Academic guidance

There are two important differences in the approach to guidance and counselling of (potential) students:

- Study choice guidance at schools
- Student counselling

Study choice guidance at schools

To ensure that they make the right choice of studies, students should have detailed information before entering a tertiary education institution.

- For schools, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1] offers the “18plus Berufs- und Studienchecker” [2] (18plus Career and Study Checker) counselling and guidance programme. The Study Checker comprises a package of assistance measures for the 7th and 8th grades of academic secondary schools and the 4th and 5th grades of colleges for higher vocational education.
- Further support is provided by school-based and non-school-based educational counselling and career guidance [cf. chapter 12.4] [3].

Student counselling

The Austrian National Union of Students [4] (ÖH) plays an important role in advising students:

- Guidance Counselling for Students and Prospective Students offers comprehensive services (individual and group counselling, brochures, presentations, etc.).
- Together with the universities, tutorials are offered to support first-year students in the introductory phase of their studies.
- The Studieren probieren (Try out studies) scheme gives prospective students the opportunity to get a taste of everyday university life, to attend lectures and therefore gain a realistic impression of what studying is like and of the contents of the field of study they are particularly interested in.
- The website studienplattform.at [5] provides basic information on all fields of study at all higher education institutions in Austria.

Higher education institutions also offer study counselling:

- In their own counselling centres, first-year students at universities are informed about the choice of different fields of study as well as the social, legal and financial framework conditions for their studies, e.g. Student Point [6] at the University of Vienna [7].
The individual universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education also organise many activities for prospective students in the form of information events (e.g. open days), information days or weeks in which potential students are given advice.

All tertiary educational institutions have websites with detailed information on the range of courses on offer.

Another important provider of study counselling is the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1] (BMBWF):

- The website studienwahl.at [8] of BMBWF provides a complete overview of study opportunities in Austria, supplemented by important information about studying.
- It publishes a range of information material, provides information by telephone, in writing and in person and takes part in study information fairs.
- Together with the Austrian Public Employment Service [9] (PES, Arbeitmarktservice), each year BMBWF [1] organises a fair (“BeSt”) for careers, studies and CET which is held in various Austrian towns.
- PES [10] offers the information series “Jobchancen Studium [11]” on its website; this series is mainly dedicated to the occupational fields for university graduates but also contains information about the corresponding study programmes.

In addition, many establishments and counselling centres, such as the PES (AMS) career guidance centres, the educational counselling and career guidance centres of the economic chambers and Institutes for Economic Promotion (WIFIs), the chambers of labour and the Vocational Training Institute (BFI) offer personal counselling on study choice as well as information (materials) throughout Austria. Advice and information are also provided by various regional and private initiatives, such as wienxtra.at [12] and studium.at [13].

With the MORE project, universities offer study prospects for refugees. OeAD GmbH supports refugees with the initiative “oad4refugees” (cf. chapter 12.5 [14]).

Psychological counselling

The Student Psychological Counselling Service [15] (Psychologische Studierendenberatung, PSB) runs six guidance centres for students in the whole of Austria. Its task is to support students to help them deal with their studies and their living situation as students. On the one hand this counselling concerns individual skills, desires and ideas and, on the other hand, it also works out personal backgrounds for making a decision.

The support does not only begin once studies start, however - it is already available at the interface between school and higher education, i.e. for high-school graduates.

Advice for the choice of studies is provided either in groups or in individual counselling sessions. Depending on the issue, individual aptitude tests can also be carried out. If students have problems in the areas of learning, work or exams or also contact and communication problems they are also offered help in the form of psychotherapy.

Career guidance

- At nearly all universities [16] there are career centres which provide graduates with a wide range of services to help them enter the world of work. This includes information on job offers, on the labour market, newsletters, presentations and events (e.g. fairs, seminars) in the area of
career coaching. Some centres also have CET offers for acquiring additional specialist qualifications and also for enhancing personal skills (e.g. training offer “JobStart” [17] of the career centre at the University of Vienna). Career centres also carry out surveys among employers with the aim of determining the competence levels and employment opportunities of graduates. Some alumni/alumnae associations have also carried out activities in this area for the support and continuing education and training of graduates.

- Many career centres have joined together in the Career Service Austria Network [18] in order to have exchanges about their activities in this area and to enable improvements by having contacts with external and international partner organisations.
- In recent years the services offered by the career centres have also been extended to students. For example, with the knowledge and project portal Ayudarum [19] there is a platform for placement in project-related work which also aims to encourage direct interaction between universities and the labour market.
- With the project “ABAk – placement service for academics with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses” [20] the aim is to support tertiary education graduates with disabilities to help them become integrated in the labour market (cf. chapter 12.5 [21]).
- The online portal studium.at [13] provides information on career guidance and job searching for academics.
- For graduates and also university employees and students who want to set up a company there are establishments available in the area of start-up consultancy. The aim is to make it easier to start professional life and also specifically to set up companies. All Austrian universities are involved in the aws AplusB Scale-up [22] or its centres as associates or as cooperation partners.