



Erasmus at BOKU

Evaluation Incoming students, summer semester 2009/2010

During the summer semester 2009/2010, 73 Erasmus students coming from 17 different European countries studied at BOKU. The students were given a questionnaire at the end of their stay asking them what they liked/disliked about their stay and what could be improved. 56 students answered the survey, below is a summary of these answers.

1. The most appreciated things at BOKU

First, students had to list the aspects of their stay that they particularly appreciated. The answers were categorized in 12 different subjects. Table 1 shows the categories and some examples of what the students mentioned. The top three categories are courses, the university infrastructure and the ZIB. The variety of courses in English and the interesting lectures were highly appreciated. The ZIB was announced to be “the best team”. The excellent organization, the newsletter and the tandem programme were enjoyed by the incomings. Teachers, events, German courses and the TÜWI were also highly valued. In total, 147 positive elements about BOKU were mentioned.

Table 1 List of answers about the most appreciated things at BOKU

	Answers	Mentioned by students
1	Courses (variety of courses in English, interesting lectures)	32 times
2	University infrastructure	26 times
3	ZIB (the best team, excellent organization, newsletter, tandem, kindness)	24 times
4	Teachers (friendly, talkative, hospitable, attention to students, helpful in all situation)	19 times
5	Events	12 times
6	German courses	12 times
7	TUWI bio shop, friendly students, easy communication, friendly atmosphere at BOKU	10 times
8	Country (beautiful city)	4 times
9	New life experience (easy adaptation)	3 times
10	Buddy (very good buddy system)	3 times
11	Türkenschanzpark	1 time
12	Care on the environment	1 time

2. Things that BOKU could do better for international students

Students were also asked what BOKU could do better for international students. First the answers were categorized. Table 2 displays the ten categories with the tasks that students mentioned. The most suggestions for improvements were given within the category of courses. Among other things, it was announced that more information about courses should be provided before the arrival. In general, more courses for international students would be appreciated; as well as a map of the university buildings.

56 aspects that could be improved were mentioned.



Table 2 List of answers about what BOKU could do better

	Answers	Mentioned by students
1	Courses (schedule, info about courses before the arrival, more courses for international students, Learning Agreement, waiting long for Transcript of Records, building map, do not know the taught language of the course, to have PC account after arrival)	17
2	BOKUonline (manual, should be easier, in English)	8
3	Language courses (for free, more spaces, more language courses)	7
4	Events (better integration with local students, better Stammtisch - change location, more trips, more trips in Austria)	5
5	Printing problems, more seats at the corridor, less bureaucracy)	5
6	Accommodation (no OeAD, increase number of credits, more exam days)	4
7	Studies in Austria (better contact with Austrian students)	4
8	Longer office hours in ZIB	3
9	Bad internet connection possibility	2
10	Better contact with buddy	1

3. Motivation and information

3.1. Factors of motivation

Figure 1 shows how important given factors of motivation were for incoming students. The experience of a different environment and language improvement was seen as motivating factors by almost 60% of the students. They also came for academic reasons and to meet new people.

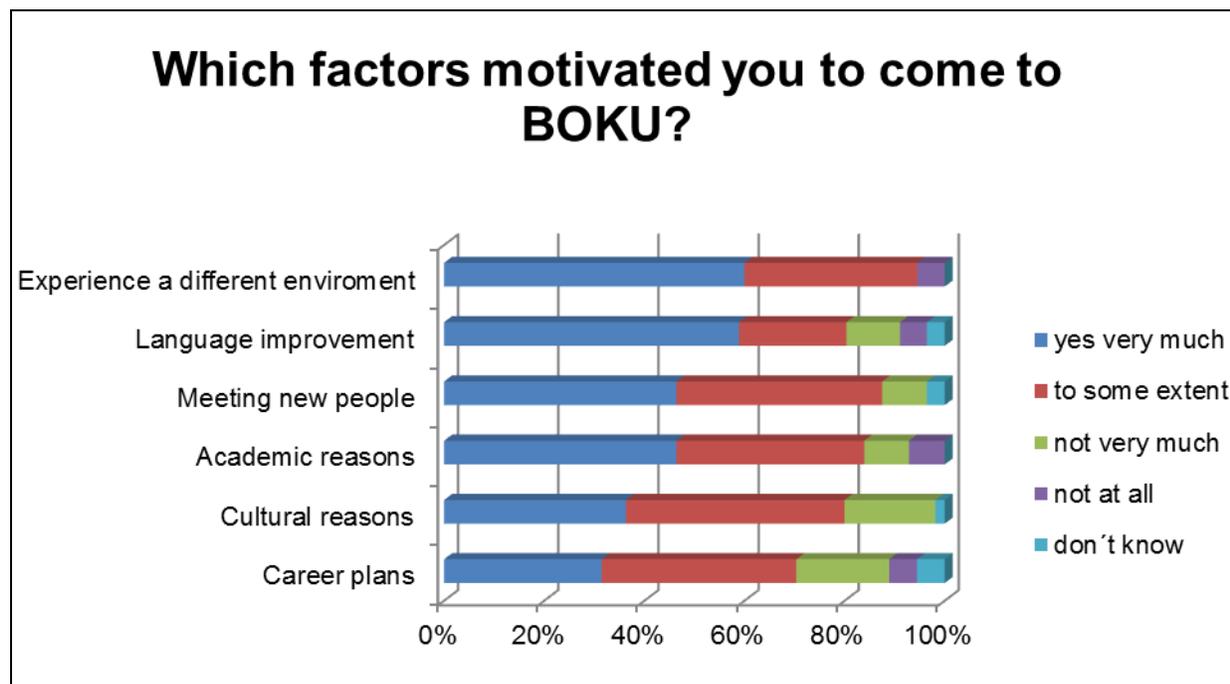


Figure 1 Importance of given factors to come to BOKU



3.2. Information before your stay

All the information necessary about BOKU was mainly obtained through the BOKU website and fellow students (32%) as it is displayed in Figure 2. Erasmus coordinators at the home university (30%) and Erasmus coordinators at BOKU (23%) were also seen as very helpful. Information was also provided by Austrian outgoing students who were studying abroad.

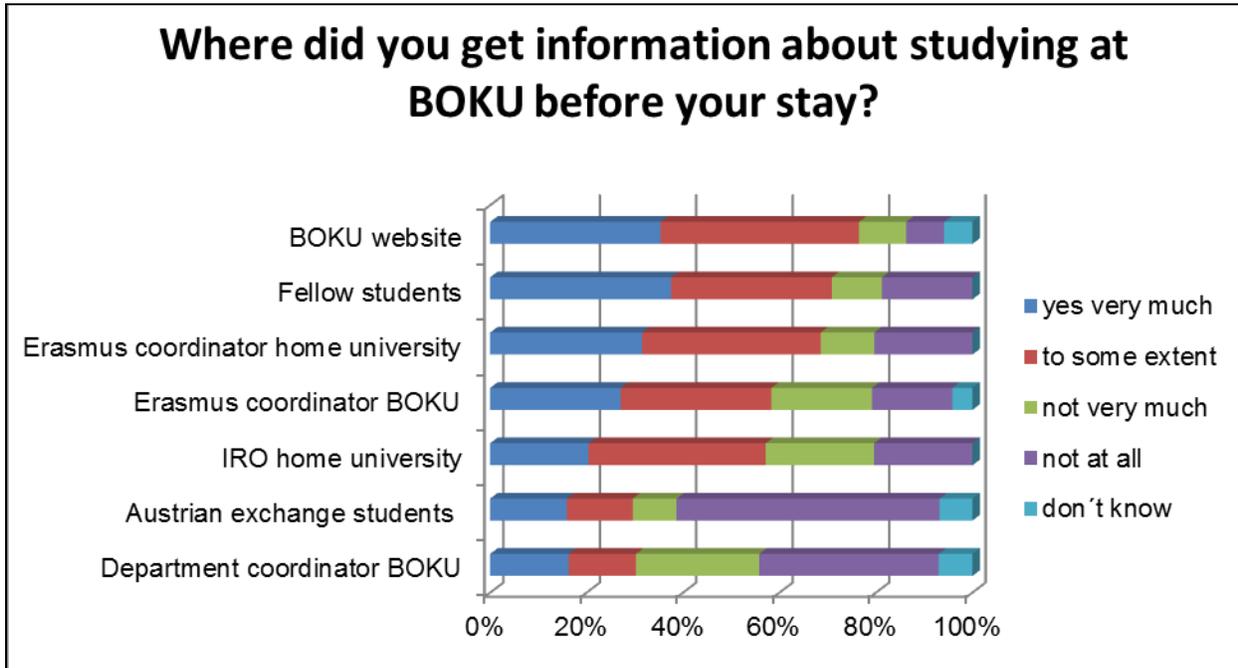


Figure 2 Ways of gaining information used by students; IRO= International Relation Office

3.3. Information from BOKU

Figure 3 shows very clearly that ZIB provides the best information before the stay and during the stay. Other BOKU and service departments were helpful too.

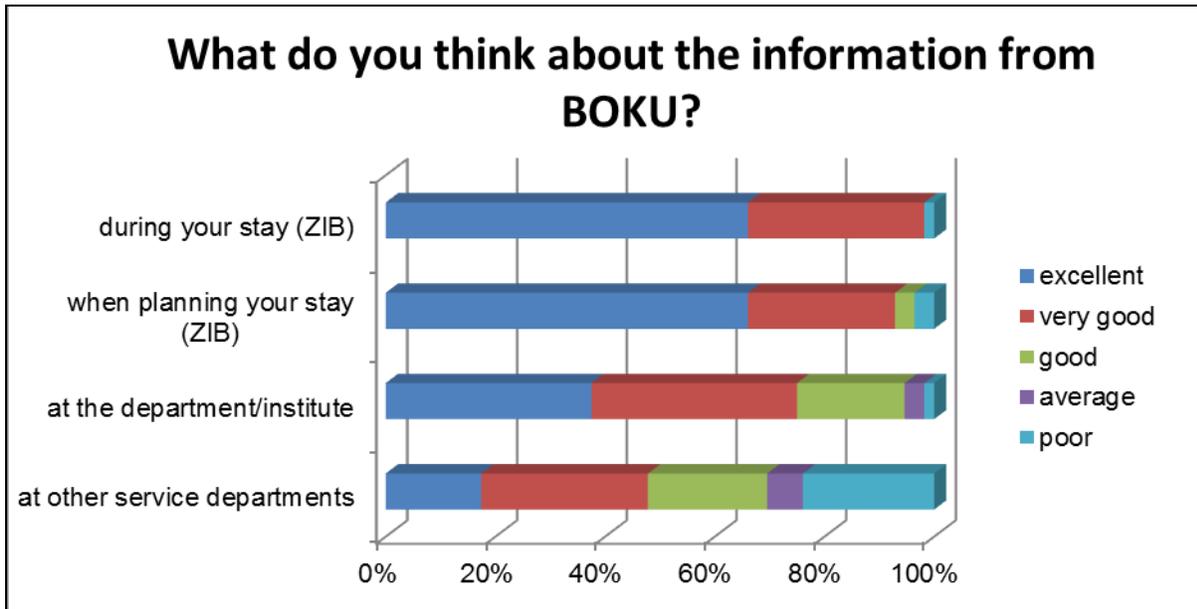


Figure 3 Evaluation of providers of information

3.4. Welcome Days

75% of the respondents participated at the Welcome Days and all of them enjoyed the guided city tour and visiting BOKU departments. The Heuriger was marked as a wonderful event where people had the opportunity to make new friends. Higher integration with Austrian students and a longer trip would be welcome as part of these Welcome Days.

3.5. Information session about BOKU online

59% of the respondents attended the information session about BOKU online and most of them found the session very helpful. One student arrived to Austria after the session was held. The rest did not answer the question.

3.6. Buddy

79% of the respondents had a buddy. Figure 4 visualizes how helpful a buddy was seen in three given tasks. Having a buddy was seen almost equally helpful (answers of “yes, very much” and “to some extent” combined) after the arrival in Vienna, in the first days at the BOKU and with getting into the social life as well (around 40% of the respondents who had a buddy). Some of the students did not meet with his/her buddy or unfortunately did not get any help from the buddy. The rest did not need any help as they felt quite independent and had enough information.

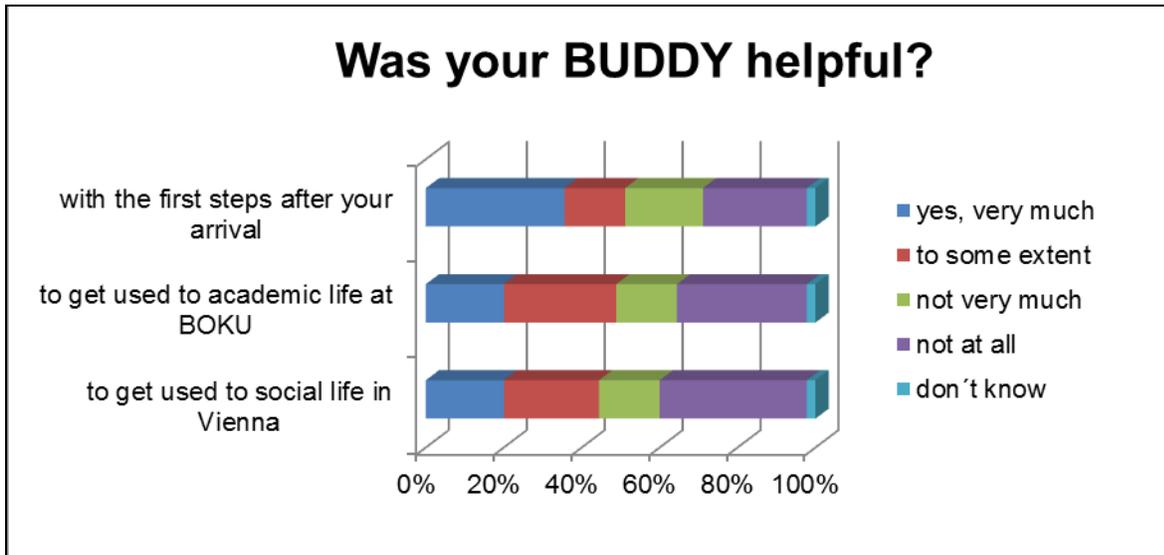


Figure 4 Helpfulness of Buddy

3.7. “Stammtisch”

The “Stammtisch” was a favourable weekly activity visited “regularly” or “now and then” by 75% of the respondents. Suggestions for improvement were to change the location sometimes and to organize different events from time to time (e.g.: country presentation, excursions, trips, games, etc.).

3.8. Newsletter

84% of the respondents read the newsletter regularly or sometimes and only four students never read it. 63% of the readers found the newsletter very useful, but wished to have more info in it (e.g.: cinema, theater, swimming pool, parties, opera, trips, festivals).

3.9 Suggestions for improvements at BOKU

Only 35% of the respondents answered that question. Those who answered were satisfied with the provided information and the buddy system. Only few things were requested for improvements, such as BOKUonline in English (20%) and having a website for sharing experiences with other exchange students. Some students asked for more information about courses after the arrival and to reduce the paperwork.

4. Infrastructure at BOKU

Figure 5 shows that all given tasks were rated very high by the respondents. Almost everyone was satisfied with the access to libraries, BOKU facilities, the study environment and access to media and computer. People would like to have a better cafeteria, printed maps of the rooms as they had difficulties to find their classrooms and better computer system.

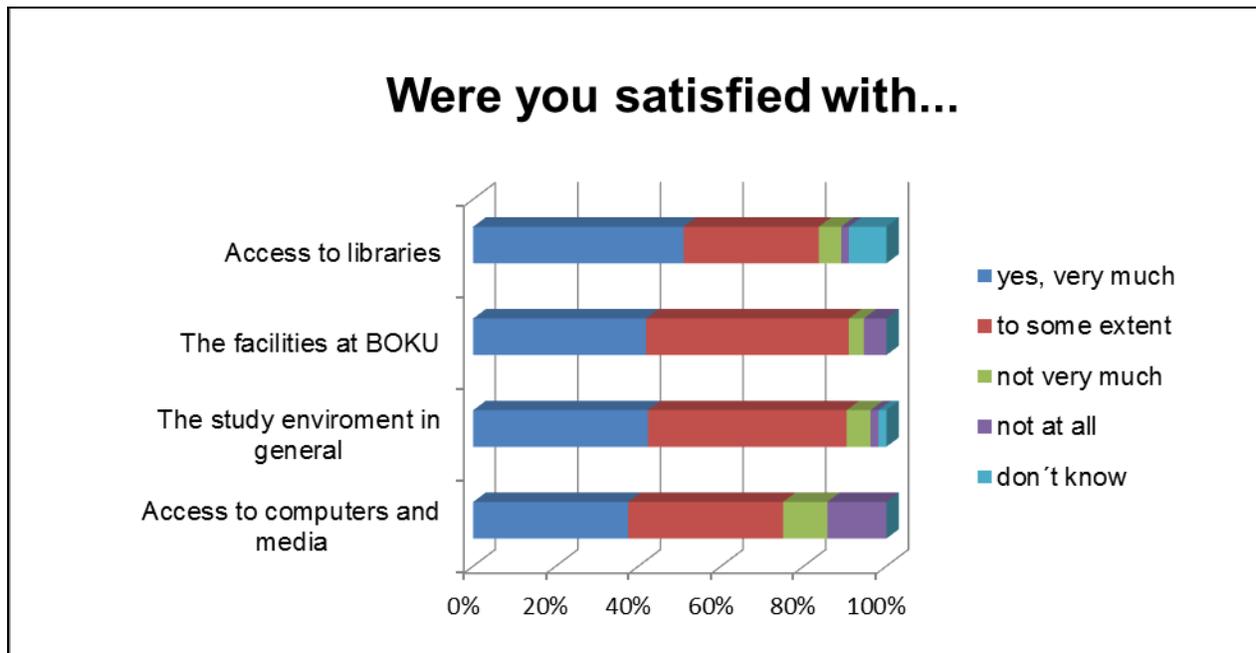


Figure 5 Satisfaction with infrastructure

5. Language

5.1 Experiences with language problems

Language problems were not significantly high. Some students had difficulties with classes and assignments (approx. 30%) and sometimes with oral exams (21%), but the rest managed without any problems.

5.2 German language course

German courses were taken before the arrival and even more often during the stay. Tandem was used only in few cases (mentioned by 4 students). The rest of the respondents learned the language on their own (mentioned by 6 students). Half of the respondents didn't answer this question, but this doesn't mean that they didn't attend any course, because this option could also be chosen.

6. Accommodation

6.1. Kind of accommodation

36 students lived in a student residence organized by the OeAD and 12 had a private accommodation, just 6 of them managed to get a student residence by themselves.

66% of the students were satisfied with the accommodation and 16 were not, the rest (18) did not care. In general students were not very happy about the size of the rooms and missing equipment. In general the prices for housing were described as quite expensive.

6.2. Most important things about accommodation

For incomings the most important factors about the accommodation were price, condition and the distance from the university. Other things mentioned were living with other foreign or Austrian students and the distance from the city centre.

7. Academic and personal outcome

In general both the academic and the personal outcome was evaluated very high. The personal outcome was given slightly more value.

7.1 Extension of stay at BOKU

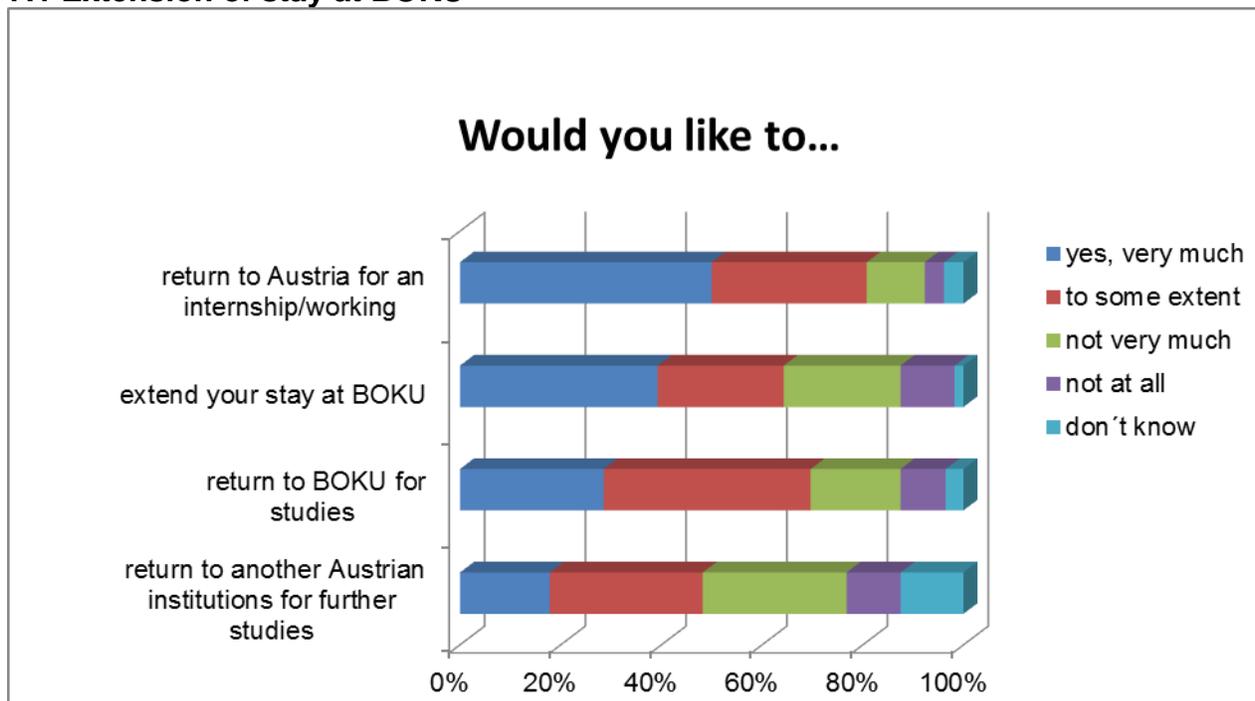


Figure 6 Future Plans

As Figure 6 shows most of the students asked would like to extend their stay at BOKU or return to BOKU or Austria in general for other reasons. Some people wanted to return to other Austrian institutions for further studies. They would also like to find a job or do an internship.

7.2 Situations that needed special attention

Most of the respondents did not answer this question and so might not have had any problems. Just a few students had difficulties with finding a flat, having a place in the German course and with the internet connection. On the other hand, the stay in Vienna was one of the best experience of their student's lives.

7.3 Recommendation for ZIB or BOKU to support exchange students coming to BOKU

Almost two thirds (62.5%) of the incoming students who answered this questionnaire had the opinion that everything was perfect and that ZIB is doing a good job. Only very few things were named, which could be improved: More events, opportunities to connect more with Austrian students and more sport opportunities and longer opening hours at ZIB.

Nationality

The 56 students answering the survey came from 37 partner universities of BOKU. Most of the students came from Czech Republic, Spain, France and Poland (see Table 3).

Table 3 Country of origin

Nationality	Number of students
Czech Republic	11
Spain	9
France	6
Poland	6
Germany	4
Turkey	4
Croatia	3
Finland	2
Italy	2
Belgium	1
The Netherlands	1
Greece	1
Portugal	1
Romania	1
Slovenia	1
Switzerland	1
Tunisia	1

79% came to participate in regular course programme at BOKU for summer semester, some worked on their thesis only (7%), on both (thesis and project) worked 13%.