

**Executive Summary of the Annual Report of the Austrian  
Students Ombuds office at the Federal Ministry for  
Education, Science and Research**

**Academic Year 2021/22**

## Annual Report of the Austrian Student Ombuds office 2021/22 at the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research to the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research and to the Austrian Parliament

### Summary

The Austrian Student Ombuds office at the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) is required to submit an annual report on the previous academic year to the responsible Austrian federal minister and to the Austrian Parliament as of December 15 of each calendar year pursuant to § 31 article 7 of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Act (HS-QSG).

This is a summary of the report for the academic year 2021/22.

### Subject of the report and general statistics

The subjects of the report are the perceptions of the Austrian Student Ombuds office on issues raised during the reporting period on study, teaching, examination, service and administrative operations defined by legal mandate at higher education institutions in the Austrian higher education area as well as at other institutions dealing with student issues.

The higher education institutions include all public and private universities, universities of applied sciences, public and private universities of teacher education, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the Institute of Science and Technology Austria as well as so-called "§ 27 HS-QSG" institutions (i.e. cross-border studies).

Other institutions dealing with student issues include the student grants offices, the scholarship offices, the residence authorities, student dormitories, and others.

The concerns were raised by prospective students, enrolled students and former students.

The student number of all higher education institutions in the Austrian higher education area (with reporting date deviations) add up to a total of **403.033** students for the academic year 2021/22.

## Breakdown of issues by institution

Public universities: 287 (44.7%)

Other institutions: 77 (12.0%)

Institutions not named / known: 54 (8.4%)

Universities of applied sciences: 92 (14.3%)

Student grant offices: 72 (11.2%)

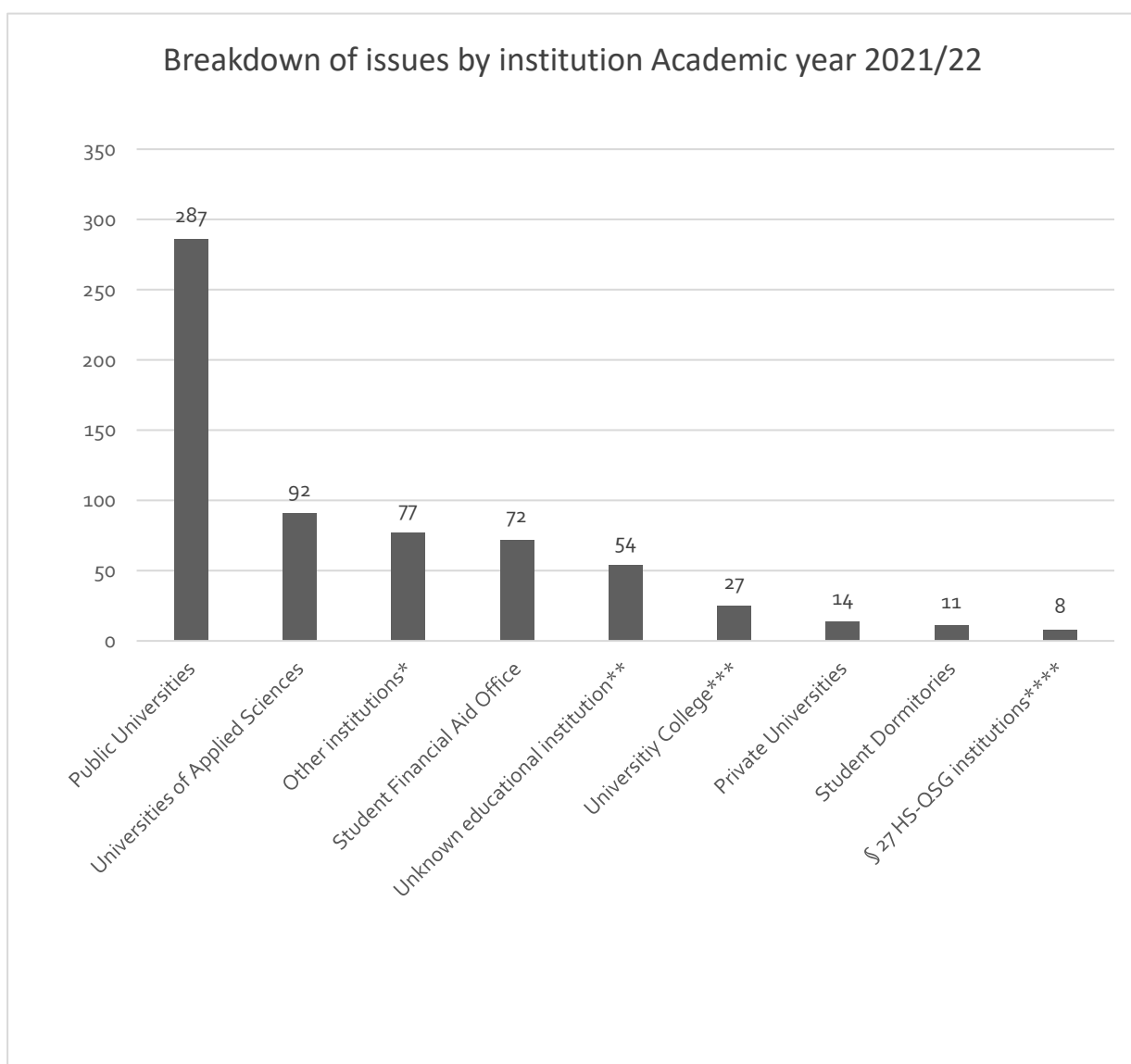
Dormitories: 11 (1.7%)

University colleges of teacher education: 27 (4.2%)

Private universities: 14 (2.2%)

§ 27 institutions: 8 (1.3%)

A total of **642 concerns** were brought to the attention of the Austrian Student Ombuds Office.



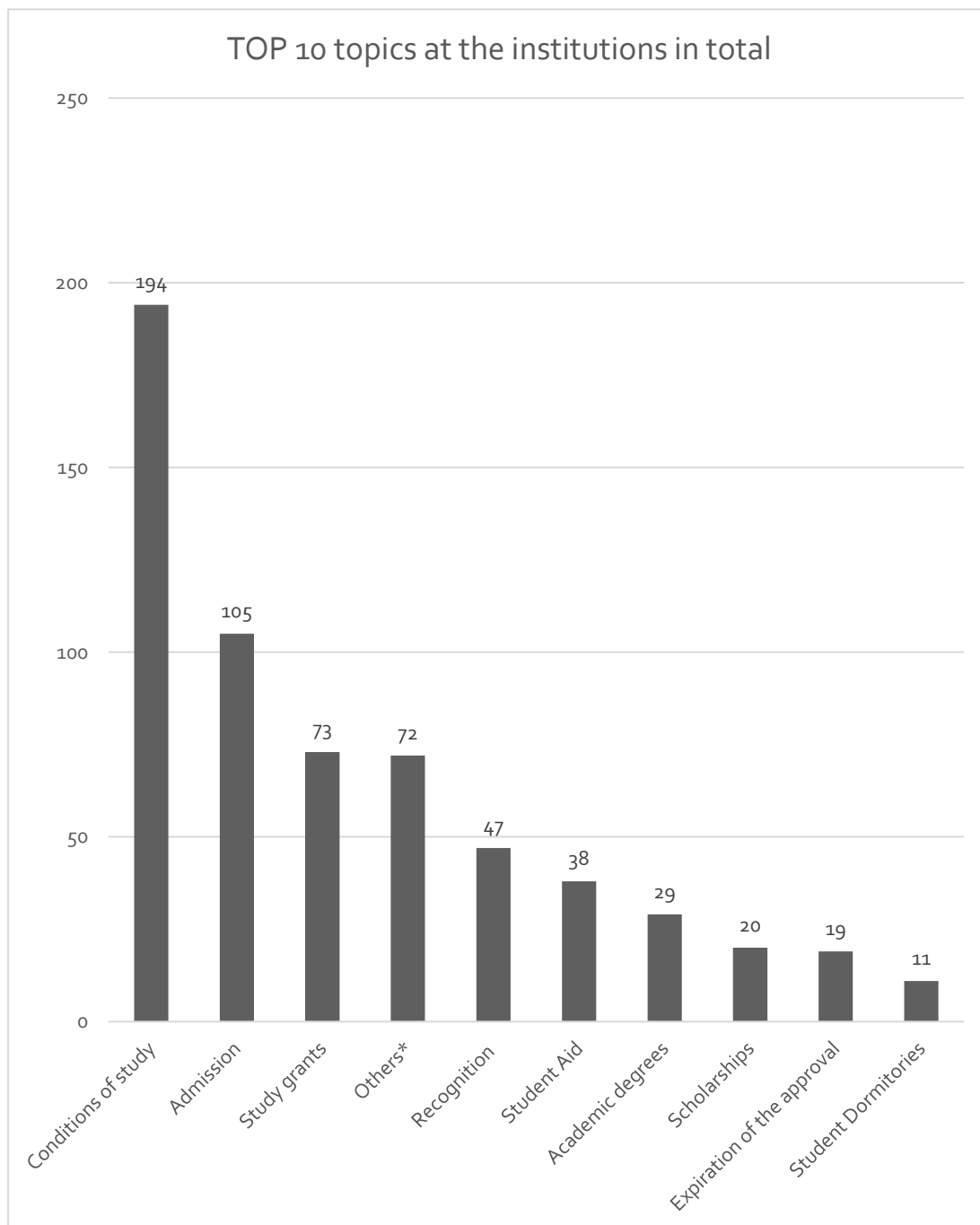
**\*Other institutions:** Continuing education programs offered by private institutions, foreign higher education institutions, residence authorities, conservatories, colleges, funding agencies, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (DAK), the IST Austria, tax office because of family allowance, among others.

**\*\*Unknown educational institution:** some contacts include only consultations of a general nature, higher education educational institutions are not disclosed.

**\*\*\*University Colleges of teacher education:** This category does not include concerns of submitters that are handled directly by Unit II/7a of the BMBWF.

**\*\*\*\*§ 27 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) Institutions:** Educational institutions that are recognized as post-secondary institutions within the meaning of § 51 Abs. 2 Z 1 UG in their countries of origin or domicile may offer their studies in Austria, provided that these constitute recognized education within the meaning of § 51 Abs. 2 Z1 UG in their countries of origin or domicile and that these studies and academic degrees are comparable to Austrian studies and academic degrees. The performance of the studies shall be reported.

## Issues by topic



Overall, the ten most frequent topics include 608 concerns.

The frequency of topics varied by type of university.

**\*Others:** Topics in this category are the residence status of international students and residence law issues; insurance issues; sponsorship of events; financial support; family allowance concerns; concerns for which the Austrian Student Ombuds Office at the BMBWF is not responsible.

## Description of issues

As in previous reports, this report of 2021/22 details cases and reports on their outcomes. A total of **24 issues are described anonymously**, as well as **one issue naming the higher education** institution, on the following topics:

### Anonymous issues descriptions:

1. late payment of tuition fees
2. blocking of studies due to passed exams as a non-degree seeking student
3. quota request for the medical entrance test due to unclear residence notification
4. negative overall assessment after a compulsory course
5. stipulation of German-language courses for admission to a Master's program
6. legal regulations for short learning courses
7. diverging obligation to pay tuition fees
8. change from non-degree programmes to degree programmes in the old curriculum
9. entrance test for participation in compulsory courses
10. abbreviation or spelling of academic degrees in Austria, which were awarded abroad
11. consideration of grades during the admission procedure
12. Are semesters on academic leave relevant in determining the period during which tuition fees are not charged?
13. conditions of admission without justification and appeal information
14. no entry into the master's program for health care professions with a general diploma in health care and nursing
15. repetition of one year of study
16. Are negatively assessed bachelor theses subject to legal protection according to § 21 University of Applied Sciences Act?
17. negative evaluation of a master's thesis due to alleged plagiarism
18. inquiry about obligatory master's degree after bachelor's degree when practicing the profession of a teacher at a Higher Federal School for Economic Professions
19. receipt of the Corona special support in connection with a study grant
20. proof of study success for a self-supporting scholarship at a private university
21. transfer to a new study plan
22. waiting period for the granting of a residence permit
23. increase of the tariffs at the student dormitory
24. possible effects of Brexit on academic degrees and their recognition as well as a possible omission of the obligation to report according to § 27 HS-QSG

### Description of the issue with naming of the higher education institution:

1. holding an examination before the beginning of the semester (WU Wien)

## Follow-up on naming of institutions in the annual report 2020/21:

### **University of Innsbruck**

Allegations of psychological and sexual violence

### **University of Graz**

Prolongation of study time due to lack of course places

### **FH Campus Vienna**

Admission of applicants to a non-degree program in a study program without funding

## **20 Proposals to governing bodies and members of higher education institutions as well as to the legislator**

### To the legislator:

1. determination of the period free of tuition fees - consideration of semesters on academic leave
2. legal protection of bachelor theses § 21 University of Applied Sciences Act
3. proposal concerning § 13 article 3 Student Residence Act
4. procedure regarding the granting of a student visa
5. obligation to retain degree certificates after termination of legal status as a higher education institution
6. capping of possible penalties in the case of no-shows
7. § 56d of the Study Support Act - Mobility Scholarship
8. exemption from fees in arbitration proceedings according to § 18 Student Residence Act
9. obligation to publish dormitory contracts on the respective website
10. dormitory statutes also in print
11. reclaiming of the deposit in non-contentious proceedings
12. review of the amount of the user fee of non-profit student residences in non-contentious proceedings

### To the governing bodies and to the members of higher education institutions:

1. supplementary examinations for English-language studies
2. legal protection in the case of short learning courses offered at public universities
3. assessment of the university entrance qualification examination
4. issuance of notifications by public universities
5. holding of examinations before the beginning of the semester
6. handling of results of software-supported plagiarism checks
7. transparent information on the curricula to be applied
8. procedures regarding the issuance of student visas

## Review

### NEW Website

After revising and optimizing the content of the Student Ombuds Office website, the domain has been changed from [www.hochschulombudsmann.at](http://www.hochschulombudsmann.at)/[www.hochschulombudsfrau.at](http://www.hochschulombudsfrau.at) to [www.hochschulombudsstelle.at](http://www.hochschulombudsstelle.at).

### Past events

The joint symposium of the Ombudsman Board, the Regional Ombudsman Boards of Tyrol and Vorarlberg, the Austrian Agency for Academic Integrity (oeawi), the Austrian Student Ombuds Office at the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the National Higher Education Ombudsman Network on the topic of data protection and whistleblower protection in the work of ombudsman boards and ombudsman offices took place on June 20, 2022.

## Outlook

### Validation and Recognitions

Joint meeting of the BMBWF and the Austrian Student Ombuds Office in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research on the topic of validation procedures on January 13, 2023 at the University College of Teacher Education Vienna.

### Good Scientific Practice (GWP)

An event is planned in 2023 to further develop the topic of GWP.

### Continuing education

The Austrian Student Ombuds Office aims to analyze the information materials of the continuing education programs offered by public and private universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of Teacher Education in Austria during the academic year 2022/23.

### Activities of the University Ombudsman Network 2023

1. New edition of the brochure: Ombuds Offices and Similar Institutions in the Austrian Higher Education and Research Area during January 2023.
2. networking meeting of the decentralized Ombuds offices in spring 2023
3. development of a training program for ombudspersons

Reactions to this report, its contents, the proposals it contains to the legislator, to bodies and members of higher education institutions can be sent to the following e-mail address [anna-katharina.rothwangl@bmbwf.gv.at](mailto:anna-katharina.rothwangl@bmbwf.gv.at).



