

**Austrian Professional
Hotel Association**

**Hotel Classification
Procedure
2015-2020**



Information, 16 May 2017

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 seventeen participating countries in Europe.
- 1.2. Classification into a particular star category is carried out, upon application by the establishment, by independent committees. 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 and/or the Austrian Professional Hotel Association 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. These guidelines do not apply to apartment houses or similar establishments that offer little or no service. There are special guidelines for these establishments.
- 1.6. The classification criteria are revised every six years, are based on current market research results and reflect guests' expectations (worldwide online-guest survey 2013).
- 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 fulfillment 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.

- 1.1. 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: Restaurant¹ (criterion 226), Quality Report (criterion 265)
 - 4*Superior: Restaurant¹ (criterion 227), Quality Report (criterion 265)
 - 5*Superior: Restaurant¹ (criterion 228), Quality Report (criterion 265)
- In each case, a committee will decide on the conferring of the Superior grade.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. Fundamentally, star classification is free of charge. For 3*S and 4*S an administration fee may incur - irrespective of the actual outlay - due to the Austrian Hotel Classification. The fee may vary between the Federal States. For 5* and 5*S the amount is 1,1140.00 Euro net Euro which goes to the Austrian Professional Hotel Association (The Austrian Professional Hotel Association is a public corporation and not an entrepreneur within the meaning of the VAT Act. This bill does not authorize for deduction of input tax.).

¹ 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.

2. General criteria for evaluation

2.1. 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.

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

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

3. Guidelines for the classification of hotels and other accommodation

Definition and differentiation of the individual categories²

3.1. One star

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

3.2. 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.

3.3. Three star

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

3.4. 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.

3.5. 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.

² For a detailed definition see Information "What do the stars stand for" at www.hotelsterne.at

Perfect service with high staffing levels, quality checked by a mystery guest check.

3.6. 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.

4. The classification process

4.1. The application

The hotel owner applies by sending a completed application form to the relevant Professional Groups (1* to 4* and 1*S to 4*S) or to the Austrian Professional Hotel Association (5* and 5*S) for entry into the Austrian Hotel Classification and declares that he/she is in agreement with the guidelines. Application forms are available for downloading from www.hotelsterne.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-builds, rebuilds and expansion of accommodation an application can be filed to apply for the expected star standard before the official grading in a procedure that has been set up specifically for such eventualities.

4.2. Quality Report

This comprehensive quality report is carried out, evaluated and documented at least once within the classification period using an online guest feedback platform (criterion 265 of the criteria catalogue of the Austrian Hotel Classification 2015-2020).

The positive result of the quality report will be considered in the decision making process of the respective Professional Group/the Austrian Professional Hotel Association. 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 committee can impose a waiting period of maximum one year for a next inspection on the hotel.

In case there is (still) no profile on the applied online guest feedback platform available or a total of less than 70 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/Austrian Professional Hotel Association. The list of companies for a mystery guest test on behalf of the Austrian hotel classification is published on www.hotelsterne.at.

4.3. The inspection

Using the classification guidelines, data provided by the establishment owner and the inspection visit report, either a federal state committee or a five-star committee will classify the establishment. Establishments already classified are inspected regularly within a period of 2 to a maximum of 5 years. In the course of this check, an establishment's grading can be confirmed, changed or disallowed. Committee 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 Groups or the Austrian Professional Hotel Association 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/Austrian Professional Hotel Association. An operators change or insolvency has to be reported to the relevant federal Professional Group/the Austrian Professional Hotel Association. In general the inspection can only take place, when the hotel is in operation. The commission is entitled to inspect all operating areas. More over the committee can inspect a classified establishment unannounced at any time (including e.g. rooms that the hotelier had not prepared for the committee's visit). During the committee's visit, photos can be taken for documentation purposes.

4.4. The committees

4.4.1. One to four star and one to four star Superior

In every federal state there is a federal state committee at the hotel sector of the Chamber of Commerce.

Committee members are appointed by the managing board of the professional body. The chair is elected by the committee members. Federal state committees reach their decisions on a majority vote. In Vienna, hotels and lodgings establishments 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. Insolvency or closing of the establishment has to be reported to the relevant Professional Group.

4.4.2. Five star and five star Superior

At federal level for Austria, a five-star committee is arranged by the Austrian Professional Hotel Association. Its members are appointed by the managing board of the Austrian Professional Hotel Association according to the rules of procedure for 5-star committees. In each case, the chair is elected locally in the course of the classification visit by the committee members. Committee members have no voting rights in their own federal state. Five-star committees require a quorum of three members with voting rights to make decisions and these are passed on a majority vote. In case of new applicants, the committee can reject inspection of any establishment that does not fulfil the minimum criteria. This takes place after consultation with the relevant Professional Group and scrutiny of the facts. Any changes involv-

ing operator or insolvency must be reported to the Austrian Professional Hotel Association.

4.4.3. Liability

It is agreed there will be no liability for damage resulting from slight negligence by committee 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 committee.

4.5. 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 committee's written decision. The complaint must contain justification for the appeal. The appeal must be lodged with the relevant Professional Group (one to four star and one to four star superior), or with the Austrian Professional Hotel Association (five star and five star superior). The appeal has a postponing effect unless the classification committee 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 committee have demonstrably been resolved/met.

4.6. Handling of appeals

4.6.1. One to four star and five star

In the case of one to four star establishments, a regional committee - put together by the relevant professional hotel body in the federal state - checks the decision of the federal committee. In the case of five-star establishments, an inspection committee checks the decision of the five-star committee. A regional committee 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. A five-star inspection committee is made up of minimum three members of the five-star committee chosen by the director of the Hotel Association who up until the time of the appeal have not been involved in the current classification process.

The regional committee decides unanimously, the 5-star-inspection-committee with a majority of votes. Regional and/or inspection committee will visit the establishment and write a report for the senior committee. This report has to be prepared, no matter if positive or negative. The senior committee - whose composition and procedure are modelled on the executive committee - 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 body of the Hotel Association. The costs for the regional and/or inspection committee are carried by the establishment making the appeal.

4.6.2. Superior grading and 5* - Quality Reports

The owner of the establishment can appeal by registered letter to the relevant Professional Group (1*S - 4*S)/to the Austrian Professional Hotel Association (5*/5*S) against not being given superior grading within four weeks after written notification of the committee's decision.

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

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

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

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

5. Terms and Data protection

5.1. Minimum criteria

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

5.2. Criteria and Procedure

The hotelier agrees with the criteria and this Austrian hotel classification procedure, especially with the system of regular self-monitoring.

5.3. Registered Trademark

The hotelier 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 procedural provisions.

5.4. Data protection

In the course of an application for classification in the 1*-4*S category, the hotelier 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 and for the classification in 5*-5*S by the Austrian Professional Hotel Association. In addition, the hotelier agrees to a data transfer, inclu-

ding hotel name, address, telephone number, fax, e-mail, URL, star category, to [contractual partners](#) for statistical purposes as well as to communicate his acquired star category only. Consent to data handling can be revoked at any time.

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³ 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.