



**Information 2**  
**Study Preparation and Transition into**  
**Regular Degree Programmes**

---

**Integration of Refugees at German**  
**Institutions of Higher Education**

**Report on the Higher Education Programmes for Refugees**

**DAAD**

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

# LEGAL INFORMATION

---

## Published by

DAAD  
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service  
Kennedyallee 50, D-53175 Bonn, Germany  
Department for Higher Education Programmes for Refugees  
[www.daad.de/fluechtlinge](http://www.daad.de/fluechtlinge)

## Authors

Katharina Fourier (DAAD)  
Julia Kracht Araújo (DAAD)  
Katharina Latsch (DAAD)  
Anke Siemens (DAAD)  
Michael Schmitz (DAAD)  
Michael Grüttner (DZHW)

The DAAD wishes to thank the University Application Service for International Students (uni-assist e.V.) and the Society for Academic Preparation and Test Development (g.a.s.t.) for their collaboration and support in creating this publication.

**Designed by** DITHO Design GmbH, Cologne

**Printed by** msk marketingservice köln GmbH

**Translation by** Robert Brambeer, Titisee-Neustadt

**Edition** December 2018 – 1.000 copies

**Image rights** Dörthe Hagenguth/DAAD

© DAAD

This publication can be downloaded at no cost at  
<https://www.daad.de/der-daad/fluechtlinge/en/>

The programme on which this report and its publication is based has been funded by the DAAD with financing provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

SPONSORED BY THE



The DAAD is committed to using language which applies to both men and women to an equal degree. For reasons of readability, however, it was not possible to consistently use gender-equitable phrasing in this publication. Furthermore, the term “refugee” is not used in the legal sense in this publication, but as a generic term to represent all individuals who have fled their home countries, provided that no further differentiation is made according to their residence status.

The DAAD does not guarantee the accuracy and completeness of the information provided in this publication.

# Contents

---

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Participating organisations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Funding programmes</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 “Integra – Integrating Refugees in Degree Programmes”	10
3.2 “NRWege ins Studium”	11
<b>4. Data and methodology</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Reports	12
4.2 Survey of the 2016 cohort of Integra course participants	12
4.3 Analyses conducted uni-assist and g.a.s.t.	13
4.4 Methodology	13
<b>5. Funding recipient data</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1 Personal background	14
5.1.1. Country of origin, age, gender	15
5.1.2. Residence status	16
5.1.3. Academic background	16
5.2 Language skills	21
<b>6. Preparing student refugees for university</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1 Integra course participants by institution	24
6.2 Integra course participants by federal state	24
6.3 Types of courses offered	25
<b>7. Problems from the viewpoint of the universities</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8. Completion of the courses</b>	<b>32</b>
8.1 Study interests of the study participants	35
<b>9. About the programme “Welcome – Students Helping Refugees”</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>10. Summary and outlook</b>	<b>40</b>

# 1. Introduction

---

After more than one million refugees entered Germany in 2015, experts estimated that between 30,000 to 50,000 of them possessed the prerequisites for commencing or continuing their studies in Germany. No reliable data existed, as information on the refugees' academic status was not systematically collected upon entry. German universities were confronted with the enormous challenge of quickly preparing suitable measures that would welcome these prospective student refugees to the academic world and integrate them at their institutions. The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) allocated 100 million euros from 2016 to 2019 to create various structures which could optimally prepare these new arrivals for admission to a degree programme and successfully integrate them at their respective universities.

Today, three years later, it appears that these expectations were very close to the mark. According to the latest Higher Education Report by the Stifterverband, some 40,000 refugees will have enrolled at German university by 2020

In view of these developments, the DAAD's higher education programmes for refugees financed by the BMBF since 2016 have become more important than ever. In 2016, the first year of Integra funding, around 6,800 student refugees were financed so that they could attend preparatory courses at universities and preparatory colleges (Studienkollegs), and in 2017, some 10,400 individuals were financed. The DAAD anticipates a similar number of funding recipients for 2018 (around 10,000).

After three years of funding, the DAAD can now identify some initial trends. Although many universities do not ask students about their refugee status at enrolment for reasons of data protection, diverse studies have indicated that a growing number of student refugees are applying for admission to undergraduate programmes.

Every semester the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) conducts a survey of its 267 member universities each semester regarding their prospective students and students with a refugee background.<sup>1</sup> The results are based on estimates from the universities and thus do not rep-

---

<sup>1</sup> German Rectors' Conference. Prospective Students and Students with a Refugee Background at German Universities. Survey of HRK member universities in the summer semester 2018. October 2018. Accessible online: [https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-07-Internationales/HRK-Umfrage\\_Fluechtlinge\\_SS\\_2018\\_Erste\\_Ergebnisse\\_Veroeffentlichung\\_Website.pdf](https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-07-Internationales/HRK-Umfrage_Fluechtlinge_SS_2018_Erste_Ergebnisse_Veroeffentlichung_Website.pdf)

resent a statistical analysis. Nonetheless, a strong trend appears to be taking shape: while only 205 refugees enrolled in degree programmes in the winter semester 2015/16, enrolment increased more than tenfold in the winter semester 2017/18 to 2,915.

In view of the fact that Syrians comprise the largest group of refugees in Germany, it is also worth considering the number of Syrians studying in Germany. According to the student statistics released by the German Statistical Office (Destatis) for the winter semester 2017/18, Syria ranked sixth in the top countries of origin of foreign students at German universities. The year before, Syria was ranked at 16. From the winter semester 2016/17 (5,090 persons) to the winter semester 2017/18 (8,618 persons), the number of Syrians enrolled at German institutions of higher education rose 69.3%. If we look only at the number of first-time students in the winter semester 2017/18, the year-to-year growth rate was even higher at 98%. Even though these statistics comprise all foreign students irrespective of their refugee status, the figures indicate that more and more people from crisis regions are commencing their studies in Germany. We can assume that a majority of the Syrian students has a refugee background.

The needs of the universities are changing with the increasing refugee enrolment numbers. University preparatory courses are no longer enough; student refugees now require comprehensive academic supervision with advice services, instruction in methodology, technical language training, and assistance with gaining initial orientation on the labour market.

The following report is the second DAAD publication of data from its higher education programmes for refugees. Like the one released in November 2017, this progress report is based on data reported by the universities, which for the first time, has been validated and supplemented with surveys administered to student refugees from the first cohorts of Integra course participants.





## 2. Participating organisations

---

### German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is the world's largest organisation devoted to supporting international academic exchange. In addition to awarding scholarships to students and researchers, it promotes international cooperation between higher education institutions, strengthens the internationalisation efforts at German universities and provides its expertise for academic collaborations. One of its most important areas of responsibility is the integration and support of foreign students in Germany. Since the end of 2015, the DAAD has been helping universities integrate academically qualified refugees. This support is provided as part of a second package of measures from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) which facilitates access to higher education for refugees. The measures range from an initial assessment of skills and qualifications (by means of the TestAS academic aptitude test, the onSET language placement test and the free assessment procedure provided by the University Application Service for International Students (uni-assist e.V.)) to ensuring academic aptitude through study preparation measures (Integra programme) and, ultimately, integration into universities and degree programmes with support from student-initiated projects ("Welcome" programme). The programmes are regularly monitored which enables data to be collected and initial findings to be provided on the target group.

### The German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW)

The German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW) carries out application-oriented empirical research in the higher education and academic system. It is a partner and service provider for scientific policymakers and stakeholders in the academic sector. The data and analyses produced by the DZHW support policymakers, higher education institutions and academic administrators in shaping higher education in Germany and Europe.

The DZHW provides information which is vital for comprehensive, sustainable and evidence-based educational and higher educational policy. The DZHW is conducting the research project "WeGe – Refugees on Their Way into German Higher Education" with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). This project is the first to investi-

gate the conditions which effectively facilitate access to higher education for prospective student refugees. The study focuses on how the refugees' individual prerequisites and learning activities are interrelated, as well as the general framework of preparatory activities and social circumstances.

### **uni-assist e.V.**

The core task of the University Application Service for International Students (uni-assist e.V.) is the evaluation of international school and university certificates. For a processing fee, uni-assist examines whether school/university certificates acquired abroad generally qualify the applicant for admission to higher education in Germany, i.e. whether the applicant holds a university entrance qualification (Hochschulzugangsberechtigung). Uni-assist can assess further criteria upon request of its member universities, e.g. language proficiency or whether other relevant application documents have been submitted. While uni-assist carries out a formal examination of the application documents, the universities themselves are responsible for evaluating their content and making admission decisions.

A total of 186 German universities are currently members of uni-assist. Since March 2016, funding provided by the BMBF has enabled refugees to apply for admission to up to three universities per semester free of charge via uni-assist.

### **g.a.s.t. e.V.**

The Society for Academic Preparation and Test Development (g.a.s.t.) operates the TestDaF Institute and the Deutsch-Uni Online. This non-profit organisation is responsible for developing, administering and evaluating tests which measure the candidate's scholastic aptitude and performance in the higher education sector. These include the Test of German as a Foreign Language (TestDaF), the Aptitude Test for Academic Studies (TestAS) and the online German and English language placement test (onSET). In cooperation with LMU Munich, g.a.s.t. also manages the Deutsch-Uni Online (DUO) programme, a learning platform that



prepares candidates for the language-, subject- and propaedeutic-related tasks required by the TestDaF and during one's studies in Germany.

With support from the BMBF-funded programmes for refugees managed by the DAAD, g.a.s.t. offers the TestAS for refugees (also in Arabic) and the onSET for refugees in German and English at no charge.



## 3. Funding programmes

---

### 3.1 Integra – Integrating Refugees in Degree Programmes

The programme “Integra – Integrating Refugees in Degree Programmes” is part of a comprehensive package of measures launched by the BMBF and the DAAD at the end of 2015 in response to the growing number of refugees in Germany. The aim of the programme is to give refugees – irrespective of their residence status – the opportunity to prepare for university study in Germany in order to help them gain admission to a degree programme as quickly as possible. The universities and preparatory course providers (Studienkollegs) have the important task of advising prospective students with refugee backgrounds and preparing them for university study both in terms of language and subject matter. The Integra programme helps the institutions set up and/or expand their range of language and specialised courses, which are offered in preparation for or alongside the degree programmes. Integra also supports the expansion of necessary advisory structures.

Candidates who hold a foreign school-leaving certificate need a university entrance qualification (HZB) to gain admission to university. This certificate must be recognised as equivalent to

the German secondary school-leaving qualification, the Abitur. Leaving certificates are assessed differently depending on the educational system of the respective country. The necessary requirements for access to higher education are based on the assessments of the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB).

A distinction is made between direct and indirect university entrance qualification. With the first, direct access to higher education is possible; with the second, it is usually only possible to study in Germany after attending preparatory courses at a preparatory college (Studienkolleg). The preparatory courses consist of language instruction and subject-related courses. These prepare students for the Feststellungsprüfung (FSP), an assessment test to determine the eligibility of foreign applicants for study at German university. Passing the FSP entitles the candidate to be admitted to academic studies in Germany. In the Integra programme, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) provides funding to preparatory colleges via the DAAD to enable them to deliver additional courses for refugees.

Universities also receive funding through the Integra programme to develop and provide language and subject-related preparatory courses. Even if a refugee holds a recognised university entrance qualification and can directly apply for admission to a degree programme in Germany, their often arduous flight to safety sets their academic career plans months or even years back. Due to the unplanned escape to an uncertain destination, very few refugees have detailed knowledge of the German higher education system, let alone German language skills at an academic level. This is why preparatory

language courses at the higher education institutions, especially when combined with specialised courses, are a fundamental requirement for successful admission to, or the continuation of, a degree programme. They also make integration at university easier.

The verification of certificates demands a great deal of time and staff resources from the universities, which is also partially covered by Integra funding. In 2017 a total of 166 institutions of higher education throughout Germany received funding through the Integra programme.

### 3.2 NRWege ins Studium.

#### Integration of Refugees at the Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia

In 2017 the programme “NRWege ins Studium”, based on the integration model put forth by the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research (renamed the Ministry of Culture and Science following the parliamentary election in May 2017), began supporting academically qualified and interested refugees who hold a university entrance qualification for direct admission. In addition to funding university preparatory and

accompanying measures at thirty universities, the programme finances staff responsible for coordinating and expanding the advice and supervision structures at the universities. In order to provide a complete overview of the student refugee programmes and the target group of academically interested refugees, this report includes the latest figures on developments in the NRWege programme as well.

## 4. Data and methodology

---

### 4.1 Reports

The present report on preparation for academic studies and access to higher education for refugees is based on statistical data from 2017 which the DAAD has collected through the Integra programme. The universities supported by the programme are obliged to provide information to the DAAD annually in the form of a proof-of-use report, explaining how the funds have been allocated and setting out the content-related activities of the courses and measures. Using the content-related information in the report, the DAAD can assess whether actual implementation corresponds to the original planning and approval. This includes, for example, details on how many

students participated in the language courses, the language level they attained, whether there is additional need for advisory services and what type of courses were offered. The universities are also asked to provide further general information on course participants such as age, educational background, country of origin etc. It should be noted that the reports do not allow any statements to be made about refugees at German universities as a whole. The following analysis is based on information related to the 10,404 participants in Integra courses in 2017, which likely represents the majority of refugees taking part in preparatory measures for university study.

### 4.2 Survey of the 2016 cohort of Integra course participants

Because the DAAD does not grant individual funding to student refugees, but rather to the universities responsible for them, the DAAD normally has no direct contact to the group of funding recipients. However, in order to determine to what extent the measures are having a positive impact on the recipients' academic prospects, it is important to gather data directly from the target group. In March 2018, the DAAD conducted an online survey of the first cohort from 2016. A follow-up survey of the same group is planned at the beginning of 2019 in order to

learn more about their ongoing academic progress. There are multiple paths the candidates can take, and in order to account for as many as possible, the survey began with a section of general information, followed by five optional responses to the question "What are you doing at present?"

1. Degree programme
2. Study-preparatory courses
3. Vocational training
4. Employment/part-time work
5. Something else

The survey enabled the DAAD to draw conclusions from the students' experience in the preparatory and language courses, and in their degree programmes.

The data provided in the following report are based on the first survey administered to the cohort of 2016. A total of 5,846 persons were invited to take part, of whom 1,580 completed and returned the survey (27% response rate). Interestingly, many of the participants indicated

that they were currently enrolled in a degree programme (36%). This might be explained by the fact that a larger number of participants who had gained admission to a degree programme completed the survey than those who decided not to pursue an academic path following their preparatory course, or those who had dropped out before finishing. This should be taken into account when interpreting the results of the survey.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the data provided by the student refugees serves to supplement and validate the data contained in the university reports.

### 4.3 Analyses conducted by uni-assist and g.a.s.t.

As part of the funding measures which allow refugee applicants to take advantage of free testing services, g.a.s.t. and uni-assist collect statistical data on the participants and applicants which are then forwarded to the DAAD in the form of monthly reports. These reports contain general information about the participants, specifically the number of applicants, their gender, country of origin, and age, as well as project-specific details on language skills, their desired course of study and their success in gaining admission. Based on

this data, the DAAD can draw conclusions about the target group of academically interested refugees and gain an idea of how many prospective students with a refugee background are applying to German universities. The information supplements the data contained in the reports submitted by the universities. The data presented in this publication refer to the entire project duration from the beginning of 2016 until May 2018.

### 4.4 Methodology

The following analysis is based first and foremost on the data provided in the university reports. They form the foundation of consideration and, whenever it makes sense, are compared with the data from the previous year (2016) and interpreted accordingly.

The survey responses provided by the Integra course participants in 2017 are included whenever these provide additional scope to the data contained in the reports.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 18, section "In comparison – Background of the survey participants"



## 5. Funding recipient data

---

According to the university reports on the Integra programme, more refugees attended study-preparatory and, for the first time, accompanying measures at German universities and preparatory colleges in 2017 than the previous year. In 2016, Integra financed 6,806 refugees, and in 2017, 10,404. Because some participants attended multiple courses, the number of course places does not correspond with the number of financed student refugees. The total number of financed refugees whom the DAAD helped to gain access to higher education through its integration programmes exceeded 14,000 in 2016 and 2017 combined (17,210 course places). The

DAAD expects approximately the same number of funding recipients in 2018 as in 2017.

In addition to these, another 2,511 refugees received funding in 2017 through the state-funded “NRWege ins Studium” programme. The programme administrators expect to extend funding to just under 4,300 participants by the end of 2018. We can therefore assume that by the end of 2018, around 25,000 refugees in Germany will have attended or will be attending university preparatory courses financed through the DAAD refugee programmes. This corresponds to approximately 32,000 course places offered in total.

### 5.1 Personal background

Table: Overview of personal background (largest groups)

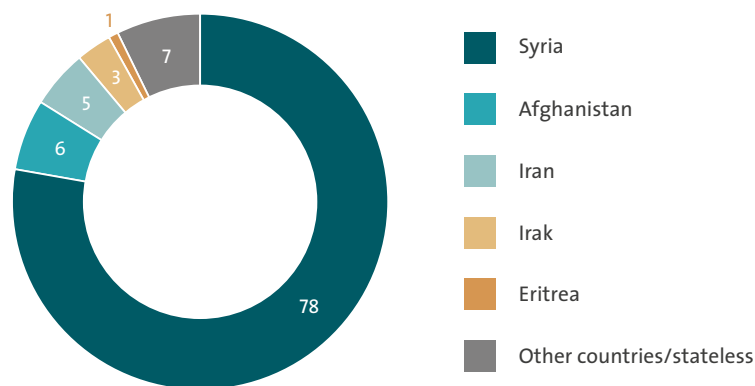
Country of origin	Syria	78 %
Gender	male	80 %
Age	average	28 years
Status	residence permit	56 %
Resident in German since	2015	70 %
Academic background	university experience	47 %

### 5.1.1 Country of origin, age, gender

The demographic background of the participants in 2017 is similar to that of the 2016 cohort. Prospective student refugees from Syria still represent the largest group with 78%. Their proportion compared to 2016 increased three percent.

The share of Iraqi and Afghan participants remained the same. The share of participants from Iran and other countries saw a slight decline. Altogether, 68 countries of origin were represented in total.

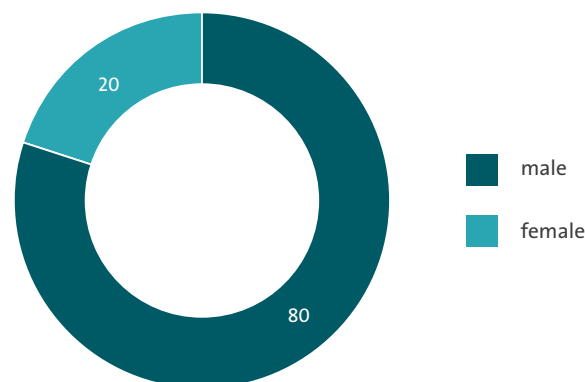
Fig.1 Countries of origin in 2017 in %



The gender distribution in 2017 remained largely unchanged but did see a slight increase of female refugees, now 20%. The increased average age of

the participants (28 years) is due to the fact that numerous study-preparatory participants from 2016 continued their courses the following year.

Fig.2 Gender distribution in 2017 in %

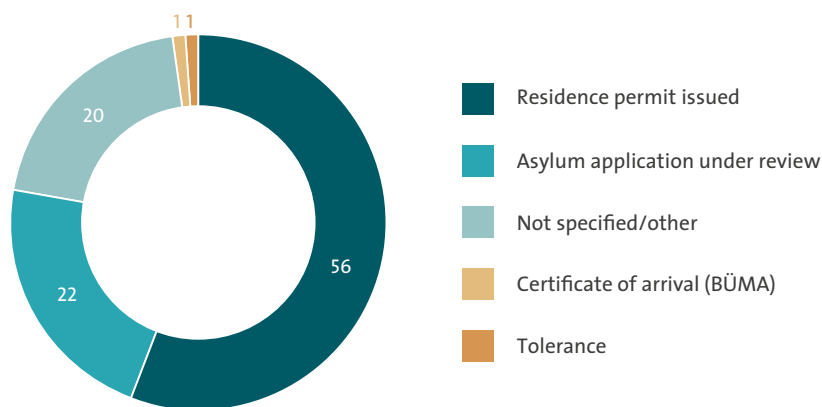


### 5.1.2 Residence status

More than half of the participants held a residence permit in 2017, and 22% were in the middle of the asylum recognition process. The universities do not always request information on residence status

after the courses have commenced nor keep it updated in their systems. Therefore, this data does not necessarily reflect the current situation.

Fig. 3 Residence status of Integra participants in 2017 in %



Although we do not know for certain when the participants of the Integra programme arrived in Germany, data provided by uni-assist, which reviews the refugees' application documents for free, reports that almost 85% of applicants with a refugee background came to Germany in 2015 or

earlier.<sup>3</sup> These figures do not directly apply to the participants of the Integra programme as they are not necessarily the same people. Nonetheless, one can surmise that the majority of Integra participants arrived in Germany prior to 2016/17.

### 5.1.3 Academic background

In 2016, 51% of the participants indicated that they had gained higher education in the form of a commenced or completed degree programme in their home country. In the following year, that number decreased to 47%, whereby 27% held a

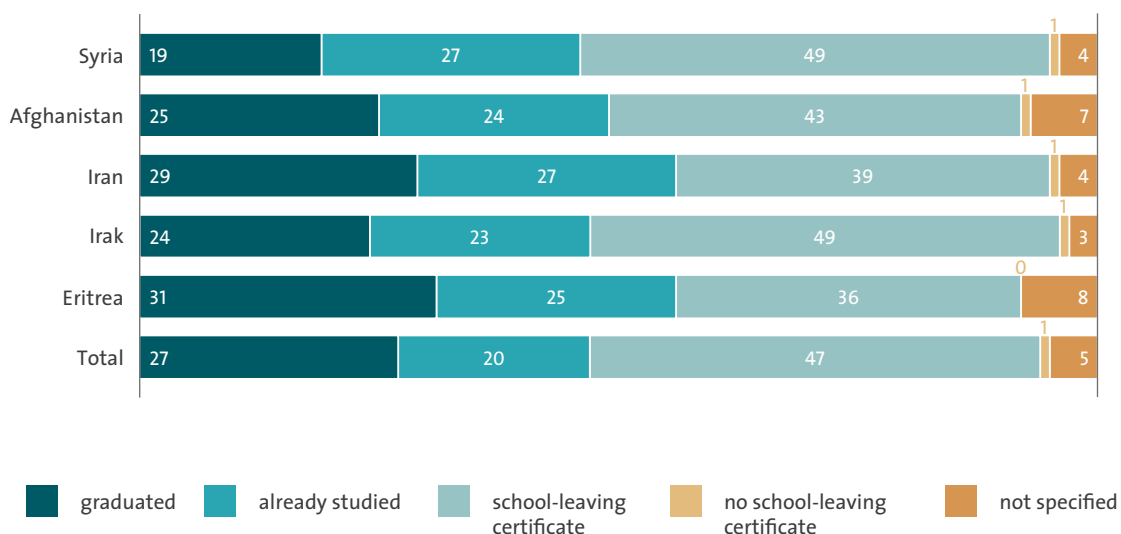
first-level university degree. It is conceivable that refugees who had studied in their home countries or had already completed an undergraduate programme would seek access to German higher education sooner than those who were only at

<sup>3</sup> This figure refers only to those persons who voluntarily indicated the date of their arrival on the fee exemption application form. .

the beginning of their academic careers. Not only would these individuals have to orientate themselves to a new higher education system, but also

determine where their personal academic path should take them.

Fig. 4 Prior education by country of origin, 2017 in%



Compared to 2016, there are some noticeable changes with respect to individual countries of origin. In 2016, 61% of the Iraqi participants indicated having some prior university experience, while in 2017, the number dropped to 47%. The Afghan participants were the only group to show a slight increase in university experience, from 45% to 49%. There was no significant difference between men and women in this regard.

The analyses by uni-assist essentially mirror the figures reported by the universities. Nineteen percent of the 11,613 candidates, whose applications uni-assist reviewed, possessed qualification for admission to a master’s programme, i.e. they had concluded their undergraduate studies. It should be noted, however, that a completed

programme in one’s home country does not automatically entitle the candidate to admission to a master’s programme in Germany. Another 54% had a university entrance qualification for direct admission, 13% had entrance qualification for indirect admission which entitled them to attend preparatory college. Only six percent of the participants were informed by uni-assist that admission to university would not be possible on account of having no university entrance qualification.

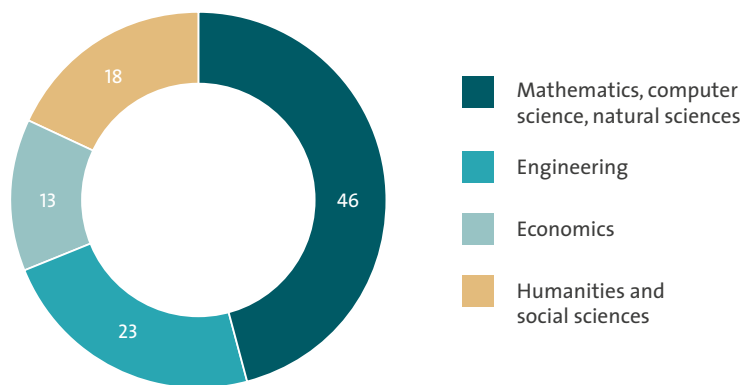
Approximately 44% of applicants each semester indicated having some prior university-level experience. That said, uni-assist can only assess such experience if the applicants present the relevant certificates, which is not necessary for

reviewing university entrance qualifications or applications for admission to bachelor's programmes. Uni-assist reports that the majority of applicants have prior experience in the engineering sciences (33%), followed by economics and law (24%) and medicine and health sciences (14%).<sup>4</sup>

The findings from the TestAS academic aptitude test for refugees presents a somewhat different

subject distribution. A total of 8,612 refugees have registered for the TestAS so far. Though 23% of the test participants selected the subject module in engineering, only 13% completed the economics module. The most commonly chosen subject module is by far mathematics, computer science and the natural sciences with 46% (prior academic experience in the subject area of mathematics/natural sciences is only 11% according to uni-assist).

Fig. 5 Distribution of test participants by TestAS subject module in %



Although there is certainly a degree of overlap, it bears noting that the applicants at uni-assist are not necessarily the same individuals who have taken the TestAS. Some refugees take the TestAS but do not apply through uni-assist, and vice versa. Moreover, the choice of subject module reflects the student's desired subject of study at

the German universities and does not necessarily correspond with his/her prior subject of study. The TestAS assesses the candidate's general and subject-group related aptitude for undergraduate study during the transition from secondary school to university.

### In comparison – Background of the survey participants

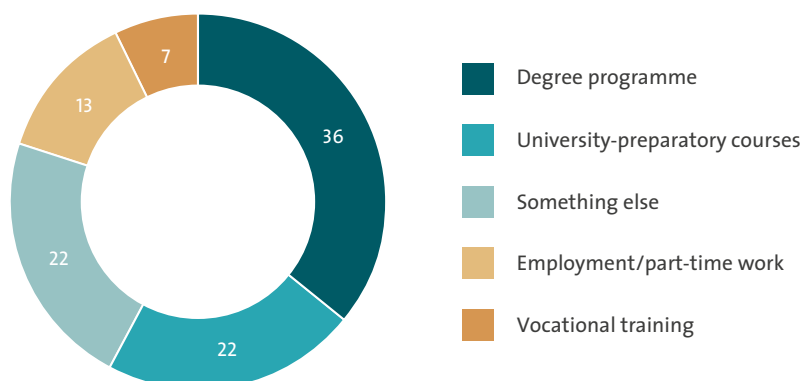
The largest group of survey participants, 36% (566 persons) indicated they were currently enrolled in a degree programme. Twenty-two percent (353 persons) indicated they were attending study-preparatory courses, 13% (203 persons)

were employed or working part-time, and seven percent (117 persons) were completing vocational training. Another 22% (341 persons) responded that they were doing "something else".

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of data collected from SS 2017 to SS 2018; applicants were counted multiple times if they applied for more than one semester.



Fig. 6 **What are you doing at present?**  
in%



Out of those who responded “Something else”, 59% (203 persons) indicated that they had already completed their degree programme. In the follow-up question to this response, the persons in this category indicated that they were either looking for a job after graduation, taking parental leave, completing an internship or professionally related German course, or pursuing a doctoral degree.

The reasons most respondents gave for dropping out of preparatory courses without subsequent admission to university and terminating their studies was an attractive job offer with the possibility of an immediate career start, or the fact they failed a German language examination.

In addition, 63% (131 persons) of those who indicated that they were employed had likewise completed their degree programme and successfully transitioned into professional life.

The results of the survey largely correspond to the results of the university reports with respect to the respondents’ country of origin and gender: 72% come from Syria and 17% are female. What is

striking, however, is the differences in academic background. A total of 78% of the survey’s participants indicated that they had already studied at university in their home country or in another country. Almost half (43%) had already earned their degree. In the group of those currently studying in Germany, 73% stated that they had studied in their home country. Only 29% claimed to have already earned a degree in their home country.

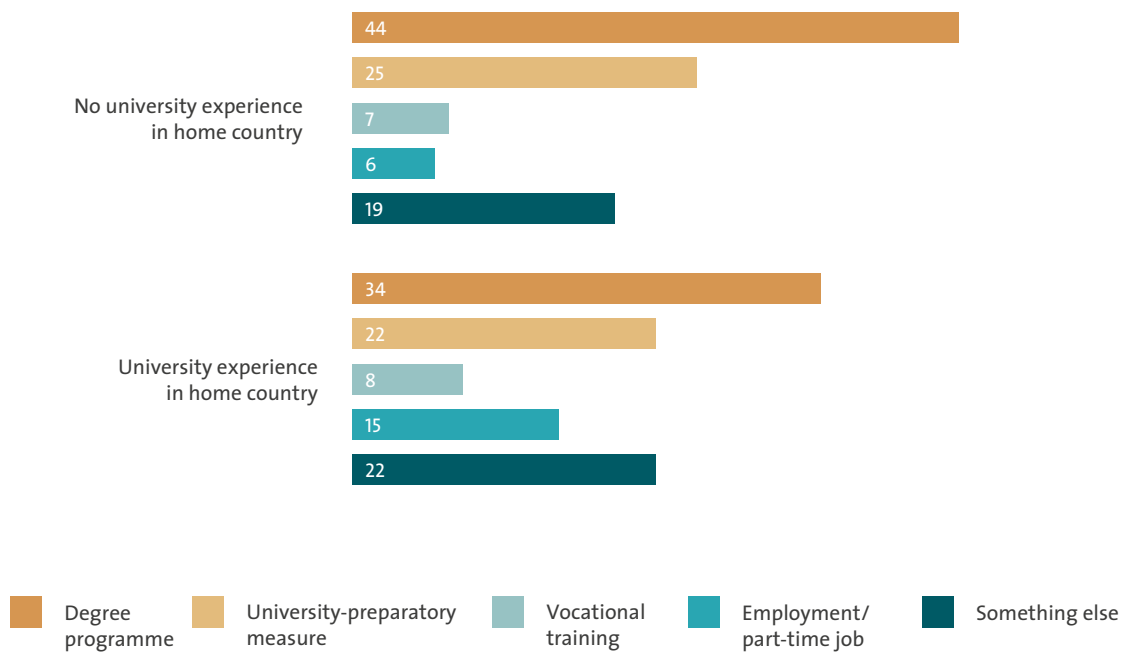
Regardless of whether refugee students had already studied in their home country or not, this appears to have no effect on the university admission figures in Germany. In fact, the group of candidates without prior university experience (44%) exceeds those who already have such experience. This could be due to the fact that some must still complete study-preparatory measures before they are permitted to continue their studies in Germany. This accounts for 22% of those with prior background in higher education.

Former Integra course participants with prior university experience were more likely to indicate that they were employed or doing something else than those without prior university experi-

ence. It is likely that some of these respondents had nearly completed their degree programmes in their home country before fleeing, and thus

had already earned their degree in Germany and entered the work force at the time they filled out the survey.

Fig. 7 **Enrolment in degree programmes in Germany with and without prior university experience<sup>5</sup>**  
in %



The results of the survey clearly show that those who arrived in Germany around 2015 had not enrolled in a regular degree programme before 2017 (519 responses). This may be due to the fact that the refugees had to first learn German before they were eligible to apply for admission

to a degree programme. In 2016, most prospective student refugees were attending a language course at a university. The general and academic orientation phase certainly influenced the start of their studies as well.

<sup>5</sup> Deviations from 100% are caused by rounding.

### Factbox NRWege

The 2,511 participants in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) come from 37 countries worldwide. Syrian participants comprise 87% of these – a larger majority than the national average. However, the share of female refugees comprised just 17% of the total – below the average female participation in the Integra programme. Only the universities in NRW reported a higher proportion of women in their programmes at over 20%. The participants are just over 26 years old on average when they begin the programme, and more than three-quarters hold a residence permit. A total of 57% possessed prior university experience or had obtained an undergraduate degree in their home country – higher than the national average.

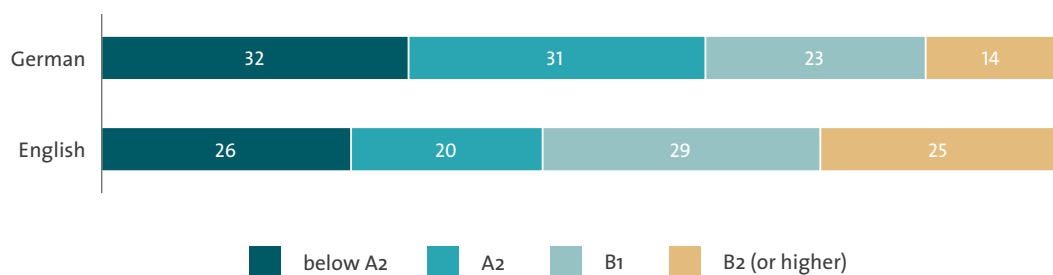
## 5.2 Language Skills

About 77% of all participants choose to take TestAS for refugees in Arabic, whereby the large majority of these are of Syrian (79%) and Iraqi origin (3%). English used to be the second most commonly chosen language, but now 12% of the participants take the TestAS in German and 11% in English.

The language assessment test onSET-Deutsch provides information about the German lan-

guage skills of refugees who wish to study. The test, taken by 5,560 persons, is used by universities and educational institutions for determining the students' language proficiency for placement in language courses. It can also be administered on an individual basis. Therefore, it is impossible to say with certainty when the test was taken during the student's language learning phase.

Fig. 8 onSET test results  
in %



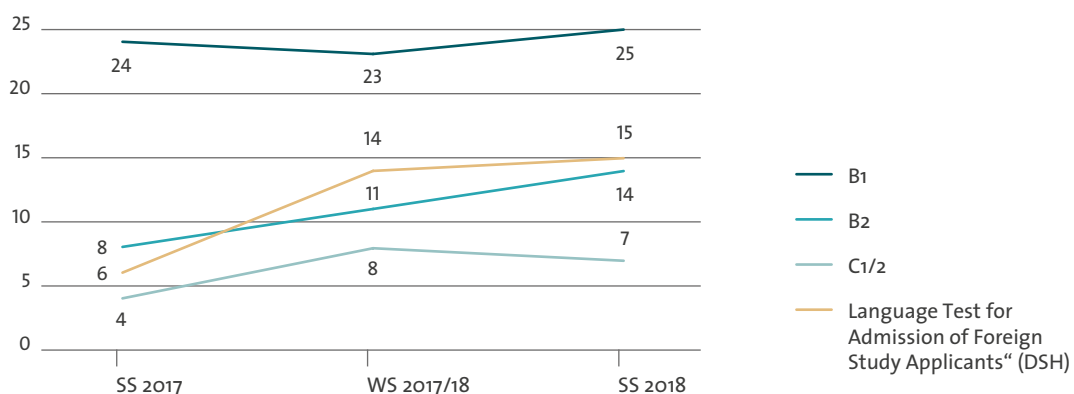
Just under two-thirds of the participants received an A2-level test score or lower. Slightly less than one quarter achieved the B1 language proficiency level – the level certified upon successful completion of an integration course. onSET is a language test explicitly designed to assess language proficiency based on the levels provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (GER).

The English language proficiency level among refugees is better than the German level. Here we see 25% achieving a B2 level (or higher), and another 29% a B1 intermediate language level. Although a lower number of English-language tests were administered (566), the results provide reasonable grounds to believe that English – an indispensable prerequisite for most degree programmes – could present an obstacle to refugees in their studies.

Uni-assist has seen an improvement of the submitted language certificates from semester to semester. Naturally, this only applies to those

applicants who submitted a language certificate, which is not required for carrying out a basic assessment of the applicant's university entrance qualification. Among those applying for enrolment to degree programmes in the winter semester 2017/18, uni-assist has seen an increasing percentage of applicants who have submitted language certificates (TestDaF, DSH, Telc C1, Goethe-Zertifikat) with scores sufficient for gaining admission.<sup>6</sup> In the application procedure for the summer semester 2018, these comprised 15%, and another seven percent possessed a C1 language level or higher, enabling them to take the corresponding test. A likewise increasing number of applicants attained a B2 language level. Most of the applicants, however, had an intermediate language level (B1) with which they were eligible to participate in study-preparatory measures at their respective university. Only a small percentage of applicants submitted language certificates confirming proficiency under a B1 level. Around one third provided no information about their current language level.

Fig. 9 Certified language level in applications reviewed by uni-assist<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Analysis based on scores of tests starting at TestDaF 16, DSH-2, Telc C1 and Goethe-Zertifikat C2. Some degree programmes may prescribe higher language knowledge requirements.

<sup>7</sup> B1 level and higher

## 6. Study-preparatory courses for refugees

Far more refugees are interested in pursuing a degree than the number who actually enrolled in study-preparatory measures at universities. Some 45,000 refugees received academic consultation at universities and preparatory colleges in 2017.<sup>8</sup> Compared to the previous year, the number of consultations remained practically unchanged and even slightly increased.

	Total	Universities	Preparatory colleges
Number of consultations	45.386	36.326	9.060
Number of applications	21.305	16.591	4.714
Rejection rate (%)	50	48	57
Number of participants	10.404	8.324	2.081

A total of 21,305 persons applied for a place in study-preparatory or subject-specific courses at preparatory colleges. About 50% of all applicants were rejected, and the success rate at preparatory colleges was notably lower than at universities. The admission requirements at preparatory colleges apply to refugees as they do to all regular international applicants. This means that student refugees must possess a B1 language level or higher to be eligible for admission, which is substantiated by an entrance examination. Depending on the preparatory college, applicants must also pass examinations to substantiate subject-specific qualification, in most cases, in mathematics. Universities, on the other hand,

are better able to flexibly react to the applicants' given language levels and can arrange corresponding courses for refugees. At both types of institutions, however, insufficient qualification was the most common reason for rejection. For universities, a lack of financial resources, as well as a shortage of or insufficient number of teaching staff and/or rooms were other important factors which resulted in one third rejecting applicants (multiple responses possible). There was some degree of overlap in the reasons for rejection, as applicants were often selected on the basis of academic criteria due to the limited number of places in the courses.

<sup>8</sup> The data is based in part on estimates by the universities. Consequently, multiple counts are possible.

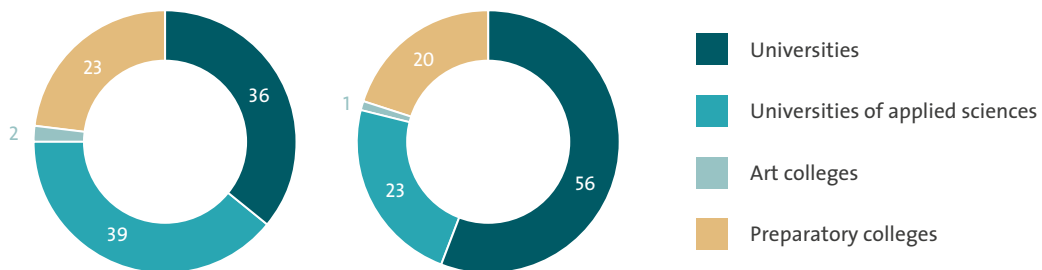


## 6.1 Integra course participants by institution

A total of 166 institutions received Integra funding in 2017, of which 127 were universities and 39 were preparatory colleges. In most cases, funding went to continuing projects which began in 2016.

As in the previous year, the majority of participants (56%) attended courses at universities. The share of those enrolled at preparatory colleges slightly increased to 20%, while 23% attended courses at universities of applied sciences.

Fig. 10 Integra projects by institution / Integra course participants by institution in%

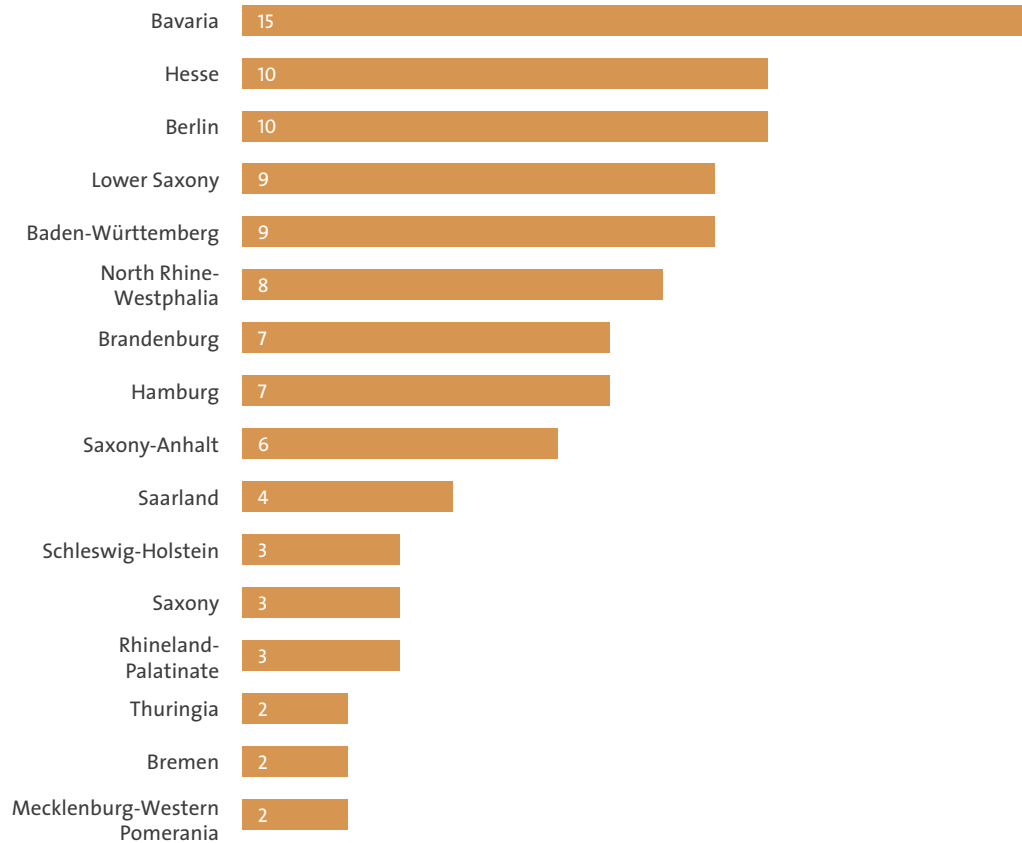


## 6.2 Integra-Kursteilnehmer nach Bundesland

As in the previous year, most refugees in 2018 attended Integra courses at universities and preparatory colleges in Bavaria (15%), Hesse (10%) and Berlin (10%). A noticeable change occurred in North Rhine-Westphalia where the number of Integra participants dropped seven percentage

points to eight percent in 2017. This is not due to a decrease in student refugees, but rather to the fact that numerous participants in study-preparatory courses received funding through the “NRWege ins Studium” programme in 2017.

Fig. 11 **Integra course participants by federal state**  
in %

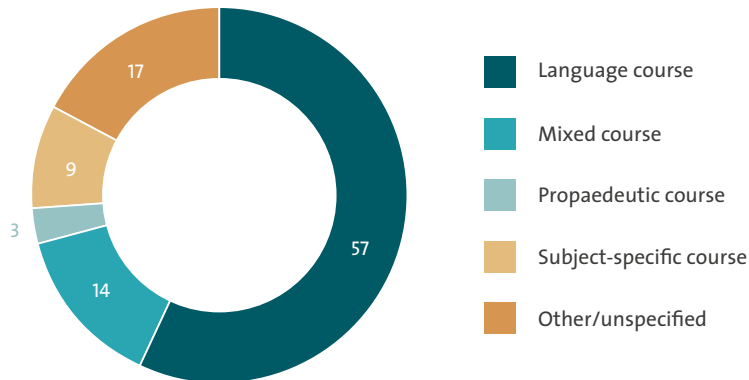


### 6.3 Types of courses offered

Language courses, along with mixed courses of subject-specific and German language preparation, are still the most commonly offered courses in the Integra programme. This underscores the extremely important and elementary role that language instruction plays for gaining admission to German university. For the first time in 2017, Integra financed accompanying courses to provide ongoing support to those who commenced their studies after successfully completing preparatory courses or externally offered courses.

However, such accompanying courses comprised only six percent of all Integra courses in the first year. On one hand, students with a refugee background can also take advantage of regular accompanying courses offered at the universities, and on the other, the demand for study-preparatory courses remains high. As the number of enrolled student refugees increases, it is likely that the demand for accompanying courses will also rise in the medium term.

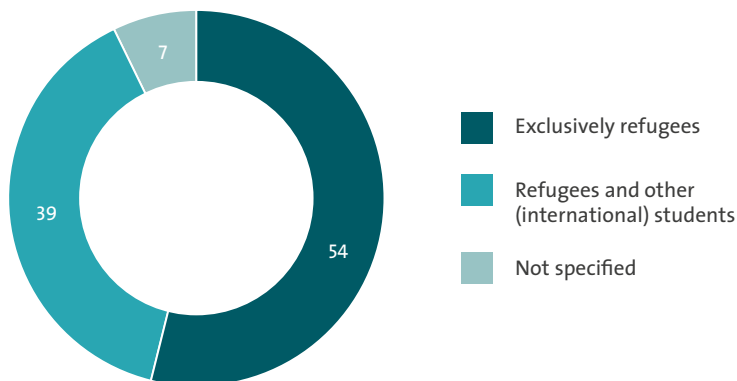
Fig. 12 **Integra course participants by course type, 2017**  
in%



More than half of the offered courses were exclusively targeted at refugees, while about 40% had refugees placed in classes with regular international students and student applicants. This was also the case in the subject-specific courses offered at the preparatory colleges. The chance that universities offered international

classes usually depended on whether the corresponding courses had already been established at language centres or similar facilities. This was normally the case at large universities. Once study-preparatory measures for refugees were established to this extent, the participant group was usually comprised of refugees only.

Fig. 13 **Integra courses by participant type**  
in%

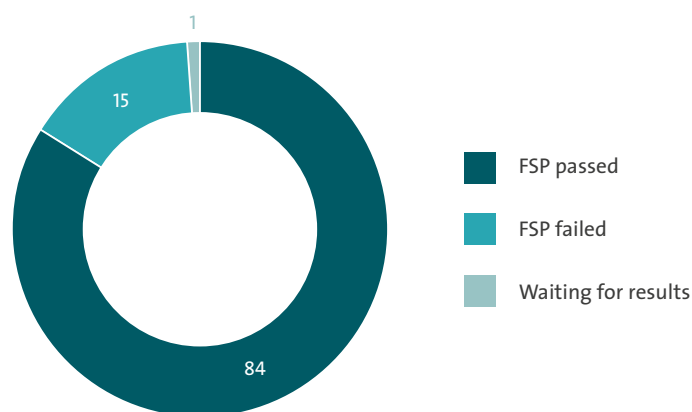


### In comparison: Study-preparatory courses attended by survey participants

Fifteen percent of the survey participants attended a study-preparatory course at a preparatory college (20% of the Integra course participants). Two thirds of the participants took

the qualification assessment examination (Feststellungsprüfung - FSP), which an overwhelming majority (84%) passed.

Fig. 14 Results of the qualification assessment examination (FSP) in %



Taking study-preparatory courses at a preparatory college apparently gives participants the sense that they are just as prepared to meet the challenges of university study as those who have attended a preparatory course at a university. Half of the now enrolled students (50%) think that the subject-related demands of their programmes are exactly right. Among those who

attended a preparatory college, the rate is even higher at 55%. Thirty-five percent of preparatory college participants and 40% of university-based preparatory courses felt that the subject-related demands of their programme were too high and predicted that they would require support during their studies to successfully meet these.

## 7. Problems from the viewpoint of the universities

---

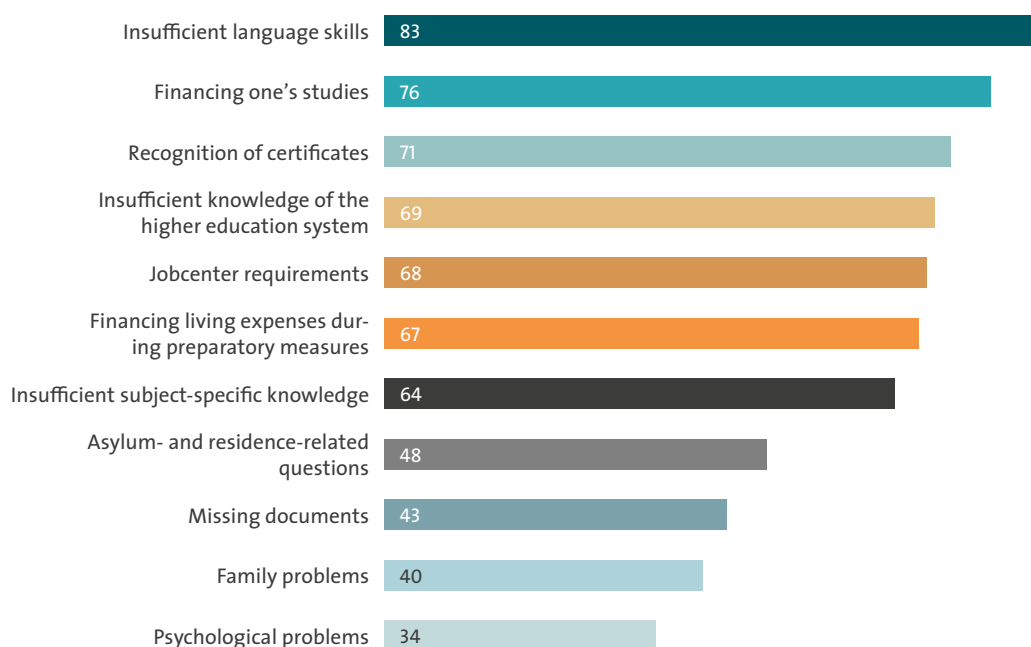
The universities reported that as increasing numbers of student refugees arrived and special services were created for them, the advice staff of the universities and preparatory colleges were confronted with a variety of topics which refugees grapple with at the beginning of their studies. These basically resemble the questions and problems that regular international students, and to some extent, also German students, encounter at the start of their programmes: How do I finance my studies? How does a German university work? What are my next steps? How can I improve my German language skills?

Even if the questions are similar, the answers differ greatly from those routinely offered to international students, e.g. concerning BAföG funding. Moreover, some issues specifically apply to refugees, and there are special agencies and representatives who are responsible for them. Such issues include refugee-specific Jobcenter requirements, financing living expenses while participating in study-preparatory measures, and asylum- and residence-related legal matters. Refugees with their numerous and complex bureaucratic obstacles clearly comprise a special group for the advice and counselling offices at universities.

At both the preparatory colleges and universities, the most commonly discussed topic in consultations is the participants' lack of or insufficient level of German language ability. Language proficiency is apparently the greatest hurdle that the participants must overcome to commence their studies. A lack of subject-related knowledge is less often a topic of discussion. This could be due to the fact that problems with subject-specific qualification usually crop up during one's degree programme or become more obvious after gaining a firmer grasp of German. Furthermore, International Offices and language teaching centres are not a suitable address for such questions.

Financing one's studies is the second most commonly discussed topic in consultations. Although students often seek advice on how to cover living expenses while attending study-preparatory measures, support is generally provided by the Jobcenter in many cases. However, both refugees and universities alike often discuss the conditions and requirements attached to securing such financing.

Fig. 15 **Topics of consultation at universities**  
in %, multiple responses possible



The frequency of consultations on financing indicates that student refugees are occupied with financial matters prior to and during their study-preparatory courses. Furthermore, as more and more refugees enrol in degree programmes following study preparation, they are having to deal concretely with the issue of financing. Other important matters like the recognition of certificates or lack of knowledge about the German higher education system also indicate that student refugees continue to require general orientation about the educational system. Missing

academic documents do not appear to be such a pressing problem even though related questions occasionally arise.

Many refugees also approach university advisors for help with personal issues, specifically familial and psychological problems. About one third of universities reported that such issues were frequently discussed in consultations. The fact that refugees are turning to universities for help with these matters could indicate that there is a general shortage of support services in this area.

Almost half of the universities continue to advise student refugees in asylum and residence-related matters.

Advisors at the preparatory colleges report that aside from insufficient language skills, a frequent problem encountered by students is the question of how to finance living expenses during the study-preparatory measures. While attending preparatory college, participants occasionally gain regular admission to universities. This also applies to refugees with the result that the Job-center can no longer support them. The possibility of securing scholarship funding depends on other regulations and is defined by the so-called "BAföG for pupils" whose funding rates do not

fully cover one's cost of living. Another frequently discussed problem at preparatory colleges is the lack of subject-specific knowledge. This often comes up ahead of the entrance examination as applicants are confronted with potential subject-relevant deficits which could result in the rejection of their application.

The fact that the areas listed above were reported by at least one third of the universities show that university advisors are encountering a diverse area of questions and problems which often lie beyond the scope of their regular expertise. Moreover, it clearly illustrates that the refugees' path at the university remains obstructed by numerous hurdles.

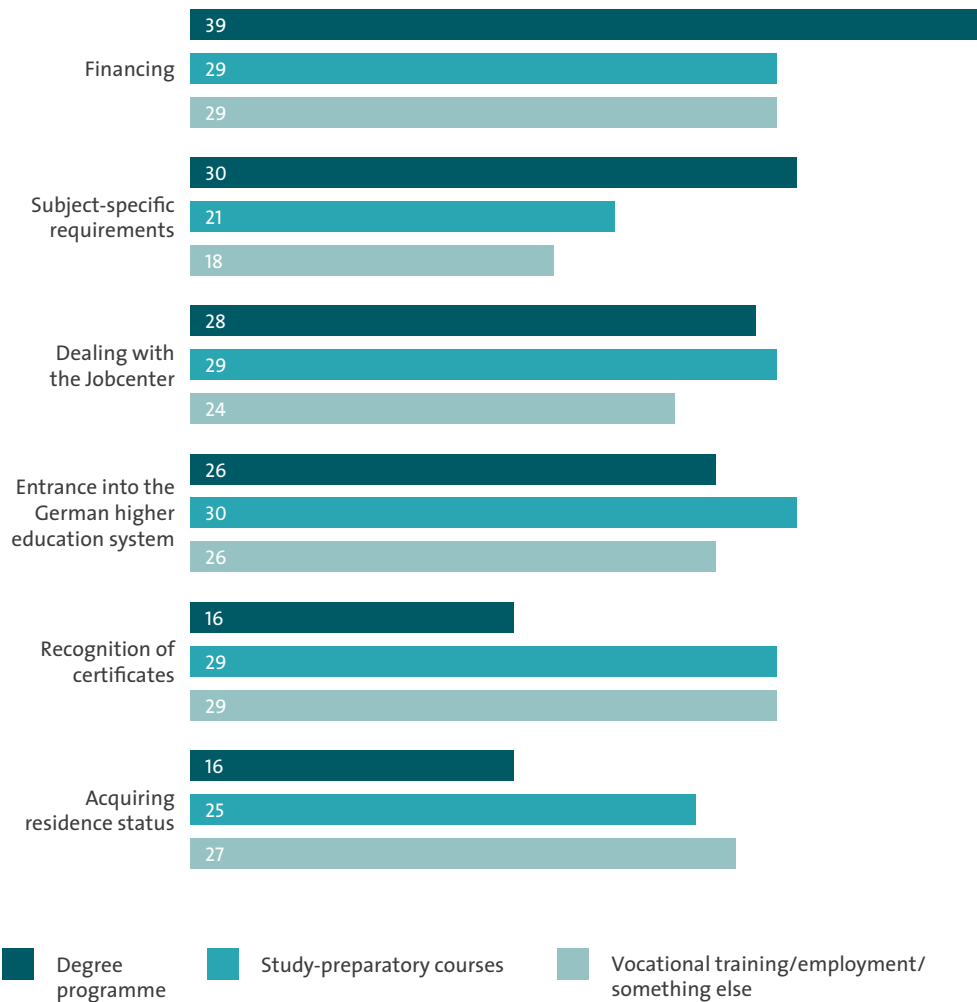
### **In comparison: Advising issues/problems from the viewpoint of the survey participants**

Financing one's living expenses was the most commonly mentioned problem among enrolled students (39%, multiple responses possible). Those who were currently attending study-pre-

paratory courses most frequently stated that entrance into the German higher education system was problematic.



Fig. 16 **Problems by phase**  
in %, multiple responses possible



Seventy-four percent of the currently enrolled, former Integra course participants finance their studies (exclusively or in part) with BAföG. One third supplemented their finances with a part-time job. The employment rate among foreign students in 2016 was just under 50%.<sup>9</sup> A smaller percentage of refugees covered their living expenses with their own savings, support from their families, the Jobcenter or other social benefits. And a very low number named small loans and mini-jobs as sources of income.

When asked about why their BAföG applications were turned down, the most common reasons participants gave were the commencement of a degree programme in their home or third country – usually in connection with changing their major in Germany, their current residence status and the age limit of 30 years.

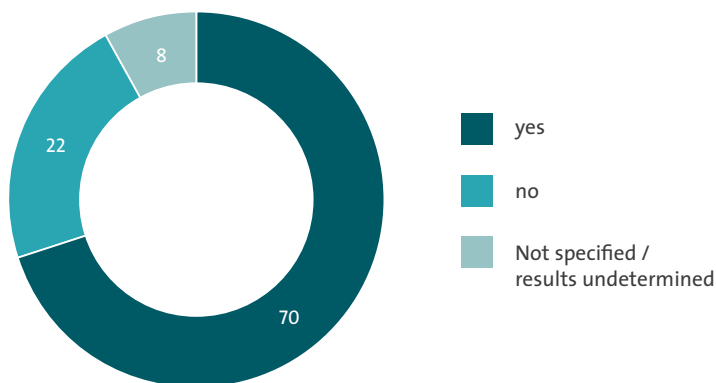
9 Apolinarski & Brandt 2018. Ausländische Studierende in Deutschland 2016. BMBF.

## 8. Completion of the courses

The universities reported that 70% of the course participants in 2017 had achieved the goal of the course, i.e. passed the examination. Twenty-two percent failed to achieve the course goal, and for

the remaining eight percent, either no information was given, or the results of the examination were not known at the time of the survey.

Fig. 17 Achievement of the course goal by course participant in %



Compared with the results of 2016, we observe an increase in the achieved language level among the Integra course participants. Twenty percent of the participants had achieved a C1 level (only ten percent in 2016) or passed the TestDaF or DSH examination. There was a slight increase in

the number who had achieved the B2 level. One of the reasons for the higher language level is certainly that many of the participants in 2017 had already completed language preparatory courses in 2016 and had further improved their language level since then.

Fig. 18 **Achieved language level**  
in%



### Factbox NRWege

In 2017, a total of 2,511 persons were prepared for university study at 30 universities in North Rhine-Westphalia. At present, 14% are still attending ongoing measures. Out of those who have completed their study-preparatory courses, almost half achieved the C1 language level necessary for admission to their degree programmes or had already passed a recognised language examination. Three quarters of the participants had achieved at least a B2 level which improved their prospects of admission in the medium term. Of those who immediately gained admission to a degree programme at the same university following their study-preparation course, approximately 80% had enrolled in an undergraduate programme, while around 20% were granted admission to a master's programme.

### In comparison: Language level and study preparation of the survey participants

Fifty-one percent of former Integra participants who had begun their studies felt they were “well” or “very-well” prepared for study in terms of language level. In the group of those still attending study-preparatory measures, 60% felt this way. This is surely due to the fact that the participants had not yet encountered the real-world language challenges of studying and therefore subjectively assessed their individual language level higher. In both groups, only four percent (in

study-preparatory courses) and eight percent (in degree programmes) felt “poorly” or “very poorly” prepared for study with regard to language level.

Usually participants who favourably assess their language preparation also assess their subject-specific preparation higher; 70% of those who felt well or very well prepared in terms of language level also considered themselves well or very well prepared for meeting the sub-

ject-specific demands of their respective degree programmes. Just under one half of the now enrolled student refugees (46%) felt well or very well prepared for university study, and another 42% felt somewhat well prepared. Only ten percent felt poorly or very poorly prepared which actually reflects the high quality of language instruction at the universities.

Whether the participants had or hadn't already studied in their home country had no effect on their personal assessment of their language and subject-specific preparation. Integra participants

with and without prior study experience who had since enrolled in a degree programme in Germany shared an equally favourable assessment of their language and subject-specific preparation. This would suggest that the study-preparatory courses have a greater influence on how well prepared for study the participants feel than whether they had already studied in their home country. Moreover, these measures play a crucial role in that they evidently represent an important stepping stone for getting off to a successful academic start.

Fig. 19 Assessment of language preparation for study at the start of a degree programme in Germany in%

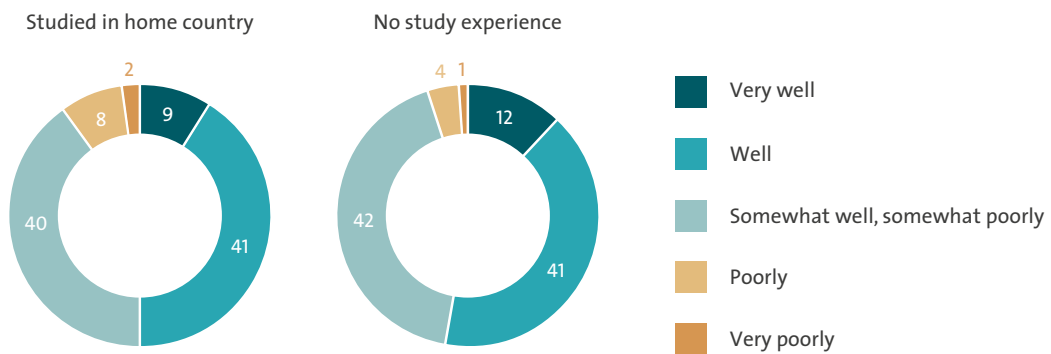
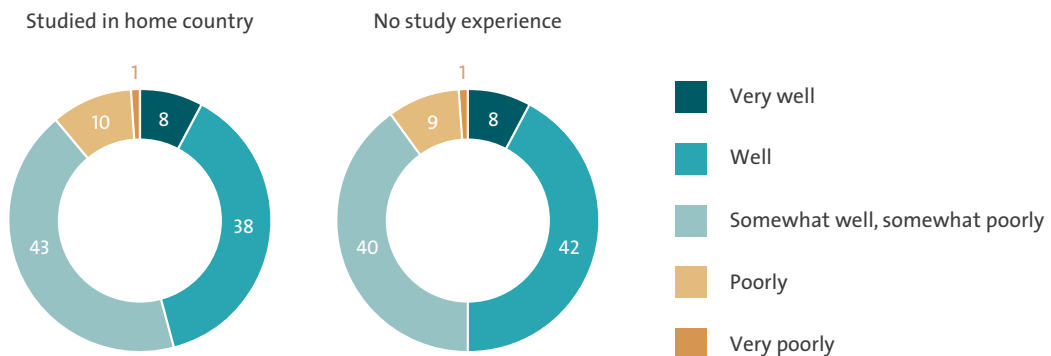


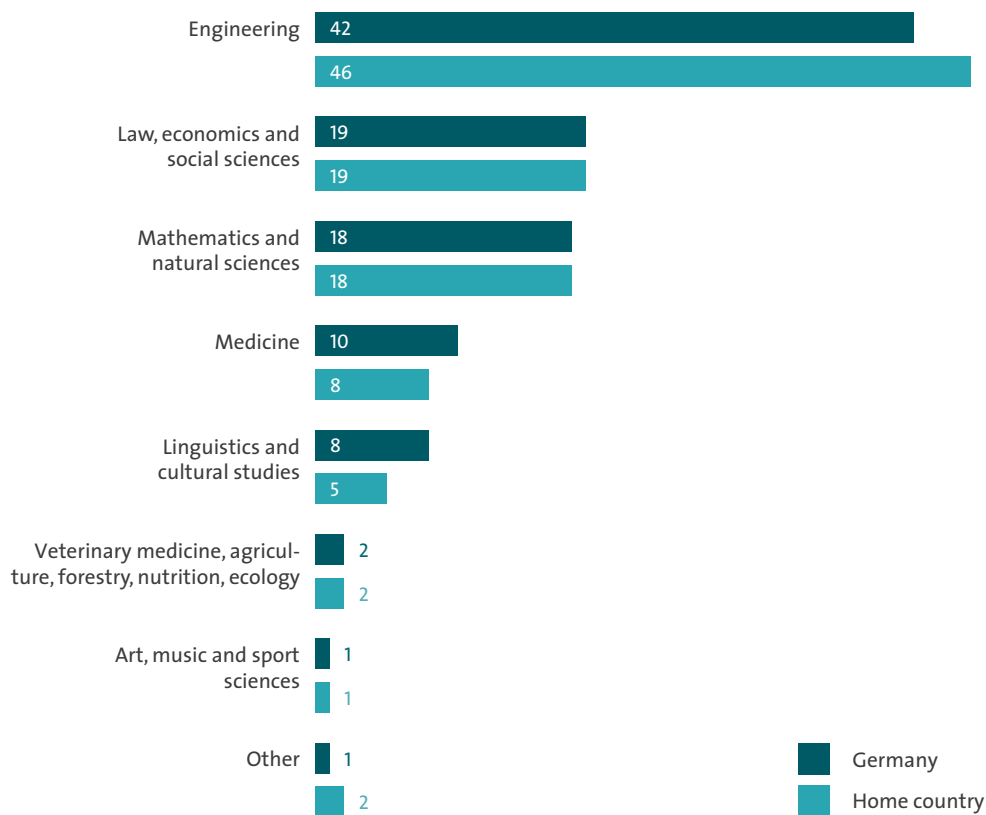
Fig. 20 Assessment of subject-specific preparation for study at the start of a degree programme in Germany in%



## 8.1 Study interests of the survey participants

The most commonly studied subjects among the survey participants in their home countries and in Germany were engineering (46%/42%), followed by law, economics and social sciences (19%/19%) and mathematics and natural sciences (18%/18%).

Fig. 21 Studied subjects in the participant's home country and in Germany<sup>10</sup> in %



A total of 379 survey participants provided information about the subjects they had studied in their home countries and currently in Germany. From this, we can draw concrete conclusions about how often they changed degree programmes. Apart from human medicine (change rate of only seven percent), we found that participants frequently changed to a different major

in Germany from the one they had studied in their home country. The change rate in all subject areas ranged between 17% and 57%.

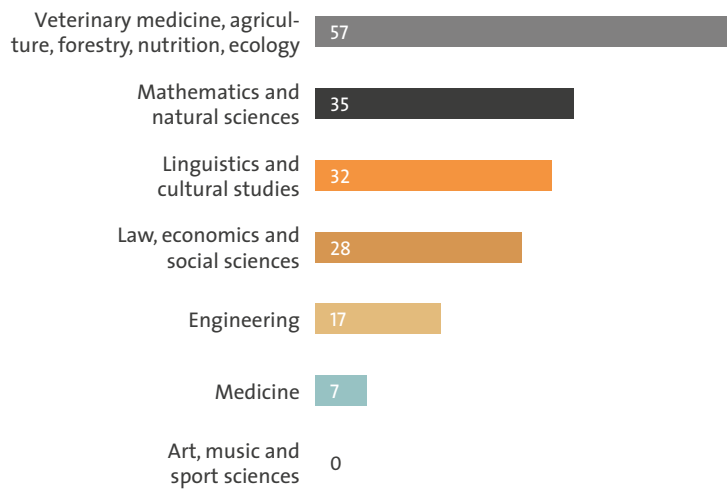
Despite the high change rate, the distribution of studied subjects in Germany compared to that in their home countries remained relatively stable and showed only a slight variation in percentage.

<sup>10</sup> Deviations from 100% are caused to rounding..

However, switching to a different degree programme can result in being ineligible for BAföG

support. This, in turn, means that many refugees find themselves unable to finance their studies.

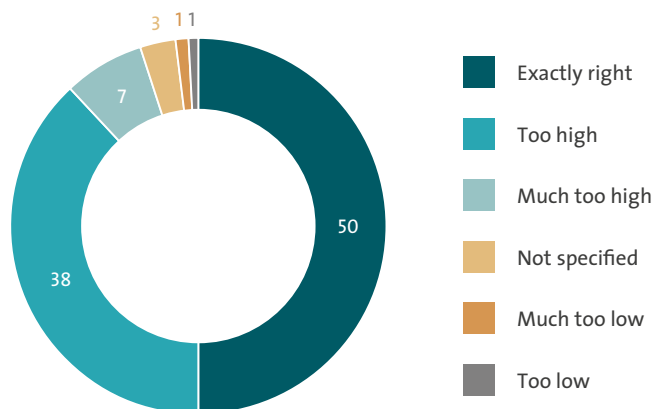
Fig. 22 Changes in degree programmes by subject area in %



Most of the currently enrolled student refugees (60%) are pursuing a bachelor’s degree, and one in four would like to earn a master’s. Ten percent are interested in passing the state examination, two percent are pursuing a doctorate, while four percent indicated “other” or did not specify.

Half of all students feel that the subject-specific demands of their programmes are exactly right, while 38% find them too high. Almost 90% of the students indicate that it is likely or very likely that they will complete their studies in Germany.

Fig. 23 Assessment of study demands of enrolled survey participants in %



## 9. About the programme “Welcome – Students Helping Refugees”

---

As part of the programme “Welcome – Students Helping Refugees”, student-organised programmes and projects throughout Germany are helping student refugees gain orientation and get acclimated to academic and daily life at university. Their efforts represent an important addition to the language and subject-based preparatory measures already in place.

In 2017, the “Welcome” programme supported over 600 student-organised projects with over 1,000 student assistants. And these do not include the large number of students who volunteer their time to support their efforts. Most of the universities employ two to three, or four to six student assistants in “Welcome” projects, while 16% of the universities employ between ten and 14 student assistants.

Over half of the students employed in “Welcome” projects are in bachelor’s programmes (63%), and the rest are in master’s programmes. Two out of three student assistants are female. Likewise, two out of three study law, economics or social sciences, while only one in six studies engineering. Interestingly, 27% of the student assistants have a migrant background themselves (279 persons), and eight percent have a refugee background (86 persons).

According to university estimates, some 30,000 refugees received advice through the “Welcome” programme in 2017. Similar to the issues encountered by the Integra programme, the student staff in the “Welcome” programme reported that student refugees most frequently came to them with problems related to absent/insufficient language skills, absent/insufficient knowledge of the German higher education system and difficulties with financing living expenses during their studies.

An estimated 35,000 refugees participated in “Welcome” projects of all kinds in 2017. Most of these focused on advising, buddy tandems and mentoring, organising events and providing language preparatory support. Two out of every three projects were exclusively targeted at refugees, and 28% were generally open to all international students.

The wide variety of student-organised projects is highlighted each year at the Welcome Prize awards ceremony. The BMBF and DAAD jointly award the prize to acknowledge and increase awareness of the extraordinary commitment of students in “Welcome” projects. Three student projects are chosen each year to receive the Welcome Prize; the prize money





can be used to support various measures in their respective projects. The three winners of 2017 reflect the wide variety of “Welcome” projects in Germany:

The Refugee Law Clinic at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin operates twelve counselling offices and employs some 60 advisors who provide consultation to around 150 refugees per month at no charge. In addition to their advice services, the Law Clinic also provides training to students and interested parties who wish to volunteer their services as legal consultants.

The Welcome Prize also went to the “German Courses for Asylum Seekers” (IDA) project at the TU Dresden which provides German language support to student refugees. The “Buddy Programme”, which pairs up refugees with students enrolled at universities in Dresden, provides orientation to around 100 participants during their first weeks at university. The project also encourages the refugees to play an active role and teach their German partner students their native languages and cultures.

The third winner of the Welcome Prize at the University of Siegen employs advisors and instructors who come from a refugee background themselves. Up to 40 refugees per semester receive support from these “educational mentors”, who successfully integrated and are currently in an advanced stage of their studies. Because of their background, they are ideal contacts for refugees as they genuinely understand the day-to-day challenges of integrating in German society.

The numerous projects funded by the “Welcome” programme augment the study-preparatory courses of the Integra programme through intensive personal support and ensure that refugees seeking a path to higher education are supported as best as possible.

## 10. Summary and outlook

---

The interest in study-preparatory courses has remained constant since the programme began in 2016. In 2017, the Integra programme provided support to 45,000 refugees at German universities – even more than the year before. Fifty percent of applicants to study-preparatory courses had to be rejected, mostly for lack of subject-specific qualification or a shortage of rooms and/or staffing coverage at the universities. In the first two years of funding, Integra supported some 14,000 persons on their way to gaining admission to a degree programme.

The backgrounds of the participants in 2017 was hardly different than the year before. Syria continues to be the most common country of origin. The majority of Integra participants are male, and their average age of 28 is slightly higher, as the course participants in 2016 were often the same as those who participated in 2017. In the meantime, however, more than half has received a residence permit (in 2016, it was 41%).

From our survey of the 2016 Integra cohorts, we learned that it usually takes at least two years for the participants to gain admission to a degree programme after arriving in Germany (in most cases, in 2015). The most important reason for this delay is their initial inability to speak the German language. The applicant data supplied by uni-assist indicates, however, that the language proficiency level is improving. Since the winter semester 2017/18, more and more candidates are submitting applications with certificates required for university entrance qualification, confirming that they achieved a sufficient score for admission to a degree programme. A higher language level among the participants in the Integra courses has been observed as well. This could also be due to the fact that those who have been attending language courses since 2016 achieved higher scores in 2017. A full 51% of the survey participants who were enrolled in degree programmes at the time of the survey reported feeling sufficiently prepared for their studies with respect to their language abilities.

The many challenges encountered on their path to higher education explains why it often takes longer for participants to achieve their goals than many had hoped several years ago. In addition to overcoming language barriers, refugees often have subject-specific deficits due to their interrupted academic backgrounds. Being older than their fellow international applicants, they more often have to fulfil their study requirements while meeting familial obligations. This particularly applies to female refugees, for whom special services must be established in future. The challenges encountered by advisory staff clearly show that

offering academically oriented advising and language courses as early as possible is crucial to avoiding unnecessary delays on the path to higher education.

Just over one half of all former Integra participants who completed our survey and are currently studying feels well prepared for their degree programme. On one hand, this confirms the strong commitment of the universities and preparatory colleges in providing study preparation, but on the other, underscores the fact that many student refugees continue to encounter challenges during their studies, for which accompanying measures will become increasingly important.

### **Important impulses for advising concepts targeted at international students**

The needs of student refugees largely overlap those of international students (language acquisition, intensive advice on curricular requirements, orientation in the German higher education system in general and at the respective university in particular, social integration at the university etc.). The arrival of student refugees has given universities reason to overhaul and amend their admission concepts for international students. It has served as an impulse for developing and testing new concepts of integration which can be applied to all international students. Language and specialised courses, as well as targeted advice services and accompanying measures also benefit international students and can help lower the drop-out rate in the long term. Furthermore, foreign students play an important role in promoting so-called “internationalisation at home”. They internationalise the German campus by contributing cultural, linguistic and academic impulses of their own. This can even have a positive effect on research achievements and teaching quality which ultimately serves all students. Finally, German students stand to benefit from international students. Building international networks often lead to future possibilities of collaboration. Measures that strengthen the welcoming spirit on campus can promote internationalisation within university administrations, for example, through staff exchanges with foreign partner universities.

## Further development and consolidation

Refugees and international students alike require intensive advising services during their studies. The drop-out rates of international students (45% in BA programmes, 29% in MA programmes)<sup>11</sup> can be used to extrapolate the success rate of student refugees as well.

Consequently, study-preparatory language and propaedeutic courses must be consolidated further. Additional accompanying measures should be established and supplemented by expanded advice and counselling services, parallel course offerings, specialised courses and soft-skill training seminars.

At some point in the future, the students' transition into the work force will gain increasing relevance. Thought should be given to developing ways that universities might offer comprehensive support to student refugees ahead of graduation. Application training, assistance with finding internships, open-house events at companies and mentoring programmes are just a few possible approaches.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure the successful integration of highly qualified refugees. The current programmes and measures have already produced promising results as they have laid the cornerstone to promoting the personal potential of the refugees. If we continue to accompany and support them on their academic career path, their integration into the labour market will succeed, providing them an important pillar for a self-determined life and a significant step towards achieving social integration.

---

<sup>11</sup> DAAD/DZHW, Wissenschaft weltoffen 2018, Facts and Figures on the International Nature of Studies and Research in Germany, p. 66.





