



Information 3
**Enrolment in regular degree programmes
and academic supervision**

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

Report on the Higher Education Programmes for Refugees

DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

DZHW
Deutsches Zentrum für
Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung

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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 presented in this publication.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Participating organisations | 8 |
| 3. DAAD Higher Education Programmes for Refugees | 11 |
| 3.1 Integra – Integrating Refugees in Degree Programmes | 11 |
| 3.2 NRWege ins Studium | 13 |
| In depth: Welcome – Students Helping Refugees | 14 |
| 4. Data and methodology | 16 |
| 4.1 Reports from the funded universities | 16 |
| 4.2 Survey of course participants in the 2016 and 2017 cohorts | 16 |
| 4.3 Analyses by uni-assist and g.a.s.t. | 19 |
| 4.4 Methodology | 19 |
| 5. Information and results of the Integra programme | 20 |
| 5.1 Data on the funded universities and course offerings | 20 |
| 5.1.1 Types of universities | 20 |
| 5.1.2 Course offerings and formats | 20 |
| 5.1.3 Development of applicant numbers, admissions and course places | 24 |
| 5.1.4 Target achievement | 25 |
| 5.2 Data on the participants and participation | 26 |
| 5.2.1 Participants by institution and federal state | 26 |
| 5.2.2 Participants by course type | 28 |
| 5.2.3 Participants by residence status | 28 |
| 5.2.4 Biographical data (country of origin, age, gender, academic background) | 29 |
| 5.3 Conclusion of the courses and participation in TestAS/onSET | 34 |
| 5.3.1 Achievement of course goals | 34 |
| 5.3.2 Academic aptitude and achieved language level | 35 |
| 5.3.3 Desired courses of study | 37 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 5.4 | Academic counselling and supervision | 38 |
| 5.4.1 | Development of advice services and needs | 39 |
| 5.4.2 | Challenges as perceived by the universities and the participants | 41 |
| 6. | Survey of course participants (2017 cohort) | 43 |
| 6.1 | Survey population and subgroups | 43 |
| 6.2 | Analysis of refugee data in degree programmes and professional life | 46 |
| 6.3 | Career-related perspectives | 54 |
| 7. | Follow-up survey of course participants (2016 cohort) | 58 |
| 7.1 | Survey population and subgroups | 58 |
| 7.2 | Conclusions based on data of the student subgroup | 59 |
| | In depth: Prospective students with and without refugee background – Analysis of results from the DZHW project “Refugees on Their Way into German Higher Education (WeGe)” | 62 |
| 8. | Summary and outlook | 68 |

1. Introduction

According to the latest figures from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there were over 70 million refugees around the world at the end of 2018. Around one third of these – almost 26 million – were actively seeking asylum outside their home countries, far from crisis hot-spots and war-torn regions. Some 6.7 million people fleeing from war and persecution are Syrians, the largest group of asylum-seekers worldwide. Among all industrial nations, Germany plays the most influential role in accepting refugees. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) reports that over 1.6 million refugees have applied for asylum in Germany since 2015. This group is predominantly comprised of applicants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Turkey.

Some 37% of those who have found asylum in Germany in the past four years are between the ages of 18 and 30 years¹. This means that a significant number of refugees in Germany have reached an age, at which they require (or desire) higher education. Particularly for young people seeking higher education, fleeing one's country not only means leaving one's home and relatives behind, but also dropping out of degree programmes that had just begun or giving up chosen (academic) career paths and perspectives which are vitally important for their current and future life plans. In 2015 experts estimated that between 30,000 and 50,000 refugees in Germany would meet the requirements for first-time admission to a degree programme or continue pursuing a degree in a programme they had already begun in their home countries. Based on a survey administered to refugees in Germany by BAMF (SOEP) in 2016, it was estimated that around 11% held at least a first-level university degree.²

In view of this academic background, policymakers recognised the need to establish participative structures and suitable conditions for accessing educational services with the goal of providing these refugees with new perspectives, whether it be to help them build a future life for themselves in Germany or prepare them for a later return to their home countries. An important step toward achieving this goal was provided by the Higher Education Programmes for Refugees, which the DAAD established with funding from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in 2015. Thanks to this programme, thou-

1 Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF): asylum figures for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

2 Herbert Brücker (IAB), Nina Rother (BAMF), Jürgen Schupp (SOEP): 2016 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey – Study Design, Field Results and Analyses of Academic and Professional Qualification, Language Skills and Cognitive Potentials, research report 30, corrected version of 20 Feb. 2018, p. 6.

sands of refugees have gained access to German institutions of higher education and have succeeded in enrolling in degree programmes in the past four years. The BMBF has allocated a total of 150 million euros to finance these programmes until the end of 2021. The interim results of these programmes which primarily fund university preparatory and accompanying measures for refugees confirm the original estimate of academically qualified individuals among the asylum seekers. Indeed between 2016 and 2019, around 30,000 refugees participated in courses offered through these higher education programmes³. Although one's refugee status is not automatically processed upon enrolment at university, the DAAD estimates that some 25,000 refugees have meanwhile enrolled in a regular course of study in Germany⁴. This figure is expected to increase to somewhere between 32,000 and 40,000⁵ by 2020. In the winter semester 2018/19 alone, a total of 3,788 newly enrolled students had a refugee background according to a survey by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) of its member universities⁶. And even the latest statistics published by the German Federal Statistical Office highlights the increase in the number of currently enrolled students from crisis regions around the world. While students from Syria ranked eighth in number of foreign students by country of origin in the winter semester 2014/15 (2,595 persons)⁷, the number of enrolled students from Syria had quintupled by the winter semester 2018/19 (13,032 persons). In the meantime, Syrian students rank third among all international students in Germany by country of origin⁸.

The majority of refugees who have succeeded in gaining admission to degree programmes in Germany demonstrates that universities have been able to remove barriers to higher education and prepare academically qualified refugees for admission to degree programmes in

3 This figure refers to only participants in DAAD-funded courses.

4 This estimate is based on data by the German Statistical Office on foreign students by country of origin. In the WS 18/19 alone, there were a total of 31,000 student refugees from the eight main countries of origin (Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia) enrolled at universities in German, almost 8,500 of whom were new students studying for the first time.

5 German Higher Education Report 2020

6 HRK: Survey of HRK member universities (winter semester 2018/19), March 2019.

7 Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Fachserie 11, Education and Culture – Students at Universities, winter semester 2014/2015, p. 58, 4 Sep. 2015.

8 Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Fachserie 11, Education and Culture – Students at Universities, winter semester 2018/2019, pp. 401ff, 18 Oct. 2019.

Germany. Yet at the same time, the growing number of refugees in degree programmes highlights the question of how best to supervise these student refugees and prepare them for transitioning to the labour market.

The following study is the third in a series of DAAD publications containing data collected from the Higher Education Programmes for Refugees from the 2018 reporting period. As in the previous two reports from 2016 and 2017, the following information presented here is based on reports provided by the funded universities. These reports serve as proof of expenditure and must be submitted to the DAAD each year. In continuation of the practice implemented in the report published last year, the new data is augmented once again by data collected through a survey of the target group. The DAAD conducted a follow-up survey for the first time in order to gain information on the medium-term development of a subgroup which had already been surveyed in the second report (2017) and were asked to respond again in 2019.



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 international 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 (BMBWF) 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-preparatory 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 the DAAD to collect and analyse data concerning 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) conducts application-oriented empirical research in the higher education and academic system. As a partner and service provider for scientific policymakers and stakeholders in the academic sector, its research is both theory-based and practice-oriented. The DZHW presents its research findings in academic discourse, and so doing, plays an integral role in the scientific community. 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 manages 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 investigate the conditions which effectively facilitate access to higher education for prospective student refugees. The project conceptualises academic preparation and university entry as a process of adaptation, the course of which is influenced, on one hand, by the refugees’ individual prerequisites and preparatory activities, and on the other, the structural and institutional conditions. To investigate this process, the project combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to help identify the conditions that promote successful transition into degree programmes and sustainably improve effective access to higher education.⁹

uni-assist e. V.

The University Application Service for International Students (uni-assist e.V.) is a non-profit organisation supported by over 180 universities in Germany. In addition to reviewing international applications for university admission, its chief task is to assess whether foreign school/university certificates meet the equivalence criteria of the German higher education system. Uni-assist also formally evaluates whether international applicants meet the individual admission requirements set by their target universities – a service financed through processing fees. Thanks to additional funding provided by the BMBF, uni-assist reviewed applications by refugees for free and allowed them to apply for admission to up to three universities per semester at no cost until the winter semester 2019/20.

g.a.s.t. e. V.

The Society for Academic Preparation and Test Development (g.a.s.t./TestDaF Institute) is primarily responsible for developing, administering and evaluating tests which evaluate the candidate’s language and scholastic aptitude (TestDaF, onSET and TestAS), provide lan-

9 Vgl.: https://www.dzhw.eu/forschung/projekt?pr_id=598

guage preparation to international students (Deutsch-Uni Online, DUO) and develop academic quality assurance and quality development measures in the area of examinations and testing. With the support of the DAAD and financing from the BMBF, g.a.s.t. offered the language placement test onSET and the academic aptitude test TestAS to refugees in German, English and Arabic at no charge until the end of 2019.



3. DAAD Higher Education Programmes for Refugees

With funding provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the DAAD has developed an extensive package of long-term measures which provide student refugees with academic preparation and supervision, secure their academic success and promote their transition to the labour market. The measures begin with an assessment of the candidate's academic qualifications, as well as their subject-relevant and language skills. These lead to further measures financed through the Integra programme which serve to prepare academ-

ically interested refugees for the specific demands of university study in Germany and systematically promote their integration into university and academic life with the support of student-run projects financed through the "Welcome" programme. The DAAD has also established an extensive accompanying concept to monitor the results and efficacy of its programmes. In this way, the DAAD can measure the success of each respective funding measure and make data available from which conclusions can be drawn about the target group.

3.1 Integra – Integrating Refugees in Degree Programmes

The Integra programme is part of a comprehensive package of measures launched by the BMBF and the DAAD 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 study in Germany so that they may gain admission to university and enrol in a degree programme as quickly as possible.

German universities and preparatory colleges (*Studienkollegs*) have the important task of advising prospective students with refugee background and preparing them for university study with respect to both language and subject matter. Candidates who hold a foreign school-

leaving certificate need a university entrance qualification (UEQ) to gain admission to university in Germany. 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 after attending preparatory courses at a preparatory college (*Studienkolleg*). The study-pre-

paratory courses consist of language instruction and so-called “core subject” courses (*Schwerpunktkurse*). 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 is a prerequisite for admission to a degree programme at a German university. In the Integra programme, the DAAD provides funding to preparatory colleges to enable them to offer additional courses to refugees.

Universities also receive funding through the Integra programme to develop and provide language and subject-relevant 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 arduous flight to safety can set 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 continuation of a degree programme. What is equally important, however, is to provide refugees with ongoing assistance beyond the preparatory phase by offering language instruction, specialist courses and tutorials during their studies. Student refugees who have already enrolled in regular degree programmes have shown strong interest in individual counselling and often require adjustment qualifications in languages and subject-relevant areas in order to successfully complete their degree programmes in Germany.

Integra has helped prepare thousands of refugees to begin or continue their studies in Germany. Many of them have successfully completed preparatory courses and have meanwhile enrolled in degree programmes at German universities. For the programme to be effective, it is essential to address the changing needs of the refugees and adapt university programmes and services accordingly. When funding began in 2016, universities focused their efforts almost entirely on providing language instruction and offering mixed preparatory courses with dual language and subject-relevant content. University preparatory courses with a purely subject-relevant focus were less frequently offered in 2016 than in the following years. By 2018 a large number of refugees were ready to commence or were already enrolled in degree programmes, and as a result, the need for subject-relevant preparatory courses and corresponding language support increased. It was also around that time that universities began focusing more intensively on how best to provide academic counselling and supervision to the target group. Consequently, for the upcoming funding period 2020/21, the programme has been revised to include an additional focus on measures which support refugees during their studies to ensure successful completion. At the same time, participants increasingly expressed a need for support and preparatory measures to help them transition into the German labour market.

Having already laid the groundwork for the professional integration of international students prior to graduation, it was possible to expand the programmes to include additional measures to promote early career orientation, preparation for the labour market and the creation of regional networks with labour market-relevant stakeholders (“cooperative transition management”).

By providing all international students access to academic counselling and supervision measures – a necessary move as their needs began to overlap – the programmes underwent further needs-based adjustments centred around this new key field of action.

3.2 NRWege ins Studium – Integration of Refugees at 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 (UEQ) for direct admission. The overarching long-term goal of the programme is to integrate refugees into degree programmes at universities in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

In addition to funding study-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.

In order to prepare prospective students with refugee background for the language and subject-relevant requirements of study at German universities, the programme finances preparatory language courses starting at the beginner level as well as subject-relevant university-preparatory courses or mixed courses with dual language and subject-relevant preparation. To ensure long-term academic success, funding can also be used to offer advanced (subject-relevant) language courses and tutorials during the students’ degree programmes. Additional personnel resources were allocated to strengthen the academic counselling structures at the universities.

The programme currently finances measures at 13 universities and 17 universities of applied sciences in North Rhine-Westphalia. The projects were launched at the beginning of 2017 and have since helped more than 6,000 current and prospective students with refugee background to integrate into the higher education system of North Rhine-Westphalia.

In depth: 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.

In concrete terms, the programme finances student assistants (SHK) who devote time to running self-organised projects or participate in university-organised support and integration services for academically qualified refugees. In 2018 a total of 992 student assistants (SHK) received financing at 159 universities through the Welcome programme. A majority of these are students who are currently pursuing an undergraduate degree themselves (638 bachelor’s students and 354 master’s students). This total does not include the large number of students who volunteer their time to support the Welcome projects. A significant number of these student assistants (37%) study law, economics and social sciences, comprising the largest group, as in 2017. Around 19% studied languages and cultural studies and just one percent studied engineering. Meanwhile, one in three SHKs involved in Welcome projects have a migration background themselves. And the percentage of students with refugee background has noticeably increased to 12% in 2018 from around 8% the year before.

The Welcome programme financed a total of 456 student projects in 2018, slightly fewer than in 2017 (492 projects). The large majority of these

measures (27%) were offered in the areas of counselling and supervision, followed by buddy and mentoring programmes (18%) and language preparation (11%). According to the universities, a total of 29,860 refugees received advice through the Welcome programme in 2018. While counsellors primarily focused on helping refugees with questions concerning student financing, inadequate language skills and a lack of orientation in the German higher education system in 2017, another matter became more prevalent in 2018, namely that of choosing one’s major and determining one’s academic orientation. The student refugees’ growing need for support with choosing a major underscores once again the central role that universities and Welcome projects have in providing orientation. Even now, one can assume this trend will lead to an increased need for formats which support these students throughout their studies.

Meanwhile, more than one third of the projects (37%) have made their services available to all international students, i.e. they are no longer exclusively offered to refugees. This development in combination with related reports from the universities, allow us to conclude that international students and students with refugee background have very similar needs in terms of targeted advice and support measures both prior to and during their studies in Germany.

For the third year in a row, three student projects financed through the Welcome Programme were

distinguished in 2019 for their outstanding commitment and important contribution toward integrating refugees at their respective universities. The awarded prize money will enable the projects to expand and further develop their measures for refugees as well as international students.

The winning project “Colourful Hands” at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences is a buddy programme focused on “language learning” and “social integration”. It offers a broad range of services including language tandems, a writing workshop, a multilingual peer-to-peer programme, a professional competence workshop, a multi-language computer science course and a socially integrative semester recreation programme.

The project “MEDIDUS – Düsseldorf Medical Refugee Assistance” at the University of Düsseldorf (HHU), the second-place winner, aims to provide adequate medical treatment to persons who are not yet proficient in German. The project creates tandems comprised of a medical student and interpreter. The goal is to improve the treatment of refugees and, at the same time, offer medical students at the HHU the opportunity to gain practical medical experience.

The third prize was awarded to the project “Mathematics for Refugees”, founded by four students at the University of Cologne. The project is targeted at academically interested refugees

who have already obtained a university entrance qualification (UEQ) in their home countries and/or have commenced a degree programme there and wish to resume their studies or take up a different major. The organisers offer a weekly mathematics course where participants learn the mathematical fundamentals required for admission to university, as well as a beginner-level computer programming course. The goal is to provide German language instruction in a new, subject-oriented, application-based context which incorporates content beyond that offered in conventional German courses, and thereby offer an opportunity to gain further qualification and access to higher education.

The diverse projects of the Welcome programme augment the study-preparatory and accompanying measures offered by the Integra and NRWege programmes. Thanks to their close personal supervision, they serve as important places of encounter for international and German students, and significantly contribute to the social and academic integration of student refugees.

4. Data and Methodology

4.1 Reports from the funded universities

The following data and resulting analysis of study preparation and access to higher education for refugees is based on statistical data from 2018 which the DAAD has collected from reports on 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 par-

ticipated in the language courses, the language level they attained, what type of courses were offered and whether there is additional need for advisory services for specific target groups. 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 data pertains only to this one subgroup of refugees in Germany and cannot be used for any general statements about refugees living in Germany as a whole. The following analysis is based on information related to the 9,060 refugees who participated in study-preparatory and accompanying Integra courses in 2018.

4.2 Survey of course participants in the 2016 and 2017 cohorts

The DAAD funds higher education programmes for refugees in the form of project funding. This means that it does not individually support prospective student refugees, but rather allocates funding to the universities which dispense funding as needed to implement their Integra courses and measures. It also means that there is no direct contact or exchange between the DAAD and the target group. However, in order to determine to what extent the implemented measures correspond to the requirements and

needs of the target group and whether they have the intended positive effect on their academic career, it is essential to collect data from the participants themselves. In March 2018 the DAAD conducted an online survey of the first cohort in 2016. A follow-up survey of the same group was carried out at the beginning of 2019 in order to learn more about their medium-term academic progress.

The DAAD attempted to contact 5,822 refugees from the 2016 cohort, of whom 3,762 were

reached via valid email addresses. Of these, 10.4% (392 persons) participated in the follow-up survey. Around 47% of the respondents of the follow-up survey indicated that they were currently enrolled in a degree programme at that time. This would mean that almost one half of all respondents were enrolled in degree programmes two to three years after participating in Integra courses. This interpretation, however, must be treated with caution in view of the low response rate and the possibility that the second survey might have been completed by those who had succeeded in gaining admission to degree programmes in Germany and less so by those who chose to take an alternative path.

The Integra course participants from the 2017 cohort were also asked to complete an online survey in the spring of 2019. Of the 9,060 persons who were contacted, 2,519 participated in the survey. The response rate of 27.8% was similar to that of the previous year (27%). A total of 43% of the respondents from the 2017 cohort indicated that they were currently enrolled in degree programmes at the time of the survey in spring 2019 – eight percent higher than indicated by the 2016 cohort when surveyed in spring 2018. This value is just four percent lower than that indicated in the follow-up survey mentioned above, and thereby serves to document the progress achieved in preparing refugees for studying in Germany.

In both cases (follow-up survey of the 2016 cohort and the initial survey of the 2017 cohort), the survey began with a section of general information, followed by five optional responses to the question “What are you doing at present?” The purpose of this question was to account for the many different paths the

target group might take and draw conclusions based on the students’ experiences with the preparatory courses, language courses etc.

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

The responses obtained by the refugees served to augment the information provided in the reports by the universities and offer a more comprehensive view of the target group and shared needs and experiences of both the universities and refugees.



4.3 Analyses 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 generally determine how many prospective students with refugee background are applying to German universities. The data presented in this publication supplements the information contained in the reports by the universities and refer to the entire project duration from the beginning of 2016 until December 2019.

4.4 Methodology

The following analysis is based first and foremost on the data provided in the university reports for the reporting period 2018. In cases where it made sense, comparisons were made to the data collected from 2016 and 2017 in order to shed light on relevant developments and identify potential needs in the future. Furthermore, the information provided by the universities was occasionally compared and supplemented with the survey responses of the Integra course participants in

2018 wherever these offered additional scope. When analysing the responses by the target group, we also focused on certain refugee subgroups in order to draw conclusions concerning their experiences with study-preparatory courses and their potential impact on their personal academic and life paths. To this end, we separately analysed and compared selected responses provided by the subgroups “student refugees” and “employed refugees”.

5. Information and results of the Integra programme

5.1 Data on the funded universities and course offerings

The first call for applications through the Integra programme was issued in December 2015. In 2016 the DAAD granted funding to 171 universities and preparatory colleges (*Studienkollegs*). In

the 2018 reporting period, to which the following data and analyses refer, the DAAD funded a total of 166 institutions.

5.1.1 Types of universities

Throughout the entire funding period from 2016 to 2020, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) comprised the largest number of all funded institutions in 2016 at 42% and in the fol-

lowing years 2017 to 2019 around 40%. Most funded universities and preparatory colleges are located in the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia (27), Bavaria (26) and Baden-Württemberg (22).

5.1.2 Course offerings and formats

Although the DAAD saw a slight decrease in the number of funded institutions between 2016 and 2018, there was a significant increase in the number of courses they offered. In the first year of the programme in 2016, a total of 713 courses were offered by the funded universities and preparatory colleges. This number climbed to 1,069 in 2017 and had reached a total of 1,153 courses by 2018. Compared with 2016, the number of courses offered had increased 62% by 2018. The accompanying courses offered to enrolled students also increased five percent from 2017 to 2018. The Integra programme began financing these accompanying courses for the first time in

2017 with the goal of providing ongoing supervision and training to students with refugee background during their studies in Germany. It is fair to assume that as a growing number of refugees enrol in degree programmes, the demand for such accompanying formats will respectively increase in the future. Nonetheless, the majority of Integra courses (95%) continues to clearly focus on providing study preparation.

As in previous years, language courses comprise the largest percentage of study-preparatory measures (56%). This demonstrates once again the crucial importance of language instruction

for gaining admission to university degree programmes. The language courses offered by the universities have changed considerably in the past years – more toward higher-level German courses. As a rule, a prerequisite for university admission is a C1 German language level as provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR GER), which applicants must demonstrate by passing a university-recognised language test (e.g. the Lan-

guage Test for Admission of Foreign Study Applicants (DSH) or the TestDaF). Considering all the language courses offered in 2016 and 2017, the number of courses leading to a C1 language proficiency level increased from 22% in 2016 to 33% in 2017. The number rose even further in 2018 to 43%. As might be expected, there was a proportionate decline in the number of courses for achieving lower language proficiency levels.

Fig. 1 Language courses offered in 2018 in %

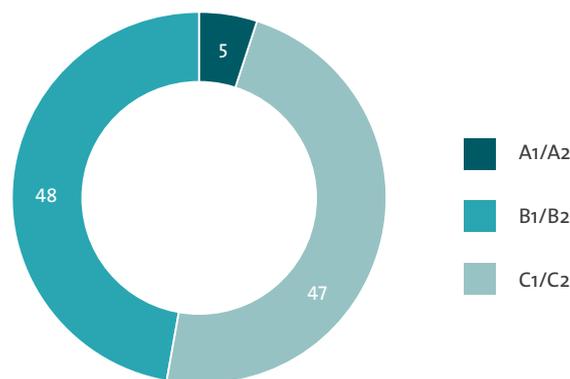


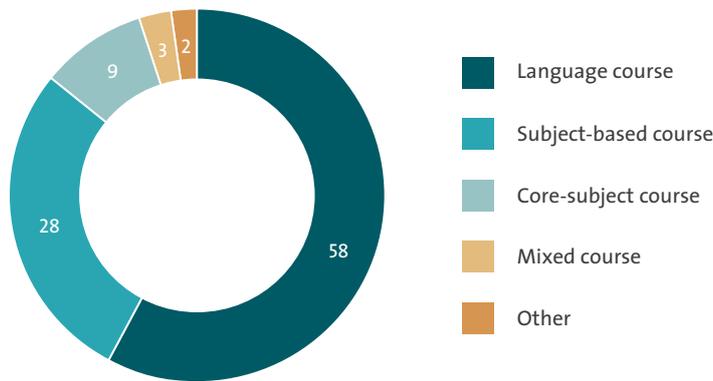
Fig. 2 Participants in language courses in 2018 in %



Between 2016 and 2018 there was also a shift from purely language-based courses to more study-preparatory, subject-relevant and mixed courses with a dual focus on both language and subject-specific instruction. While 69% of all Integra courses offered by universities and preparatory colleges in

2016 concentrated on offering language instruction only, that percentage shrank to 58% in 2018 due to an increasing number of courses and the ever-greater subject-relevant orientation of newly established courses.

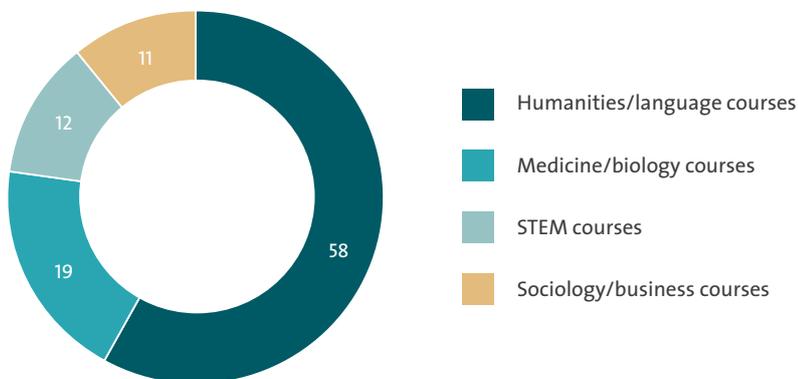
Fig. 3 Types of courses in 2018 in%



Nine percent of offered courses in 2018 were core-subject courses (Schwerpunktkurse). Out of all those who participated in core-subject courses, a significant majority (58%) completed courses for technical, engineering and natural scientific

degree programmes (so-called STEM courses). This confirms the refugees’ strong, unabated interest in engineering and natural scientific degree programmes – a trend which studies in previous years had identified.¹⁰

Fig. 4 Attended core-subject courses in 2018 in%



10 DAAD: Integration of Refugees at German Higher Education Institutions – Information 1 Academic Preparation and Access to Higher Education, November 2017, p. 27.

DAAD: Integration of Refugees at German Institutions of Higher Education – Information 2 Study Preparation and Transition into Regular Degree Programmes, December 2018, p. 35.

Not only does this represent an enormous increase in the number of courses offered. The clear shift toward higher-level language courses and an even greater heterogeneity point to the adjustments the universities have taken to address the changing needs and developments of the target group.

We can assume that the rather small but steadily growing proportion of accompanying courses over the past few years will likewise adjust to the development of the course participants and increase in number in the years to come. Based on the growing significance of accompanying subject-based courses, we can also expect to see an increasing number of refugees enrolling in regular degree programmes and requiring the relevant accompanying course formats and measures.

The heterogeneity of the course offerings and the surge of innovation at the universities is demonstrated by the fact that a majority (59%) of universities and preparatory colleges indicate that they have developed new course formats using Integra funding and tested new instruments for various target groups. In this way, language and subject-relevant instruction is closely intertwined with a personal (learning-based) supervision of the participants.

According to the reported by the universities, these newly tested and established course formats include lab introduction courses, preparatory courses for which credit points are awarded toward a subsequent degree programme, supervised course auditing programmes, subject-relevant and professional language courses and digital learning tools. Another 41% of universities responded that funding was used to expand existing course formats¹¹. Over half of the universities (51%) claimed to have redesigned the courses in 2018 that were specifically intended for the target group, i.e. the students with refugee background. An almost equal share of universities (49%) reported that they had adapted existing formats for international students to the special needs of refugee students and were continuing to develop these on this basis going forward. This information allows us to conclude that international students and prospective (and current) students with refugee background largely express similar needs with respect to academic advice and support services in subject-based and language-learning areas. Or from a different perspective, that the experiences which have given rise to target-group-specific innovations can also benefit the services for international students in general.

¹¹ According to responses provided by the funded universities for the reporting year 2018.

5.1.3 Development of applicant numbers, admissions and course places

The number of refugees who have sought academic counselling at German universities or preparatory colleges highlights the target group's undiminished interest in obtaining a university degree in Germany. There are still far more prospective students with refugee background in Germany than its universities can accept. In 2018 a total of 42,148 academic counselling sessions

were conducted with prospective student refugees, a slightly lower number than the previous year (2017: 45,386). Out of the 18,213 applications submitted in 2018, far more were granted admission (around 70%) compared with the previous year when one out of every two applications had to be turned down (rejection rate: 50%).

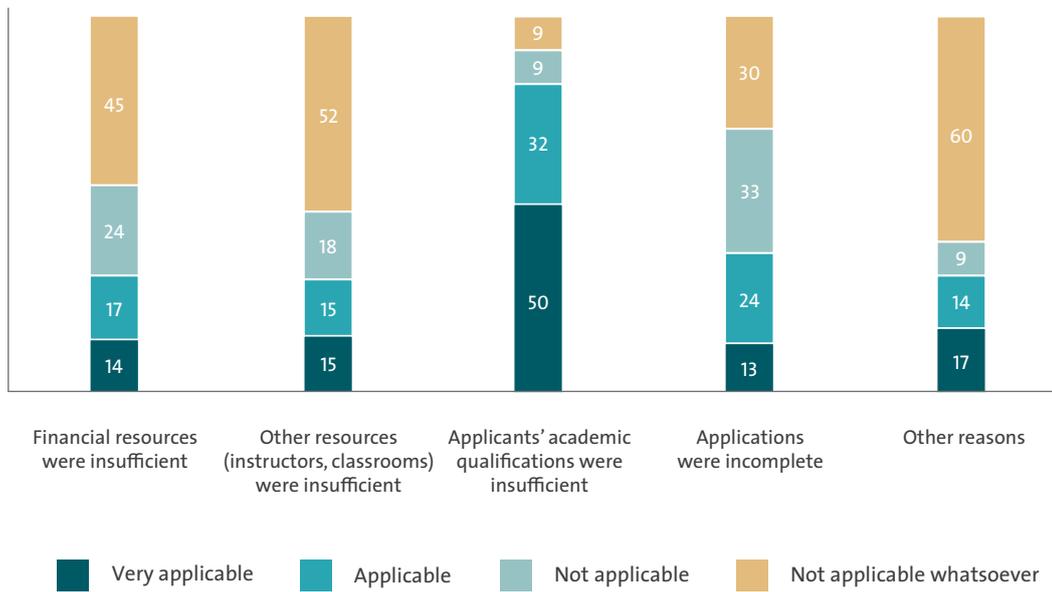
Table 1 Consultations, applications and course places in 2017 and 2018

| | | 2017 | | | |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Consultations | 45.386 | Number of courses | Language courses | 69% | |
| Applications | 21.305 | | Core subject courses | 7% | |
| Rejections | 50% | | 1.069 | Mixed courses | 17% |
| Funded refugees | 10.404 | | Study-preparatory courses | 7% | |
| | | 2018 | | | |
| Consultations | 42.148 | Number of courses | Language courses | 56% | |
| Applications | 18.213 | | Core subject courses | 25% | |
| Rejections | 30% | | 1.153 | Mixed courses | 16% |
| Funded refugees | 9.609 | | Study-preparatory courses | 3% | |

Insufficient qualification was the most common reason (82%) why applicants were rejected in 2018. Almost one third of the institutions indicated other reasons for rejection, for example, inadequate financial resources (31%) and a lack

of instructors and classrooms (30%) (multiple answers were possible). A total of 37% of the universities indicated that incomplete applications were also a reason for rejection.

Fig. 5 **Reasons for rejection in 2018¹²**
in%

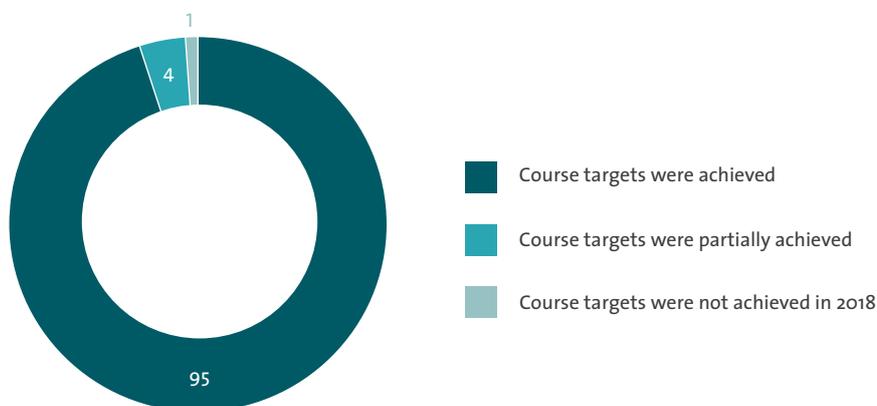


5.1.4 Target achievement

Out of the 166 funded institutions, 95% announced that they had achieved their original course targets in 2018. Only one percent indicated that they had partially achieved their targets, with four percent stating they had failed to achieve their targets in the reporting period. Compared with the first year of the programme in 2016, the propor-

tion of institutions which succeeded in achieving their targets within the same period increased by 17%. This would indicate that universities have used their past experience to adapt their course formats, content and implementation processes to the special needs and prerequisites of the target group.

Fig. 6 **Achievement of course targets in 2018**
in%



12 Multiple answers possible

5.2 Data on the participants and participation

A total of 9,609 refugees participated in courses funded through Integra in the reporting year 2018. Compared with previous years, the number

of participants saw a slight decrease (2016: 6,806 and 2017: 10,404).

5.2.1 Participants by institution and federal state

As was the case in 2017, the majority of participants (53%) in 2018 attended a study-preparatory Integra course at a university. An almost equal

share attended courses at preparatory colleges (24%) or universities of applied sciences (22%) with only one percent enrolled at art colleges.

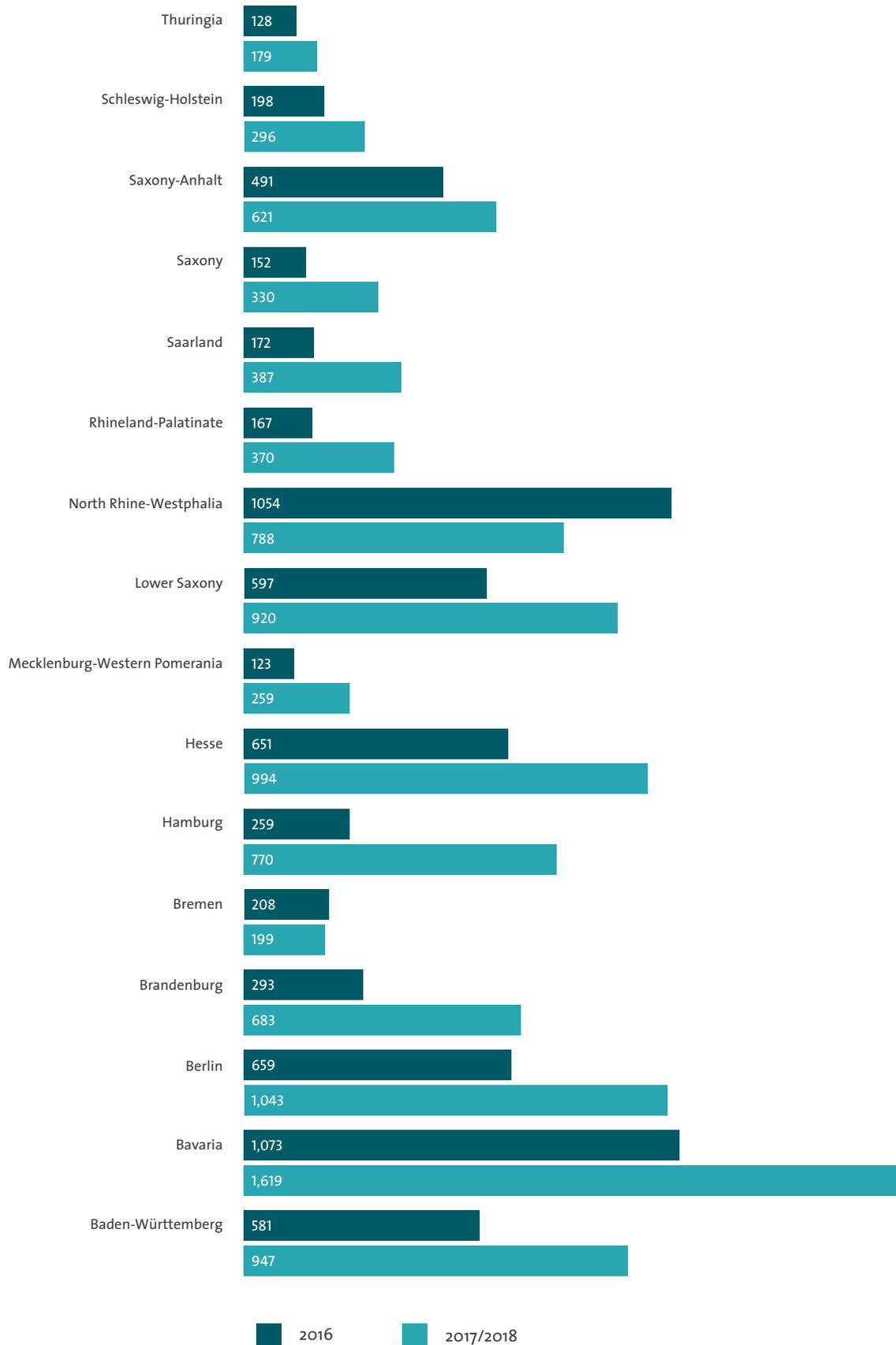
Table 2 Participants by institution in 2018

| Participants | Univ. of appl. sciences | Art college | Prep. college | University | Total |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-------|
| Number | 2,139 | 50 | 2,297 | 5,123 | 9,609 |
| Percentage | 22 | 1 | 24 | 53 | 100 |

As in previous years, the state of Bavaria had the largest group of refugees enrolled in Integra courses at universities and preparatory colleges (14.8%), followed by universities in Berlin (10%) and Hesse (9%). While the states of

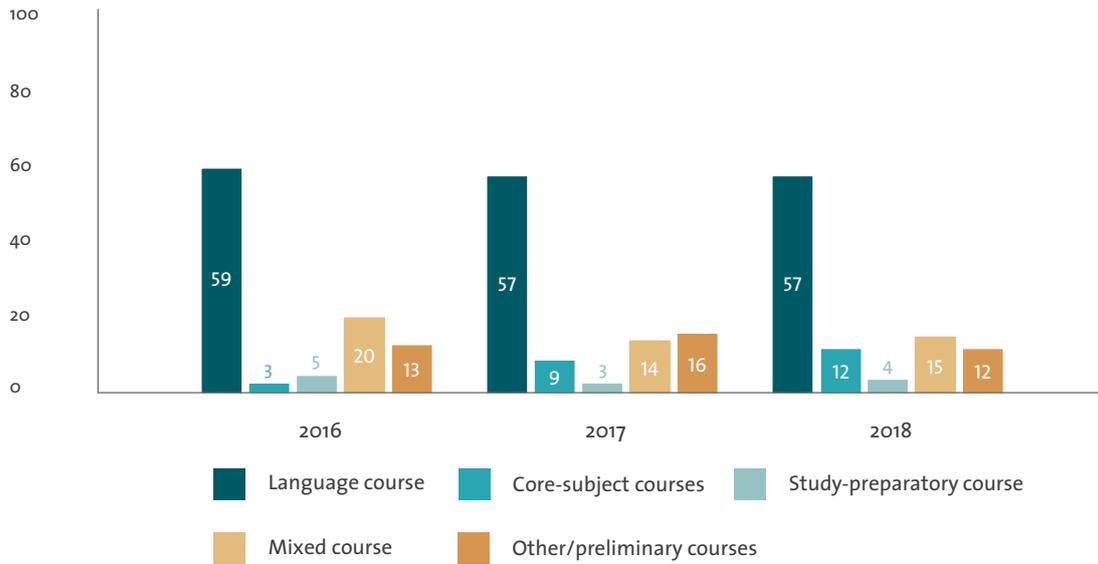
Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia registered an increase in participation rates, the number of participants in the remaining states declined.

Fig. 7 **Integra course participants by federal state in 2016, 2017 and 2018**



5.2.2 Participants by course type

Fig. 8 Integra course participants by course type in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in %

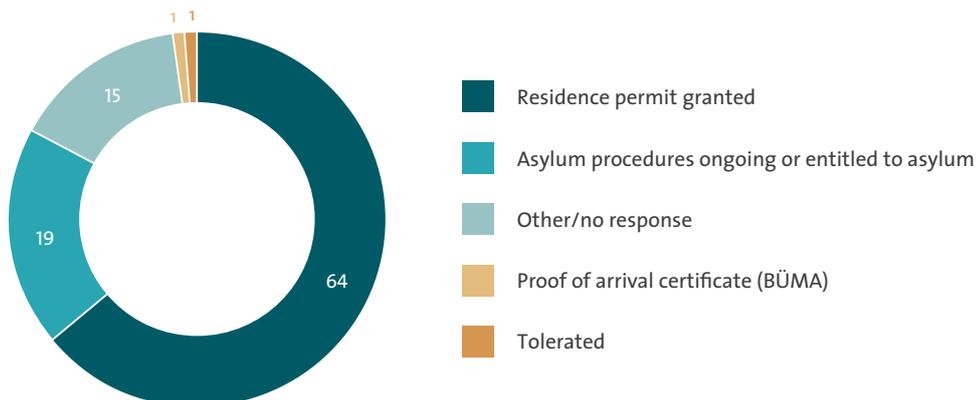


5.2.3 Participants by residence status

The majority (64%) of Integra course participants held a valid residence permit as either recognised refugees (46%) or persons granted subsidiary protection (18%). Another 19% indicated at the time of the survey (i.e. the beginning of the respective Integra course) that their applications for asylum

were still being processed. One should note that the universities were not able to collect broad-based information on their participants' residence status, meaning that the data does not reflect the latest information.

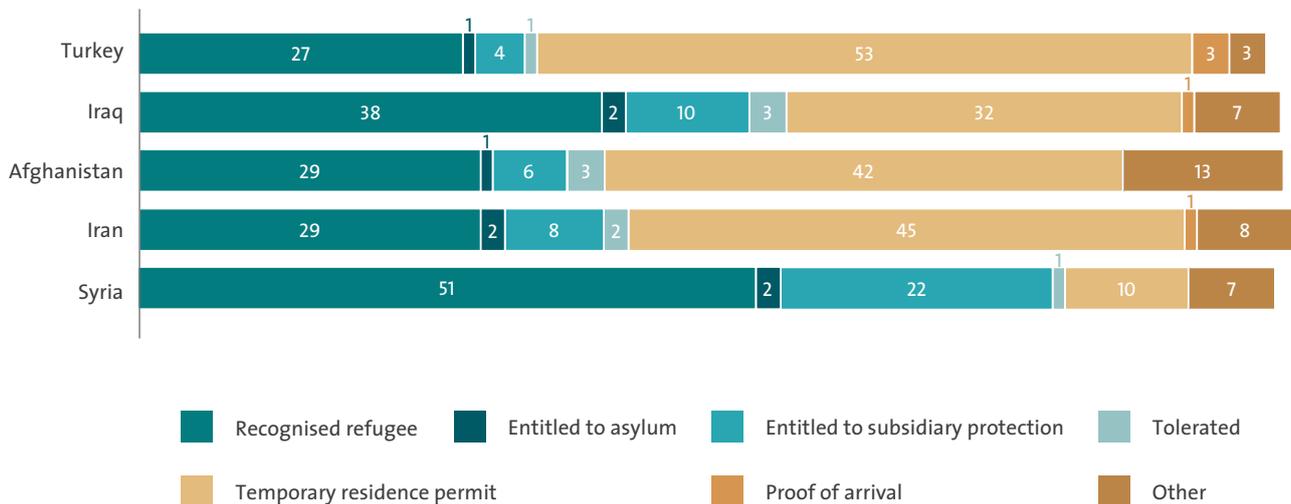
Fig. 9 Participants by residence status in 2018 in %



From the data provided on course participants from Syria, we know that this group holds the largest share of residence permits. Around 22% of the Syrian participants have been granted subsidiary protection, and one out of ten are allowed to remain in Germany while their petitions for asylum are adjudicated, all of whom comprise a total of 83% of Syrian participants. The majority of course participants from Iraq likewise hold res-

idence permits, as well one third of participants from Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. At the time of the survey, a large share of participants from Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan indicated that they were living in Germany while their asylum cases were being processed in accordance with the Asylum Act (AsylG) (*Aufenthalts-gestattung*, “temporary residence permit”).

Fig. 10 Residence status by country of origin in 2018 in%

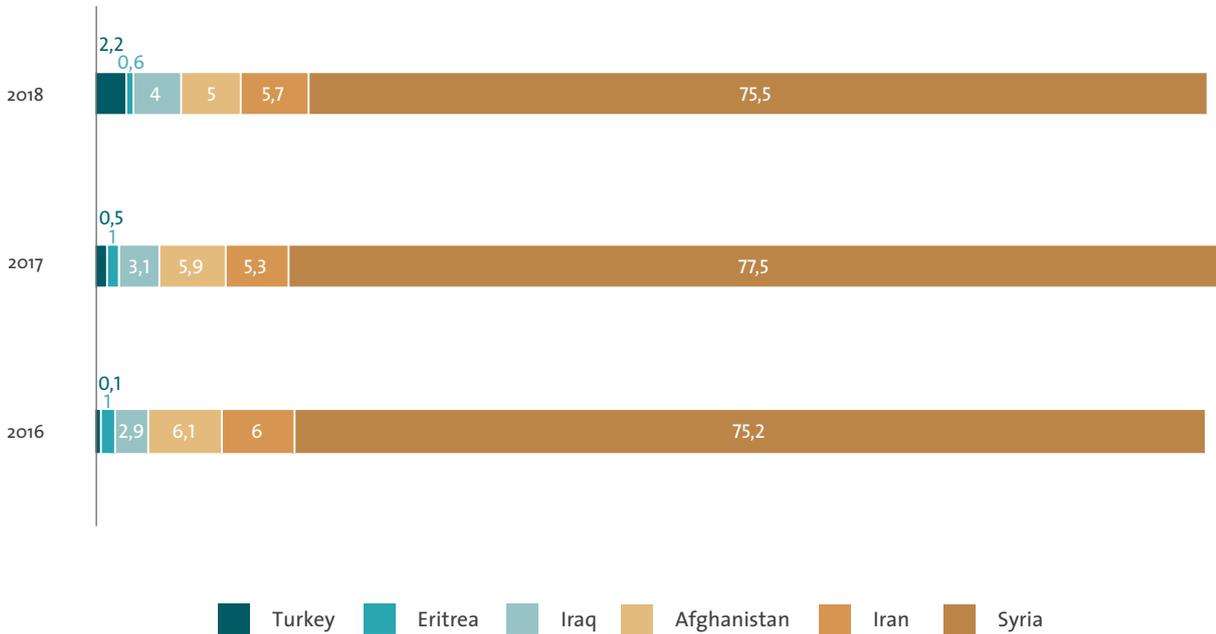


5.2.4 Biographical data (country of origin, age, gender, academic background)

As was the case in 2016 and 2017, most of the participating refugees originated from Syria, Iran, Afghanistan or Iraq. The fifth most common country of origin indicated by the respondents (2.2%) was Turkey in 2018, thereby displacing Eritrea in 2017 to sixth place. Considering that less than one percent of all participants came from Turkey in 2016, the number of Turkish participants

more than doubled by 2018. As that may be, this group comprises a very small percentage of all prospective students with refugee background. However, we expect a significant increase in their number in 2019. Prospective student refugees from Syria remained the largest group in 2018 with 75.5%. Altogether 70 different countries of origin were represented in the Integra courses.

Fig. 11 The six most common countries of origin among participants in 2018 in %



The average age of course participants remained practically unchanged in 2018 at 28.3 years (2016: 27 years, 2017: 27.9 years). The share of female participants saw a slight increase, although their

number remains rather low. While 19% of course participants were women in the first year of 2016, their percentage steadily increased in the following two years to 20% in 2017 and 22% in 2018.

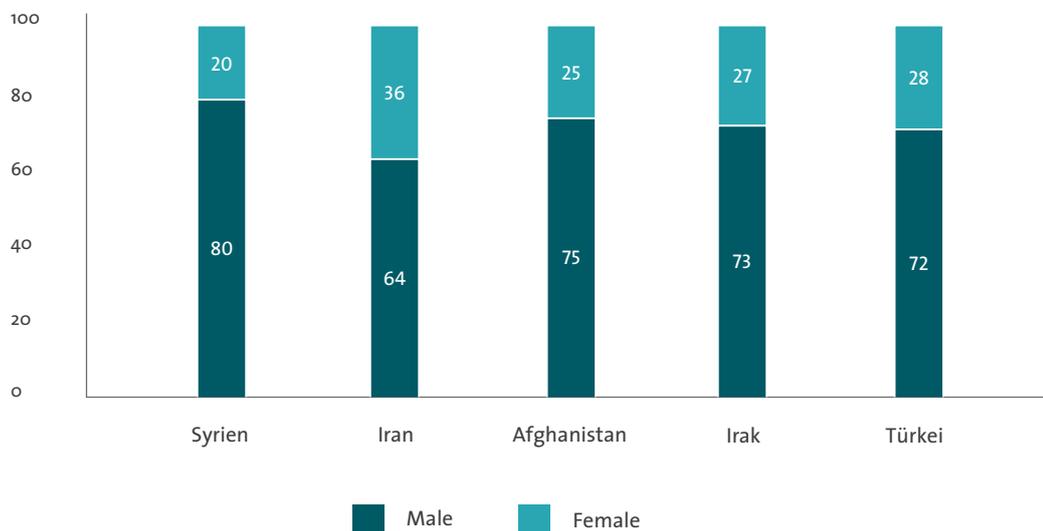
Fig. 12 Gender distribution of course participants in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in %



The largest share of women participants with respect to country of origin came from Iran (36%), followed by prospective female students from Turkey (28%) and Iraq (27%). The proportion of female Syrian participants also saw a three-percentage rise compared to the first year of the programme to 20%. In order to increase the share of women among the course participants and

provide prospective female students with a safe space, a number of universities have established cafés for women only. These offer integrated introductions to the university, language classes, social and recreational activities with childcare services, career counselling and trial courses specifically oriented to refugee women¹³.

Fig. 13 Gender distribution by country of origin in 2018
in %



In 2016, the first year of the programme, a total of 51% of the Integra course participants stated they had studied or had already earned a university degree. In 2017 the percentage dropped to 47%, of whom 27% possessed a first-level higher education qualification.

The percentage of refugees who indicated they had prior university experience in the form of a commenced or completed degree programme had fallen to 39%, whereby 22% stated that they were enrolled in a degree programme at the time they fled their country, while 17% had succeeded in earning a university degree abroad.

¹³ Schmidt, Maria Anne; Kinscher, Birgitta: Geflüchtete Frauen an Hochschulen: Gezielte Ansprache und Unterstützung weiblicher Geflüchteter, HTW Berlin, 16 Mar. 2018.

Fig. 14 Academic background of Integra course participants in 2018 in %

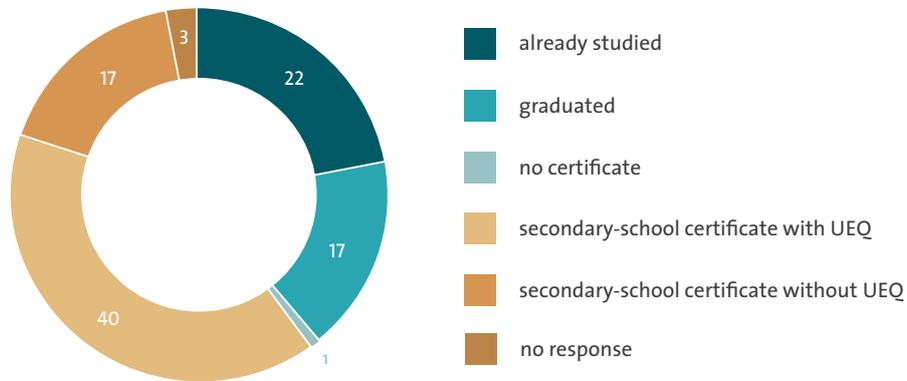
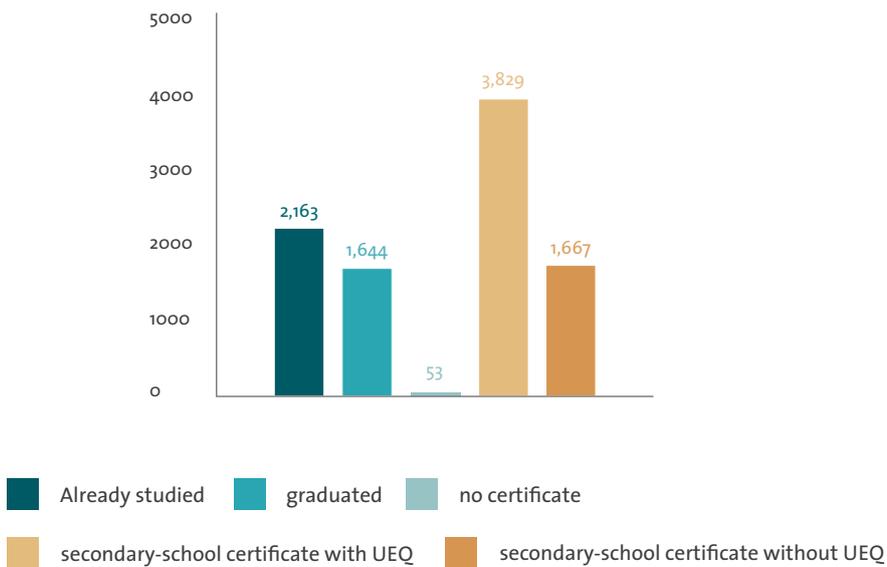


Fig. 15 Prior education and university experience of Integra course participants in 2018



Comparison of applicant data by uni-assist e. V.

The analyses carried out by uni-assist essentially confirm the participants' responses regarding their academic background. Twenty percent of the 19,186 candidates whose applications were reviewed by uni-assist possessed qualification for admission to master's programmes and had thus completed their undergraduate level studies. A total of 57% held a university entrance qualification (UEQ) for direct admission (general or subject-based) and 13% had a UEQ for indirect admission which entitled them to enrol in a preparatory college (Studienkolleg). Uni-assist had to notify only five percent of the applicants that direct admission to university

would not be possible on account of having no UEQ. A total of 44% had prior university experience (with or without a degree). One should note, however, that uni-assist can only assess these criteria if candidates submit the corresponding certificates, which of course is not necessary for assessing one's UEQ or application documents for admission to a bachelor's programme. According to uni-assist, the most studied common disciplines are engineering with 33%, economics and law with 23% and medicine and health sciences with 13%.¹⁴

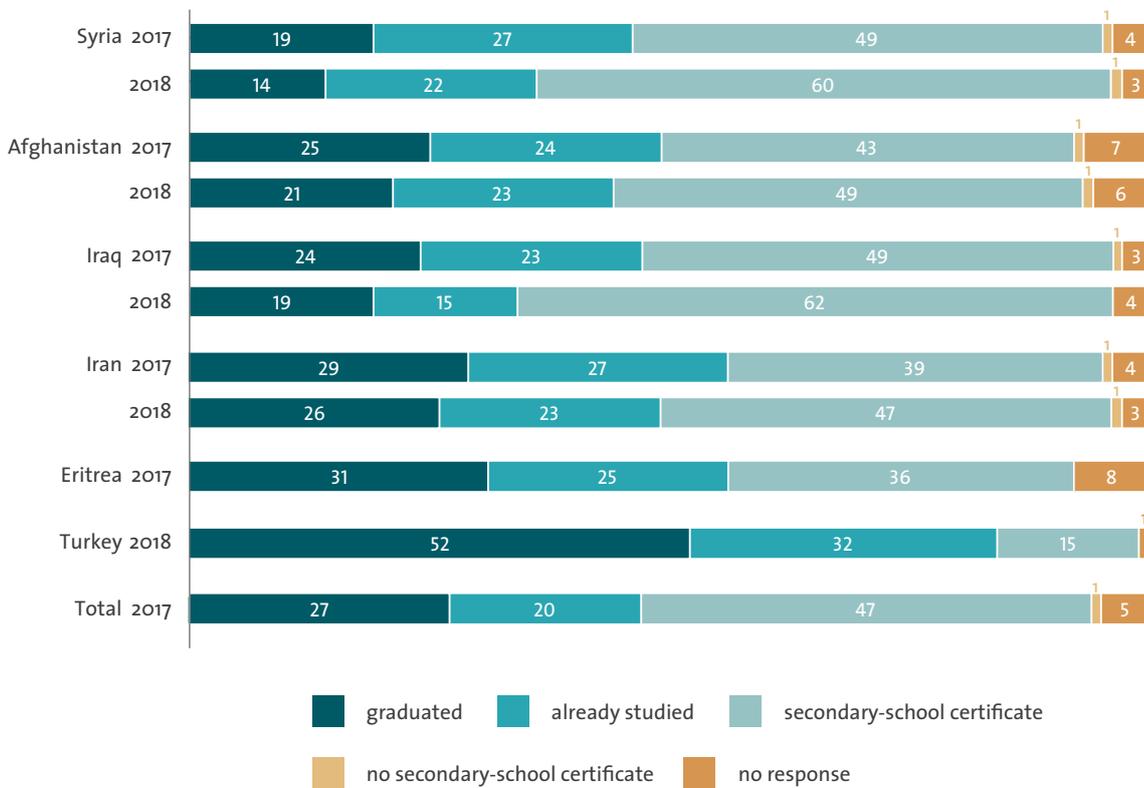
The decline of participants with university experience mentioned above is also evident with respect to the Integra course participants from the four top countries of origin: Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. The change among participants from Iraq is perhaps most prominent. While 23% of Iraqi students claimed to have university experience in 2017, only 15% of the same group stated likewise in 2018. Also the share of Iraqi participants who hold a university degree fell by five percent. We find a similar trend among the participants from Syria as well. While 27% of Syrians had prior university experience in 2017 and 19% had already earned a university degree, these percentages decreased to 22% and 14% respectively in 2018. We can assume that refugees who had already commenced or completed a degree programme in their home countries had learned German without enrolling in university courses or preparatory colleges and had succeeded in gaining admission to regular degree programmes in Germany faster than their compatriots. It is also conceivable that a large number of refugees who hold a university entrance qual-

ification (UEQ) might have taken an alternative path by gaining vocational training and entering the labour market and may at some later time seek access to higher education.

Interestingly, a large majority of the Turkish participants (84%) have prior university experience or hold a university degree. This could be attributed to the higher average age of refugees from Turkey. In 2016 and 2017 the number of prospective Turkish students with refugee background was so negligible that their numbers were not statistically registered. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the academic background of Turkish refugees with the cohorts of the past years. In view of the current political situation and developments in Turkey, we can presume that the percentage of prospective students from Turkey will continue to increase in the coming years. The most recent figures from uni-assist appear to confirm this trend. In October 2019 Turkish applicants comprised ten percent of all the applications reviewed at no cost by uni-assist for university applicants with refugee background.

¹⁴ Source: statistical analysis by uni-assist for the period SS 2017 to WS 2019/20; applicants are counted multiple times if they apply for more than one semester.

Fig. 16 Countries of origin and academic background in 2017 and 2018 in%



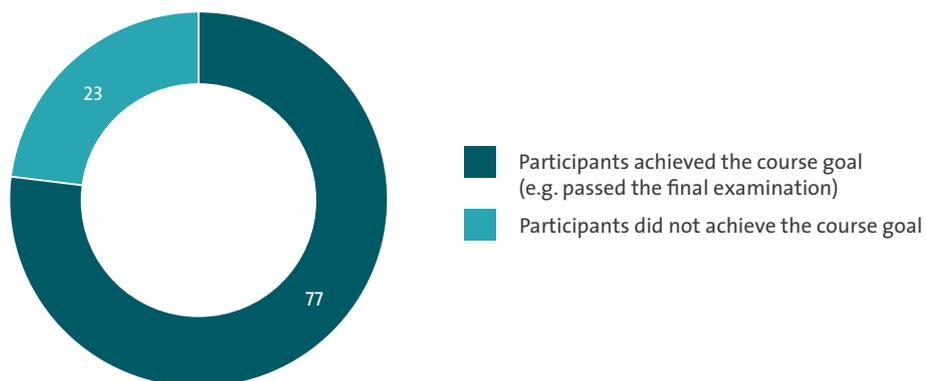
5.3 Conclusion of the courses and participation in TestAS/onSET

5.3.1 Achievement of course goals

According to the reports from the universities, 77% of all Integra participants achieved the course goal in 2018, e.g. in the form of a passed final examination. There are many reasons for why the prescribed goal was not achieved by all the participants. In certain cases, participants dropped out

for familial or health reasons. Sometimes students prematurely left their courses after failing their DaF exams or when they encountered difficulties understanding the course content due to insufficient German skills.

Fig. 17 Participants who achieved the course goals in 2018 in%



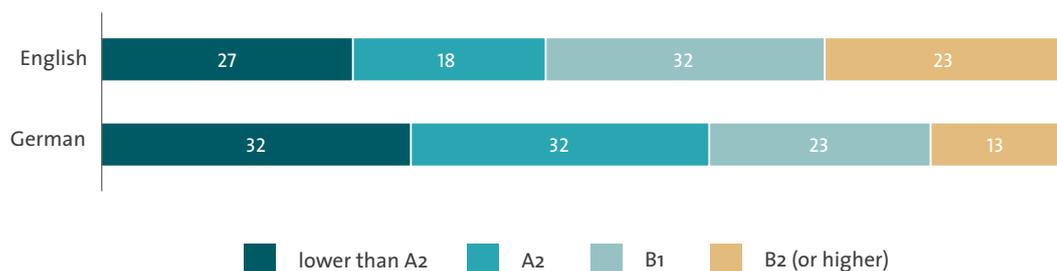
5.3.2 Academic aptitude and achieved language level

The TestAS for prospective student refugees was taken by 74% of the participants in Arabic between January 2016 and December 2019. A total of 14% completed the test in German, while just 12% chose to take the test in English. The results of these were essentially comparable to those achieved by the group of worldwide participants. As of the second year of the programme, one could already notice an improvement in the test scores. This was likely due to the fact that the refugees received more optimally targeted counselling with regard to their future academic career and generally had more time to prepare for the examination.

The onSET-Deutsch language placement test assesses the German skills of the prospective students with refugee background. The test is explicitly designed to determine a candidate's level of language proficiency based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

(CEFR GER)¹⁵. A total of 8,085 tests were administered between 2016 and 2019 which served as the basis for placing students in language courses at the universities and educational facilities and evaluating their language skills at the individual level. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain at what point the test was taken during the candidate's language training. Based on the results, just over two thirds of the participants who took the test achieved a maximum score of A2 (63%). Almost one quarter achieved the language level B1 which is certified by successfully completing an integration course. A total of 13% of the test takers achieved scores at or above the B2 language level. The English test results for refugees were comparatively higher. In this case, almost one quarter achieved a score at or higher than the B2 level, and another 32% achieved the intermediate B1 level. A total of 819 persons completed the English-language test.

Fig. 18 Test results of onSET German and English (January 2016 - December 2019) in%

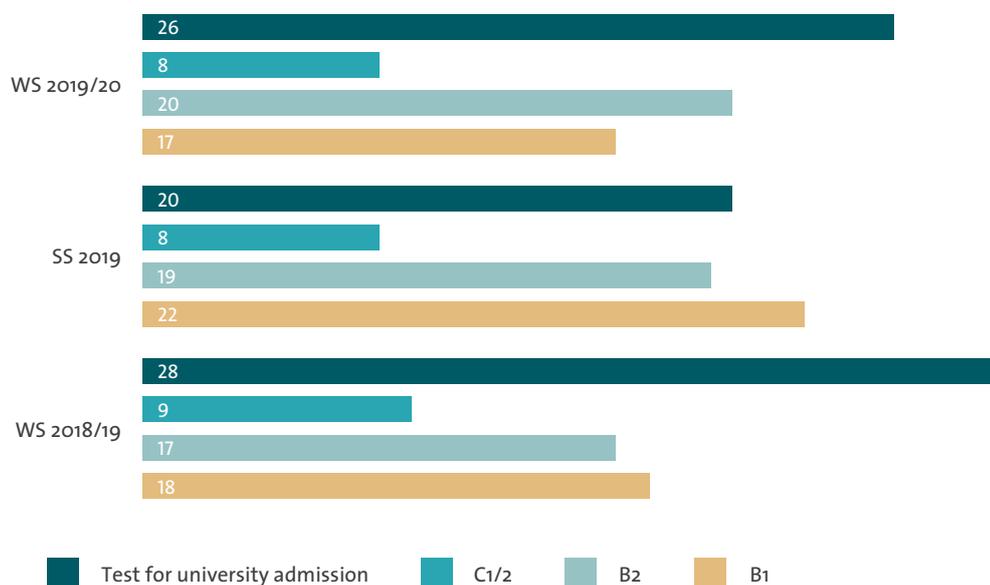


15 <http://www.europaeischer-referenzrahmen.de>: GER language levels: A: Basic language use, B: Independent language use, C: Proficient language use

Based on the language certificates submitted by applicants between WS 2018/19 and the current WS 2019/20, uni-assist could not identify any clear trend with respect to language proficiency levels. Uni-assist was only able to base this assessment on those applicants who submitted such language certificates as a prerequisite for admission, which is not a requirement for evaluating one's university entrance qualification (UEQ). The percentage of applicants who achieved a sufficient score on a language test for university admission saw a notable increase in WS 2019/20 compared those who took language tests in SS 2019.¹⁶

What the figures clearly show, however, is that the relative majority of applicants (26%) took a language test which would suffice for university admission, e.g. TestDaF, DSH, Telc C1 or the Goethe Zertifikat C2. Also more applicants in WS 2019/20 were able to demonstrate that they possessed a B2 language level than the prior SS 2019. Over the course of the past three semesters, an almost equal share of applicants succeeded in achieving the C1 level, i.e. 9% in WS 2018/19, 8% in both SS 2019 and WS 2019/20.

Fig. 19 Demonstrated language level in applications reviewed by uni-assist¹⁷
in %



More than one-third of all Integra course participants achieved a B2 language level (34%) and another 30% was able to demonstrate German language proficiency at a C1 level or higher (TestDaF).

This development in the participants' language levels is corroborated by the data that universities provided with regard to the offered courses in 2018.

¹⁶ Based on an assessment of results achieved for TestDaF 16, DSH-2, Telc C1 or Goethe Zertifikat C2 or higher level. Individual degree programmes may require even higher language proficiency levels.

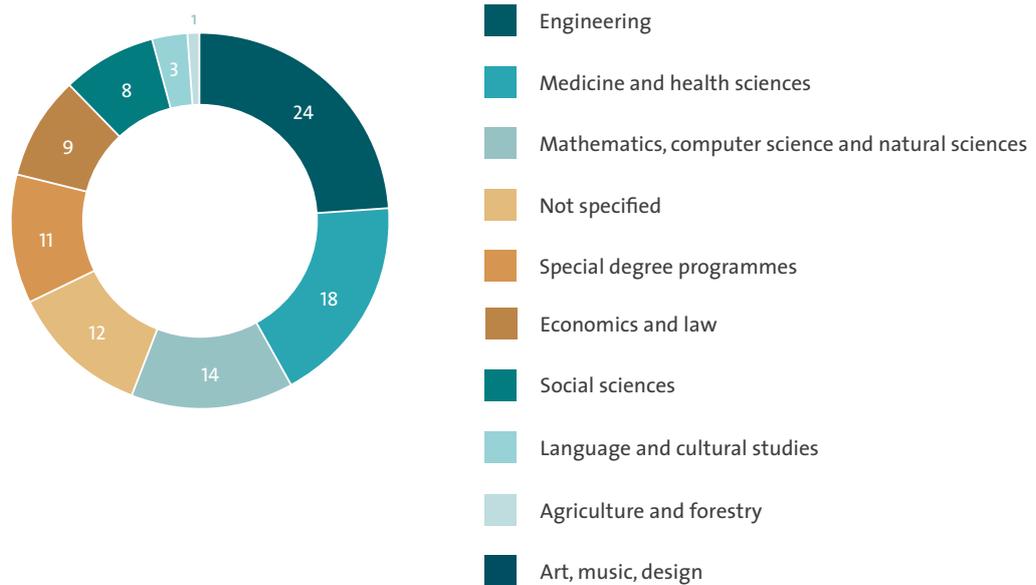
¹⁷ For test scores at B1 level and higher.

5.3.3 Desired courses of study

From January 2016 to December 2019, a total of 19,186 refugees took advantage of the free appli-

cation review process and applied for 61,681 courses of study¹⁸ via uni-assist.

Fig. 20 Desired courses of study in applications processed by uni-assist, divided into subject groups in%



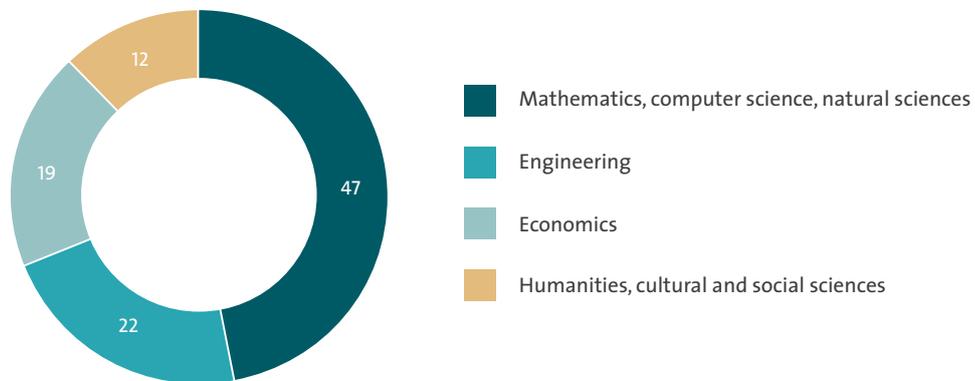
The applicants most often indicated that they preferred to study subjects in the area of engineering (24%), medicine and health sciences (18%) and mathematics, computer science and the natural sciences (14%). This reflects a slight shift in the academic experiences of past applicants whose second most common subjects of study were in the areas of economics and law. Just under half of the applicants presented proof of academic achievement in these areas. We can assume that subjects in which German plays a large role can only be chosen by those who already possess a certain level of German language proficiency. Another obstacle, particularly with regard to law, is that past academic achievement is only rarely recognised by

German universities as it often refers to the legal systems of the applicants' home countries.

The academic aptitude test TestAS for refugees presents a somewhat different distribution of subjects. A total of 11,598 refugees registered to take the TestAS. The most frequently chosen subject module (47%) was the module for mathematics, computer science and natural sciences. Another 22% chose the subject module engineering, 19% the humanities and social sciences, and 12% economics.

¹⁸ A desired course of study represents an application for a single degree programme at a university.

Fig. 21 Selected subject modules for the academic aptitude test TestAS (Jan. 2016 – Dec. 2019) in %

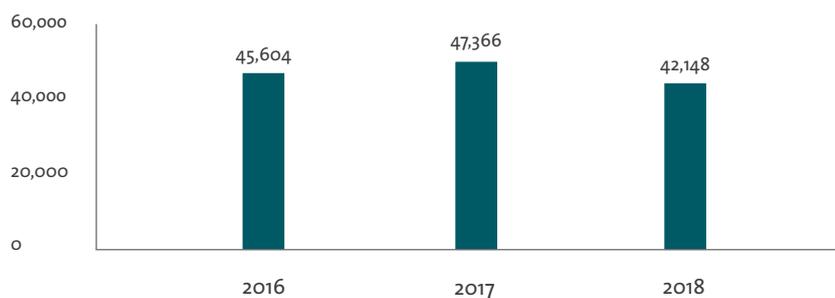


5.4 Academic counselling and supervision

According to figures provided by the universities and preparatory colleges, 135,118 prospective students with refugee background received academic counselling between 2016 and 2018. A

total of 42,148 consultation sessions were conducted in 2018, a slight decrease compared with the prior two years.

Fig. 22 Conducted consultations in 2016, 2017 and 2018)



The demand for academic counselling for refugees developed differently among different universities. Some 42% estimated that the demand for academic counselling in 2018 had decreased compared to the year before. Thirty-nine percent

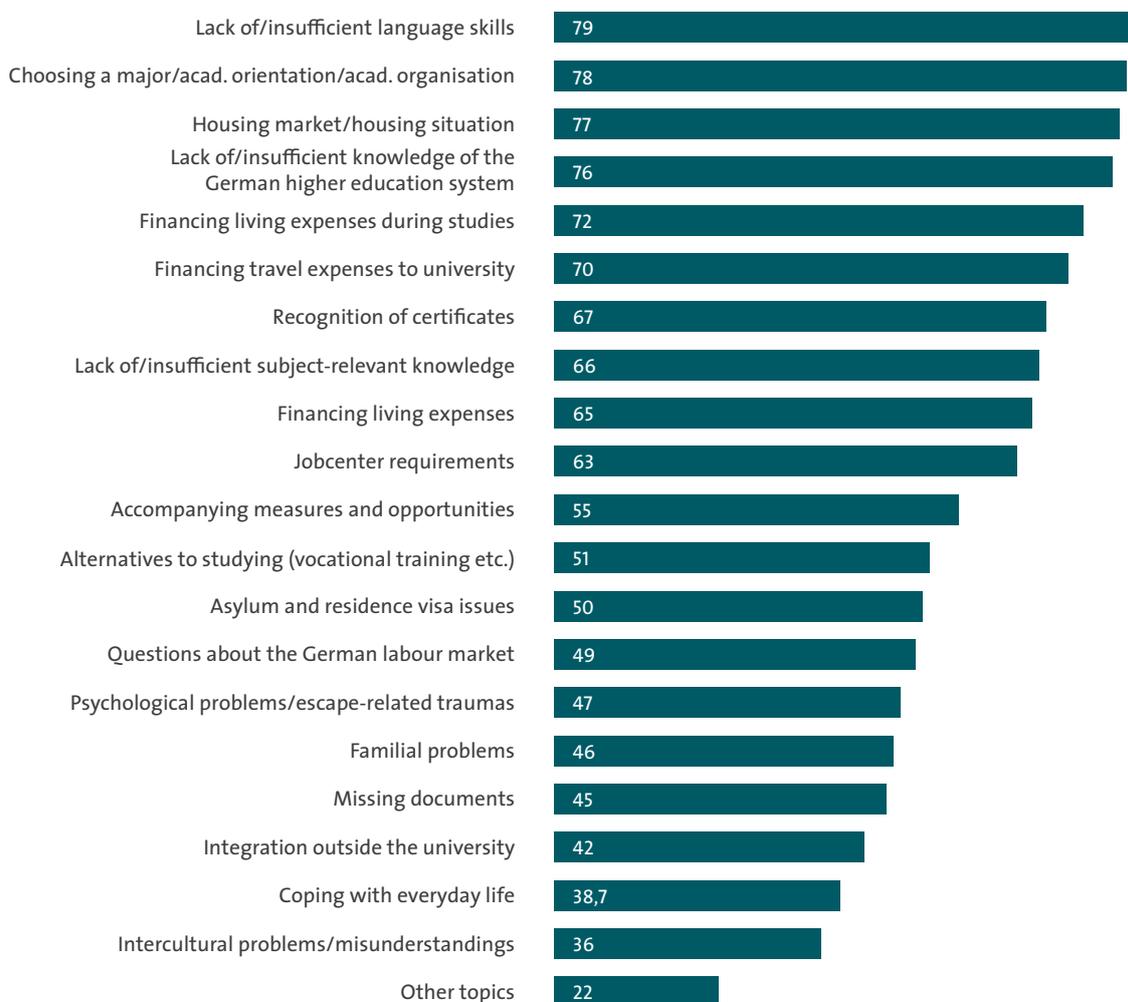
believed the need for counselling had remained the same, while 20% claimed to have provided more consultations in 2018 compared to the year before.

5.4.1 Entwicklung des Beratungsangebots und -bedarfs

When it comes to advising refugees, universities and preparatory colleges are still confronted with a wide array of sometimes complex themes which go beyond the usual topics and areas of competence of regular university and administrative staff. Due to their legal and personal circumstances, the refugees' interests and coun-

selling needs often differ from those of international students and require individually tailored advice services. At the same time, there are many areas where counselling topics overlap among refugees and international students, and even German students to some extent.

Fig. 23 **Counselling topics “frequently” or “very frequently” discussed in 2018 (multiple answers possible)**
in%



Absent or insufficient German language skills was the most often broached subject in the counselling sessions. Consequently, it appears that insufficient language knowledge remains one of the largest obstacles to successfully commencing one's studies. Student refugees required an almost equal amount of counselling on their choice of major, academic orientation and organisation – in sharp contrast to 2017. This could be due to the fact that a larger number of refugees are now enrolled in degree programmes or are in the process of seeking admission to a regular degree programme and require corresponding academic advice. Another frequently discussed problem relates to the housing situation in Germany. This might well be a topic that occupies international and German students to a similar degree. Insufficient knowledge of the German higher education system continues to be a frequently discussed topic in counselling sessions, as

well as financing matters. While financing one's living expenses during preparatory courses was one of the most discussed topics in 2017, the scope of this question extended to financing opportunities during one's studies in 2018. The lack of subject-relevant knowledge and questions concerning accompanying measures and opportunities were far more frequently addressed in 2018 than the year before. The advising institutions also reported that students came to them more often with questions concerning the German labour market and job opportunities in Germany. The frequency of counselling sessions devoted to job-related topics indicates that student refugees are considering their career prospects in Germany both before and during their studies. This suggests that a considerable percentage of students with refugee background more likely sees their professional future in Germany than in their country of origin.

In comparison: This was also confirmed by the responses of the target group. A total of 89% of the surveyed refugees in the 2017 cohort indicated that they hoped to work in Germany after graduation, while six percent were not sure and another five percent answered negatively or provided no answer. At the same time, only 36% of the respondents felt that they were well informed about the German labour market, and almost half (47%) stated that they had no knowledge of any programmes or measures offered by their respective universities on professional qualification opportunities, application procedures or career orientation. Outside the universities, only 20% reported to have taken advantage of preparatory measures available in the labour market. Although many respondents show a desire to work in Germany, it appears that the majority of course participants have not yet taken advantage of any advice services outside their respective universities. A significant number of respondents (32%) expressed a desire for more career counselling in areas unrelated to the traditional STEM subjects like science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The percentage was even higher (42%) among those already employed. Among the participants who had already enrolled in degree programmes, 25% expressed a wish for general advice in a diverse spectrum of occupational fields. Based on their responses, the students appeared to show increasing interest in concrete support measures to successfully enter the labour market, evident in their explicit wish for more information on internship possibilities and part-time jobs (11%), application coaching (10%) and cultivating business contacts (6%).

Refugees often asked their universities and preparatory colleges during their counselling sessions about alternatives to getting a degree, e.g. vocational training. The frequency of consultations on student financing and the German

labour market suggests that financial difficulties are pushing refugees to consider vocational training as an alternative to qualification through higher education, or even decide to enter professional life straightaway.

In comparison: 25% of the surveyed participants in the 2017 cohort, who were attending vocational training programmes at the time of the survey, indicated that this was why they chose not to seek admission to a degree programme in Germany.

Other important topics discussed in counselling sessions included the recognition of certificates, missing documents, Jobcenter requirements, and asylum/residence visa-related issues. The university staff reported that a large number of refugees sought their help to cope with personal problems. Around 47% indicated that familial

and psychological problems were frequently discussed in the counselling sessions. Just under half of the universities reported that social integration outside the university, intercultural misunderstandings and difficulties managing the challenges of everyday life were frequently discussed topics in counselling sessions.

5.4.2 Challenges as perceived by the universities and the participants

We can assume that both the demand for accompanying measures and the need for advice on entering the labour market will become increasingly relevant topics in counselling sessions as the student refugees continue on their path toward a university degree. This development is already taking shape in the most frequently discussed counselling topics reported by the universities in 2018. The frequency of counselling sessions on general orientation in the German higher education system, which saw a significant rise compared to the year before (2017: 69%, 2018: 76%), indicates that there are still many refugees at universities who find themselves at the beginning of their academic career in Germany, have very basic questions and need help gai-

ning general orientation in the German higher education system. The fact that refugees are turning to universities for help with personal matters could point to a lack of alternative advice and support services in these areas¹⁹. Based on these assumptions, universities and preparatory colleges should prepare to address a growing number of complex and, in some cases, rather sensitive counselling topics in the future. Furthermore, they will have to provide adequate services and the corresponding competence-building training measures for their counsellors. This will require them to consolidate newly established structural measures and to sustainably provide and expand them going forward.

¹⁹ DAAD: Integration of Refugees at German Institutions of Higher Education – Information 2 Study Preparation and Transition into Regular Degree Programmes, December 2018, p. 28f.

In comparison: In addition to financial difficulties reported by 46% of the survey participants from the 2017 cohort, the lack of social contacts outside university and academic life was among the most significant and most frequently mentioned problems facing the course participants. This response was given by 42% of the respondents. Judging from the participants' responses and the reports by the universities, it appears that additional financial support for individuals may be required to systematically enhance their overall chances of completing their studies. Furthermore, social integration and participation at and outside the university continue to play a central role in achieving academic success. Social contact to people directly and indirectly connected to the academic environment represents an essential resource for coping with problems, managing psychological/emotional impairments and positively affecting one's personal motivation which correspondingly translates into academic success. The complex spectrum of required support measures, indicated by the survey's results, comprises subsections which are closely interwoven with the participants' personal living circumstances and thereby extend beyond what are considered typical university-related topics. The interesting aspect here is that the survey participants, who had found employment, indicated that they felt most integrated in Germany compared to those participants still in preparatory courses, vocational training or degree programmes. A total of 77% of this subgroup reported feeling well or very well integrated in Germany. The universities could potentially offer measures to promote and interweave social, academic and professional integration, and thereby encourage a sense of belonging among the student refugees. This, in turn, could further improve their chances of achieving academic success. According to the survey, participants indicated that the measures which were especially helpful in this regard were study-preparatory courses (41%), individual counselling sessions at the International Offices (35%), followed by counselling from degree programme advisors (26%) and mentor and buddy programmes (24%).

6. Survey of course participants (2017 cohort)

6.1 Survey population and subgroups

Out of the 9,060 course participants in 2017, a total of 2,519 participated in the online survey in March 2018 (response rate 27.8%). From this group of respondents, 43% reported to be currently enrolled in a degree programme in Germany. This could indicate that those who responded to the survey were more likely to have gained admission to a degree programme than those

who were still attending preparatory courses or had since dropped out. Nineteen percent of the participants stated that they were still attending a DAAD-funded preparatory course. Another 16% stated that they were employed, and nine percent reported to be currently enrolled in a vocational training programme.

Fig. 24 **Current occupation**²⁰
in %



Around 14% of the survey's participants reported that none of the paths listed above applied to them. In some cases they claimed to be in a preparatory course which was not receiving Integra or NRWege funding. Others stated that they were currently looking for employment, were in the process of retraining or gaining advanced professional training. Of those refugees who were not currently enrolled in degree programmes, a significant majority stated that they had completed study-preparatory courses (vocational trainees:

72%, employed: 68%, other: 71%). When asked why they did not choose to study, the most common difficulty mentioned was student financing (19%), followed by an inability to meet or fully meet the admission requirements (14%), and indecision regarding one's choice of major (8%). Based on the write-in answers to this question, it appears that some of the survey participants were still waiting to commence a planned degree programme at the start of the winter semester 2018/19 when the survey was conducted.

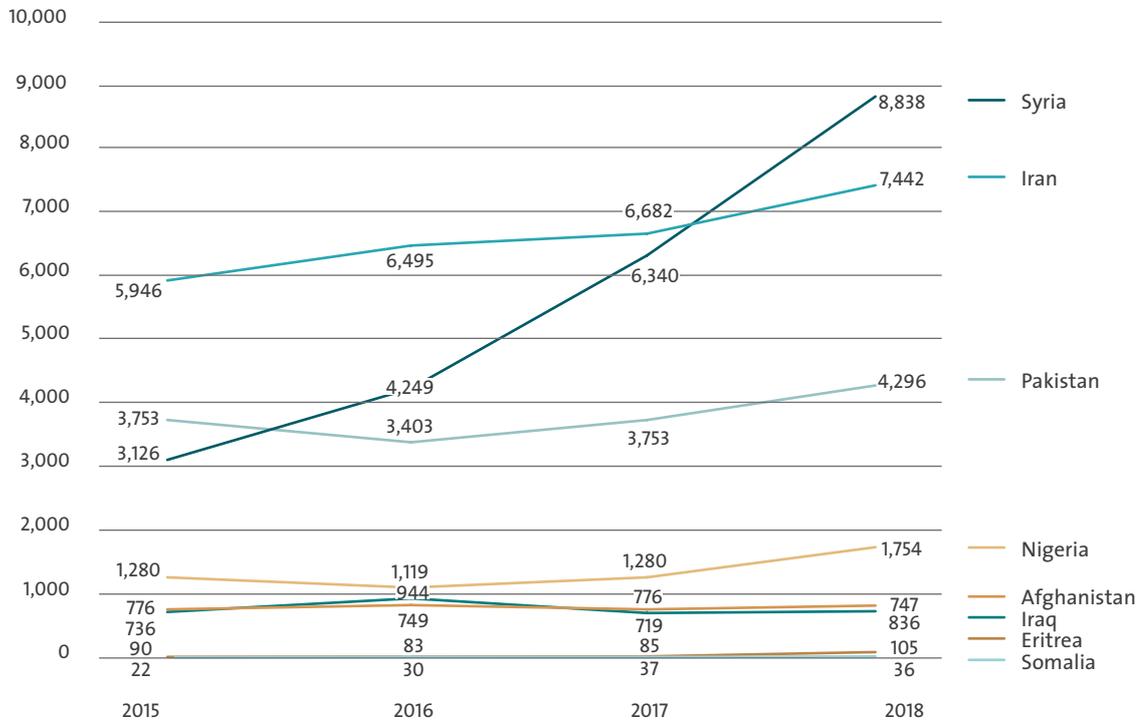
²⁰ Deviations from 100 are caused by rounding.

Another frequently mentioned reason for not taking up study was insufficient language skills, a not-yet passed language examination (usually C1 level) or familial reasons, e.g. lack of childcare. Nevertheless, in the past four years we have seen a positive development in refugee enrolment numbers from the eight top countries of origin²¹. Based on the annual surveys conducted by the Federal Statistical Office, a steadily growing number of academically qualified refugees has gained admission to regular degree programmes in Germany from 2015 to 2019²².

There are numerous reasons why participants were unable to complete study-preparatory courses. Financial problems was most frequently mentioned as a reason for dropping out of courses (37%). Language difficulties (27%), problems with the pace of learning (16%), general lack of motivation (18%) and time-management challenges (17%) also frequently played a role. Eighteen percent of those who dropped out of a study-preparatory course indicated that they had turned to other professional alternatives.



Fig. 25 Enrolment figures for student refugees from the eight most common countries of origin between 2015 and 2018



21 Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia

22 Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Education and Culture – Students at Higher Education Institutions, Surveys from 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019. Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Education and Culture – Students at Higher Education Institutions. Winter Semester 2015/2016. Published on 2 September 2016. (https://www.destatis.de/GPStatistik/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00027054/2110410167004.pdf).

Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Education and Culture – Students at Higher Education Institutions. Winter Semester 2016/2017. Published on 24 October 2017.

(https://www.destatis.de/GPStatistik/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00033166/2110410177004.pdf).

Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Education and Culture – Students at Higher Education Institutions. Winter Semester 2017/2018. Published on 7 September 2018, Summarised overviews 2, 4 and 5 revised on 14 September 2018. https://www.destatis.de/GPStatistik/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00041035/2110410187004_Korr14092018.pdf).

Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Education and Culture – Students at Higher Education Institutions. Winter Semester 2018/2019. Published on 18 October 2019, revised on 1 November 2019. (https://www.destatis.de/GPStatistik/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00051772/2110410197004_korr01112019.pdf).

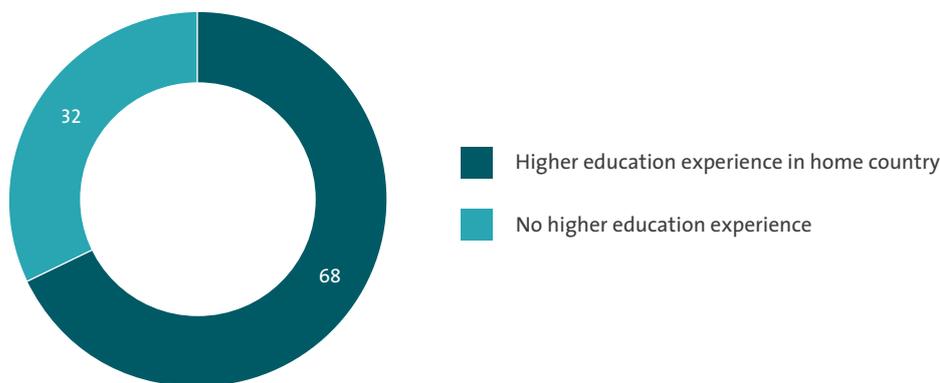
6.2 Analysis of refugee data in degree programmes and professional life

Most respondents, who indicated that they were currently studying, were enrolled at universities. The subgroup of refugees in study-preparatory courses had a slightly higher percentage of Syrian refugees than the entire group. Syrians accounted for 84% of refugees enrolled in degree programmes, compared with 79% in the entire group. Most of the student refugees had already spent three to four years in Germany (73%), with another 17% having lived here for four to five years. The majority of these students (51%) had attended a study-preparatory language course for six to ten

months prior to enrolment, while approximately one third (31%) had attended such courses for more than 10 months, and 18% for just one to two months. Based on these figures, we can gather the average duration of language preparation required for admission to a degree programme in Germany.

A significant majority of the subgroup of student refugees (68%) had already gained some higher education in their home countries.

Fig. 26 Student refugees with higher education experience from their country of origin in %



Sixty percent of those with prior experience in higher education were forced to either interrupt or terminate their studies, while the other 40% succeeded in earning a degree. What this shows is that one's path to higher education in Germany is significantly influenced by whether one had already begun pursuing an academic career in one's country of origin. The high number of individuals who wish to enrol in a degree programme in Germany despite already possessing a university degree from their home country raises various interpretations. For one, we could assume that these are students who wish to obtain a

master's degree in Germany after having earned a bachelor's-level degree in a related subject area in their home countries. This assumption is supported by the large number of respondents who indicated that they had already earned a bachelor's degree in their home country (88%). In conjunction with the range of subjects studied by the student refugees, it appears that many with higher education experience study subjects in Germany related to those studied in their home countries. More than half of the respondents (53%), who had already studied at university in their home countries, indicated that their aca-

demic work completed at home or abroad was recognised in Germany, while 26% claimed that they had not taken steps to gain recognition, and another 21% failed in their attempt to gain recognition for past academic work.

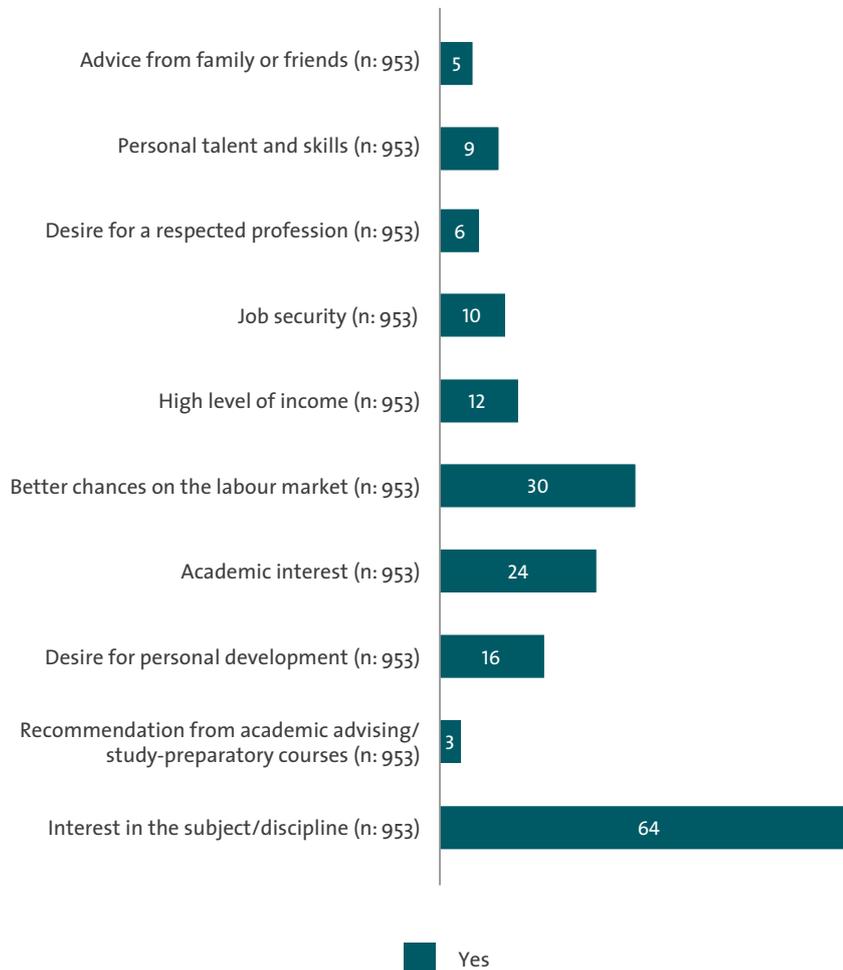
Many students with refugee background noted that their decision for choosing a university location came down to the university's good reputation (35%) or ranking (15%) with another 27% citing the profile of the degree programme in question (multiple answers possible). Consequently, the expected quality of the academic institution and degree programme appears to have played a decisive role in the choice of university. An almost equally decisive factor appears to be the university where the student happened to complete the study-preparatory course; one out of five respondents mentioned this as decisive in choosing their place of study. The choice of university is determined by other factors as well – factors which prospective students have minimal control over, e.g. residence permit conditions which 19% of the respondents cited as limiting their choice of residence in certain states in Germany. At least one in five surveyed students mentioned the proximity to family, friends and social contacts as playing a decisive role. Only seven percent stated that failure to gain university admission was the reason for not being able to study at their university of choice.

What this data shows is that potential student refugees, international students and German students appear to choose the place of study based on similar criteria, i.e. the reputation and quality of the academic institution or the profile of the degree programme. In the case of students with refugee background, the choice is also influenced by external factors related to their particular legal status, e.g. the terms and conditions of their place of residence.

Of the surveyed refugees currently enrolled in degree programmes, almost half (47%) indicated that they were enrolled in engineering programmes. Other highly popular programmes included law, social sciences and economics (16%) followed by mathematics and natural sciences (12%).

The main reason for enrolling in programmes in certain disciplines was attributed to subject-relevant (64%) and academic (24%) interests, as well as the prospect of improved chances on the labour market (30%). The desire for personal development was also an important factor for deciding on a certain subject area (16%). Other reasons, such as recommendations from academic advisors or influence from family and friends played a somewhat subordinate role in the respondents' choice of major.

Fig.. 27 **Reasons for choosing one's subject of study (multiple answers possible)**
in %



Compared to German students, students with refugee background show significantly greater interest in engineering and natural scientific subjects – a level comparable with that of international students in general.

Almost one out of three participants expressed a wish to earn a master's degree (32%), while the majority was currently enrolled in undergraduate programmes (57%). Just seven percent of the students were aiming to pass a state examination in Germany, and three percent were working on their doctorates. The overwhelming majority were enrolled in programmes taught in German, while just four percent stated that they were enrolled in English-language degree programmes in Germany.

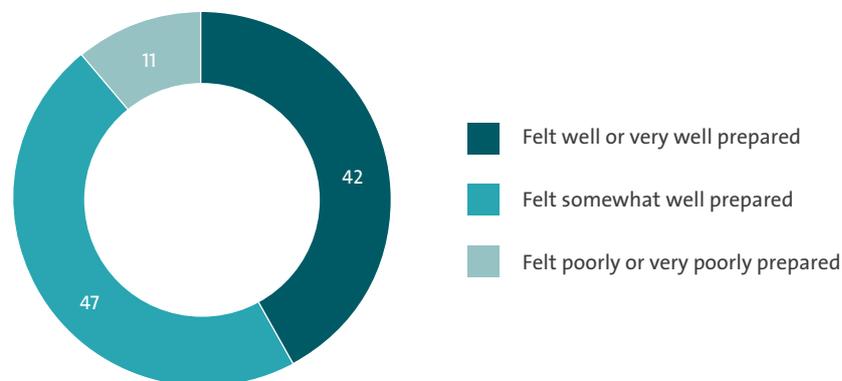
According to the responses by the student refugees who had attended a study-preparatory course funded through Integra, 60% succeeded in gaining admission to a German university after their first or second application. Another 29% applied to up to five universities, while 11% responded that they had sent more than 10 applications for admission to university. A large majority (80%) reported receiving notification of admission from one to two universities, 18% from three to five, and two percent from up to 10 universities. Based on this data, we can conclude that the university applications from refugees received an overall positive assessment.

Ninety-four percent of students who reported to have taken the TestAS beforehand indicated that

they had taken advantage of the free testing procedures for refugees. Out of those surveyed participants who reported to have applied to university via uni-assist, 93% indicated that they, too, benefited from the fee waiver for refugees. The large majority (91%) indicated that their goal was to gain admission to a degree programme at a German university. According to a survey conducted by uni-assist, some 74% of those who requested and were granted fee waivers were satisfied or very satisfied with the corresponding online portal²³. This suggests that these specially established programmes did indeed remove barriers to university access for potential student refugees.

Most student refugees who are enrolled in degree programmes indicated that they did not prepare for studies in Germany by attending a preparatory college (Studienkolleg). However, 95% said they had taken a language course and passed a language test (e.g. TestDaF or DSH) in preparation for study in Germany. Fifty-one percent of these students attended language courses for six to ten months, and another 31% participated for longer than ten months. Forty-two percent of the surveyed students felt that the language training had prepared them well or very well for their degree programmes, while 47% felt somewhat well prepared, and 11% reported feeling poorly or very poorly prepared.

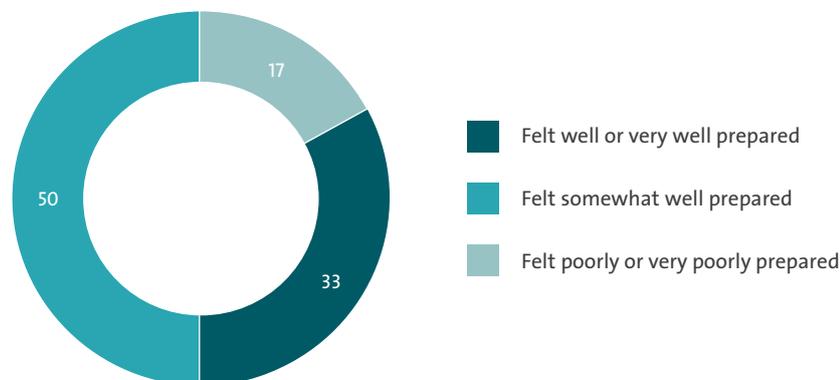
Fig. 28 Respondents' assessment of how well language courses had prepared them for study in Germany in%



Only 18% of the students attended subject-relevant preparatory courses. From this subgroup, 33% reported feeling well-prepared for taking up study in their respective subject. One half of the respondents felt only somewhat well-prepared at the start of their degree programmes in Germany, and 17% indicated feeling poorly or

very poorly prepared in terms of subject-relevant knowledge. Most of the participants stated that they had completed subject-relevant preparatory courses at a university (71%), followed by other educational institutions (30%) and, at third place, preparatory colleges (16%).

Fig. 29 Respondents' assessment of how well subject-relevant courses had prepared them for study in Germany in %



The average length of subject-relevant preparatory courses was five months, i.e. significantly longer than the language courses in 2018 which required three months to complete on average. A large number of those surveyed, who are now enrolled in degree programmes, reported having attended subject-relevant preparatory courses lasting six to more than ten months.

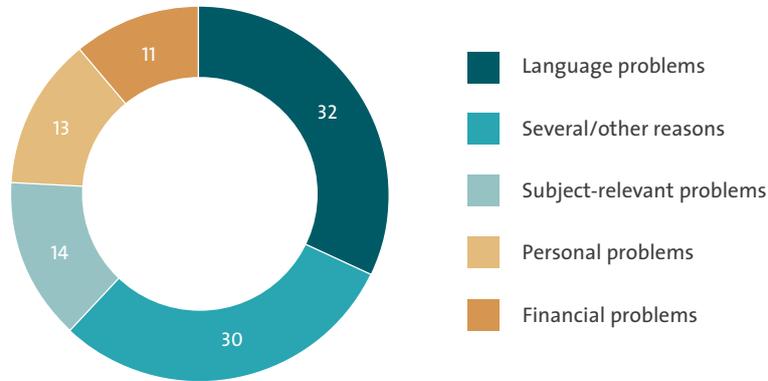
While 33% of the refugees enrolled at university felt well prepared to study their respective discipline, more than half of this subgroup reported finding it difficult or very difficult to meet the subject-relevant demands of their current programmes. Only five percent claimed it was easy or very easy to meet these demands. Nonetheless, 43% of the students assessed the demands placed on them by their degree programme as appropriate. What is also interesting in this context is that despite these mixed assessments, a significant majority of this group (81%) assumed that they would probably or very probably complete their degree programmes in Germany with success. Only five percent considered the likelihood

of successfully completing their programmes as somewhat improbable. Compared to the average drop-out rate among international students in Germany in master's programmes (29%) and bachelor's programmes (45%)²⁴, this self-assessment by student refugees paints a surprisingly positive picture and underscores the positive impact of the universities' preparatory and accompanying courses. The responses from the survey's participants demonstrate that refugees generally feel well prepared for study in Germany and meet the language demands of their degree programmes.

When asked why they would consider dropping out of university, around one third (32%) of this subgroup cited language difficulties as the most common reason. Subject-relevant reasons were cited by 14%, as well as financial and personal problems. Almost one in five indicated that a combination of several reasons could play a role in preventing them from successfully completing their studies.

24 DAAD/DZHW: Wissenschaft Weltoffen 2018, p. 66.

Fig. 30 Reasons for not successfully completing one’s studies in Germany (multiple answers possible) in %

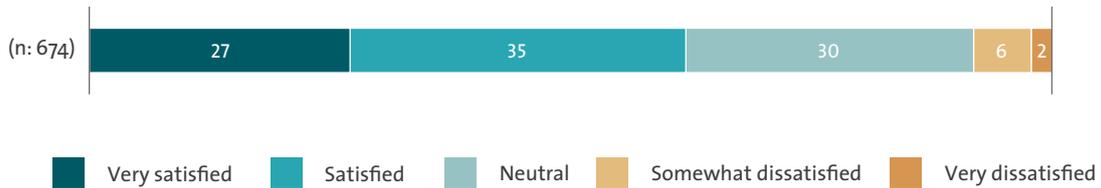


The fact that language problems is cited as the most common reason for possibly terminating one’s studies is rather remarkable, as the respondents had already passed the required language test for university admission. This proves once again how important it is that these persons continue to receive language and subject-relevant support after enrolment and throughout their studies in order to improve their prospects of graduating. It is quite evident that the support needs of refugees enrolled in degree programmes are multifaceted. Offering advice and support measures to meet these needs, especially in the area of subject-relevant language training and accompanying subject-relevant courses, could have a positive impact on the refugees’ academic development.

Just under one third of the surveyed refugees reported feeling very satisfied (27%) or satisfied (35%) with the progress of their studies, while a third had no opinion one way or the other. A very small percentage (8%) was dissatisfied (6%) or very dissatisfied (2%) with their progress. When viewed altogether, it appears that the overwhelming majority of refugees currently enrolled in degree programmes positively assess their study progress, from which we can also draw conclusions about their general academic satisfaction and sense of integration. The responses regarding satisfaction with one’s study progress suggest that the large majority of refugees have successfully integrated into degree programmes at a German university.

Fig. 31 Satisfaction with the progress of study
in %

How satisfied are you with the progress of your studies?

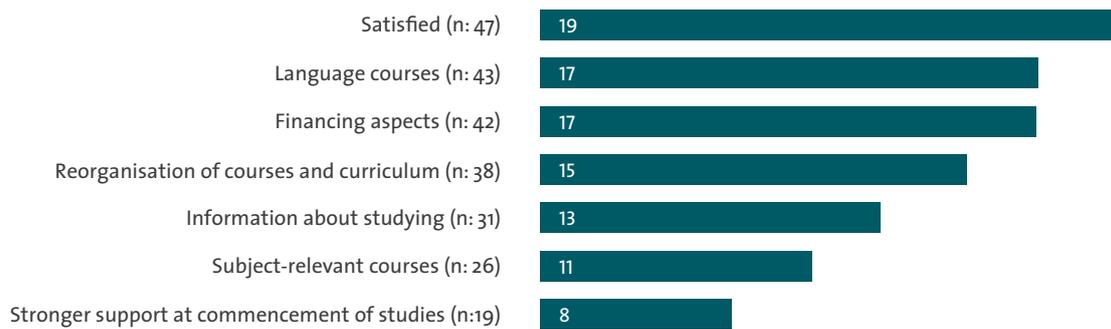


When asked how the support measures during one’s degree programme could be improved, 19% of the participants responded “satisfied” (i.e. with no suggestion of improvement). Seventeen percent indicated they would welcome more support with learning German and another 11% wished

for more subject-relevant support. Eight percent of the respondents stated that it would be necessary to receive such support at the beginning of their degree programmes. Additional advice on obtaining student financing was also suggested by 17% of the participants.

Fig. 32 Suggestions for possibly improving the support measures
in %

How could the support measures be improved during your degree programme?

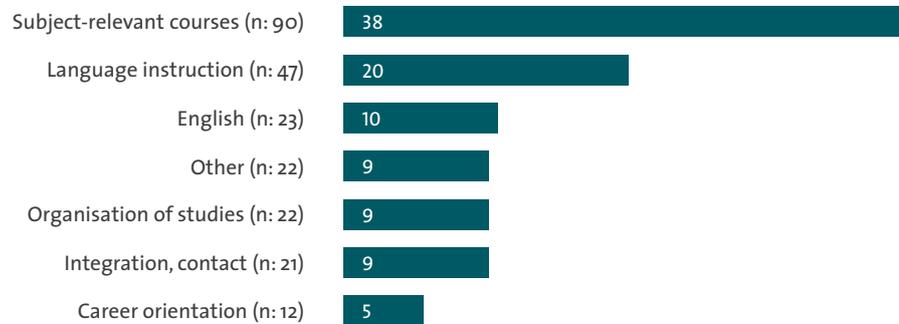


The student refugees were asked what kind of additional courses they would desire during their degree programmes. Thirty-eight percent wished for study-relevant accompanying courses. One out of five (20%) indicated that they required additional language instruction during their studies, and ten percent would have liked accom-

panying English courses. Nine percent wished for more help with organising their studies, and an equal number expressed a need for more social/ personal contacts and integration. Another five percent wished that the university would offer more career orientation and corresponding programmes.

Fig. 33 **Additionally desired courses and workshops**
in %

What additional courses and/or workshops would you have wished for or do you still wish for?

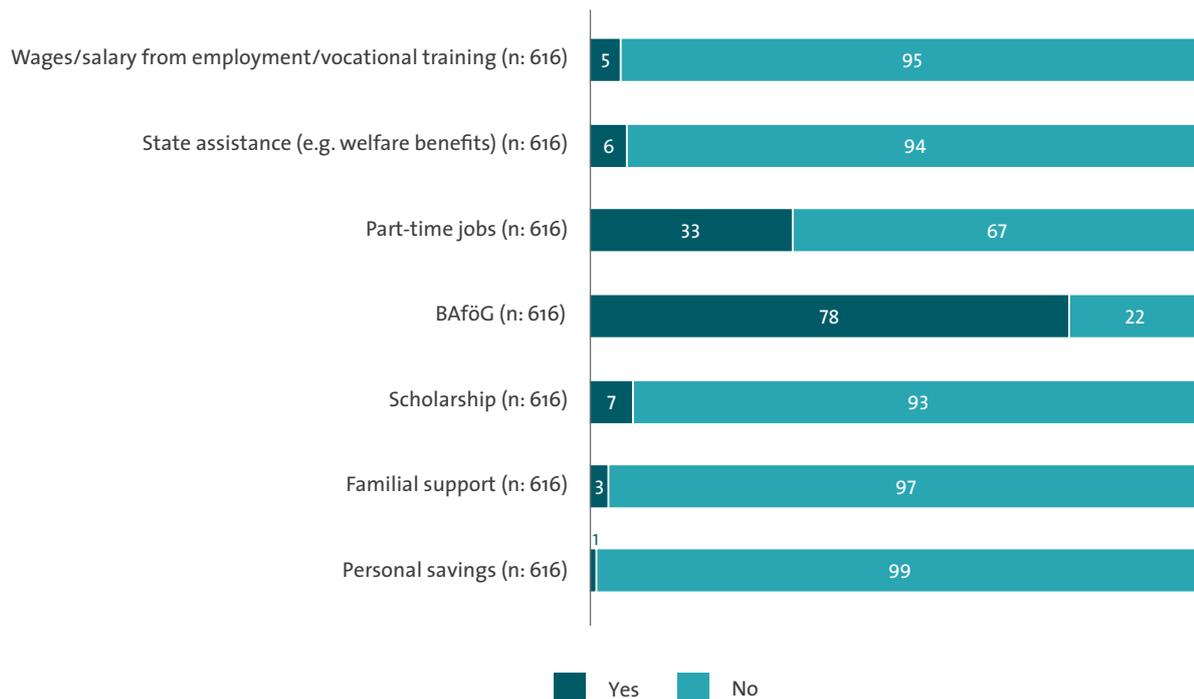


The overwhelming majority of refugees receive financial support through social benefits paid through the Federal Student Assistance Act (BAFöG). Over one third of the respondents stated that they cover their cost of living with income from a part-time job (in some cases in addition to BAFöG, as multiple answers were pos-

sible). Out of the 616 participants who answered this question, seven percent indicated that they were receiving scholarship money in Germany. Another six percent said they were receiving state public welfare, while five percent were mainly or partially financing themselves through gainful employment.

Fig. 34 **Financing living expenses²⁵**
in %

How are you currently financing your living expenses?



25 Multiple answers possible

Only 146 participants answered the question of whether they had applied for BAföG to finance their studies in Germany. Seventy-four persons answered “yes”, and over half of those who did apply (57%) were rejected. The most common

reason for the rejections – according to the respondents – was their not yet clarified residence status (38%), followed by having changed majors (26%), a previously earned university degree (19%) and being too old (7%).

6.3 Career-related perspectives

From the group of refugees currently enrolled in degree programmes, 42% stated that they had already completed an internship in Germany and gained initial practical experience. Another 14% indicated they were planning to do an internship,

while 44% said they had not yet completed one. Most of the students with refugee background (89%) indicated that they saw their professional future in Germany and not in their home country.

Fig. 35 Professional future in Germany
in %

Would you like to continue living in Germany after completing your studies?

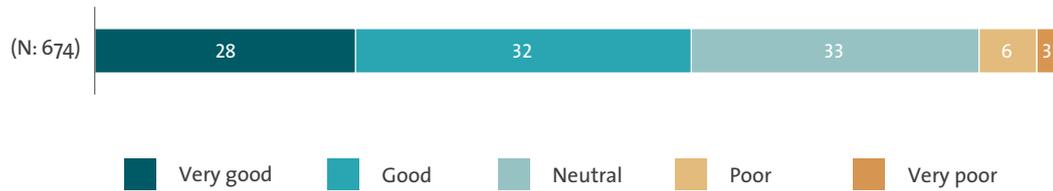


We should not underestimate the potential this desire could have for the German labour market. Companies in Germany often point to a shortage of trained professionals in exactly those disciplines which prospective student refugees show an above-average interest in studying. These include engineering- and natural science-oriented professional fields and health care occupations. The survey’s participants are generally very

optimistic with regard to their chances of finding employment in Germany after graduation. Two-thirds of the respondents assessed their career chances on the German labour market as good (32%) or very good (28%). Another 33% regarded their chances as neutral, and only a small percentage considered their prospect of finding a job in Germany as poor (6%) or very poor (2%).

Fig. 36 **Estimated prospects of finding employment in Germany**
in %

How do you estimate your prospects of finding work in Germany after your studies?

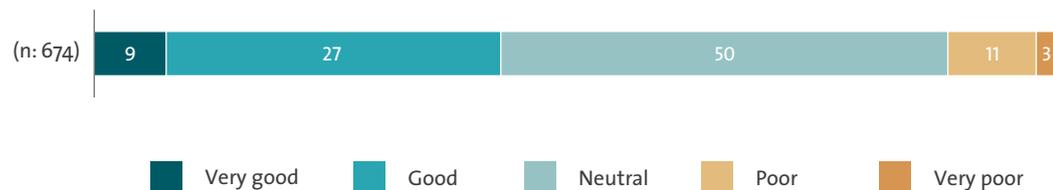


Although the majority of refugees enrolled in degree programmes view their professional prospects in Germany optimistically, there is a surprisingly large proportion which feels only somewhat (50%), poorly (11%) or very poorly (3%) informed about the German labour market. A significant

majority (80%) also indicated they had not yet taken advantage of measures to prepare for the labour market, while almost half of the respondents (47%) admitted not knowing whether such labour-market-related information was available at their respective universities.

Fig. 37 **Estimated prospects of finding employment in Germany**
in %

How do you estimate your prospects of finding work in Germany after your studies?



These figures emphasise that even though students with refugee background are optimistic regarding their professional prospects in Germany, these expectations are only partially grounded in actual professional experience or backed by actual information or support measures. One out of every four student refugees

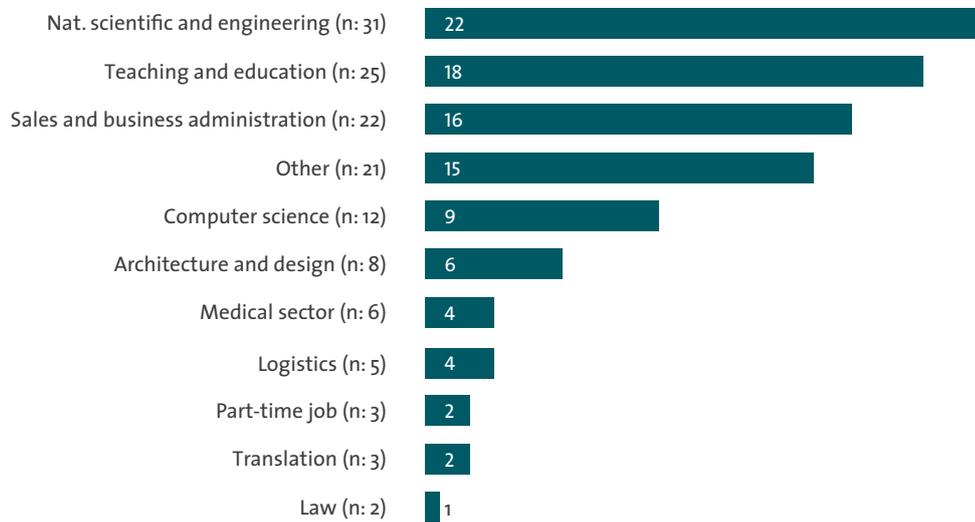
expressed a wish for more information on general career orientation in the German labour market (25%) or job and work placement opportunities (11%). According to the survey, working in Germany after graduation is a goal that an overwhelming majority of students are strongly or very strongly pursuing (92%).

A review of the responses from the subgroup of refugees who are employed reveals that a majority had already earned a higher education degree in their home countries (71%) and in many cases had gained work experience in their home countries, other countries and/or in Ger-

many (79%). Prior to fleeing their countries, most currently employed refugees had worked in the natural scientific and engineering sectors (22%), while 18% were teachers and educators or had jobs in the areas of business administration (16%) and computer science (9%).

Fig.. 38 **Practised professions in one's home country**
in%

In what professional area did you work?



More than half of this subgroup (58%) reported that they were financing their cost of living through paid wages or salaries, another 19% through earnings from part-time jobs, while 23% said they were also receiving public benefits, e.g. social security benefits, despite their professional activities. This could be an indication that despite having earned a university degree, these academics with refugee background cannot always find employment in Germany suited to their educational level. In this group of employed refugees, 68% indicated that they had previously completed study-preparatory courses. Out of the 32% who reported dropping out of the courses, 45% claimed that the decision was driven by financial problems. Language difficulties (27%)

also frequently played a role in their decision to stop attending courses. Compared with the subgroup of refugees at university, the average age of the employed refugees was significantly higher despite the fact that the majority of both subgroups had resided in Germany for the same period of time (three to four years). What is surprising is that compared with the students, a significantly higher percentage of employed refugees had felt well- or very well-prepared for study in Germany in terms of language abilities (58%) and also well- or very-well prepared in terms of subject-relevant knowledge (49%).

The responses of this subgroup suggest that many employed refugees preferred entering the

labour market over pursuing a university degree even though they would have met the prerequisites for study. The reasons for this could lie in their predominantly academic backgrounds, the availability of attractive job offers, or perhaps difficulties in obtaining student financing,

or financing their cost of living. The significantly higher average age of this subgroup would also suggest that the participants had children and/or spouses to provide for, which could have played a role in seeking employment instead of studying.



7. Follow-up survey of course participants (2016 cohort)

7.1 Survey population and subgroups

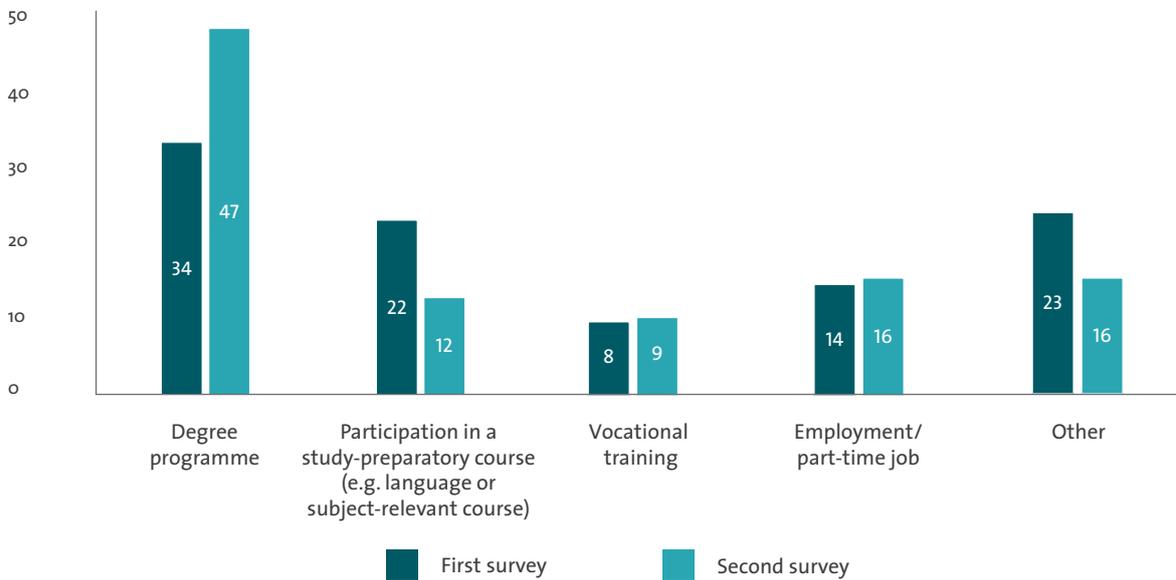
The follow-up survey was sent to 5,822 email addresses in March 2018. The recipients were all participants of Integra courses in 2016 and had been asked to participate in the first survey in 2017. It was determined that 3,762 addresses were still valid, which correspondingly served as the assumed total survey population. A total of 392 persons participated in the follow-up survey which corresponds to a response rate of 10.4%. As was done in the survey of the 2017 cohort, the participants of the follow-up survey were asked about their current occupation and clustered accordingly in order to gain insights into certain subgroups, e.g. refugees enrolled in regular degree programmes. What was striking was the high number of persons in degree programmes who participated in the follow-up survey. Forty-seven

percent of the respondents indicated that they were currently enrolled in degree programmes at German universities. Another 16% reported that they were fully employed or working part-time jobs. Nine percent of the participants reported that they were currently receiving vocational training, while 12% said that they were attending another study-preparatory course. Sixteen percent answered the question about their current occupation with “other”, i.e. these participants were unable to classify their occupation under the given categories. In comparison with the first survey, we can clearly recognise a trend: the participants are frequently transitioning into degree programmes as study-preparatory measures and other transitional phases have concluded²⁶.

²⁶ These analyses are based on unweighted data. One should take into account that the interpretation of the presented initial and follow-up survey results is based on a self-selection of especially successful Integra course participants. Against this background, it is hardly possible to draw conclusions about the total population of former participants as this would require a suitable method of statistical weighting.

7.2 Conclusions based on data of the student subgroup

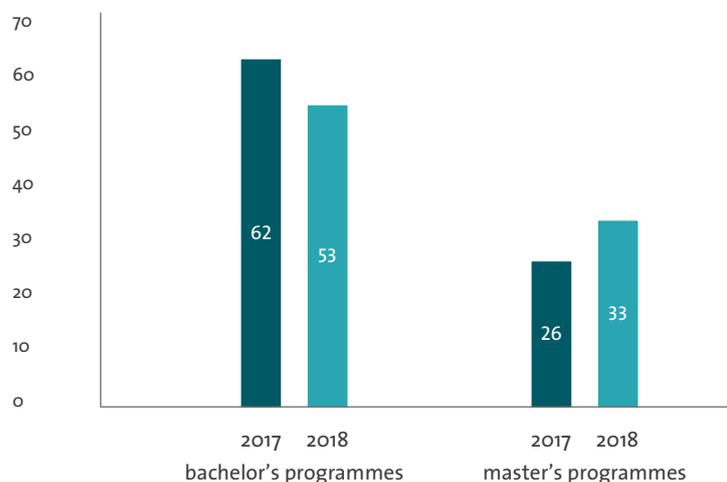
Fig. 39 **Current occupation of participants of the first and second surveys²⁷**
 Current occupation in percent, (n1= 2,617; n2= 392)



Compared with the subgroup of refugees in degree programmes from the survey of the 2017 cohort, there are no significant differences with regard to the participants' subjects of study in the corresponding subgroup in the follow-up survey. As was the case in the same subgroup in 2016, engineering remains the most popular discipline (44%), followed by the natural sciences, computer science and mathematics (16%) and law and social sciences (15%).

While 62% of the surveyed participants in 2017 said they were enrolled in an undergraduate programme (bachelor's), this figure dropped to 53% in 2018²⁸. Yet at the same time, the percentage of participants who reported being enrolled in master's programmes increased from 26% to 33%.

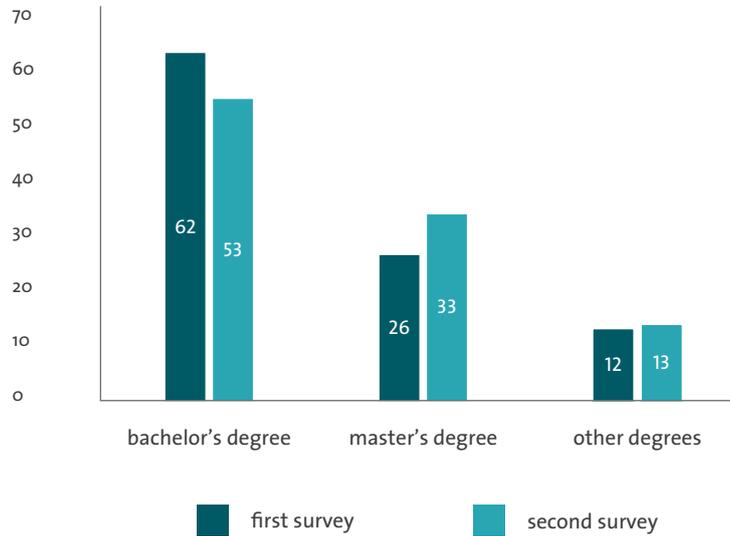
Fig. 40 **Participants in undergraduate and graduate programmes in 2017 and 2018**
 in %



²⁷ Deviations from 100 are caused by rounding.

²⁸ Deviations from 100 are caused by rounding.

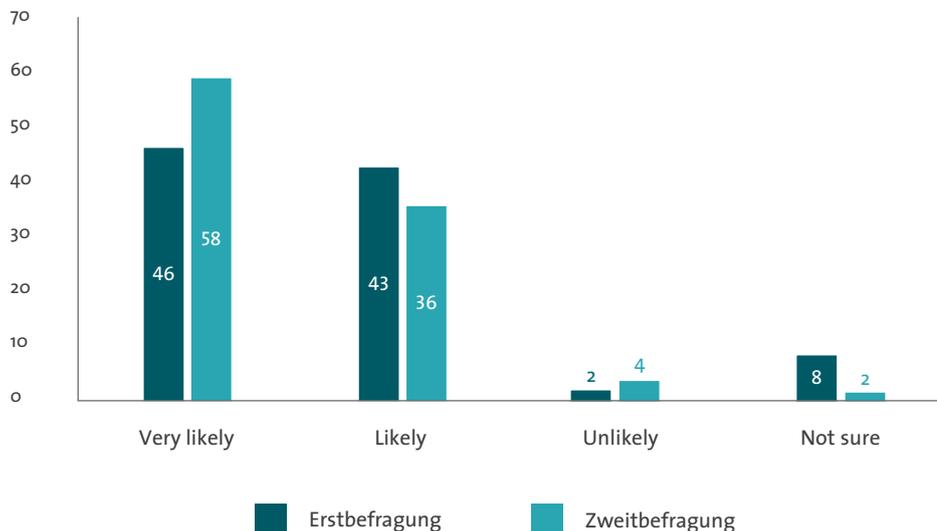
Fig. 41 Desired higher education degree (comparison of first survey in 2017 and second survey in 2018)
 Current target qualification in percent, (n1= 604; n2= 132)



In the first survey, a total of 89% of the participants indicated that they were likely or very likely to complete their degree programmes, while eight percent could not say for sure. In the follow-up survey, however, 94% of the participants believed they were likely or very likely to complete their studies, marking a positive develop-

ment in their self-assessment. Only two percent of participants in the follow-up survey indicated that they were not sure if they could complete their studies successfully. On the other hand, the percentage of those who regarded their chances as unlikely saw a two percent increase compared to the responses from the first survey.

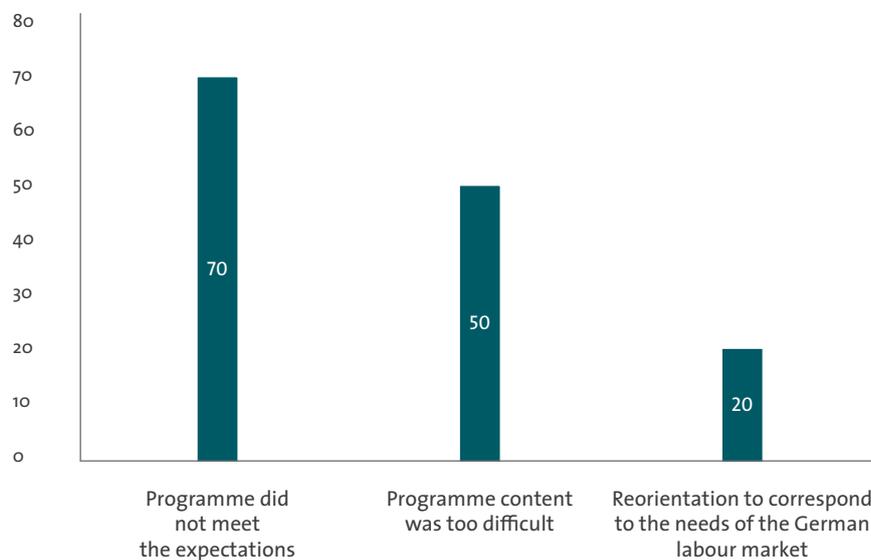
Fig. 42 Probability of completing the degree programme in % (comparison of results from the first survey in 2017 and follow-up survey in 2018)
 Probability of completion of studies (n1 = 616; n2 = 133)



Fifty percent of the participants judged the current subject-relevant demands of their programmes as either difficult or very difficult, while 46% indicated that these were relatively difficult. Only four percent felt that the subject-relevant demands were easy. Despite that half of the participants assessed the demands of their programmes as difficult, it doesn't appear this negatively influenced their expectations of successfully completing their studies. In the follow-up survey of the subgroup of student refugees, only nine percent indicated that they had meanwhile changed majors. Of those who had planned to change majors, the majority (64%) reported that they had succeeded in changing majors at the start of their studies in Germany. Twen-

ty-seven percent stated that they had switched majors during their time at university in their home countries, while another 27% said they had switched majors only after enrolling in a degree programme in Germany²⁹. Most students (70%) attributed their decision to switch majors to unfulfilled expectations of their respective programme, e.g. the content was more theoretical or simply not what than they had anticipated. But content-related demands were also given as a reason for changing majors by 50% of the respondents. One out of five students explained that their decision to switch majors was due to a wish to re-orientate in order to correspond to the needs the German labour market (20%).

Fig. 43 Reasons for changing majors in % (n= 140, multiple answers possible)



29 Multiple answers possible

In depth: Prospective students with and without refugee background – Analysis of results from the DZHW project “Refugees on Their Way into German Higher Education (WeGe)”

German universities have not only witnessed an increase in refugees in study-preparatory courses in recent years. For years, international students have shown a preference for Germany as a study destination, and meanwhile Germany is now the most popular non-English-speaking country for foreign academics (Heublein et al. 2019; Kondakci et al. 2018). A large number of these international students are required to meet additional language and subject-relevant prerequisites for admission to a degree programme. To this end, they enrol in courses at preparatory colleges (Studienkollege) where they prepare to take the aptitude test for university study (Feststellungsprüfung, FSP) or complete language courses in preparation for the recognised C1 language exams. The DZHW estimates that the drop-out rate among international students is significantly higher than that of domestic students who hold a German university entrance qualification (Heublein and Schmelzer 2018). The German higher education system has only limited understanding of the reasons for this discrepancy. Morris-Lange (2017) points to language problems and a lack of subject-relevant preparation and language training, as well as social isolation, financial problems and residence permit issues. This suggests a need for measures and innovations which strengthen individual skills and organisational competence and ultimately achieve a better “fit” between students and degree programmes.

As part of a study of the DZHW project “Refugees on Their Way into German Higher Education

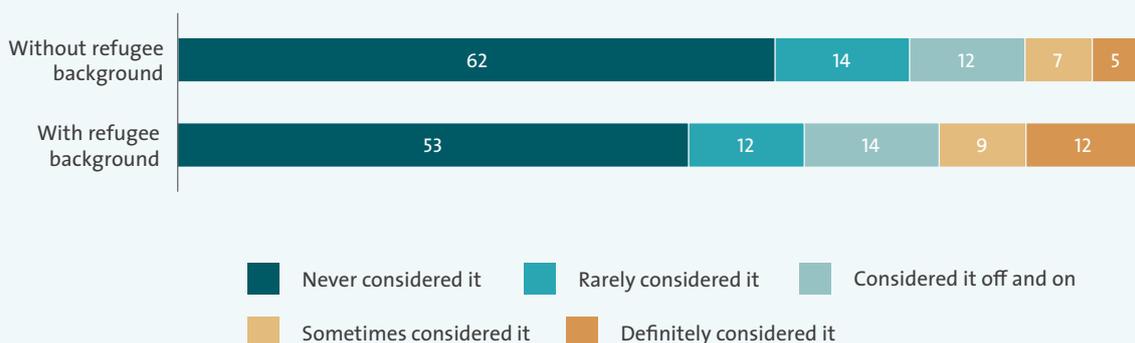
(WeGe)” (Grüttner et al. 2018), we were able to survey international students with and without a refugee background. For this purpose, we visited 16 institutions (universities, university of applied sciences and preparatory colleges) throughout Germany and surveyed the course participants irrespective of their residence status. The collected data is not representative of all the prospective students enrolled in study-preparatory courses. What is new and unique about this data, however, is that it allows us to draw comparisons between both groups. In past evaluations there was no data with which one could even hypothetically discuss differences and commonalities between international students with and without refugee background based on distinctly separate data sets (Berg et al. 2018). In the following we differentiate between persons who indicated that they had applied for asylum in Germany regardless of the status or outcome of the asylum process (prospective students with refugee background) and persons who indicated that they did not apply for asylum but generally hold a visa for the purpose of studying in Germany (prospective students without refugee background). A precursory glance at the data reveals similar distributions found in other studies. For instance, women comprise 22% of students with refugee background – around the same level as we see in the Integra programme data. In contrast, women comprise 45% of the total number of prospective students without refugee background. The average age of prospective students without refugee background is about 21 years, while those with refugee background in our

sample is almost 26 years on average. The most represented countries of origin among students with refugee background is Syria (69%) which correlates closely with the responses from the Integra programme participants and uni-assist, while China (22%) is the most common country of origin among prospective students without refugee background.

Before we take a closer look at the specific aspects which apply to prospective students with and without refugee background, let us first address the question mentioned above regarding labour market orientation. Refugees didn't wait until after graduation to consider this question, but rather long before when they were deciding whether to pursue a university degree and while preparing for their studies. The decision came down to either extensively investing in one's

education in the academic area or immediately integrating into the labour or vocational training market. We asked whether they had ever seriously considered abandoning their wish to study in Germany. Though the majority in both groups enthusiastically embraced their decision to take up study – 62% of prospective students without refugee background and 53% with refugee background – the discrepancy between these groups is clearly visible; after all, almost one in eight refugees had at some point seriously considered leaving the path of higher education. While study alternatives are available to refugees, e.g. vocational training or employment, the question that mainly occupies prospective students without refugee background – provided they hold study visas in Germany – is rather one of changing their country of study.

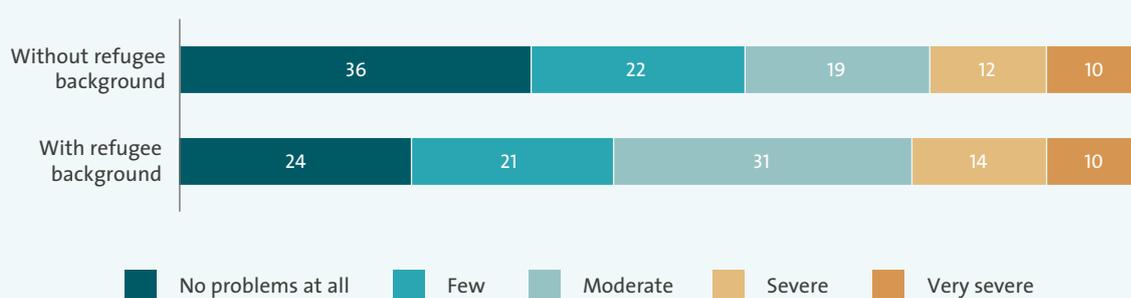
Fig. 44 **Thoughts on abandoning the wish to study in Germany**
 Source: Study Preparation Survey 2018 in the WeGe project, own calculation (n = 968)



Intensive academic and career counselling measures would be especially helpful to higher qualified refugees for identifying professional interests and preparing their future career paths. In our sample, around 30% of the prospective students with refugee background couldn't or didn't want to name the subject they would eventually choose to study. In comparison, 20% of the international students without refugee background didn't specify their prospective subject of study. In this regard, it appears a need exists for additional orientation and counselling services among both groups.

However, we found that financial concerns can often make it difficult to adhere to clearly formulated academic goals. While 36% of the prospective students without refugee background reported having absolutely no problems with financing their living expenses in Germany, the same applied to only 24% of the refugees. On the other hand, there was a comparable number in both groups who felt they had severe or very severe problems financing their living expenses. In our sample, more than one out of five in both groups reported facing such difficulties.

Fig. 45 **Problems financing one's living expenses**
Source: Study Preparation Survey 2018 in the WeGe project, own calculation (n = 949)



In order to assess the situation properly, it is crucial to look at what sources are used to finance one's living expenses. In this point, there are considerable differences. In our sample, 89% of international students without refugee background indicated that their family or relatives were their source of financing, followed by gainful employment (9%) and personal savings (5%). The majority of refugees (59%), on the other hand, stated that

they financed themselves with basic welfare benefits. Twenty-six percent of the respondents reported receiving benefits through the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG). In this context, it appears both groups differ less in terms of those who are struggling with severe financial problems, and much more in how dependent they are on public benefits and their coordination (e.g. in transitioning from basic welfare to BAföG).

One can conclude that the refugees' chances for making the transition to university and achieving academic success invariably depends on the financial aid obtained through BAföG and scholarship programmes.

Table 3 Sources of financing, multiple answers possible
 Source: Study Preparation Survey 2018 in the WeGe project, own calculation (n = 998)

| With refugee background | | Without refugee background | |
|-------------------------|----|----------------------------|----|
| Grundsicherung | 59 | Familie/Angehörige | 89 |
| AsylbLG | 26 | Erwerbsarbeit | 9 |
| (Schüler-)BAföG | 11 | Ersparnisse | 5 |

Social integration is always mentioned as a crucial factor for the academic success of international students. The difficulties they encounter in getting settled and engaging in contact with others can have a detrimental impact on their learning success. As a result, prospective students with and without refugee background sometimes worry that they will not be able to make friends and establish contacts at university. As it were,

around 26% of prospective students without a refugee background (somewhat) agreed with the statement that they worried about being unable to establish contacts. The figure was even higher (35%) among the refugees we asked. The affected prospective students could especially benefit from strategies and programmes which promote social integration in addition to language competence (e.g. tandem programmes).

Fig. 46 Concerned about not finding social contacts at university
 Source: Study Preparation Survey 2018 in the WeGe project, own calculation (n = 940)

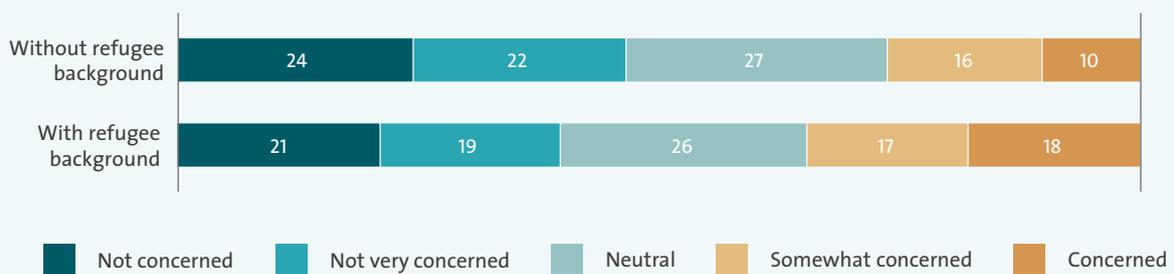
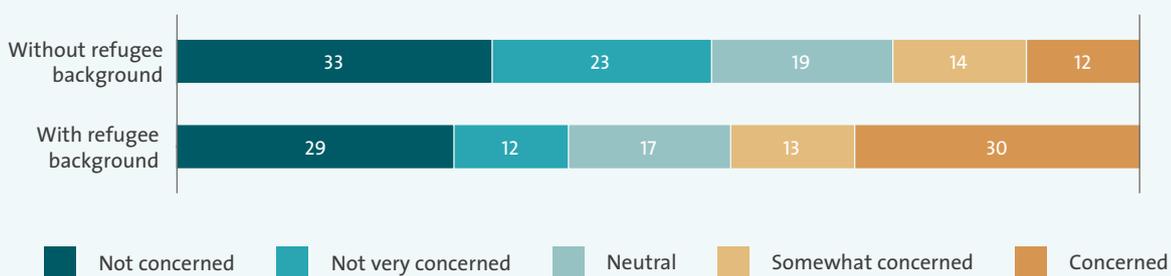


Fig. 47 **Concern about having to leave Germany before completing one's studies**
 Source: Study Preparation Survey 2018 im the WeGe project, own calculation (n = 949)



International students and prospective students often hold temporary visas and are required to apply for extensions from the responsible Aliens Registration Office in regular intervals. This situation can be quite exasperating for students from non-EU countries (Morris-Lange 2017; Apolnarski und Brandt 2016). When asked if they were worried about having to leave Germany before completing their studies, 26% of the prospective students without refugee background and 43% of the prospective students with refugee background stated they were indeed (somewhat) concerned. Uncertainty regarding one's residence prospects can impede one's learning progress in study-preparatory courses and certainly during one's degree programme.

Language skills play a central role in gaining access to higher education and achieving academic success. The respondents of our study had very positively assessed their own passive language competence (listening and reading). There was no significant difference between the groups with respect to reading comprehension.

Over two thirds of the respondents assessed their reading competence as good or very good. In their assessment of their listening (84%) and speaking skills (55%), the refugees gave themselves significantly better marks than the prospective students without refugee background. One third of this group expressed high confidence in their active speaking abilities. When it comes to listening comprehension and speaking, refugees appear to benefit from their longer duration of residence in Germany and the everyday communication which comes with living in Germany. With respect to German writing skills, a slight majority of refugees (56%) and a large minority of prospective students without refugee background (45%) assessed their abilities as good or very good. This data shows that, on one hand, both groups and particularly prospective students without refugee background see room for improvement in terms of active language usage, but on the other, refugees can benefit from using German in everyday life. We mustn't overlook the fact, however, that difficulties may arise from possibly overestimating one's own abilities.

Table 4 **Self-assessment of language skills – response groups “good” or “very good”**

Source: Study Preparation Survey 2018 in the WeGe project, own calculation (n = 978). Percentage of respondents who assessed their skills as good or very good based on the following scale: very poor, poor, mediocre, good, very good.

| | Listening comp. | Speaking | Reading | Writing |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------|---------|---------|
| Without refugee background | 63 | 33 | 67 | 45 |
| With refugee background | 84 | 55 | 71 | 56 |

Even though the academic aspirations of refugees are very strongly pronounced (Brücker et al. 2016), a combination of various challenges with respect to financing, residence status, social integration and (subject-relevant) language competence can subdue the desire to study. Yet there are some

international prospective students without refugee background in our sample who likewise struggle with financial, residence visa and language-related challenges which must also be overcome in study-preparatory courses or accompanying measures offered during their studies.

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8. Summary and outlook

Refugees' interest in gaining tertiary education remained high in 2018. This is substantiated by the large number of counselling sessions offered at universities and preparatory colleges which helped students prepare for and commence their studies. In 2018 a total of 42,148 prospective students with refugee background were advised to attend study-preparatory courses, a slight decrease compared to 2017. In 2019 university administrators expected to conduct a similarly high number of counselling sessions.

Although fewer applicants had to be rejected in 2018 compared with the previous year, one third of the universities still grappled with personnel and room capacity shortages, which in some cases resulted in the rejection of sufficiently qualified applicants. As the universities can attest, the increased counselling needs of refugees regarding choice of major, academic organisation, accompanying programmes and the German labour market emphasise a positive development in the underlying academic paths. On the other hand, they reveal that corresponding measures will have to be implemented to address these new needs in the future. The growing trend observed in 2018 toward more subject-oriented courses and accompanying advice formats suggests further growth in the future and the need for customised support formats.

The survey of course participants who had already enrolled in degree programmes in 2018 confirms this development. A majority of students with refugee background wished for subject-relevant courses and subject-specific language instruction during their studies to help ensure their academic success. The reports from the universities and responses from the survey participants clearly indicate that academic success significantly depends on the financial opportunities available to them. The distinctions between students with refugee background and international students have also grown increasingly blurred. This is due to the fact that more and more refugees are now enrolled in degree programmes and thus automatically subsumed in the group of international students, but also because the needs of both groups increasingly overlap – be it with respect to (subject-relevant) language acquisition, orientation in the German higher education system, social integration in everyday life at university or preparation for professional life in Germany. In 2018 universities had also begun offering all international students access to the new and recently expanded counselling and supervision programmes for refugees. A broad-based expansion of the supervision and counselling formats to include all international students would not only have a positive effect on their academic career but could also significantly contribute to lowering the sustainably high drop-out rate of international students in Germany. At the same time, it is crucial to continue consolidating and stabilising the study-preparatory measures for refugees, particularly in light of the persistently high demand for advice on commencing one's studies and the specific needs of the target group.

The socio-demographic composition of the courses changed only slightly compared with the previous years. The average age of the participants was 28.3 years – only 0.3 years higher than the previous year – which can be explained by the fact that many of the respondents continued attending courses in 2017 or had participated in the survey in the preceding year. While 41% of the participants held a resident permit in 2017, this figure increased to 64% in 2018. The percentage of women among the course participants also increased – albeit only moderately – to 22%. The analysis of the survey detected a striking rise in the language levels of the course participants. This marked a continuation of the positive development in language acquisition already observed in 2017. Only 12% of the course participants attended beginner-level German courses, while 88% attended German courses at an advanced skill level. Language courses comprised more than half of all Integra courses offered in 2018, which underscores once again the fundamental importance of language acquisition for gaining admission to degree programmes in Germany.

As in years past, Syria ranked first among all the countries of origin, followed by Iran and Afghanistan. For the first time in 2018, Turkey was among the top six countries from which the largest share of prospective students with refugee background originate. Initial trends appear to show that the number of Turkish participants will likely increase in the coming years.

In this context, it is worth noting the relatively high academic qualification that applicants from Turkey bring with them to Germany while the level of education previously attained by course participants from the other five countries of origin in 2018 slightly dropped. Nonetheless, a large share of course participants (39%) have prior university experience gained in their home countries and predominantly in the fields of engineering and healthcare. This group holds enormous promise for Germany in view of the shortage of qualified professionals in these key sectors. In order to effectively tap this potential for the German labour market, it would be necessary to establish additional counselling and support programmes for highly qualified refugees at German institutions of higher education.

Syria meanwhile ranks third among the countries of origin of all international students³⁰. By the end of 2019, more than 30,000 refugees had taken part in higher education programmes for refugees. A growing number of these have successfully gained admission to regular degree programmes. Up to 25,000 refugees are estimated to have accomplished this important step. In order to promote this development and address the (newly) emerging needs of the universities, a stronger focus would have to be placed on sustaining the

30 Federal Statistical Office (Destatis): Student statistics for the winter semester 2018/19 (international students).

academic success of these participants in the future. Based on the data provided by the universities and participants, some key factors which could lead to terminating one's studies included financial problems, subject-relevant and language obstacles, and difficulties cultivating contacts at university. From the outset, the DAAD was aware that new needs – informed by the experience of the universities – would arise as the refugees entered each academic phase (study preparation, commencement of study, transition to the labour market). Consequently, the higher education programmes for refugees were designed to flexibly respond to these developments and enable administrators to adjust the programmes to the changing needs of the participants. Based on the experience and feedback from the universities and course participants, the call for applications for programme funding starting in the 2020 funding year additionally focused on awarding funding to cover accompanying language, subject-relevant and methodological courses and measures to prepare refugees for the German labour market. The funding package partially finances participation of international students as well.

At the same time, the new funding package presents a clear course of action for the universities. By expanding measures which provide good subject-relevant preparation, subject-oriented language training and socially integrative support, universities can minimise the drop-out rate and contribute to achieving one of the most important strategic goals of higher education policy: increasing the academic success rate of international students in Germany which is a fundamental prerequisite for attracting highly qualified international professionals.

The integration of refugees and international professionals into the German labour market is one of the most significant challenges of the coming years. Therefore, two additional key fields of action for future programme development should involve opening funding programmes further to international students and offering them targeted preparation for the German labour market during their studies. By expanding the programmes in a needs-oriented manner, we could anticipate and meet future challenges and build a strong foundation for successfully integrating international students into our society and our labour market.



