



Universität für Bodenkultur Wien
University of Natural Resources
and Life Sciences, Vienna

Erasmus at BOKU

Evaluation of Incoming student questionnaires, Summer Semester 2017

This is a report on the results of the survey conducted among the incoming students who spent the summer semester 2017 at BOKU. At the end of their stay, the students were given a questionnaire asking them what they liked/disliked about their stay and what could be improved upon. 92 questionnaires were returned.

1. What exchange students had appreciated the most at BOKU

Students were asked to list three things that they appreciated about their stay. The most common response was that students appreciated the friendly atmosphere at BOKU (38 responses). Secondly, 33 student responses indicated that the good administrative services offered at BOKU were also highly valued by students. Many students commented that they were satisfied with the administrative support that they received, as well as with the information provided about their stay. Welcome Days and the other events that took place on campus also proved popular with students. 32 survey responses praised these events, with students stating that they were well-organised and helped them to make friends. Other things appreciated by students included the following:

- Approachability of teaching staff
- The university's flexibility regarding choice of courses
- Facilities on campus (e.g. the library, access to printers, well-equipped classrooms)
- The high quality of education at BOKU
- The friendliness of ZIB staff.

Responses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 What students appreciated most at BOKU (more than 10 responses)

Number	3 things appreciated by students	Answers	%
1	Friendly atmosphere	38	14%
2	Good administrative services/ information about stay	33	13%
3	Welcome Days and other events	32	12%
4	Teaching staff	31	12%
5	Flexibility of the university (e.g. choice of courses)	30	11%
6	Facilities on campus	21	8%
7	Quality of education	18	7%
8	ZIB staff	12	5%



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2. Things that BOKU could do better for international students

Although most students were satisfied with their time at BOKU, some felt that there was still room for improvement. 21 students requested that BOKU offers more help to students choosing their courses, and that the university reserves places on courses for Erasmus students. Some students felt that course places were quickly filled by home students, making courses less accessible for exchange students. Moreover, 16 students thought BOKU could provide more information on certain aspects of their stay. Students suggested that it would be helpful to receive more information on course registration and course content, which would allow them to make more informed choices when selecting courses. Students also requested more information on extra-curricular activities. Thirdly, some students wanted to receive more information in English (12 survey responses). Other suggestions for improvement ranged from running more Erasmus events and preventing course clashes to improving the Buddy and Tandem programmes and offering more language courses.

A summary of the areas student felt could be improved can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 Difficulties mentioned by students (more than 5 responses)

Number	3 things that BOKU could do better	Answer	%
1	Offer more help to students choosing their courses/ reserve places on courses for Erasmus students	21	15%
2	Provide more information (e.g course registration, course content, extra-curricular activities)	16	11%
3	More courses/ information in English	12	8%
4	More Erasmus events	11	8%
5	Stop courses from overlapping	11	8%
6	Simplify Mobility-Online/ application procedure	8	6%
7	Better integration of Erasmus students	7	5%
8	Improved assessment procedure/ faster exam results	7	5%
9	Extend ZIB opening hours/ improve ZIB availability	6	4%
10	Better Buddy/ Tandem system	6	4%
11	More language courses/ make them free	6	4%



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3. Motivation and information

3.1 Activities at BOKU

75% of the students who completed this survey participated in a regular course programme, 15% worked on their thesis or research project, and 10% did an internship.

The host institutes were:

- The Center for International Relations (ZIB)
- The Department of Agrobiotechnology (IFA-Tulln)
- The Department of Biotechnology
- The Department of Chemistry
- The Department of Food Science and Technology (DLWT)
- The Department of Nanobiotechnology
- The Division of Livestock Sciences (NUWI)
- The Institute of Botany
- The Institute of Food Technology (LMT)
- The Institute of Landscape Development, Recreation and Conservation Planning
- The Institute of Sanitary Engineering and Water Pollution Control
- The Institute of Soil Research (IBF)
- The Institute of Surveying, Remote Sensing and Land Information (IVFL)
- The Institute of Water Management, Hydrology and Hydraulic Engineering (IWHW)
- The Institute of Wood Technology and Renewable Materials.

3.2 Motivation Factors

Most of the students (83%) stated that academic reasons were the main factor in their decision to study at BOKU. The second most common response given by students was a desire to experience a different environment (mentioned by 82% of students). Improvement of language proficiency (60% of the students), career plans (56%) and cultural reasons (55%) were also taken into consideration.

For detailed results see Figure 1.



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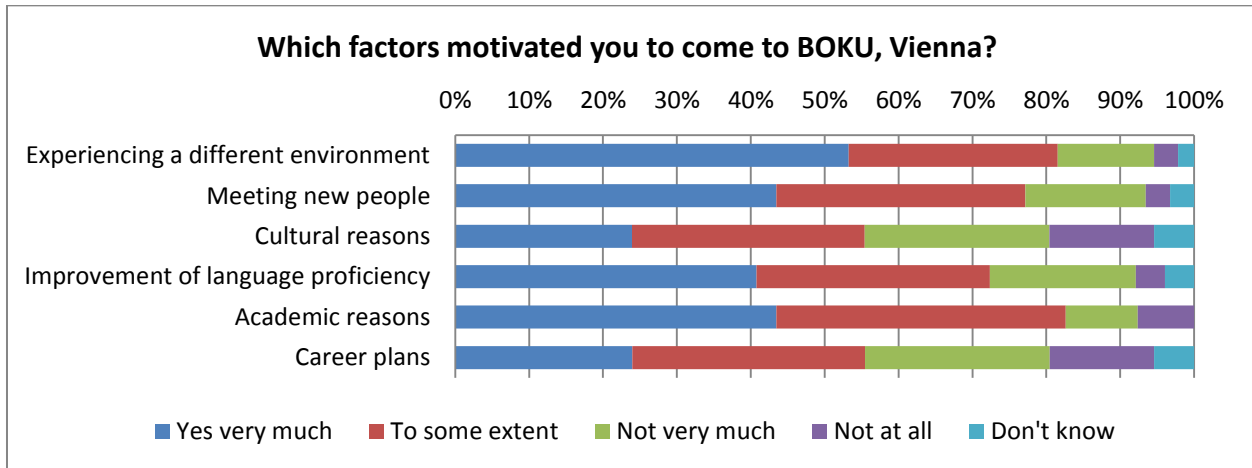


Figure 1 Importance of given factors to come to BOKU

Some students had alternative reasons for choosing to study at BOKU:

- 'Common research, better utilization of interdisciplinary research.'
- 'I had heard that Vienna was a very agreeable city to live in.'
- 'Because I liked Vienna when I once visited.'

3.3 Information before your stay

The most popular source of information for the incoming students was the BOKU website (mentioned by 65 students). The second most widely used source was fellow students from home universities (mentioned 43 times). Mobility-Online, ZIB, departmental coordinators and international offices at home universities were other important sources of information for around 40% of students. Some students also consulted departmental coordinators at BOKU and Austrian students at their home universities.

See Figure 2 for details.

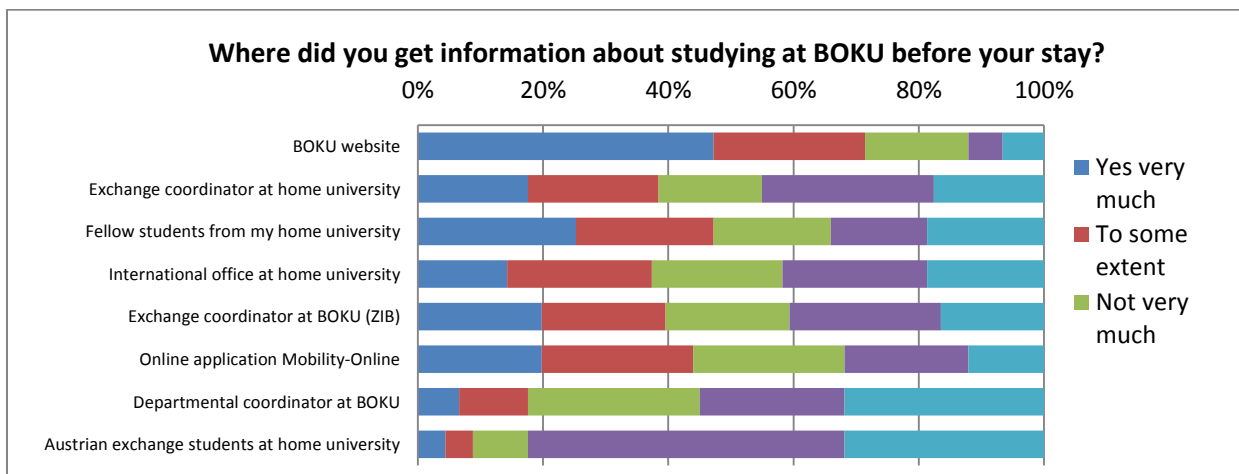


Figure 2 Sources of information used by students before their stay



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Additionally, some students found information from the following sources:

- 'BOKU Online.'
- 'BOKU Students from my chosen Course at international conferences.'
- 'Austrian friends from my home town.'
- 'I met my supervisor in a Congress one year before and I participated in the Tropentag Conference in Vienna last year.'

3.4 Information from BOKU

Students were also asked to comment on the information they had received about their stay. 75 respondents were satisfied with the information provided by ZIB prior to their stay, and 71 were satisfied with the information given by ZIB during their stay. 48 students were pleased with the information provided by other departments and institutes and 36 were satisfied with that given by BOKU services.

The exact percentages can be seen in Figure 3.

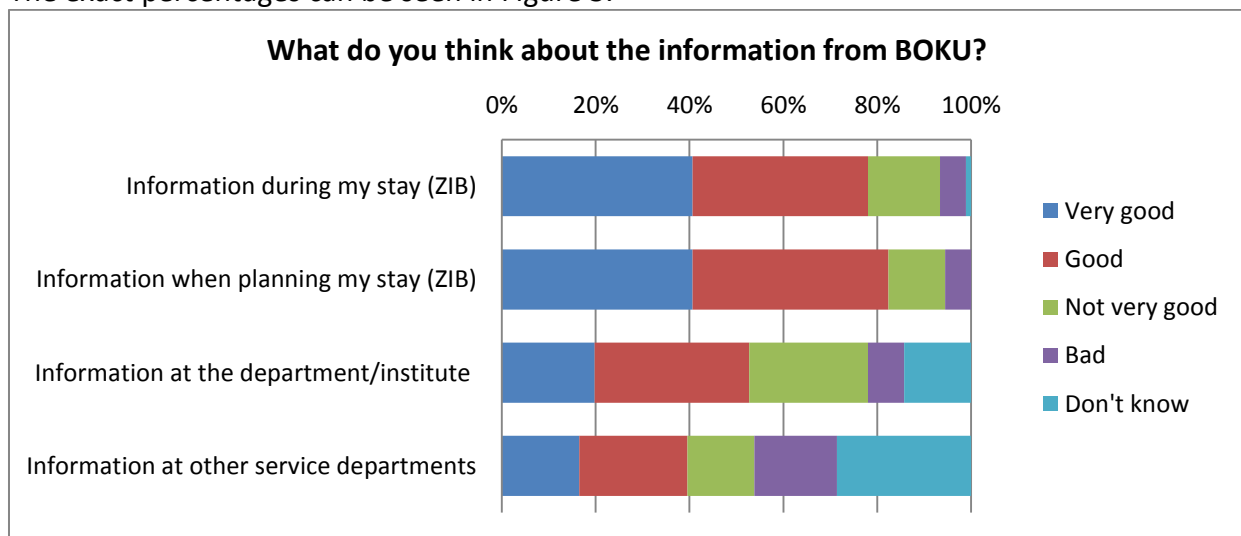


Figure 3 Evaluation of providers of information

3.5 Mobility-Online

When asked to comment on Mobility-Online, the majority of students reported that they were satisfied with the application portal. 69 students were pleased with the clarity of emails, 66 agreed that the system was reliable and 62 students were satisfied with the clarity of instructions provided in the database. 62 respondents also thought it was a reasonable effort. Students were somewhat less satisfied the simplicity of the process (51 respondents).

Students were also asked to provide feedback on Mobility-Online. Suggestions included the following:

- Collecting signatures for paperwork once
- Merging BOKU-Online and BOKU-Learn together, along with Mobility-Online



- Making home universities aware that students need all of their paperwork before arriving at BOKU
- Sending out information emails on how to complete Mobility-Online.

Exact figures can be found in Figure 4.

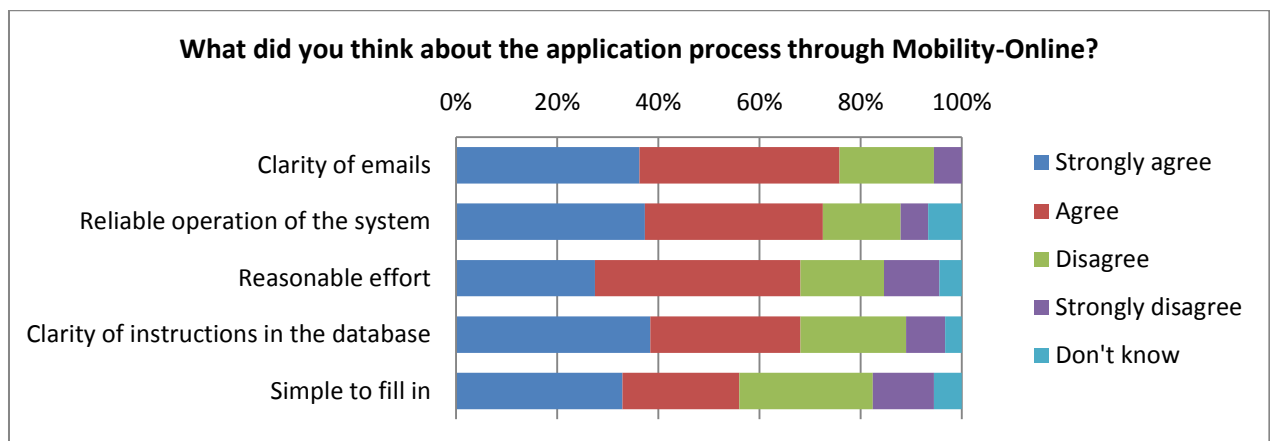


Figure 4 Evaluation of the application process through Mobility-Online

3.6 Welcome Days

74% of respondents attended the Welcome Days, and 79% of these students came away with a good or very good impression. When asked what they liked most about the Welcome Days, 17 students answered that they had enjoyed the opportunity to meet other international students and 15 stated that they had particularly appreciated the campus tour games. Other popular events included the Heurigen party (13 students), the information and support throughout the arrival procedures (11 students), the activities and games in general (7 students), and the tour around Vienna city centre (3 students).

Some students suggested that the Welcome Days programme could be somewhat improved for future events. 10 students answered that they would have liked more social events to meet new people, in particular the chance to meet Austrian students. Others claimed that the info session was too long, with the information given sometimes being repetitive, self-explanatory and easily found online. Some students did not like the fact that the Welcome Days events overlapped with the intensive German course. Also, some mentioned that extra activities should be organised for those who arrive earlier.

3.7 Information session about BOKUonline

70% of respondents attended the BOKU-Online info session and 72% of them found it either very good or good. What students appreciated the most was the clarity of the explanations given (mentioned 9 times), the complete and detailed information provided (8 students), and the explanation of the course registration process (6 students). Some respondents also noted that they particularly appreciated the opportunity to ask questions. However, 7



students wrote that the information had already been sent out by email, and therefore was not necessary, or that the information in general was self-explanatory.

3.8 Buddy

Exchange students had the opportunity to participate in the Buddy programme. This allowed them to meet Austrian students and receive help with administrative tasks when moving to Vienna, and with academic and social aspects of life at BOKU. 78% of the survey respondents had a buddy.

The students who chose not to have a buddy did so for various reasons. Some stated that they already knew BOKU students, or that they were eager to make friends outside of university. Others were PhD students or interns, and therefore unaware that they could also have a Buddy. Alternatively, some native German speakers felt they could manage without the help of a Buddy.

According to the answers provided, the buddies were especially useful with students' first steps after arrival (34 respondents). 22 students stated that their buddies helped them to adjust to academic life at BOKU, and 18 received help with getting used to social life at BOKU.

Some students stated that they lacked opportunities to meet their Buddies and would have liked to have activities organised to this purpose. Many of them also felt their Buddy did not have time for them. Sometimes their buddy was not in Austria when they arrived, and therefore could not help them.

For details see Figure 5.

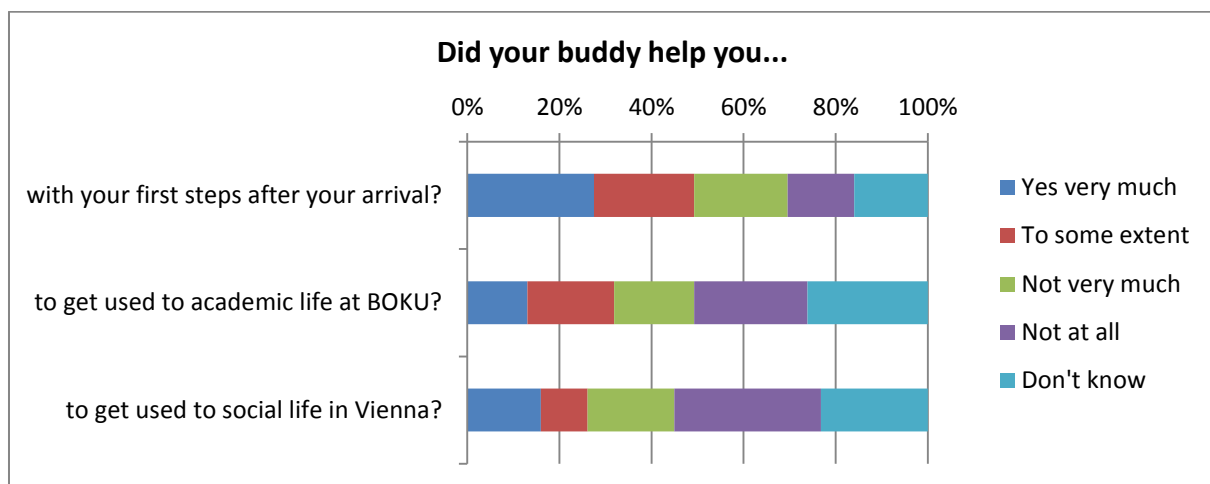


Figure 5 Helpfulness of buddy

3.9 Newsletter

35% of the respondents read the international newsletter from ZIB regularly. 48% read it now and then and 17% never read it. 20% of the respondents found the information in the newsletter very useful, 36% found it useful, 23% not very useful and 5% not useful at all.



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Student suggestions included the following:

- Include event information the week before the event is due to take place. This gives students more notice to attend
- Provide more information about the student organisations at BOKU, and how students can get involved.

3.10 "ESN BOKU Incomings" Facebook group

83% of the respondents joined the Facebook group "ESN BOKU Incomings". 59% appreciated the information there. Students commented that they especially appreciated the information about social events, particularly at the beginning of their stay.

3.11 "Stammtisch"

The Stammtisch was attended regularly by 7% of the respondents and 58% went now and then. 36% of the students in the survey never attended the Stammtisch. Students were also asked if anything could be improved about the Stammtisch. 12 respondents suggested that a non-smoking place should be chosen for future meetings, as many students do not like smoking, and were therefore reluctant to attend meetings. Changing places regularly was also a popular recommendation (mentioned by 11 students); with some also suggesting that outdoor places would be a good idea during the summer. 6 students said they would enjoy the Stammtisch more if certain activities (games, quizzes, karaoke, and party theme) were organised. Other suggestions ranged from holding the event less often, to giving ESN a desk at every Stammtisch, so students could register and pay for their events.

3.12 Other events

63% of the respondents attended the Heurigen; 88% of the participants stated the event was either good or very good. The Apfelstrudel Goes International event was attended by 34% of the students who answered this survey; 26% of the participants stated the event was very good and 45% rated it as good.

3.13 Suggestions for improvement at BOKU

In response to this open question, students suggested several improvements:

- 'Provide more specific information about the following: where each part of the application procedure should be done; BOKU Online; BOKU Learn; the fact that procedures have to be done in a certain order.'
- 'Provide information earlier.'
- Better integration of interns.

4. Infrastructure at BOKU

More than half of the respondents were satisfied with BOKU infrastructure with regards to the general study environment, the facilities, the access to computers and media and the access to libraries. However, around 40% of students indicated that the food supply at BOKU could be improved. This could be done by selling cheaper food, and offering more options



for vegetarians or vegans. Other students wanted places to buy healthier or local food on campus, and some wanted to have more rooms to relax or study in.

Figure 6 shows all responses.

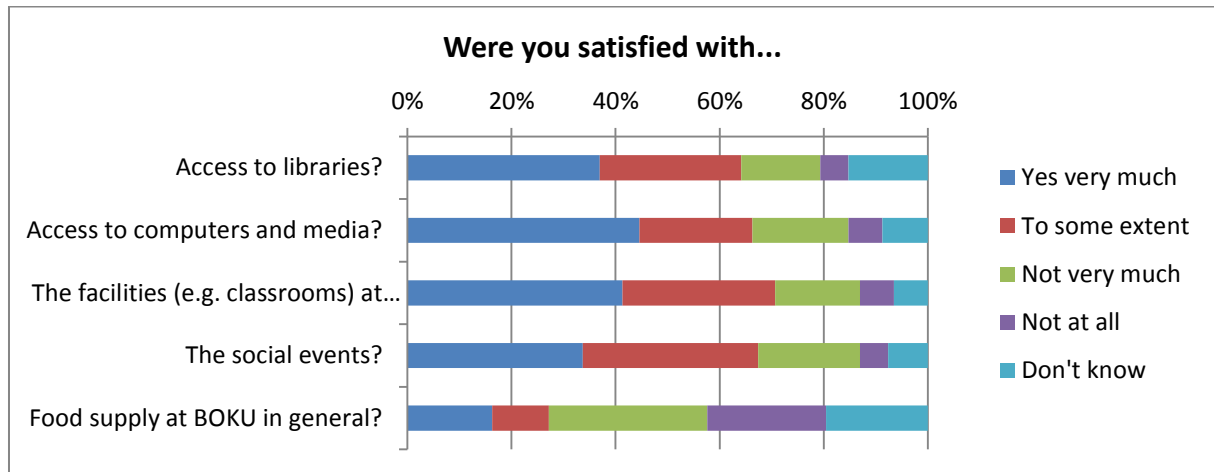


Figure 6 Satisfaction with infrastructure

5. Language

5.1 Experience with language problems

36 respondents experienced no language problems at all, 53 experienced them only now and then and 3 encountered language problems regularly. Language problems mostly occurred in private life and in contact with Austrian students, affecting about 11% of students. Certain students have reported that they have experienced problems while communicating with their professors and university staff, as well as having some difficulties in their everyday communication in the city. Issues also occurred in the classroom for around 12% of the students.

More detailed figures can be found in Figure 7.

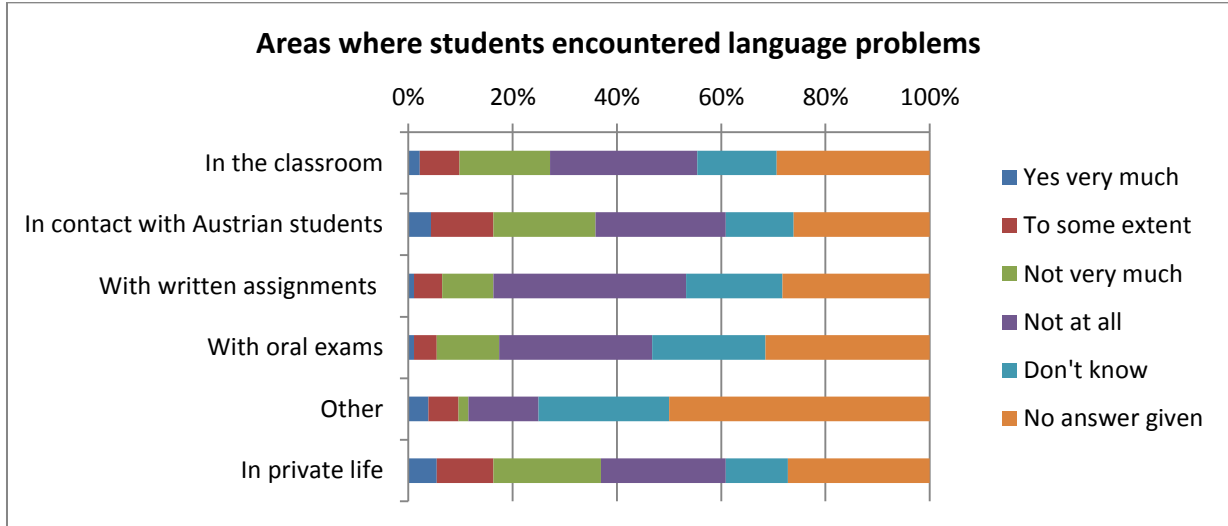


Figure 7 Language problems

5.2 German language courses

8 out of 92 respondents attended the Intensive German course before the start of the semester. Furthermore, 21 respondents took part in the German course during the semester. 10 people regularly participated in the Tandem programme and 6 people attended other German courses, for example, the one in FI.

6. Accommodation

6.1 Type of accommodation

Nearly a quarter of the students stayed in a student residence managed by the OeAD. About a third stayed in a student residence that they organised themselves and the rest in private accommodation. The majority of the students were satisfied or very satisfied with their accommodation. Among those dissatisfied, some complained about the OeAD and mentioned that BOKU should provide students with more information about the alternatives to OeAD accommodation.

6.2 Factors in choosing accommodation

The most important considerations when choosing accommodation were price (according to 57% of respondents) and condition (37%). Other factors were proximity to the city centre (33% of responses), and to BOKU (28%), and living together with Austrian students (19%). The opportunity to live with other foreign students was mentioned by 15% of respondents.

7. Academic and personal outcome

7.1 Outcome of the stay at BOKU

74% of the students judged the academic outcome of their stay as very good or good. And no less than 79% of respondents were satisfied with the personal outcome of their stay.



7.2 Extension of stay at BOKU

64 students stated they were likely to return to Austria for an internship or job. 54 students wanted to come back to BOKU for further study. 49 respondents would like to extend their stay at BOKU, and 47 students would like to study at another Austrian institution.

See Figure 8 for details.

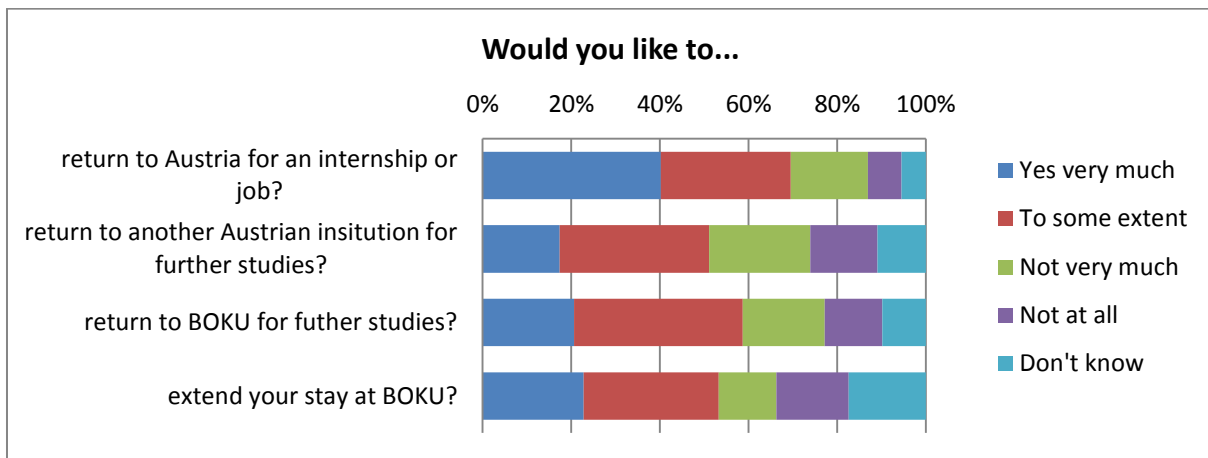


Figure 8 Future plans

7.3 Situations that needed special attention

The vast majority of students did not mention any matters that needed special attention. Students who did experience these situations stated the following:

- Visa issues (1 student)
- Problems with student financing from home country (1 student).

7.4 Recommendations for ZIB or BOKU to support exchange students coming to BOKU in the future

The suggestions provided were as follows:

- 'Provide more advanced German courses.'
- 'Provide more sports activities, especially those that could be attended by all BOKU students.'
- 'Improve the administrative platforms for signing up for courses and learning agreement applications etc.'

8. Background information

65% of the respondents were female and 35% were male. 60 respondents stayed at BOKU for the summer semester and 19 for the full academic year. 13 students had alternative arrival and departure dates.

Table 3 shows the students' countries of origin.



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Table 3 Country of origin

Nationality	Answer	%
French	21	23%
Italian	14	15%
German	7	8%
Finnish	6	7%
Spanish	5	5%
Croatian	5	5%
Belgian	4	4%
Czech	3	3%
Hungarian	3	3%
Swiss	3	3%
Dutch	2	2%
Slovenian	2	2%
Lithuanian	2	2%
Polish	2	2%
Swedish	2	2%
English	2	2%
Brazil	1	1%
Slovakian	1	1%
Austrian	1	1%
American	1	1%
English/German	1	1%
Turkish	1	1%
Greek	1	1%
Not stated	1	1%
SUM	91	100%