

Austrian Professional
Hotel Association

Hotel Classification Procedure 2025-2030



Information, 1 January 2025

1. The system

- 1.1. The Austrian Hotel Classification is a standardised system that is valid throughout Austria and provides guests with a reliable guide to the quality of hotels and other accommodation. Furthermore, the Austrian Hotel Classification is part of the harmonised hotel classification system of the Hotelstars Union (HSU), which is currently implemented in twenty-one European countries.
- 1.2. Classification into the respective star category is carried out by independent commissions upon application by the establishment (see Rules of Procedure Classification Commission). Regular on-site inspections and a continuous self-monitoring system ensure quality.
- 1.3. Member businesses may use this service provided by the Professional Groups of the Austrian Federal Economic Chambers on a voluntary basis.
- 1.4. The catalogue of criteria for the classification of hotels and accommodation establishments distinguishes between 'full establishments' (e.g. hotel, pension, guesthouse) with restaurant services and establishments with limited gastronomic offer (hotel garni, bed and breakfast) which only offer breakfast. Establishments with limited gastronomic offer are restricted to categories 1* to 4*.
- 1.5. The catalogue of criteria for the classification of hotels does not apply to apartment houses or similar establishments that offer no or minimal services. There is a separate set of criteria for these establishments.
- 1.6. The classification criteria are reviewed every five to six years based on current market observations and reflect guest expectations⁹.
- 1.7. The criteria catalogue for the Austrian Hotel Classification consists of a mixed system with minimum criteria that must be fulfilled, a minimum number of points and additional points from optional criteria. The number of stars to be awarded results from this mixture.
- 1.8. Hotels and similar establishments are divided into five categories.
- 1.9. In all star categories (1*-5*), establishments may be awarded the additional quality label 'Superior' after inspection and compliance with the relevant requirements. 'Superior' can only be achieved by full establishments.
- 1.10. The Superior levels are quality and marketing labels for top establishments in their respective categories and describe an 'extra' level of service. The Superior levels are not star categories in their own right.

- 1.11. In order to achieve the Superior level and 5* category, in addition to the fulfilment of the corresponding criteria of the Hotel Classification Criteria Catalogue, the following requirements must be met:
1*Superior: The 'Superior' suffix is always based on the number of points achieved.
2*Superior: The 'Superior' suffix is always based on the number of points achieved.
3*Superior: Restaurant¹ (criterion 202), Quality Report (criterion 232)
4*Superior: Restaurant¹ (criterion 203), Quality Report (criterion 232)
5*Superior: Restaurant¹ (criterion 203), Quality Report (criterion 232)
In any case, it is the Commission that takes the final decision on the award of the superior or 5* category.
- 1.12. On 1 January 2014, the Hotelstars Union brand - 'HOTELSTARS.EU' - was launched in Austria. It is internationally protected. Hotels are obliged to use only the Hotelstars Union design. This registered trademark gives both guests and hoteliers the assurance that the hotelstars can only be used by hotels that are actually classified. Guests can therefore be sure that Austrian hotels will only receive the label if they meet the high quality standards of the Austrian hotel classification.
- 1.13. In the event of a downgrading or the total withdrawal of the stars, the establishment is obliged to use the trademark or logo of the newly classified star category or to refrain from using the hotel stars. In case of insolvency or closure, hotels/appartements/holidayhomes may not use the trademark „HOTELSTARS.EU“ until they are reclassified. Moreover, the [provisions on the use of the star-signs and the "HOTELSTARS.EU" brand](#) apply in their current version.
- 1.14. For 3*S, 4*S, 5* and 5*S, processing fees are charged as part of the Austrian Hotel Classification. These may vary from federal state to federal state. Detailed information can be obtained from the respective Professional Group. The Professional Groups are public bodies and are not entrepreneurs within the meaning of the VAT Act. Invoices do not allow for the deduction of input tax.

2. General evaluation criteria

2.1. The overall impression

The overall impression and the state of maintenance (facilities and equipment) as well as the impeccable cleanliness and hygiene of an

¹ The restaurant shall be located within the building or in an adjacent building, preferably accessible by an enclosed corridor. In certain circumstances, the hotel restaurant may be within walking distance of the hotel. Walking distance means across the street or in the immediate vicinity. Payment is made via the hotel bill.

establishment are basic prerequisites for inclusion in the Austrian Hotel Classification.

2.2. In addition, the following points are important for classification in the respective category:

- 2.2.1. The quality of the service, including the appearance, dress, friendliness and competence of the management and staff.
- 2.2.2. The external appearance, including signage, access, driveways, car parks and gardens.
- 2.2.3. The hotel's own leisure and ancillary facilities, such as indoor swimming pool, sauna, meeting rooms, gardens, garage parking.
- 2.2.4. Guest satisfaction, frequency and handling of guest complaints.

3. Definition and differentiation of categories

3.1. One-star

Simple furnishing and equipment, the facilities necessary for a normal overnight stay at the establishment are provided in a clean and immaculate condition.

3.2. Two-star

Practical facilities with some comfort. Limited services are provided in addition to accommodation. The quality of the facilities is measured by their functionality and cleanliness rather than the materials used.

3.3. Three-star

High quality and uniform furnishings in the guest's field of vision, with a homely character. Good state of maintenance of all hardware, high level of service. The overall impression of the hotel in terms of materials is of a high standard. Furnishings are consistent in shape and colour throughout and offer a good level of comfort.

3.4. Four-star

First class facilities, spacious rooms with high quality contemporary furnishings, good soundproofing, high level of service, very good condition of all hardware. The overall impression of the hotel in terms of materials is of a high standard. Fixtures and fittings are of high quality and offer first class comfort.

3.5. Five-star

Exclusive, luxurious furnishings, fine, high-quality materials and impeccable condition of all appliances. Architecture, furnishings, ambience and services on a par with international luxury hotels. Impeccable quality of service, with a very high level of staff commitment, confirmed by a quality report.

3.6. Superior

In all star categories (1*-5*) there is an additional quality feature 'Superior', which describes an 'extra' level of service. The 'S' stands for 'Superior', 'service', 'subjective perception' and 'soft criteria', which are reflected in a higher score. In order to be awarded this supplement, 3*S/4*S/5*/5*S require a service quality audit with a positive result in the underlying quality report. Superior' is awarded to top establishments that have achieved significantly more points than required in their category and offer an above-average overall impression. These establishments therefore offer a particularly high level of superior service. The Superior supplement can only be achieved by 'full establishments'. The basic requirement is an impeccable base category.

4. The classification process

4.1. The application

By completing the application form, the representative of the company applies for inclusion in the Austrian Hotel Classification and declares his agreement with the catalogue of criteria and the rules of procedure of the Austrian Hotel Classification. The application form can be downloaded from www.hotelsterne.at. Once the application has been submitted and checked by the competent authorities, the establishment is authorised to complete the classification questionnaire electronically. In the case of new buildings, conversions and extensions to accommodation establishments, an application may be made to promote the expected star category prior to the official classification in accordance with a specially designed procedure.

4.2. Quality Report

A quality report is a minimum criterion for the categories 3*Superior, 4*Superior, 5* and 5*Superior and is carried out, evaluated and documented at least once during the classification period with the help of the online guest feedback platform TrustYou (criterion 232 of the criteria catalogue for the Austrian Hotel Classification 2025-2030). When reclassifying a hotel 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, carried out as close as possible to the date of categorisation, will be taken into account in the decision-making process of the respective Professional Group/commission. In the case of a slightly negative TrustYou report, the commission may request a mystery guesting (test). If the mystery guesting is positive, criterion 232 is fulfilled. It is also possible to impose a blocking period of up to one year for a new on-site inspection.

If the establishment does not (yet) have a profile on the online guest review platform TrustYou or has fewer than 100 reviews in the last 24 months, the establishment is obliged to do a mystery guesting (test) at the request of the specialist group.

Each Mystery Guesting check under the Austrian Hotel Classification System must be carried out by an independent company from the current Mystery Guest pool, on the hotelier's own initiative and at the hotelier's own expense. In the event of bias, e.g. if the Mystery Guest company has a business relationship with the establishment being classified, the Professional Group may suggest a selection of Mystery Guest companies. A list of companies that can be used for Mystery Guest tests within the framework of the Austrian Hotel Classification is published at www.hotelsterne.at. Mystery Guestings in the form of covert self-inspections by hotel chains or hotel co-operations can be considered equivalent if they meet the standard of accredited tests (written report including photo documentation, comprehensive evaluation, etc.). In principle, only Mystery Guesting results less than six months old can be used.

4.3. The inspection

The classification of the establishment is carried out by the Classification Commission on the basis of the Hotel Classification Criteria Catalogue, the information provided by the representative of the establishment and the inspection visit report. Establishments that have already been classified are regularly inspected over a period of 3 to a maximum of 6 years. The Superior classification is linked to the period of validity of the base stars. 5* and 5* Superior establishments are inspected every three years. During the inspection, the classification may be confirmed, modified or withdrawn. The Commission's decisions are communicated to the establishment in writing. By completing the survey form, the hotelier also submits to regular self-monitoring. In doing so, the establishment confirms in writing to the Professional Groups that it meets the criteria relevant to its category. It is the responsibility of each hotelier to report any significant changes and/or reorganisation of the business to the relevant Professional Group without delay.

Transfers and takeovers usually result in the loss of the establishment's star category and the hotelier has to submit a new application to the Professional Group. Any change of operator or insolvency of the establishment must be reported to the Professional Group in the relevant federal state. Inspections are usually only carried out when the establishment is open/operating. The Commission has the right to inspect all areas of the establishment. In addition, the Commission may at any time and without prior notice inspect the entire classified establishment (e.g. including rooms not prepared by the hotelier for the Commission's visit). During the Commission's visit, photographs may be taken for documentation purposes.

4.4. The Committees

4.4.1. One- to four-star, one- to four-star Superior and 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 elections of the Economic Chamber for the period until the next elections of the Economic Chamber (right of nomination chairman and CEO) and is set up at

federal state level at the respective Professional Group of the hotel industry in the Economic Chamber.

In Vienna, the expert committee for the classification of Viennese hotels and accommodation establishments (1*-4*S) is set up at the Vienna Tourist Board. The constitution of this expert committee, which also includes external experts, is governed by 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, a commission with at least two commission members is formed from the Classification Committee forms for 1*-4*S, and a commission with at least three commissioner members is formed from the Classification Committee or the 5*/5*S-Cluster for 5*-5*S.

4.4.3. Liability

Liability for damage caused by slight negligence on the part of the members of the Commission is excluded by mutual agreement. Liability for damage of third parties, loss of profit or unrealised savings is also excluded. This exclusion of liability applies to all levels of the process and to all commissions.

4.5. Appeals

The authorised representative may, within four weeks of receipt of the written copy of the Commission's decision, lodge an appeal by registered letter against the classification or non-classification in a category. The appeal must be substantiated and the application explained. The appeal must be sent to the relevant Professional Group. In principle, the appeal has a suspensive effect, unless the Classification Commission unanimously decides to exclude the suspensive effect, in particular if the general assessment criteria of the classification are not met. A new application for classification in a star category can only be submitted once the deficiencies cited by the Classification Commission have been demonstrably remedied or the conditions imposed have been fulfilled.

4.6. Handling of appeals

4.6.1. One- to five-star

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

The Regional Commission consists of at least two members from other federal states. There should also be a non-voting member from the federal state concerned, who has not yet been involved in the

classification process. The Regional Commission takes decisions unanimously.

The Regional Commission inspects the establishment and prepares a report for the Senior Commission (see the Rules of Procedure Senior Commission). This report is issued in both positive and negative cases. The Senior Commission decides within seven months and keeps a record of the decision, including the reasons for the decision. The decision is notified in writing to the complainant and the Professional Group concerned by the Professional Association of the Hotel Industry. The costs of the Regional Commission are borne by the company.

4.6.2. Superior levels and 5* - Quality reports

The business owner may appeal against not being given Superior grading by sending a registered letter to the relevant Professional Group within four weeks of receiving the Commission's written decision.

If the Classification Commission comes to a negative conclusion regarding the fulfilment of the criteria, a Regional Commission is appointed by the Professional Group in the event of an appeal, which, after a further inspection, prepares an expert opinion for the Senior Commission.

The Senior Commission makes its decision within seven months. The decision will be notified to the establishment by the Professional Hotel Association.

In the event of an appeal against classification or non-classification on the basis of a negative quality report, the Professional Group will commission an accredited mystery guest company to carry out a further analysis. A further inspection by the Regional Commission is then scheduled. The decision and notification will be made by the Senior Commission of the Professional Hotel Association.

The costs of the required Mystery Guest check and of the Regional Commission shall be borne by the appellant.

There is no further appeal against the decision of the Senior Commission, which is based on the classification guidelines of the Professional Hotel Association of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.

5. Provisions and declaration on data protection

5.1. Minimum criteria

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

5.2. Criteria and Procedure

The applicant agrees to the catalogue of criteria and the underlying procedural regulations of the Austrian Hotel Classification in its current version, in particular the system of regular self-monitoring. In the event of changes to

the catalogue of criteria or the procedural regulations, the respective Professional Group will inform the establishments in writing and in good time.

5.3. 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.

5.4. Data protection

By applying for classification in the 1*-5*S category, the hotelier agrees that his personal data and the information provided in the hotel classification questionnaire may be processed by the relevant Professional Group in the respective federal state, by the 5*/5*S-Star-Cluster and by the Austrian Professional Hotel Association for the purpose of classification and servicing of his establishment. In addition, the applicant agrees that the data - consisting of hotel name, address, telephone number, fax, e-mail, URL, star category - may be passed on to contractual and cooperation partners exclusively for statistical purposes and for communicating the star category achieved. Consent to data processing may be revoked at any time.

In case of doubt, the German version applies.

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Vienna, 1 January 2025

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