before the official grading according to a procedure specially set up for such cases.

### **3.2. Quality Report**

Mystery Guesting is a minimum criterion for the 3\*Superior, 4\*Superior, 5\* and 5\*Superior category and is carried out, evaluated and documented at least once within the classification period using the online guest feedback platform TrustYou (criterion 239 of the criteria catalogue of the Austrian Hotel Classification 2020-2025). In case of a new classification into the superior category, the classification commission is free to request a TrustYou report or a Mystery Guesting (test).

The positive result of the quality report will be considered in the decision making process of the respective Professional Group/commission. Mystery Guestings in the form of hidden self-control through hotel chains or hotel cooperations can still be regarded as equivalent. In case of a negative quality report the classification commission can impose a waiting period of maximum one year for a next inspection on the hotel or request a Mystery Guesting (test).

In case there is (still) no profile on the applied online guest feedback platform available or a total of less than 100 reviews have been available in the last 24 months, the hotel is still obliged for a Mystery Guesting. This review has to be carried out by an independent company from the current mystery guest pool on the initiative and on the account of the hotelier upon request by the Professional Group. The list of companies for a mystery guest test on behalf of the Austrian Hotel Classification is published on [www.hotelverband.at](http://www.hotelverband.at).

### **3.3. The inspection**

Based on the criteria catalogue for the Austrian Hotel Classification, the data provided by the establishment owner and the inspection visit report, the federal state commission will classify the establishment. Establishments already classified are inspected regularly within a period of 3 to a maximum of 6 years. The superior classification is bound to the validity period of the base stars. 5\* Superior facilities are reviewed every three years. In the course of this check, an establishment's grading can be confirmed, changed or disallowed. Commission decisions are communicated to the establishment in writing. With the completion of the criteria catalogue the hotelier takes part in a regular system of self-assessment. Within this process, the establishment confirms in writing to the Professional Group that the relevant criteria within its category have been fulfilled. It is the personal responsibility of every hotelier to inform the relevant Professional Group immediately in case of essential changes or reconstructions in the hotel. In case of acquisitions and company transfers, the respective star category of the establishment basically expires, which is why the hotelier has to submit a new application to the Professional Group. An operators change or insolvency has to be reported to the relevant Professional Group. In general the inspection can only take place, when the hotel is in operation. The commission is entitled to inspect all operating areas. Moreover, the commission can inspect a classified establishment unannounced at any time (including e.g. rooms that the hotelier had not prepared for the commission's visit). During the commission's visit, photos can be taken for documentation purposes.

### **3.4. The committees**

#### **4.4.1. One to four star, one to four star Superior as well as five star and five star Superior**

The Classification Committee (1\*-4\*S in all federal states as well as 5\*/5\*S in Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg) is appointed by the Committee of the Professional Group after the election of the Economic Chamber for the period until the next election of the Economic Chamber (right of nomination chairman and CEO) and is established at federal state level at the respective Professional Group of the hotel industry in the Economic Chamber.

In Vienna, hotels and lodgings establishments (1\*-4\*S) are classified by an expert committee at the Vienna Tourism Association. The constitution of this expert committee to which external professionals are also drawn, has its own rules of procedure.

The "5\*/5\*S-Star-Cluster" is appointed by the Committees of the Professional Groups of the federal states of Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria and Vienna for the period until the next election of the Economic Chamber. The delegation of the individual members to this cluster is decided by the Committee of the Professional Groups at federal state level.

For on-site commissions, the Classification Committee forms a commission with at least two commission members in the case of 1\*-4\*S. In the case of 5\*/5\*S the Classification Committee or the 5\*/5\*S Cluster form a commission with at least three commission members.

#### **4.4.3. Liability**

It is agreed there will be no liability for damage resulting from slight negligence by commission members. There is also no liability for damage by other parties, for loss of earnings or achieved savings. Disclaimer of warranty applies to every level of jurisdiction and commissions.

### **3.5. Appeals**

The owner of the establishment can appeal by means of a registered written letter against a grading or non-grading into a category within four weeks after notification of the commission's written decision. The complaint must contain justification for the appeal. The appeal must be lodged with the relevant Professional Group. The appeal has a postponing effect unless the classification commission unanimously excludes this effect, especially in cases where the general assessment criteria for classification have not been fulfilled. A renewed application for classification in a star category can only be made if the deficiencies/conditions alleged by the classification commission have demonstrably been resolved/met.

### **3.6. Handling of appeals**

#### **3.6.1. One to five star**

In the case of one to five star establishments, a regional commission - put together by the relevant Professional Group in the federal state - checks the decision of the classification commission.

A regional commission is made up of minimum two members from other federal states and moreover one non-voting member of the federal state concerned, who up until the time of the appeal has not been involved in the current classification process. The regional commission decides unanimously.

The regional commission visits the establishment and writes a report for the senior commission (see Rules of Procedure senior commission). This report has to be prepared, no matter if positive or negative. The senior commission decides within seven months and prepares a decision memorandum in which the reasons for the decision are given. The decision is sent in writing to the appeal applicant and the relevant Professional Group by the Professional Hotel Association. The costs for the regional commission are carried by the establishment making the appeal.

#### **3.6.2. Superior grading and 5\* - Quality Reports**

The owner of the establishment can appeal by registered letter to the relevant Professional Group against not being given superior grading within four weeks after written notification of the commission's decision.

Should the classification commission come to a negative decision in respect of criteria fulfilment, in the case of appeal, a regional commission will be set up by the Professional Group. These commissions will prepare an expert opinion report for the senior commission after a second inspection visit.

The senior commission will decide within seven months. The establishment will receive notification about the decision from the Professional Hotel Association.

In the case of an appeal against a grading or non-grading in one category, the Professional Group will engage a listed mystery guest company for a repeated analysis. Then the regional commission shall revisit the establishment. The decision and notification of the applicant comes from the senior commission and the Austrian Professional Hotel Association.

Expenses for the necessary mystery guest test and for the regional commission are to be borne by the appeal applicant.

## **4. Terms and Data protection**

### **4.1. Minimum criteria**

The applicant confirms that the minimum criteria of the desired star category - 1\* to 5\*Superior - are fulfilled.

### **4.2. Criteria and Procedure**

The applicant agrees with the criteria catalogue and this Austrian hotel classification procedure in the currently valid version, especially with the system of regular self-monitoring. In case of changes to the criteria catalogue or procedural provisions, the establishments will be informed in writing in time by the relevant Professional Group.

### **4.3. Registered Trademark**

The applicant hereby commits the usage of the trademark "HOTELSTARS.EU" registered with the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market exclusively in the sense of these currently valid procedural provisions.

### **4.4. Data protection**

In the course of an application for classification in the 1\*-5\*S category, the applicant agrees that his personal data as well as the criteria indicated by him in the criteria catalogue for the classification and servicing of his establishment are handled by the responsible Professional Group in the respective Federal State, by the 5\*/5\*S-Star-Cluster and by the Austrian Professional Hotel Association. In addition, the applicant agrees to a data transfer, including hotel name, address, telephone number, fax, e-mail, URL, star category, to contractual partners and cooperating partners for statistical purposes as well as to communicate his acquired star category only. Consent to data handling can be revoked at any time.



In case of doubt, the German version applies.

Further enquiries: <sup>3</sup>

Mag. Maria Schreiner | Mag. Maria Dinböck  
Austrian Professional Hotel Association  
Wiedner Hauptstr. 63 | B4 08 | 1045 Vienna  
T: +43-(0)5-90-900-3554 | F: + 43-(0)5-90-900-3568  
E: [hotels@wko.at](mailto:hotels@wko.at)  
W: <http://www.hotelverband.at>

Vienna, 14 July 2020

---

<sup>3</sup> Although much care has been taken in compiling the information, no responsibility is taken for correctness. Both the author and the Austrian Professional Hotel Association disclaim liability.