



Erasmus at BOKU

Evaluation of Incoming student questionnaires, summer semester 2013

This paper is a report on the results of the survey conducted among the incoming students, who spent the 2013 summer semester 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. 68 questionnaires were returned.

1. The most appreciated things at BOKU

The courses offered were the most positively commented upon aspects of BOKU as students were especially pleased to be allowed to choose their courses wherever possible. A lot of students were especially happy with the atmosphere within the University and mentioned the friendly, welcoming and international nature of BOKU. Support upon their arrival and throughout their time at BOKU was also appreciated, especially ZIB's and other departments' helpfulness and clear explanations. The city of Vienna, its culture and infrastructure proved popular whilst further students mentioned the social activities and Welcome Days, favourite aspects of which being the evening spent in a Heurigen and the Welcome Days tour. Other issues mentioned can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 List of most appreciated things at BOKU

	Answers	Mentioned by students
1	Courses incl. excursions	33 times
2	Atmosphere	29 times
3	Support staff incl. ZIB	28 times
4	Location, Vienna, city infrastructure	21 times
5	Social activities and welcome days	18 times
6	Teaching staff	16 times
7	Technology	9 times
8	Facilities	8 times
9	Buddy-system	6 times
10	TUWI and Students' Union	5 times
11	Libraries	4 times
	Language courses	3 times

2. Things that BOKU could do better for international students

The area where the most students (29) felt BOKU could improve itself was also in relation to courses. Indeed, some felt that it was difficult to sign up to the courses themselves and others had difficulties with signing up for the exams. 20 students felt that the ZIB and other support departments could provide more help when students try to settle in upon their arrival and that better communication with home universities and less paperwork would make arriving at BOKU easier. Social activities proved popular with students and the main criticism in this area was that some students wanted more! Students also said that social events and Welcome Days could be improved either by being more numerous or visited by more Austrian students who would help international students to adapt better to life in Austria. Other issues can be found in Table 2.



Table 2 List of difficulties

	Answeres	Mentioned by students
1	Courses and exams	29 times
2	ZIB (e.g. opening hours)	20 times
3	Social events (e.g. not enough)	13 times
4	Technology (logging into campus computers, printing)	10 times
5	Location, facilities, transport (small classrooms, spread out campuses, lack of computers)	8 times
6	English availability (emails)	8 times
7	Language courses (cost and availability)	6 times
8	Accommodation (searching process)	5 times
9	Buddy system (lack of contact)	2 times
10	Teaching staff (availability)	2 times

3. Motivation and information

3.1 Activities at BOKU

90% of the students who filled in this survey participated in a regular course programme and 10% worked on their thesis/research project. The host institutes were the Geotechnical Institute, the Department of Food Science and Technology, the Institute of Waste Management, the Department of Civil Engineering and Natural Hazards, LBT, Forest Ecology and the Institute for Agricultural Engineering.

3.2 Factors of motivation

The main reason for students deciding to come and study at BOKU was to experience a different environment. Cultural and academic reasons were also taken into consideration. For detailed results, see Figure 1.

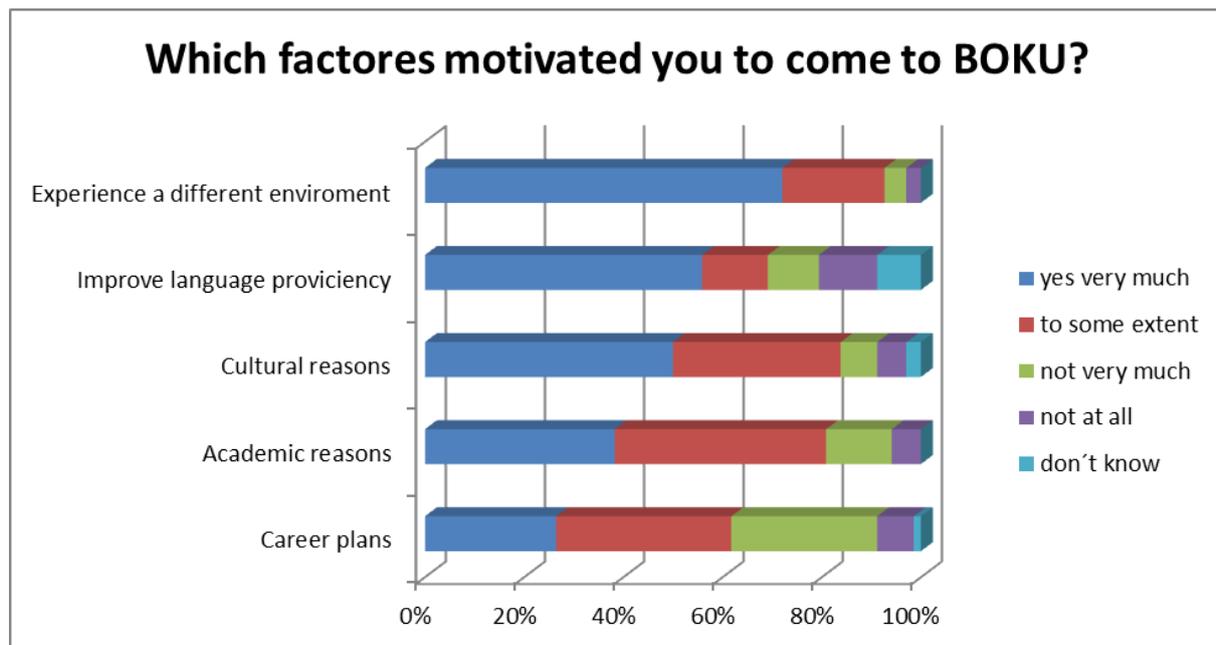


Figure 1 Importance of given factors to come to BOKU



3.3 Information before your stay

The most used resource was by far the BOKU website. Exchange coordinators at BOKU and Mobility Online provided also a high amount of information. The exchange coordinators at students’ home universities, departmental coordinators at BOKU, fellow students from home universities and the International Office at home universities also provided a lot of information. Students hardly gathered information from Austrian exchange students, possibly because most students had not met any Austrians students at their home university (Figure 2).

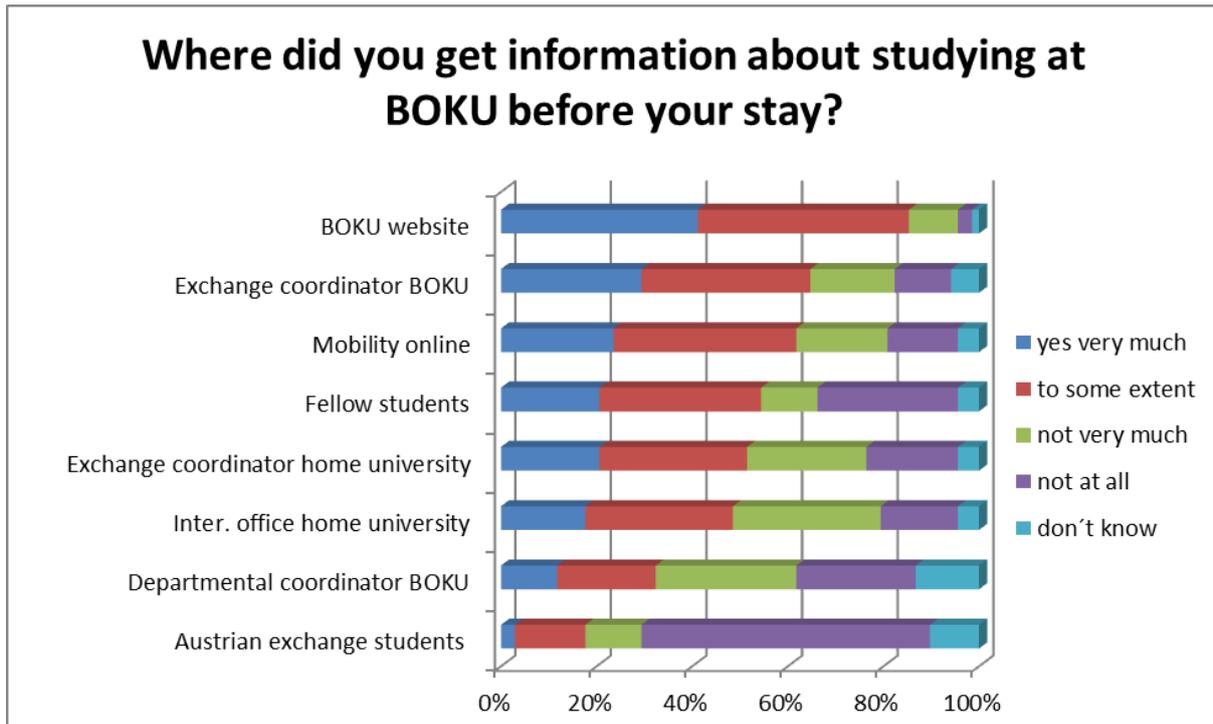


Figure 2 Ways of gaining information used by students

3.4 Information from BOKU

Students were quite satisfied with the information provided by BOKU (i.e. ZIB, all other service departments and institutions) and considered it as useful. The exact ranking can be seen in Figure 3.

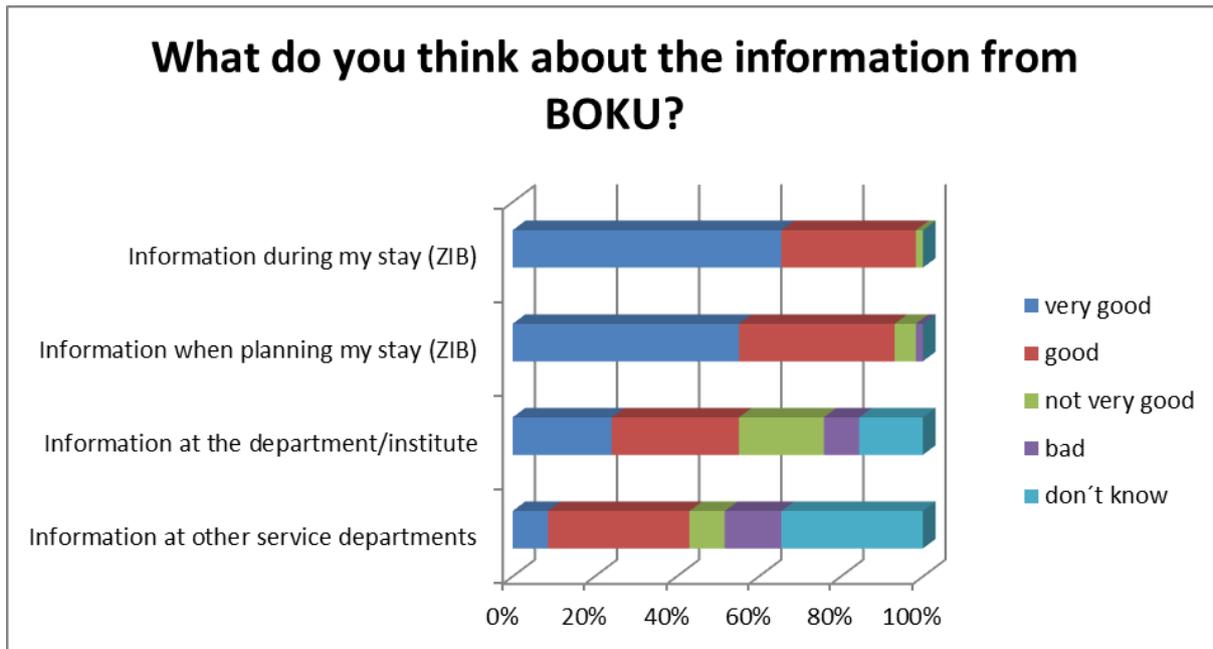


Figure 3 Evaluation of providers of information

3.5 Mobility Online

Mobility Online was rated very positively by students and aspects “reasonable effort”, “clarity of emails”, “clarity of instructions on the database”, “reliable operation of the system” and “simple to fill in” were ranked similarly. The most positively rated aspect was the clarity of emails with 96% of students viewing them positively. The survey asked students to suggest improvements for Mobility Online and 2 replied with the following suggestions:

- Documents should be allowed in other formats than PDF
- The application processes with home and host universities could be combined

3.6 Welcome Days

A fantastic 88% of the students who attended the Welcome Days regarded them positively. It was said that the Welcome Days allowed students to get to know new people as well as the University grounds and that they contained lots of useful information about issues such as registering in Vienna. The favourite parts of the events were the tour of the city and the evening spent in a traditional Austrian Heurigen. The only suggested improvements were that there should be more focus on Muthgasse, a clearer schedule, the group should be divided up and all Buddies should be present. It was also mentioned that it was sometimes irritating that information was said both in German and English; however, other students said that they were grateful for the translation!

3.7 Information session about BOKUonline

45 out of the 68 students who answered this questionnaire attended the information session about BOKU online. 78% of those who attended rated the session positively.

3.8 Buddy

72% of respondents had a buddy and the rest did not. The reasons for not having a buddy were mainly that the students thought it was unnecessary. 2 students mentioned that they did not sign up for Buddies, one of whom specifically saying that being a German native speaker he thought it unnecessary, however, they both regretted their decision. According to the answers provided, the buddies were especially useful within the first steps after the arrival

(see Figure 4). Some students expressed dissatisfaction with their buddies: some of the buddies did not answer emails and many students said that their relationship with their buddy was short-lived; however, they still helped with the students' first steps when the buddy was really needed.

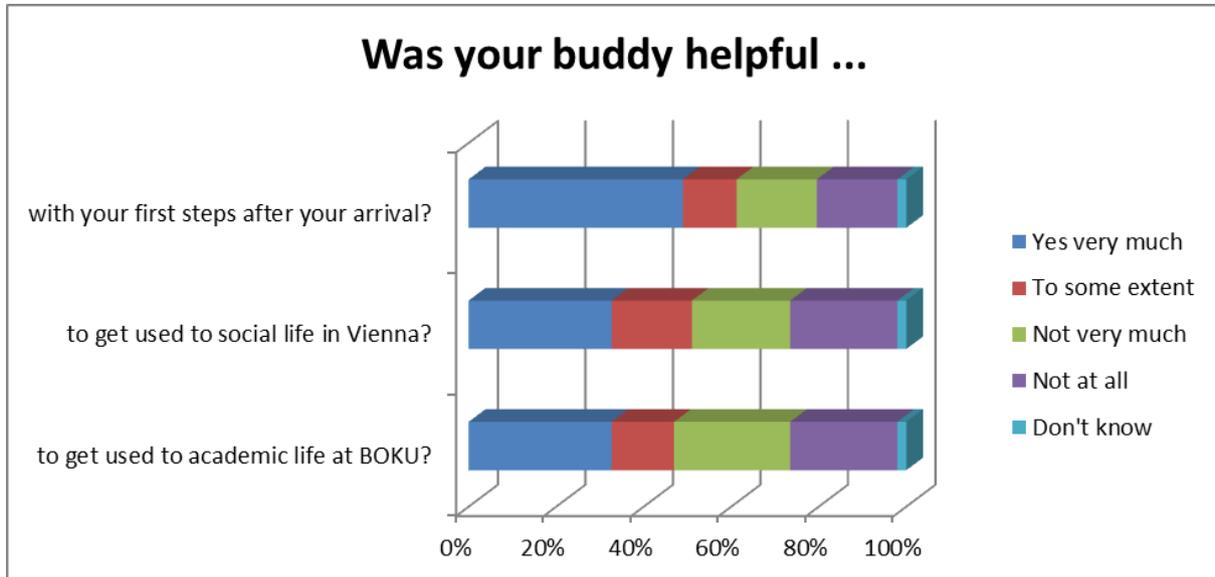


Figure 4 Helpfulness of buddy

3.9 Newsletter

47% of the respondents read the newsletter regularly, the same percentage read it only now and then and 6% never read it. 88% of the respondents found the information in the newsletter useful. As possible improvements, students suggested that the newsletter could feature internship offers in Vienna. Another student would like events to be advertised earlier and another would like everything to be in English as well as in German.

3.10 "Stammtisch"

The Stammtisch was attended regularly by 15% of the respondents and 60% visited it now and then. 25% of the students in the survey never attended the Stammtisch. Students suggested that there should be a change of location for the Stammtisch and that there should be more games and/or quizzes to help students to get to know each other. Other suggestions were that there should be cheaper drinks and live music.

3.11 Other events

35 of the respondents attended the Heurigen and almost all of the participants stated the event was very good or good. The Apfelstrudel Goes International event was attended by 13 of the students who answered this survey.

3.12 Suggestions for improvement at BOKU

In reply to this open question, students suggested the following improvements:

- Provide more information about the cost of living in Vienna
- Simplify BOKU online and reduce the amount of paperwork required
- Create a blog for students to share experiences

4. Infrastructure at BOKU

The majority of students (85%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the BOKU infrastructure in regards to the general study environment, the facilities, the access to computers and media and the access to libraries. The only category which was less impressive was ‘Food supply’ (see Figure 5).

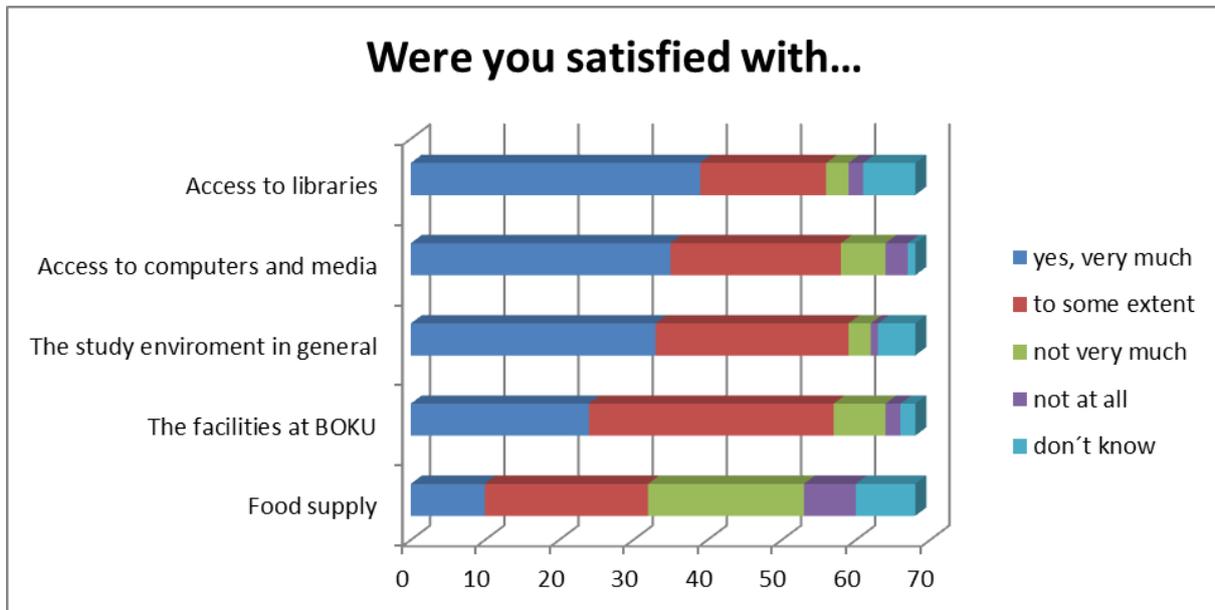


Figure 5 Satisfaction with infrastructure

5. Language

5.1 Experience with language problems

40% of the respondents experienced no language problems, 56% experienced them only now and then and 4% encountered language problems regularly.

5.2 German language course

17 out of 68 respondents attended the Intensive German course before the semester and almost all of them were either very satisfied or satisfied with it. 24 of the respondents took part in the German course during the semester and 83% of them considered it as very good or good. 11 people participated in the Tandem learning and the majority liked it.

6. Accommodation

6.1 Kind of accommodation

Nearly half of students stayed in a student residence managed by the OeAD. About a quarter stayed in a student residence that they organised themselves and the rest in a private accommodation. 69% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their accommodation. Among those dissatisfied, some complained about the OeAD and its prices whilst others found initial deposits too high, so much so that it was difficult to pay for them.

6.2 Important issues about accommodation during the exchange stay

The most important characteristics of accommodation appear to be price and condition. Other very important aspects were proximity to BOKU and the city centre and living together with

other foreign students. The possibility of staying with Austrian students was also taken into account but did not play a key part in the students' decision.

7. Academic and personal outcome

7.1 Outcome of the stay at BOKU

85% of the students judged the academic outcome of their stay as very good or good. And no less than 99% of respondents saw their personal outcome as very good or good.

7.2 Extension of stay at BOKU

81% wish to return to Austria for study for an internship or job including 46% to study at another Austrian institution. Exactly half of the respondents would like to come back to BOKU for further study. 57% of the respondents would like to extend their stay at BOKU.

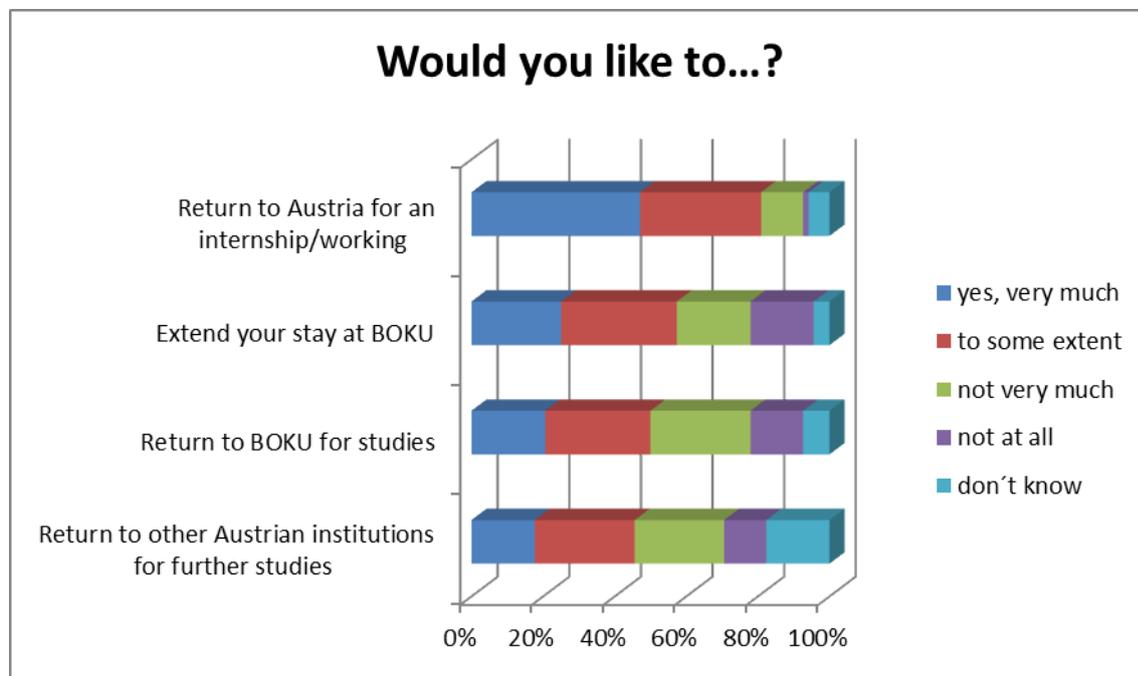


Figure 6 Future plans

7.3 Situations that needed special attention

Students required special attention for the following reasons:

- Solving problems with OeAD
- When dealing with some organisations e.g. registration with the city of Vienna, getting a bank account
- Organising exams
- Signing up for courses
- Looking for an internship

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

The majority of the students didn't answer the questions while one student simply replied with "You guys are perfect". The suggestions that were provided were as follows:

- Tell international students about the CO2-compensation on the website
- Provide a list with names of other exchange students
- More regular activities (e.g. through societies)

8. Background information

62% of the respondents were female and 38% were male. 51 of the respondents stayed at BOKU for the summer semester and 16 for the full academic year. 1 student came to BOKU for 6 months, arriving at the beginning of April and staying until the end of September. Table 3 shows the students' countries of origin.

Table 3 Country of origin

Nationality	Answer	%
France	13	19,12
Germany	12	17,65
Poland	9	13,24
Czech Republic	6	8,82
Italy	5	7,35
Belgium	5	7,35
Switzerland	4	4,41
Croatia	3	4,41
Spain	2	2,94
Finland	1	1,47
Sweden	1	1,47
Ireland	1	1,47
China	1	1,47
Liechtenstein	1	1,47
Uruguay	1	1,47
Greece	1	1,47
Slovakia	1	1,47
Hungary	1	1,47
SUM	68	100