



Erasmus at BOKU

Evaluation Incoming students, winter semester 2009/2010

During the winter semester 2009/2010, 113 Erasmus students coming from 18 different European countries studied at BOKU, 74 of them stayed only for the winter semester, 39 stayed for the whole study year. 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. 39 (53%) surveys returned and below are the answers:

1. The most appreciated things at BOKU

First, students had to list elements that they particularly appreciated during their stay.

The most appreciated aspects of BOKU were “Events like Welcome Days, trips, Stammtisch” and the “new life experience like meeting new international friends and language improvement”. Students were also very satisfied with teachers, courses and the “ZIB services” as you can see in Table 1.

“The university infrastructure” (e.g. excursions, laboratories and library), “the country itself including public transport and helpful people” were also mentioned. For most of the respondents, studying at BOKU was an “unforgettable experience”, “they made new international friends, improved languages and got to know a new country”.

Table 1 List of most appreciated things at BOKU

	Answers	Mentioned by students
1	Events (welcome days, stammtisch, trips)	14 times
2	New life experience (new international friends, language improvement)	12 times
3	Teachers (friendly, motivated, fast response)	8 times
4	Courses (BOKU online)	8 times
5	ZIB (info, organization)	8 times
6	University infrastructure (laboratories, library, excursions)	6 times
7	Country (people, public transport)	4 times
8	Buddy	3 times
9	German courses	3 times

2. Things that BOKU could do better for international students

Students were also asked what BOKU could do better for international students.

Most people had experienced some difficulties with their courses (see Table 2). This included registration, BOKU online, changing schedule, not many lectures in English and low number of credits per subject. “More information about accommodation possibilities” would be welcomed by 6 students as OEAD was “too expensive” and “the service was bad”. To get in touch with “the buddy” was not always easy and they had to manage the first days on their own.

Despite the fact that everyone was satisfied with the “events organized by ZIB”, they asked about “more activities”, “more language courses”, and “free German courses for beginners”. “ZIB opening hours” should be longer.

Table 2 List of difficulties

	Answers	Mentioned by students
1	Courses (registration, BOKU online, fixed course schedule,earlier exam announcement,increase number of credits per subject,help with exams, more courses taught in English)	14
2	Accommodation (OEAD - expensive, bad service, more info about accommodation possibilities)	6
3	Better contact with buddy	5
4	Events (more events, Stammtisch, university tour)	3
5	Language courses (more available language courses, free German courses for beginners)	2
6	Studies in Austria	2
7	Longer office hours in ZIB	1

3. Motivation and information

3.1. Factors of motivation

The main reasons that drew students to come and study at BOKU were experiencing a different environment (56%), improving their language proficiency (46%), cultural reasons and meeting new people (44%), academic motives and career plans were some other major incentives (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Importance of given factors to come to BOKU

3.2. Information before your stay

The necessary information about BOKU was mainly obtained by the ZIB Erasmus coordinator (41%), through the BOKU website (33%) and through the International Relations Office at the students' home university (23%) - Figure 2. The information was also provided by Austrian outgoing students who were studying abroad.

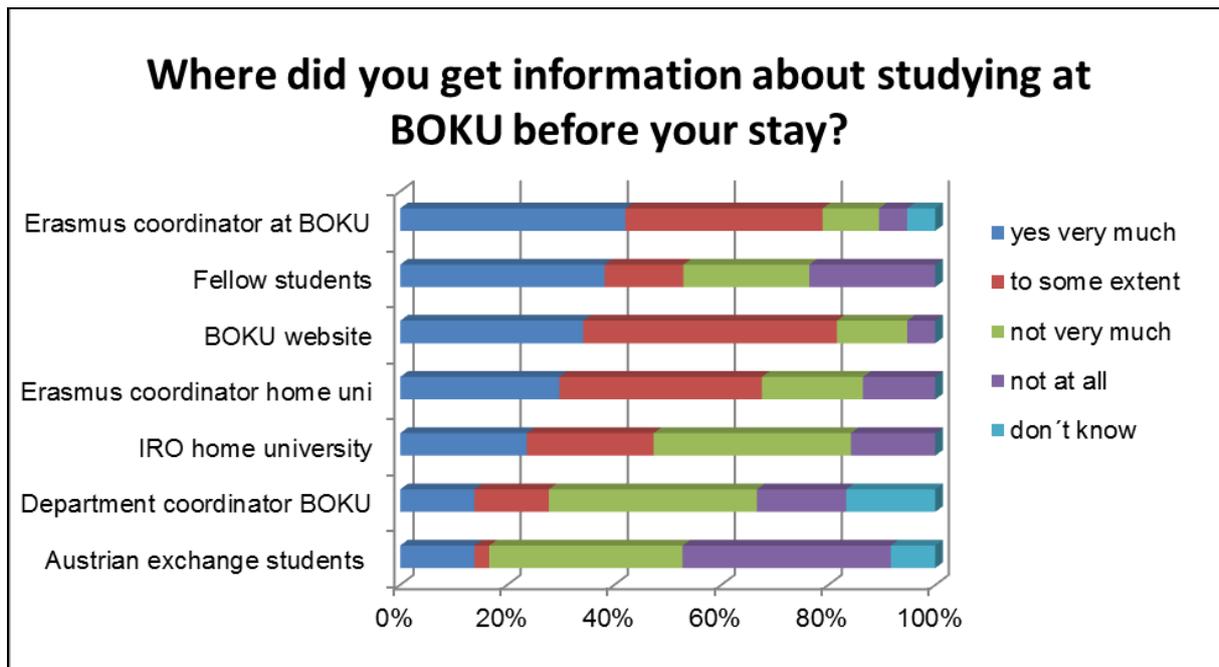


Figure 2 Ways of gaining information used by students; IRO= International Relations Office

3.3. Information from BOKU

Figure 3 shows, that ZIB has provided the best information before the stay (through group emails) and then during the stay. Other BOKU departments were helpful too. The information was always considered satisfactory and useful.

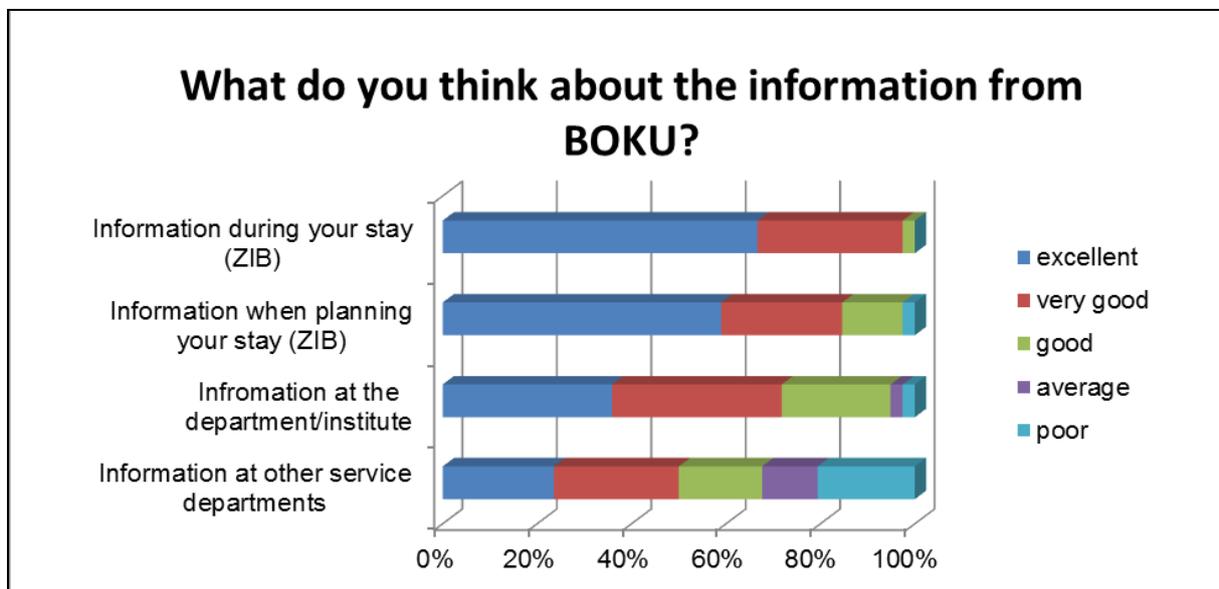


Figure 3 Evaluation of providers of information

3.4. Welcome Days

80% of the respondents took part in the Welcome Days and all of them enjoyed the guided tour and the possibility of making new friends. The university presentation and the Heuriger were marked as great events. A longer trip would be appreciated as part of these Welcome Days.

3.5. Information session about BOKU online

79% of the respondents attended the information session about BOKU online. However, many of them felt they did not need any schooling since using BOKUonline was found to be quite easy. Only few respondents did not know about the session, some said they would rather have had the session before the course registration and have access to all documents in English.

3.6. Buddy

31 students had a buddy and 8 did not. Figure 4 shows how helpful it was to have a buddy. The help was appreciated during the first steps after the arrival, academic life at BOKU and with getting into the social life as well. Some of the students (10%) did not meet their buddy at all whereas others (8%) did not feel like they needed any help as they were quite self-sufficient and had enough information.

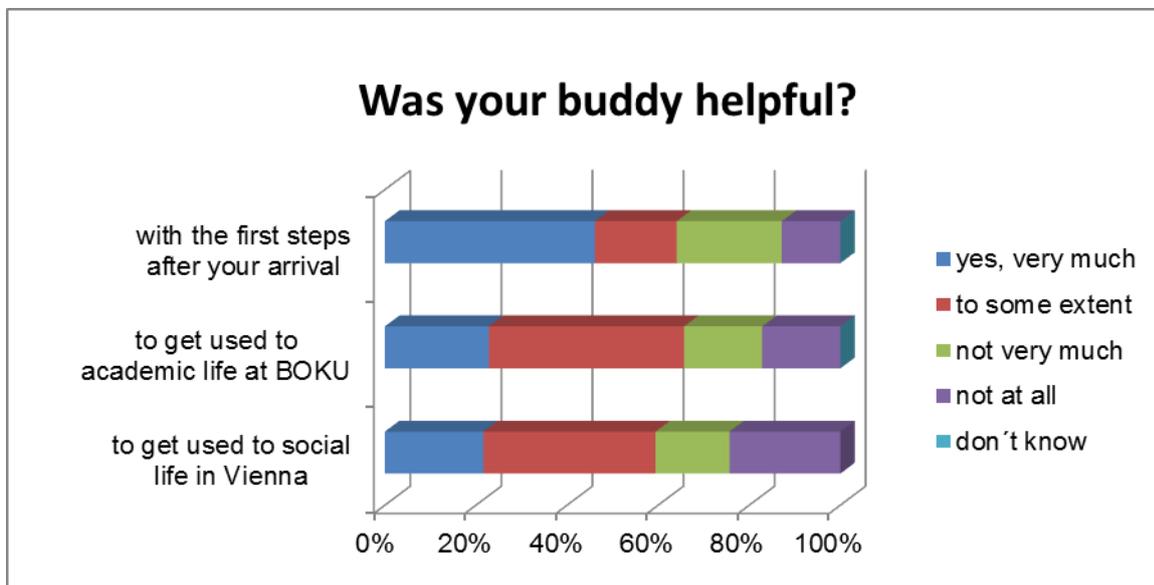


Figure 4 Helpfulness of buddy

3.7. “Stammtisch”

The “Stammtisch” was a supportive weekly activity visited regularly or now and then. Suggestions for improvement were to vary locations, to invite Austrian students, to start earlier and to organize some other kinds of events additionally. Other events such as Heuriger and Weihnachtsjause were enjoyed by almost everyone.

3.8. Newsletter

Most of the respondents read the newsletter regularly or from time to time. Only one student did not read it. The readers found the newsletter very useful, but wished to have more info in it (e.g. about events in Vienna).

3.9 Suggestions for improvements at BOKU

Students were very satisfied with the provided information. Only few things were requested, such as:

- More activities at the beginning of the semester
- An improved registration process
- More information about language courses

- Better accommodation (OeAD services are too expensive and of poor quality)
- BOKUonline in English
- A website for sharing experiences with other exchange students.

4. Infrastructure at BOKU

Figure 5 shows that everyone was highly satisfied with the access to libraries, computers and media in general. All BOKU facilities and the study environment were typically ranked as excellent. However, students called for some improvements as far as the Mensa is concerned and would appreciate a more comprehensive campus map, as they had difficulties to find their classrooms.

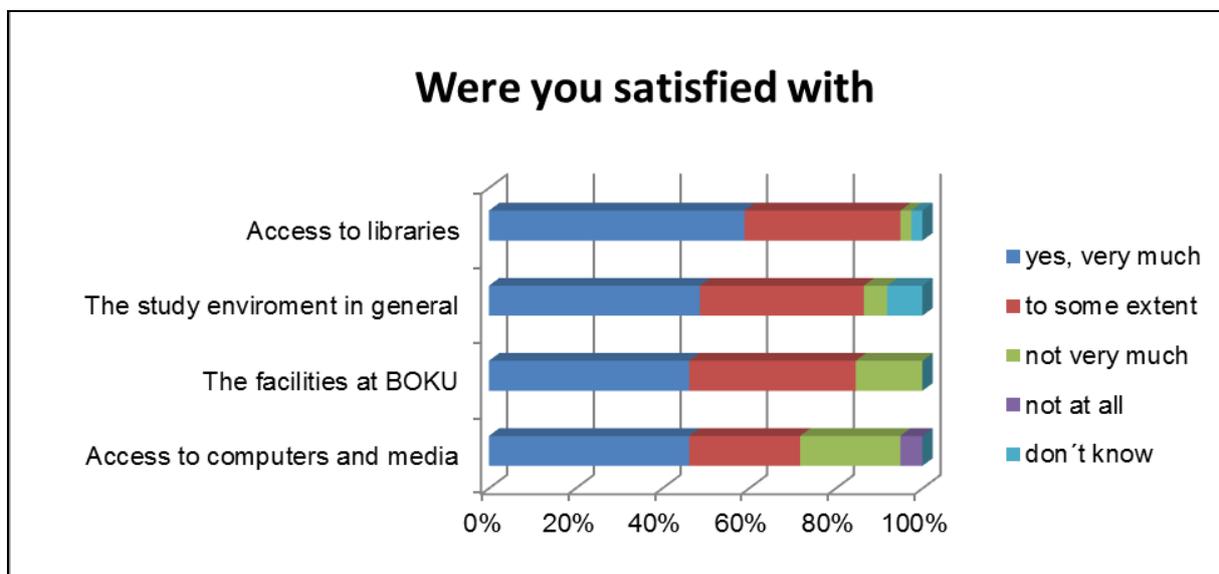


Figure 5 Satisfaction with infrastructure

5. Language

5.1 Experience with language problems

Language issues were not significantly frequent. Some students pointed out difficulties in understanding lectures in the classrooms and writing assignments, but 50% of them said language was not problematic to them.

5.2 German language course

Intensive German courses were generally taken before the arrival or, even more often, during the stay. Tandem was used only in few cases. Only one respondent learned the language on his own. As some students did not answer the question, we cannot know for sure through what means they learned the language.

6. Accommodation

6.1. Kind of accommodation

18 students lived in a student residence held by the OeAD while 6 students had a private accommodation. 12 others managed to get a student residence by themselves.



There were some complaints about the OeAD. Specifically, its fees were perceived as too high while the quality of its services was seen as mediocre. Besides, the rooms were said to be too small while expensive and poorly equipped. For some students, finding accommodation proved to be a very difficult task.

6.2 Most important things about accommodation

For incomings, the most important factors about the accommodation were price, condition and proximity to the university. Other important aspects were the nationality of their roommates/flatmates (Austrian or foreign) and closeness to the city centre.

7. Academic and personal outcome

7.1 Extension of stay at BOKU

In most of the cases, students had very high academic and personal outcomes of their stay at BOKU.

Most respondents would like to extend their stay or come back to Austria for further studies. They would also like to find a job or do an internship (see Figure 6).

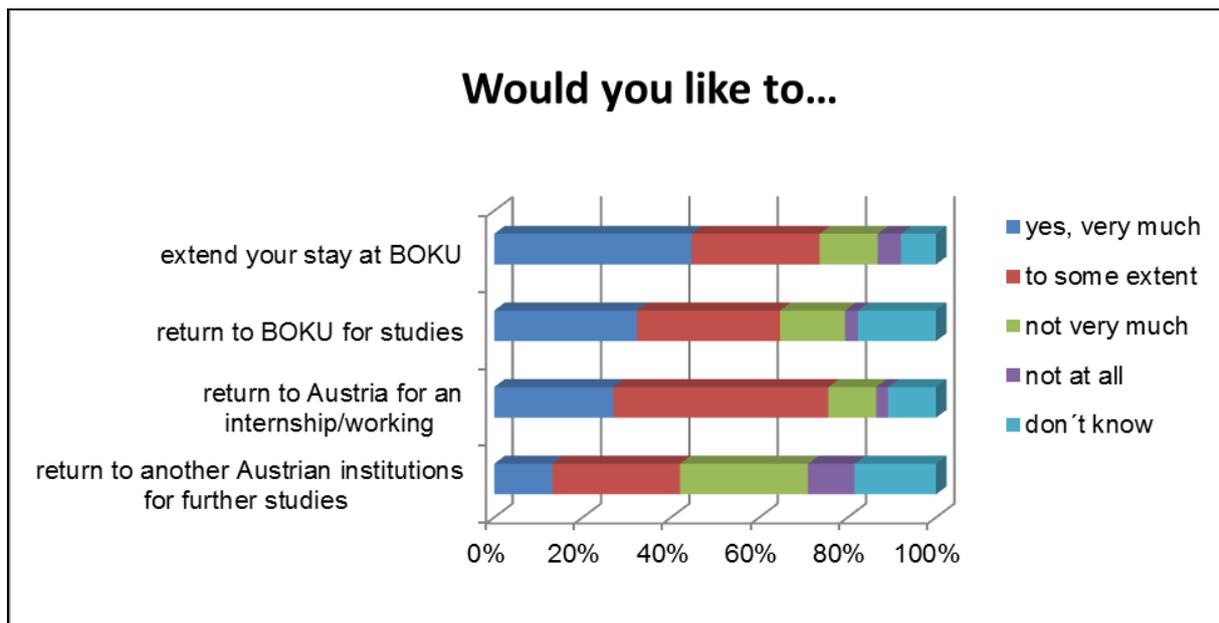


Figure 6 Future Plans

7.2 Situations that needed special attention

Most of the respondents did not answer this question and so might not have had any problems. Some responded that their stay was hard but interesting too and they recommended this experience to everyone. Just a few students had problems with the lectures, exams and finding a flat.

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

Everyone was convinced that ZIB does an excellent job. The only improvements should be in organizing more events (e.g. trips, international dinner, sport sessions, cultural night), to offer more German courses (German beginners for free), to have more lectures in English and more help to find an accommodation.

8. Nationality

The 39 students answering the survey came from 24 partner universities. 71% came to participate in regular course programme at BOKU for winter semester or worked on their thesis only (11%). The rest did not answer this question. Most of the students were from Germany, France and Poland (see Table 3).

Table 3 Country of origin

Nationality	Number of students
Germany	10
France	7
Lithuania	5
Poland	5
Czech Republic	3
Turkey	2
Belgium	1
Greece	1
Croatia	1
Slovenia	1