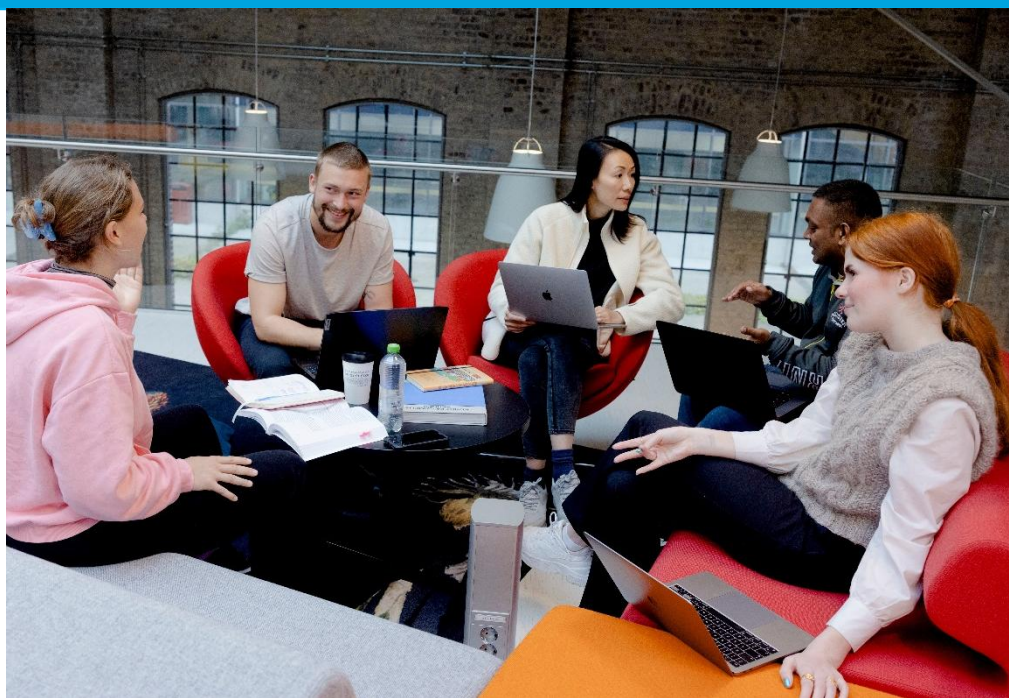


Report 11:2025

International students in Norway

2025



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Foreword

This report presents findings from a survey of international students in Norway. The project was commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and has been carried out by ideas2evidence.

Similar surveys have been conducted six times before, the last one in 2019. This year's questionnaire builds on the last one and was developed through a cooperation between HK-dir and ideas2evidence. Ideas2evidence carried out the data collection and wrote the report.

We would like to thank HK-dir for an interesting mission, and good cooperation throughout the project. We would also like to thank the international students who contributed to the project by answering the survey.

Bergen,

June 2025

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Executive summary

Description of the survey population

Overall, a majority of the international students in the survey population are from countries that Norway prioritise for academic cooperation. Two thirds are from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, and one in ten are from the so-called “Panorama” countries.¹ The share of students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation in the survey population is considerably lower than in the previous survey of international students in Norway from 2019. We find that exchange students predominantly are from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, whereas the degree students are split equally between this group and other countries. The share of students from Panorama countries is the same in both groups.

Following Europe, the most common region of origin among the survey population is Asia. The most common countries of origin in the overall survey population, as well as among the exchange students, are Germany, France, Italy and Spain. Among the degree students, the most common countries of origin are Germany, Pakistan, Sweden and France.

The two largest higher education institutions (HEIs) in Norway, NTNU and UiO, host a large share of the survey population. Overall, almost forty percent are enrolled at one of these two institutions, and they are also the largest institutions among both degree and exchange students.

Overall, the respondents are equally distributed between the two academic levels. There are large variations between the degree students and the exchange students, however. The degree students are primarily enrolled at the master level, while exchange students are mainly enrolled at the bachelor level.

The international students are spread widely between different areas of study, the most common being natural sciences and technology. Degree and exchange students are distributed fairly similarly between different fields of study.

In total, around 13 percent of the students in the survey population pay a tuition fee for their studies in Norway. As of autumn 2023, degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland have to pay an international tuition fee. 6 percent of the survey population pay such a fee. The international students who are enrolled at private institutions pay a domestic tuition fee, and these constitute almost one in ten students in the survey population. It is mainly degree students who pay a tuition fee.

On average, the international students are slightly younger than Norwegian students. The degree students are significantly older than the exchange students. We find that a majority of the international students are female, in the overall survey population as well as among degree and exchange students.

Coming to Norway

When planning their studies abroad, online sources of information were important for the degree students. We also find that personal contacts, either family, friends or other students or academic

¹ These include Brazil, Canada, India, Japan, China, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the United States

staff, are important for some. For the exchange students, their home university was the most frequently used source of information when searching for information about study opportunities abroad. Digital sources of information and personal contacts were also important for quite a few.

Many of the international students had Norway as their first choice for studying abroad. This is the case for three out of four students among both degree students and exchange students. In both groups, many name studying in Norway or studying abroad as the primary motivation for their choice of destination, rather than wanting to study at a specific institution.

The quality of education and the fact that Norway is a peaceful and safe society are important motivations behind the choice to study in Norway for both degree students and exchange students. The availability of courses taught in English was also an important motivation for many.

While many of the degree students chose their institution based on the availability of a specific study programme and the quality of education, the existence of an exchange agreement is the most important factor when the exchange students choose their institution. The location of the institution is important for both groups.

Most international students meet relatively few challenges when preparing for their stay in Norway. The most important challenges, for both degree and exchange students, are opening a bank account and registering to obtain a residence card and ID number. Students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland have a somewhat more challenging experience, especially related to obtaining a study permit and providing proof that they have sufficient funding to study in Norway.

Academic and social life in Norway

The international students in Norway are ambitious, most wanting to perform above average. Degree students spend more hours a week on their studies than exchange students, and students at the master level spend more time than students at the bachelor level.

Personal and/or family resources are important sources of funding for both degree and exchange students. Many of the exchange students also rely on Erasmus+ or other grants, scholarships or loans from the EU/EEA, while among the degree students, a substantial share have part time work.

To achieve internationalisation at home, international students and Norwegian students should interact. We find that there is quite frequent contact between international students and Norwegians in academic settings, but less in leisurely settings. Both degree students and exchange students have a lot of contact with other international students during their leisure time, but many express that they wish they could have had more contact with Norwegians. Quite a few international students have felt lonely during their time in Norway.

Assessment of the studies and future plans

Both degree students and exchange students appear to be very satisfied with their studies in Norway. The workload and requirements of their studies are perceived as reasonable, and they are very satisfied with their learning outcomes. In both groups, a significant majority answer that they would recommend studying in Norway to other students.

We find that quite few of the international degree students agree that international students are being treated as important assets, indicating that there is still work to be done in order to reach the full potential of their contribution towards quality enhancement in higher education. The exchange students feel that they are treated as important assets to a larger degree than the degree students.

A substantial share of the international students consider staying in Norway after finishing their current studies. This is the case for three out of four degree students, and almost half of the exchange students. For both groups, the main motivation for staying in Norway is to find a job.

1 Introduction

In this chapter we briefly discuss the background for the survey to international students in Norway. We then present some key issues when collecting data from international students in Norway. Lastly, we present some key features of this year's data collection, including the response rate.

1.1 Background

This report presents findings from a survey of international students in Norway. Similar surveys have been conducted six times previously, the last one in 2019. During these years, there have been several important changes in the context surrounding incoming student mobility to Norway.

Firstly, it is important to note that the Norwegian government decided to implement an international tuition fee for students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland, so-called third countries, from the autumn of 2023.² Previously, Norway was one of few European countries who did not charge a tuition fee from international students belonging to this group, and the 2019 survey found the lack of tuition fee to be an important motivation for choosing to study in Norway among many international degree students from third countries. Studies have found that the number of international degree students from third countries in Norway has decreased since the introduction of the international tuition fee (HK-dir, 2023, HK-dir, 2025). Thus, we can expect the composition of the group of international students in Norway to be different in 2025 than in 2019.

Secondly, over time the Norwegian authorities have developed a clearer strategy for international academic cooperation. An important part of this strategy is naming some countries that are prioritised for such cooperation. These are the EU/EEA/Switzerland, as well as eight countries outside the EU: Brazil, Canada, India, Japan, China, South-Africa, South Korea and the USA.³ These eight countries are identified in the government's Panorama strategy, which aims to ensure that Norwegian academic cooperation with countries outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland is long-term and holistic. The current strategy runs from 2021 to 2027 and builds on the previous Panorama-strategy that was active between 2015 and 2020.

Between the first and the second Panorama strategy, the group of Panorama countries was expanded, as the United States, Canada and South Korea were included. This means that the group of Panorama countries has become even more heterogenous over time. Because the group of Panorama countries are so heterogenous, analyses of this group will to some degree conceal significant differences between students from these countries. The expansion of Panorama also means that it is not accurate to compare findings regarding Panorama students from the 2019 survey with findings from this year's survey.

² Refer to chapter 2.3 for a more detailed discussion about the international tuition fee

³ Russia has been a part of the Panorama strategy since Panorama I, but there is currently no active cooperation with Russia due to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The few Russian students in the data set (1,1 percent of the survey population) are counted as Panorama students in the analyses.

Throughout the report, we compare respondents from these three groups; students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, students from Panorama countries and students from other countries, wherever it is relevant.

1.2 Which international students?

Below, we discuss some key issues when collecting data from international students in Norway.

1.2.1 Degree and exchange students

The most commonly acknowledged definition of international students, is:

Individuals who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin (UNESCO, n.d.)

There are two kinds of mobile international students: Exchange students and degree students.⁴ The exchange students typically stay in Norway one or two semesters, whereas the degree students stay two years for a master's degree or three years for a bachelor's degree. Because they stay in Norway for a significantly longer period of time, the degree students are regarded as even more important contributors towards quality of education and internationalisation at home than the exchange students (White paper 7 (2020-2021), pp. 89-90).

Previous studies (Diku, 2019) have found that these two groups differ in a number of important ways, including geographical background, study level and age. We explore these differences more in depth in chapter 2.

1.2.2 Identifying international students in public records

While exchange students are registered directly in FS by their Norwegian host institution, there is no systematic registration of international degree students in Norwegian public records. The closest we can get, is information about the students' citizenship, which is registered in FS/the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH). This means that we can identify foreign nationals who study at a Norwegian HEI, but it is not possible to ascertain whether they crossed borders for the purposes of studying, or if they initially came to Norway for other reasons than to study, for instance as refugees or migrant workers. Thus, because we only have information about citizenship to go on, it is impossible to precisely identify international degree students in public statistics (Diku, 2019; HK-dir, 2024, p. 77). Another consequence is that it is impossible to assess the representativity of the survey population compared to the total population of international students in Norway.

To make sure that the persons answering the survey were international students in line with the definition presented above, we included an introductory question in the survey that asked whether the respondent moved to Norway to study, or if they were already living in Norway when they applied

⁴ A few international students come to Norway outside an exchange programme/agreement and without taking a full degree. This can for instance be students who take a one-year course. These are counted alongside the degree students in the analyses.

for higher education. A similar question has been included in the previous surveys to international students in Norway. Only respondents who moved to Norway for the purpose of studying were included in the survey.

1.3 Data collection

In the following, we describe the process of collecting contact information to the international students in Norway, as well as the data collection process.

1.3.1 Collection of contact information

The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) invited all accredited higher education institutions (HEIs) and University colleges with accredited study programmes to take part in the study. See appendix 1 for a list of which institutions are represented the net survey population.

The institutions were asked for approval to collect contact and background information for their international students from the common student system (FS); an administrative data system used at most Norwegian HEIs. We received background data from 24 institutions. Note that a few of the invited institutions do not use FS. These sent contact information directly to HK-dir.

The Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT) collected contact information for the international students from FS, on behalf of HK-dir. They also collected some background information about the international students, including:

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Citizenship
- ◆ Whether the student is an exchange or degree student
- ◆ Study programme
- ◆ When they were enrolled at their current studies
- ◆ Whether the student pays an international tuition fee or not

1.3.2 Data collection and response rate

The survey was sent out to 16 524 students registered with a non-Norwegian citizenship at their institution. The field period lasted from the 10th of March to the 22nd of April 2025. Following the first invite, we sent three reminders. Two were sent via e-mail, and one via SMS.

When we closed the survey, 6107 persons had answered the questionnaire. 5691 persons completed the entire survey, while 416 only answered parts of the survey. All responses are included in the net survey population, giving a response rate of 37 percent. This is lower than the 2019 survey.

Table 1.1: Response rate in the survey of international students, 2014 – 2025

Year	Population	Complete responses	Total responses (complete + incomplete)	Complete response rate	Total response rate (complete + incomplete)
2014	8 022	2 385	3 216	30 %	40 %
2016	7 465	2 623	n.a.	35 %	n.a.
2019	15 209	5 977	6 508	39 %	43 %
2025	16 524	5 691	6 107	34 %	37 %

Out of the 6107 persons who answered the survey, 1802 (29,5 percent) were already living in Norway when they applied for higher education. These are not counted as international students according to our definition and were routed out of the survey. This left a survey population consisting of 4305 students.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 presents the composition of the survey population, including geographical background, age and gender. We also look at which fields of study the international students are enrolled in. Further, we describe how many students pay a tuition fee, and what characterises these students.

Throughout chapter 2, we compare exchange students and degree students. The analyses demonstrate that these two groups of international students in Norway are fundamentally different on several key features, including geographical background, study level and age. Therefore, the rest of the report presents analyses for these two groups separately, with a chapter dedicated to each of the two groups.

Chapters 3 and 4 present survey findings regarding the experiences of international students in Norway. Chapter 3 looks at the international degree students, while chapter 4 presents findings regarding the exchange students.

Firstly, we look at how the students experienced coming to Norway, including what motivated their choice of country and institutions, and which sources of information they used when planning their stay. We also shed light on which challenges they faced during the process of preparing for their stay in Norway.

Secondly, we present findings from questions regarding what academic and social life is like for international students in Norway. We look at which ambitions the students have for their studies, how they fund their stay in Norway, and how much contact they have with Norwegian students. We also present how the students evaluate the study environment they have been a part of.

Lastly, we look at how the international students assess their stay in Norway. We present findings regarding how satisfied they are with the teaching and academic counselling they have received. We also look at their overall assessment of their studies, and what are their plans after they finish their degree in Norway.

2 Description of the survey population

In this chapter we describe the composition of the survey population. We shed light on the students' geographical background and which academic fields they study. We also describe how many students pay a tuition fee, and what characterises these students. Lastly, we document the international students' age, gender and social background.

Throughout the chapter, we compare degree students and exchange students. Overall, the analyses in this chapter demonstrate that these two groups of international students are fundamentally different in a number of different ways, including geographical background, study level and the length of their stay in Norway. The findings from this chapter constitute an important background for interpreting the findings in chapter 3 and 4, where we present separate analyses of the responses of these two groups of international students.

2.1 What is known about the international students in Norway?

Previous studies have shown that the international students in Norway are a heterogenous group (Diku, 2019). One of the most important divides, is that between exchange students and degree students. The previous survey of international students in Norway conducted in 2019, showed that while the exchange students mainly came from countries within the EU/EEA/Switzerland, a significant share of the degree students came from outside Europe.

The degree students stay in Norway longer than the exchange students: While the former have stays lasting two years for a master's degree or three years for a bachelor's degree, the latter usually stay for one or two semesters. Further, the degree students normally attend studies at the master level, whereas the exchange students more often are enrolled at the bachelor level. Lastly, the degree students are, on average, older than the exchange students. The genders are equally balanced among the degree students, contrasting the exchange students where there is an overweight of females.

In the following sub-chapters, we explore whether similar patterns can be found in the data material from the international student survey for 2025.

2.2 Geographical background

A student's geographical background can have a lot to say for what the process of coming to Norway will look like, and the challenges they might face before and during their stay in Norway. Perhaps the most important geographical distinction is between the students originating from a country within the EU, the EEA or Switzerland, and students from countries outside this group. The latter students have to apply for a student visa before coming to Norway, which can be a time-consuming and expensive process. It should also be kept in mind that the students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland

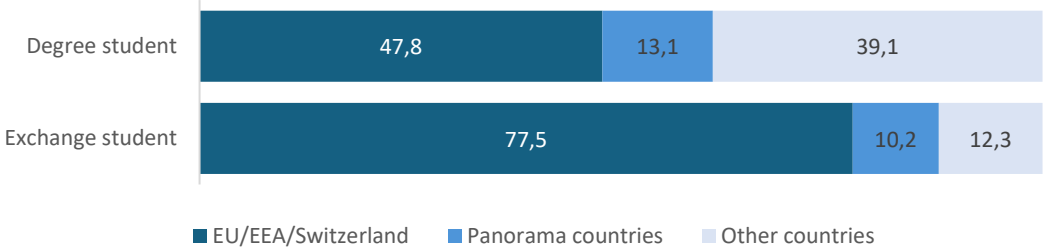
probably will experience larger cultural and linguistic differences during their stay in Norway than their counterparts.

2.2.1 Prioritised countries

Overall, a majority of the international students in the survey population come from a European country within the EU/EEA or Switzerland. This applies to almost two thirds (62,1 percent) of the respondents, whereas about a third (37,9 percent) are from other countries. 11,7 percent of the students are from one of the Panorama countries. In other words, about one in four students (26,2 percent) come from countries *not* prioritised for international cooperation by Norwegian authorities. These students are primarily degree students (77,2 percent), meaning that they, at least in theory, have come to Norway on their own initiative. The share of international students originating from countries not prioritised for international academic cooperation is notably lower than in the 2019-survey, when this group constituted 35 percent of the survey population (Diku, 2019, p. 22). It is worth noting that the composition of the groups of prioritised and non-prioritised countries has changed somewhat since the previous survey. The group of Panorama countries has been expanded to include South Korea, the United States and Canada, while the UK no longer is a part of the EU/EEA/Switzerland due to Brexit.

When we compare the geographical background of degree and exchange students (figure 2.1), the pattern is relatively consistent with findings from the previous survey of international students from 2019. While the exchange students predominantly are from countries inside the EU/EEA/Switzerland (77,5 percent), the degree students are split almost equally between the EU/EEA/Switzerland and other countries (47,8 percent and 52,2 percent respectively). The share of students from Panorama countries is about the same within the two groups: 13,1 percent among the degree students and 10,2 percent among the exchange students.

Figure 2.1: Geographical background among degree and exchange students (percent, N = 4304)



It should be noted that the share of degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland was higher in the 2019 survey of international students, 60 percent. The introduction of an international tuition fee for students outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland probably explains a substantial share of this decline (HK-dir, 2023; HK-dir 2024, s. 75; HK-dir, 2025).

2.2.2 Country and region

In this sub-chapter we take a closer look at which regions and countries the international students in the survey population come from.

As we saw in the previous sub-chapter, almost two thirds of the students are from Europe. The second-most common continent of origin is Asia. Almost a fourth (22,0 percent) of the students are from an Asian country. Africa and the Americas each make up for about five percent of the survey population (5,4 and 5,9 percent respectively).

In figure 2.2, we show the regions of origin among degree and exchange students. The most common region within both groups is Europe, constituting about half (52,2 percent) of the degree students and two in five (81,2 percent) exchange students. Almost a third (32,9 percent) of the degree students are from Asia, while only one in ten exchange students are from this continent. Degree students are also overrepresented among the respondents from Africa and the Americas.

Figure 2.2: Region of origin among exchange and degree students (percent, N = 4305)

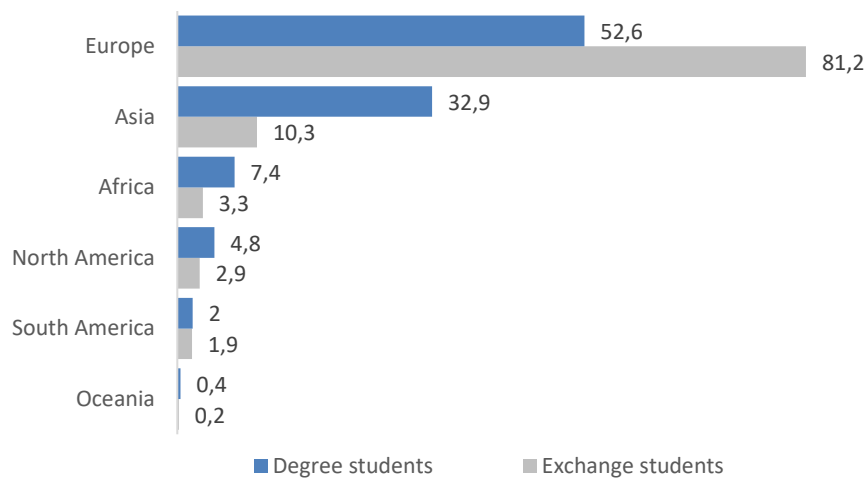


Table 2.1 shows the most common countries of origin among the survey population overall, as well as within the two sub-groups degree students and exchange students. European students dominate the overall population. Germany is the most common country overall, as well as among the degree and exchange students. France, Italy and Spain are also among the four most common countries of origin in the overall population. Students from these four countries make up a third (34,4 percent) of the survey population. Pakistan (4,3 percent) and China (2,5 percent) are the only non-European countries represented within the top ten.

Table 2.1: Ten most common countries of origin (percent, N = 4305)

International students (N = 4305)		Degree students (N = 2226)		Exchange students (N = 2079)	
Germany	14,1	Germany	8,5	Germany	20,1
France	8,9	Pakistan	8,1	France	13,9
Italy	6,9	Sweden	4,7	Italy	9,9
Spain	4,5	France	4,3	Spain	7,4
Pakistan	4,3	Italy	4	Czechia	3,8
Sweden	3,1	Bangladesh	3,9	Netherlands	3,8
Netherlands	3	Denmark	3,5	Belgium	2,6
Denmark	2,7	Iran	3,3	Austria	2,1
China	2,5	United States	3	China	2
Czechia	2,3	India	2,8	Finland	1,9

Among the degree students, there is some more geographical variation. The list of the ten most common countries includes five European countries, Germany being the most common. Among the other countries on the list, four are Asian and one American. Two of these countries, India and The United States, are on the Norwegian government’s list of countries prioritised for international academic cooperation outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland.

Of the ten most common countries of origin among the exchange students, nine are European. Germany is dominant also here, origin to one in five exchange students in the survey population. The only non-European country represented in the top ten is China, which is among the countries prioritised for international academic cooperation outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland.

2.3 Studies and tuition fee

In the following, we present the institution, academic level and field of study of the international students, comparing degree and exchange students. We also take a closer look at the students in the survey population who pay a tuition fee, either because they originate from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland, or because they study at a private institution.

2.3.1 Institution

Table 2.2 shows which HEIs the exchange students in the survey population study at.⁵ In the overall population, as well as within the two sub-groups, the universities NTNU and UiO have the largest share of international students (20,1 and 19,4 percent respectively). Given that these are the two largest HEIs in Norway (HK-dir, 2024, p. 15), this is perhaps to be expected. In total, almost two in five (39,5 percent) students in the total survey population attend one of these universities.

Table 2.2: Ten most common institutions (percent, N = 4035)

International students (N = 4305)		Degree students (N = 2226)		Exchange students (N = 2079)	
NTNU	20,1	UiO	20,9	NTNU	27,5
UiO	19,4	NTNU	13,2	UiO	17,7
UIS	7,9	BI	12,6	UIT	7,8
UIT	7,7	UIS	8,7	UIS	7,1
BI	6,7	UIT	7,6	UIA	5,4
UIA	4,7	USN	5,7	HVL	4,8
NORD	4,4	NMBU	4,7	NHH	4,5
USN	4,4	NORD	4,2	NORD	4,5
HVL	3,7	UIA	4,1	OsloMet	4,3
NMBU	3,6	HVL	2,6	USN	3,1

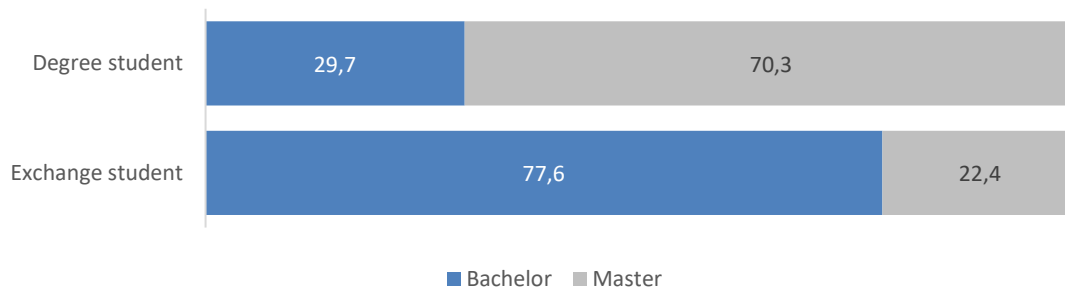
We also note that more than one in ten degree students (12,6 percent) attend BI. This is a private scientific college, which means that degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland who attend BI will pay a differential tuition fee that comes in addition to the domestic tuition fee that all students at the institution pay.

⁵ Note that we lacked contact information for international students enrolled at UiB and HiØ. Thus, students enrolled at these institutions did not receive the survey.

2.3.2 Academic level

Overall, the respondents are equally distributed between the two academic levels: 52,2 percent are bachelor students and 47,8 percent are master students. There are, however, large variations between the degree students and the exchange students when it comes to level of study. As shown in figure 2.3, the degree students predominantly undertake studies at the master level (70,3 percent), whereas the exchange students mainly come to Norway as bachelor students (77,6 percent).

Figure 2.3: Academic level among degree and exchange students (percent, N = 3979)



As pointed out previously in this chapter, degree students typically aim to complete a two- or three-year study programme, whereas exchange students usually stay in Norway for one or two semesters. Analyses of admittance data confirms this pattern, as they show that the degree students in the survey population have stayed in Norway for a longer period than the exchange students. Within the former group, almost a third (27,9 percent) were admitted in 2023, and almost half (43,0 percent) were admitted in 2024. Within the latter group, two thirds (67,6 percent) of the students were admitted in 2025, and one in four were admitted in 2024 (26,8 percent). This difference between the two groups is important to keep in mind, because it means that the degree students had a wider set of experiences to build on when they gave their assessments in the survey.

2.3.3 Field of study and study language

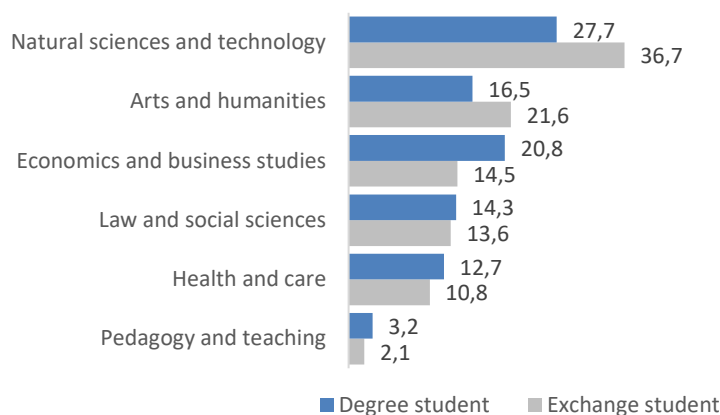
Overall, the most common fields of study among the international students who answered the survey are natural sciences and technology (31,7 percent), arts and humanities (18,7 percent) and economics and business (18,1 percent). Two thirds of the international students are enrolled in studies within one of these three fields. Following these three are law and social sciences (14 percent) and health and care (11,9 percent). Only a few international students (2,7 percent) are enrolled in study programmes within pedagogy and teaching. The low number of international students within this field, as well as the field of health and care, probably owes to the fact that these fields hold many professional training programmes that might have strict national demands for approval of educations taken abroad.

In figure 2.4 we show how the degree and exchange students are distributed between the different fields of study.⁶ The main impression from the figure is that degree and exchange students are fairly similarly distributed between the different fields of study. The most common subject within both groups is natural sciences and technology, which is somewhat more common among exchange students than among degree students (36,7 and 27,7 percent respectively). The second most common

⁶ The shares in the figure do not add up to 100, as the two smallest fields of study (primary industries (0,6 percent) and transport and communications, safety and security (2,4 percent) are left out.

field of study for the degree students is economics and business (20,8 percent), whereas for the exchange students it is arts and humanities (21,6 percent).

Figure 2.4: Field of study for degree and exchange students (percent, N = 3784)



We also asked the students which language or languages their current studies are in. They could choose all relevant alternatives from a list of English, Norwegian and other languages, the latter followed by an open text box where they could fill in the relevant language. Nine out of ten students in the survey population (91,0 percent) have one or more classes in English and 15,8 percent have a class/classes in Norwegian. Only a handful (2,4 percent) have studies in other languages, the most common being the large European languages French, German and Spanish.

Given that the respondents could choose one or more alternatives, we also analysed which combinations were the most chosen. By far, the most common is to *only* have studies in English. This is the case for eight out of ten students (81,9 percent) in the survey population.

2.3.4 Tuition fee

There are different kinds of fees that some international students in Norway must pay. Firstly, as of autumn 2023, students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland who come to Norway without being part of an exchange agreement, stipend scheme etc. have to pay an *international tuition fee*. In practice, this mainly concerns degree students, as exchange students usually come to Norway through an exchange agreement between their home institution and the Norwegian institution.

Further, some international students study at private institutions in Norway and have to pay a *domestic tuition fee*, the same as Norwegian students at private institutions. Students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland who study at private institutions also pay a *differential tuition fee* that comes in addition to the domestic tuition fee. In the report, we will refer to the fee paid by students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland as *international tuition fee* regardless of whether they study at a private or public institution. The term *tuition fee* will be used when referring to all types of fees.

6,1 percent of the survey population pay an international tuition fee because they originate from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland. Almost one out of ten students (9,1 percent) pay a domestic tuition fee because they study at a private institution. There is a small degree of overlap between these two groups: 2,0 percent of the survey population (87 persons) are degree students from outside the

EU/EEA/Switzerland who study at a private institution.^{7,8} In total, 13,8 percent of the survey population pay some kind of tuition fee for their studies in Norway.

As discussed above, it is mainly degree students who pay a tuition fee: 23,3 percent of those taking a full degree in Norway pay a fee, compared to 3,5 percent of the exchange students. Furthermore, we find that 11,5 percent of the degree students in the survey population pay an international tuition fee. 15,7 percent of the degree students pay a domestic tuition fee because they study at a private institution, compared to 3,2 percent of the exchange students.

As we saw in figure 1.2, a vast majority of the degree students undertake studies at the master level. Therefore, we also observe some variation between study levels: 15,9 percent of the master students pay a tuition fee, compared to 8,8 percent of the bachelor students.

2.4 Age, gender and social background

Overall, the mean age of the international students who responded to the survey is 27 years. This is slightly younger than the Norwegian students, where the mean age is 28,4 years (HK-dir, 2024, p. 25).

Similarly to the 2019 survey, we find that the degree students, on average, are older than the exchange students. While the mean age of the degree students is 29 years, the mean age of their counterparts who are on an exchange stay in Norway is 24 years. Some of this difference probably owes to the fact that most of the degree students undertake studies at the master level, meaning that they have already completed a bachelor's degree before starting their current studies. However, we also note that the exchange students undertaking studies at the bachelor level are younger than those taking a full bachelor's degree in Norway (24 and 28 years respectively), and we observe the same pattern when comparing exchange and degree students at the master level (26 and 29 years). Hence, the difference in study level does not account for the entire difference in mean age between the two groups of students.

As in 2019, a majority of the respondents who answered the survey are female. This applies to slightly less than a third (58,8 percent) of the students in the survey population. Women are in the majority within both sub-groups: They constitute 61 percent of the degree students and 56,8 percent of the exchange students.

Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between the educational level of parents and that of their children. This pattern is found also among the international students in Norway, as the respondents report a high level of completed education amongst their parents. Almost two thirds of both mothers and fathers (60 and 61,5 percent) have completed education at the university or college level.

⁷ Most of these students, 71 persons, study at BI.

⁸ In cases where we compare these two groups, degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland and degree students at private institutions, those who belong to both groups are counted alongside the degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland.

2.5 Summary

A majority of the international students in the survey population are from countries that Norway has prioritised for academic cooperation. Two thirds are from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, and one in ten are from Panorama countries. The share of students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation in the survey population is considerably lower than in the previous survey of international students in Norway from 2019. We find that exchange students predominantly are from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, whereas the degree students are split equally between this group and other countries.

The two largest HEIs in Norway, NTNU and UiO, host a large share of the survey population. Overall, almost forty percent of the survey population are enrolled at one of these two institutions, and they are also the largest institutions among both degree and exchange students.

The respondents are equally distributed between the two academic levels. There are large variations between the degree students and the exchange students, however. The degree students are primarily enrolled at the master level, while exchange students are mainly enrolled at the bachelor level. The degree students stay in Norway for two or three years, while the exchange students usually stay for a semester or two.

The international students are spread widely between different areas of study, the most common being natural sciences and technology. Degree and exchange students are distributed fairly similarly between different fields of study.

In total, a bit more than one out of ten students in the survey population pay a tuition fee for their studies in Norway. Quite few, 6,1 percent, pay an international tuition fee, while one out of ten pay a domestic tuition fee. It is mainly degree students who pay a tuition fee.

On average, the international students are slightly younger than Norwegian students. The degree students are significantly older than the exchange students. We find that a majority of the international students are female, in the overall survey population as well as among degree and exchange students.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that the international degree students and the exchange students are fundamentally different in several important respects, including geographical background, level of study and age. Therefore, we present findings for these two groups separately, devoting one chapter to degree students and one chapter to exchange students.'

3 International degree students

This chapter presents results regarding the experiences of international degree students in Norway. Firstly, we look at how they experienced coming to Norway. We present findings regarding what motivated their choice of Norway as a study destination and the choice of HEI, as well as which sources of information they utilised when planning their stay. We also shed light on the challenges they faced during this process.

Next, we look at what academic and social life has been like for the international degree students in Norway. We present findings regarding their academic ambitions, what their academic and social life have been like, and how they fund their studies. We also look at how they evaluate the social environment they have been a part of.

In the last part of the chapter, we present the degree students' assessments of their stay in Norway. We look at how they evaluate the education they have received, and look at their plans after finishing their stay in Norway.

3.1 Coming to Norway

The first part of this chapter presents findings from questions regarding the degree students' planning and preparations for their arrival in Norway. We investigate where they sought information when looking for study opportunities abroad, and which sources of information about studies in Norway they found useful. We also investigate what motivated their choice of country, as well as the choice of institution. Lastly, we look at which challenges the degree students faced when they were preparing for their studies in Norway.

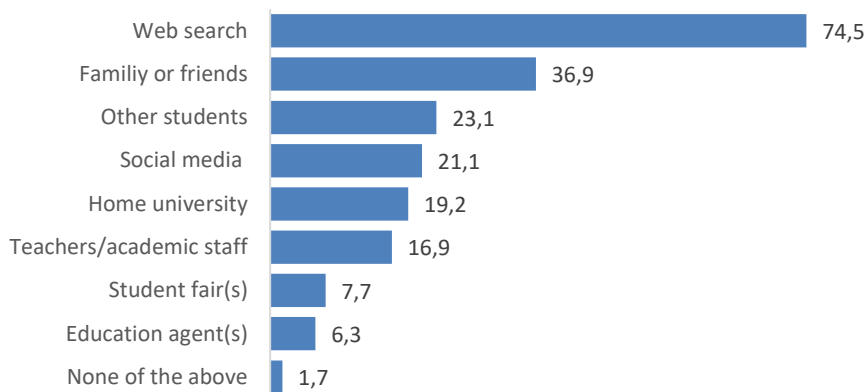
3.1.1 Sources of information

Figure 3.1 shows which sources of information the degree students used when they were looking for information about studies abroad. The respondents could choose all relevant alternatives.⁹

Four out of five degree students (74,5 percent) answer that they sought information through a web search, making this by far the most frequently used source of information. The other digital source of information on the list, social media, was used by about two out of five students (21,1 percent).

⁹ Note that the analysis includes all degree students in the survey population, regardless of when they first started studying in Norway. While there may be cognitive biases when respondents are asked to recall events that took place a long time ago, further analyses do not indicate systematic differences in the responses related to when they first were registered in FS.

Figure 3.1: Where did you seek information about study opportunities abroad? (percent, N = 2170)

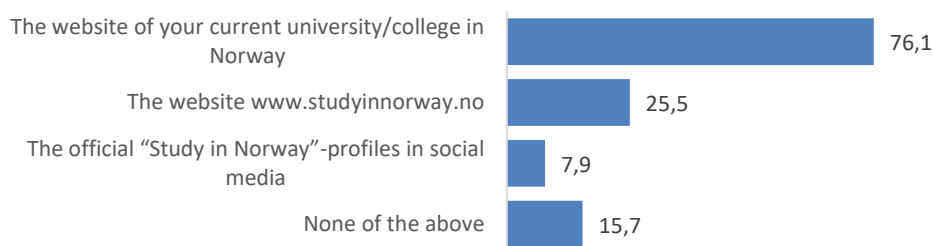


Personal contacts have been a source of information for some students. A third (36,9 percent) sought information from family or friends, making this the second-most used source. We also find that almost a fourth (23,1 percent) talked to other students, and 16,9 percent talked to teachers or other academic staff.

We also asked the students whether they found three different online sources of information to be useful when searching for information about study opportunities in Norway: the website of their current university/college, the website [studyinnorway.no](http://www.studyinnorway.no) and the Study in Norway social media profiles. The two latter are an effort to promote Norway as a study destination for international students run by HK-dir.

The website of their current university was found to be useful by three in four degree students. We saw in figure 3.1 that many students used a web search to find information about study opportunities abroad. Figure 3.2 can indicate that in many cases, the search led them to the institution’s website.

Figure 3.2: When searching for information about study opportunities in Norway, did you find any of the following sources of information useful? (percent, N = 1042)



One in four (25,5 percent) answer that they found [studyinnorway.no](http://www.studyinnorway.no) to be useful, and a bit less than one in ten (7,9 percent) have made use of the Study in Norway social media profiles.

3.1.2 Motivation for choice of study destination

Further, we explore what motivated the degree students’ choice of study destination. This is an important question for Norwegian authorities in their efforts to make Norway an attractive destination for international students.

Overall, three in four international degree students indicate that Norway was their primary choice of study destination when considering studying abroad. When comparing students from countries prioritised for academic cooperation (the EU/EEA/Switzerland and Panorama countries) with students from other countries, we find that the share that had Norway at the top of their list is about the same in both groups.

Figure 3.3: What was your primary motivation for choosing study destination? (percent, N = 2157)

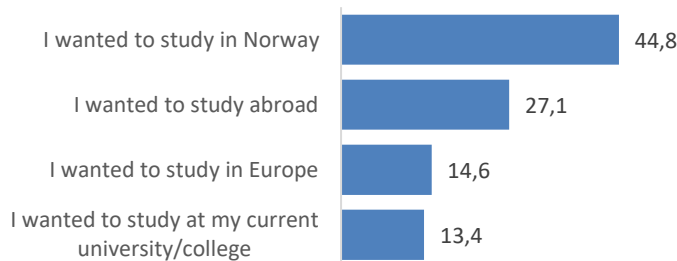


Figure 3.3 demonstrates that coming to Norway is the most common primary motivation behind the degree students' choice of study destination. Almost half (44,8 percent) were motivated by the fact that they wanted to study in Norway, and a bit less than one in three (27,1 percent) wanted to study abroad. The specific institution they study at was not as important, 13,4 percent naming this as the primary motivation. We note that students at the highly specialised institution KHiO (Oslo National Academy of the Arts) stands out in this regard, with two in three degree students (62,7 percent) naming the specific institution as their primary motivation. Students at UiT (The Arctic University of Norway) also stand out, with almost a third naming their institution as the primary motivation behind their choice.

We also note that students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland are somewhat more motivated by the opportunity to study at their current institution (19,5 percent) than students from other countries (7,9 percent). Students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland are slightly more motivated by the opportunity to study in Europe (17,8 percent versus 11,2 percent) or Norway (48,1 percent versus 41,3 percent).

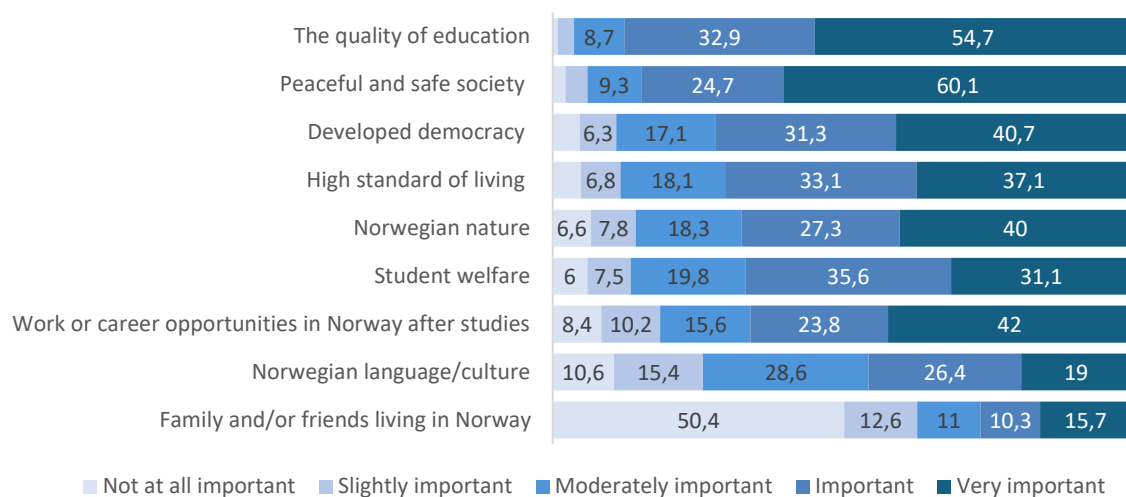
We find no significant variations in the primary motivation for choice of study destination when comparing the international degree students who pay a tuition fee and those who do not. There are some variations in the motivation for choice of study destination between different kinds of paying students, however. Among those who study at a private institution and pay a domestic tuition fee, a third (33,6 percent) were primarily motivated by the opportunity to study abroad, compared to those who pay an international tuition fee where this is true for 21,3 percent. The degree students who pay an international tuition fee are to a larger degree motivated by the opportunity to study in Norway (58,5 percent) than those who pay a domestic tuition fee (40,6 percent). The two groups of paying students are equally motivated by the opportunity to study at their current institution (9,5 percent for those who pay an international tuition fee and 10,2 percent for those who pay a domestic tuition fee).

In the survey, we asked the students to evaluate how important a number of different factors were for their choice of study destination. The results are showed in figure 3.4. The most important factor for the degree students, is the quality of education: Almost nine out of ten (87,6 percent) name this as an important or very important factor for their decision to study in Norway. The fact that Norway is a

peaceful and safe society is almost as important (84,8 percent). These were also the two most important motivational factors among degree students in the 2019 survey.

The degree students also emphasised some other features of Norwegian society when they made their choice: Almost three out of four (72 percent) found it important or very important that Norway is a developed democracy, and seven out of ten valued the high standard of living (70,2 percent), and Norwegian nature (67,3 percent). Perhaps somewhat surprising, Norwegian language/culture is not as important for the degree students, 45,4 percent naming this factor as important or very important.

Figure 3.4: How important were the following for your decision to study in Norway? (percent, N = 2138)



We find that students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, Panorama countries and other countries have fairly similar assessments of the importance of these factors. It is worth noting, however, that non-European students (both from Panorama countries and other countries) put more emphasis on work or career opportunities in Norway after studies.

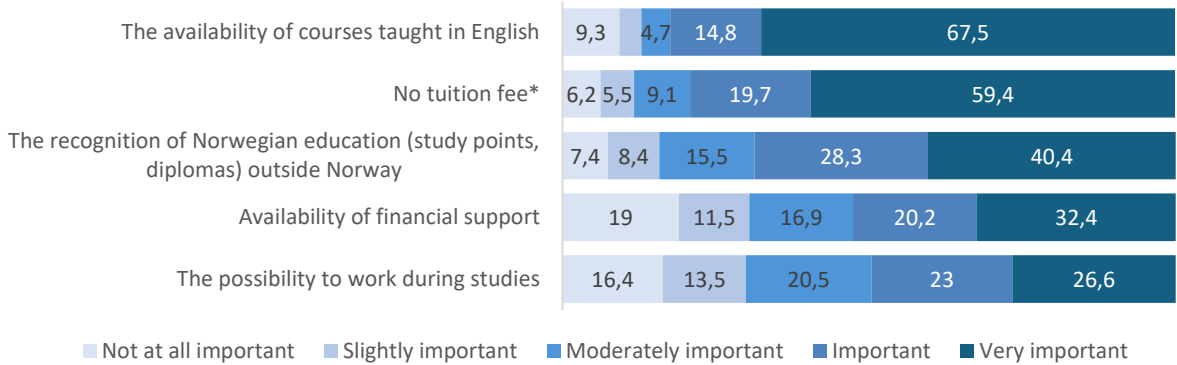
We find that the assessments of the importance of these factors are quite similar for students who pay a tuition fee and students who do not. The findings are similar when comparing the assessments of students who pay an international tuition fee with those who pay a domestic fee because they study at a private institution. One notable exception is that the former group emphasise work or career opportunities in Norway after studies to a larger degree than the latter.

The students were also asked to evaluate the importance of some factors that might make it easier for them to study in Norway (see figure 3.5). The availability of courses taught in English was seen as important or very important by more than eight out of ten degree students (82,3 percent). Among the students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, almost as many name the absence of a tuition fee as an important or very important reason (79,1 percent).

The assessments regarding the other financial aspects mentioned in the question, availability of financial support and the possibility to work during studies, vary. About half of the degree students name these factors as important (52,6 percent and 49,6 percent respectively), while around a third (30,5 percent and 29,9 percent) found them slightly important, or not important at all. Further analyses show that students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland found these factors to be more important than other students. The assessments of students who pay a tuition fee are fairly similar to

those who do not. We make similar findings when comparing the answers of students who pay an international tuition fee with those who pay a domestic tuition fee. A notable exception is that those who pay an international tuition fee emphasise the opportunity to work during studies to a larger degree than the students at private institutions.

Figure 3.5: How important were the following for your decision to study in Norway? (percent, N = 2143)



* The alternative “no tuition fee” was only presented to students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland

3.1.3 Motivation for choice of institution

The students were also asked some questions about what motivated their choice of institution.

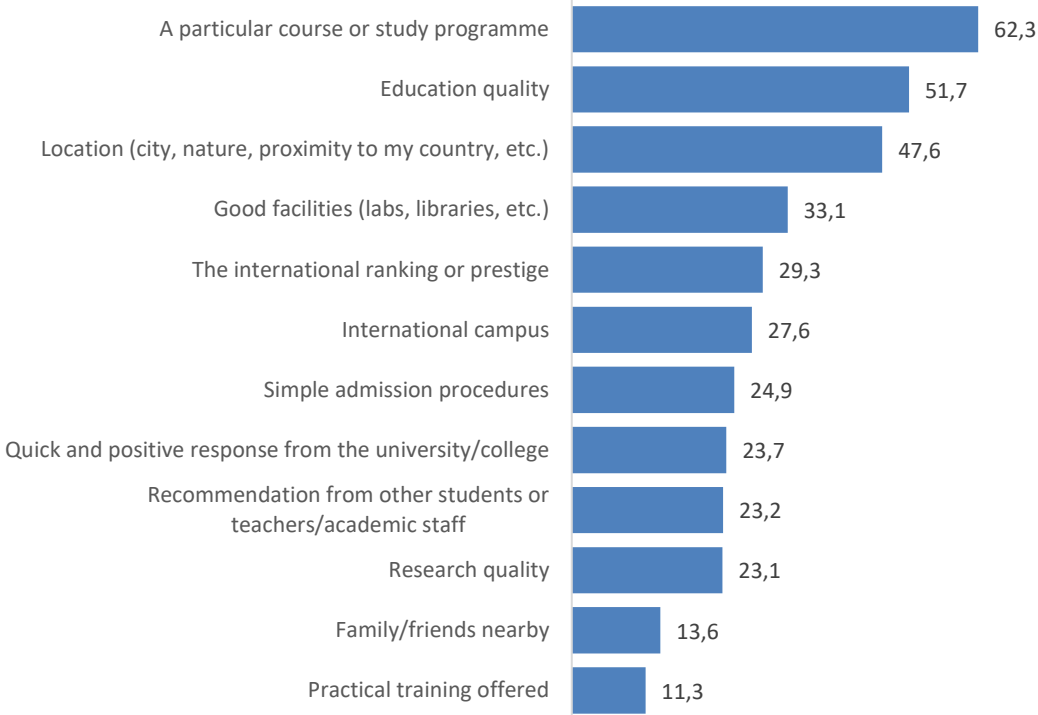
A majority of the degree students, 59,8 percent, only applied for one Norwegian university/college. Almost two in five (17,9 percent) applied for two institutions, and 11,7 percent applied for three. For eight out of ten degree students (80,8 percent), their current institution was their first choice.

Figure 3.6 presents the most important reasons behind the degree students’ choice of institution. The respondents could choose up to five alternatives. Almost half of the degree students (44,7 percent) chose five alternatives, and 18,4 percent chose four alternatives.

The motivation that is most frequently named by the degree students, is a particular course or study programme. Almost two thirds (62,3 percent) name this as an important reason for their choice of institution in Norway. Education quality was important for about half of the degree students (51,7 percent), and the location of the institution was emphasised by almost as many (47,6 percent). Similar findings were made in the 2019 survey.

We note that factors such as being part of an international campus, simple admission procedures and getting a quick and positive answer from the host university are emphasised by significantly fewer of the degree students. Given that many are motivated by being able to attend a specific course or programme, it makes sense that such factors are of less importance.

Figure 3.6: Please indicate the most important reason(s) for your decision to study at your university/college (percent, N = 2118)



Mainly, the reasons that motivated the choice of institution are fairly similar for students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, Panorama countries and other countries. We note, however, that students from the former group to a larger degree are motivated by a particular course or study programme.

We have also compared the most important reason(s) for choice of institution of students who pay a tuition fee with those who do not. The paying students emphasise education quality (60,1 percent) and international prestige (43,3 percent) to a larger degree than the student who do not pay a tuition fee (49,1 percent and 25,0 percent respectively). On the other hand, we find that the students who do not pay a fee emphasise the availability of a specific course or study programme to a larger degree than those who do pay a fee (68,6 percent and 55,1 percent).

We find similar patterns when comparing students who pay an international tuition fee with students who pay a domestic tuition fee because they study at a private institution. The students at private institutions emphasise educational quality and international ranking to a larger degree than those who pay an international tuition fee, and those who pay an international tuition fee emphasise the availability of a specific course or study programme to a larger degree than those at private institutions.

We have also compared the answers of students at different institutions. We note that students at the specialised colleges VID, NHH, BI and AHO emphasise educational quality to a larger degree than the average student. Students at UiT and OsloMet found the location of the university to be somewhat more important than the average student.

3.1.4 Challenges

International students might face several challenges when planning and preparing for their stay in Norway. These challenges can be both legal and administrative. In figure 3.7, we show the results from a question where we asked the students to what extent they experienced problems during different processes when preparing for of their studies.

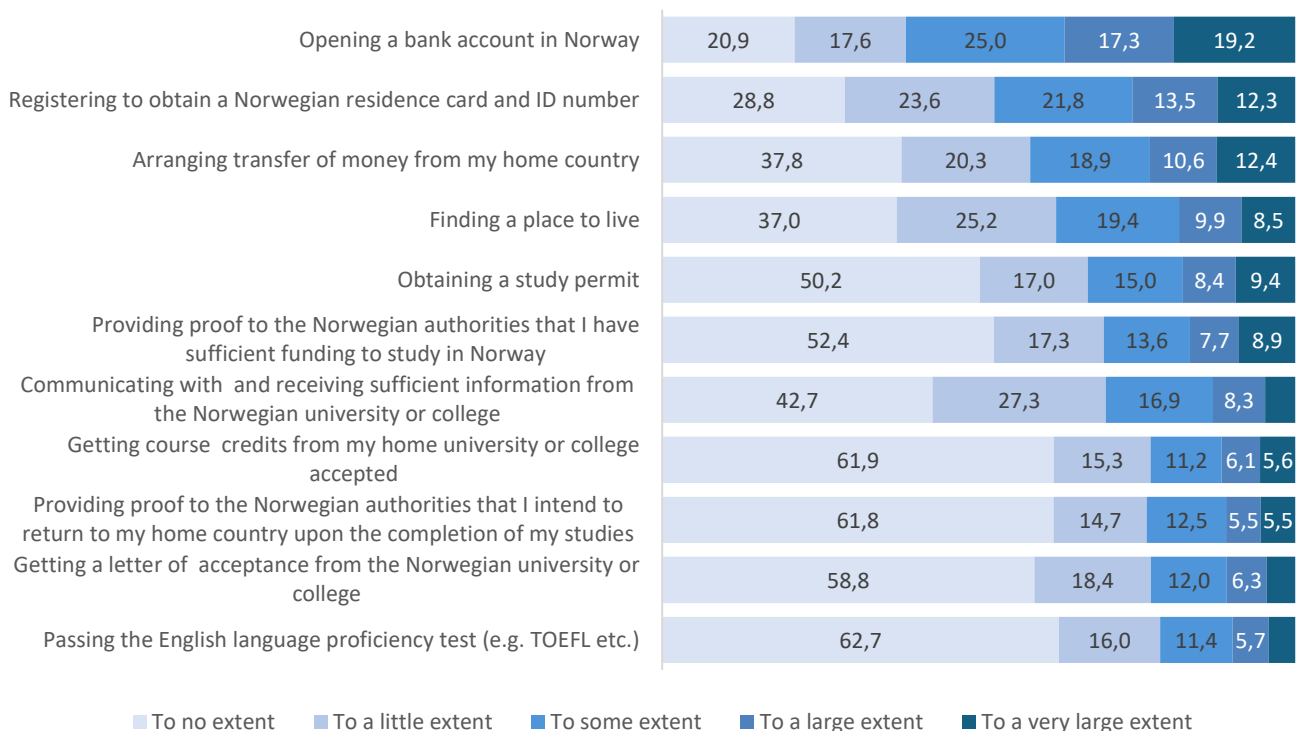
Note that this question included a “not relevant” alternative. Choosing this alternative can be a way of expressing that you have not gone through the process in question, and respondents who chose this alternative are therefore left out of the analyses presented in figure 3.7. This means that for the overall population of exchange students, the challenges are less widespread than the numbers in the figure indicate. Especially many respondents chose “not relevant” regarding providing proof of their intention to return to their home country (33,8 percent), passing the English language proficiency test (20,7 percent), obtaining a study permit (19,0 percent) and getting course credits from their home university approved (18,2 percent). Please refer to appendix 2 for a full overview of the distribution of answers to this question, including the respondents who chose “not relevant”.

As figure 3.7 shows, the degree students’ experiences are somewhat varied. For all of the alternatives, however, there are more students who have had problems to a small extent or not at all, than there are students who have experienced problems to a large or very large extent.

It is most common to experience problems during the opening of a bank account in Norway. One in three degree students had problems during this process to a large or very large extent. At the same time, we find that a similar share (38,5 percent) had problems to a small extent, or not at all.

Usually, one needs a Norwegian ID number to open a bank account, and we see that one in four degree students (25,8 percent) experienced problems to a large or very large extent during the process of obtaining a residency card and ID number. This probably explains some of the challenges related to opening a bank account.

Figure 3.7: During the time you prepared for your studies in Norway, did you experience any problems with the following? (percent, N = 2042)



The communication with the Norwegian university and other study administrative processes appear to work fairly well. Most students (70 percent) had little or no problems communicating and receiving enough information from their Norwegian university, and the same goes for getting approval of course credits from their home university (77,2 percent).

Some students experience problems to a large or very large extent during the immigration related processes mentioned in the question. Almost two in five degree students (17,8 percent) experience problems with obtaining a study permit.

We also asked whether the students found it challenging to renew their study permit. Note that 38,2 percent of the degree students answered that this question was not relevant for them, probably indicating that they have not gone through a process of study permit renewal. Of the degree students who have renewed their study permit, seven out of ten (70,2 percent) answered that they had little or no problems at all during this process, while 15,8 percent had problems to a large or very large degree.

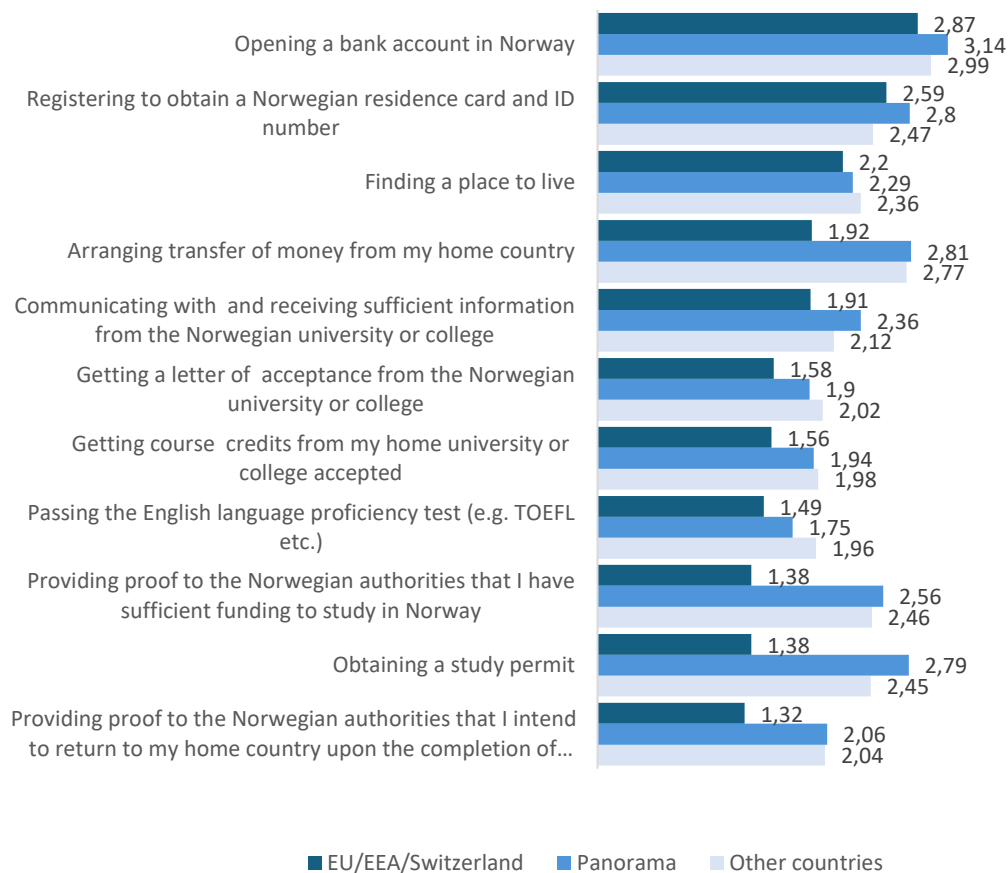
Further, we find that 16,6 percent experienced problems with providing proof of funding for the stay, and around one in ten (11 percent) experience problems proving that they intend to return to their home country after finishing their studies.

We know that some of the processes mentioned in the question most likely are more challenging for students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland (Diku, 2019, s. 27).¹⁰ For example, the students from this group face other demands when it comes to getting approval of study credits and they have to

¹⁰ Thus, we expect that they will affect degree students and exchange students equally and indeed find that this appears to be the case (see chapter 4.1.4).

pay significant sums to obtain a study visa. In figure 3.8, we therefore shed light on whether students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, the Panorama countries and other countries have different experiences when preparing for their studies in Norway. This is particularly important for the students from Panorama countries, as their home countries are prioritised for academic cooperation with Norway, yet they might face challenges that students from other prioritised countries do not.

Figure 3.8: During the time you prepared for your studies in Norway, did you experience any problems with the following? Comparison of degree students from EU/EEA/Switzerland, Panorama countries and other countries (percent, N = 2042)



The results of the comparison are presented as means on a scale from one to five, one being “to no extent” and five being “to a very large extent”. The main impression from figure 3.8 is that the degree students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland face less challenges than students from other countries, as expected. The differences are particularly distinct when it comes to migration related processes such as providing proof of funding, providing proof of intent to return to their home country, and obtaining a study permit. Arranging for transferral of money from their home country is also more challenging for the students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland.

There are large variations in the students’ experiences of renewing their study permit. While hardly any degree students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland found this process challenging to a large or very large extent (1,6 percent), this concerns a third (33,5 percent) of the degree students from Panorama countries and 19 percent of the degree students from other countries.

In short, although some of the international degree students experience problems during the preparations for their studies in Norway, most processes appear to run smoothly for a majority of the students. As we expected, students from Panorama countries and other countries outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland experience more challenges, particularly when it comes to migration related processes.

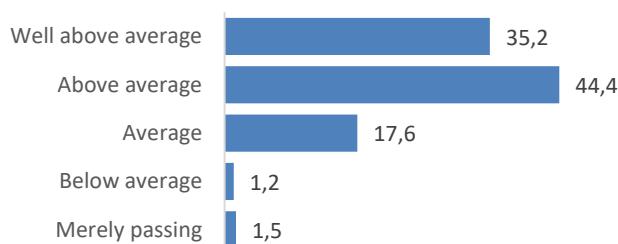
3.2 Academic and social life in Norway

This sub-chapter sheds light on the academic and social life of the international degree students in Norway. We look at which ambitions they have concerning their grades, and how much time they spend on their studies. We also present findings regarding how the international degree students fund their studies in Norway, and how much time they spend on paid work while they are students. We also look at the degree of contact between international degree students and Norwegians.

3.2.1 Academic ambitions

In the survey, we asked the students what ambitions they have concerning their grades. Figure 3.9 demonstrates that the international degree students in Norway are ambitious: One in three (35,2 percent) want to perform well above average, and 44,4 percent want to perform above average. Quite few (17,6 percent) settle for getting grades that are on the average.

Figure 3.9: What goals do you have concerning your grades? (percent, N = 2026)



We find that students at the master level are somewhat more ambitious than students at the bachelor level. Two out of five master students (39 percent) want to perform well above average, while this is true for 28,3 percent of the bachelor students. We find that students at private institutions have the same level of ambition as those who study at public institutions.

We also asked the students how many hours a week they spend on two different study related activities: Learning activities organised by their institution, such as teaching, counselling sessions and internships, and independent study activities such as assigned readings, assignments and group work with other students. Overall, the students spend 15 hours a week on activities organised by their institution, and 20 hours a week on independent study. This is the same amount of time as in the 2019 survey. A comparison with statistics from the Norwegian University and University College Student Survey (*Studiebarometeret*) shows that the international degree students spend about the same amount of time on organised study activities as Norwegian students, but a bit more time on independent study (NOKUT 2025, p. 40).

There is some variation between students from different parts of the world. Students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland spend slightly less time than average on both activities organised by their

institution as well as independent study. Students from Panorama countries spend an average amount of time, while students from other countries spend a bit more time than average.

We find no significant variations between students who pay a tuition fee and those who do not. We find, however, that the students who pay an international tuition fee spend more time on both activities than those who pay a domestic tuition fee.

The academic workload can vary between different fields of study. We find that students of natural sciences and technology spend more time than the average student on activities organised by their institution as well as independent learning activities. Students of health and care and pedagogy and teaching spend somewhat less time on independent study than the average student. We also find that the master students spend a bit more time than the bachelor students on both activities, which makes sense given that they also had somewhat higher ambitions regarding their grades. We also know that the workload usually is greater, and the academic demands higher, at the master level compared to the bachelor level.

3.2.2 Funding and paid work

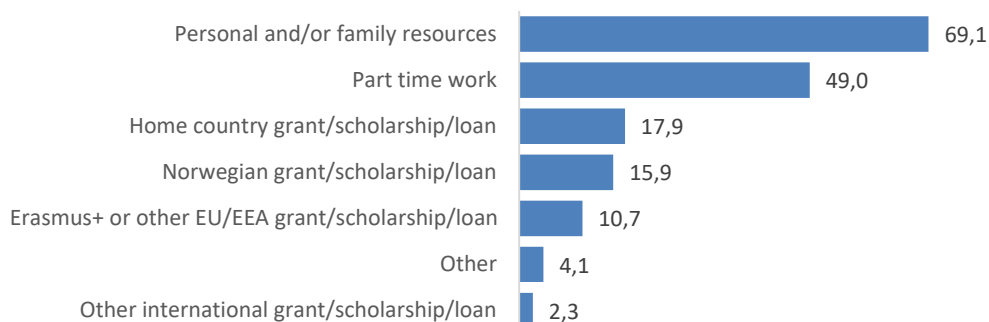
Studies abroad can be financed in a number of ways. Some students receive scholarships and/or loans from their home country, while others are eligible for stipend schemes from other countries or the EU. Other students have to finance their studies through funds of their own, either from savings or part time work during their studies.

As of the autumn semester of 2023, degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland have to pay an international tuition fee for their studies in Norway. In order to get a study visa, they also have to be able to cover their costs of living for the time the visa is valid (White paper 7 (2020-2021), p. 96). Therefore, we expect that degree students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland will have a different financial situation than other students.

Figure 3.10 shows the most important sources of funding for the international degree students in Norway. In the survey, the students were asked to choose up to three alternatives from the list. A little less than half of the students finance their studies in Norway through a single source of funding (44,1 percent), while an almost equal share rely on two sources of funding to cover all their costs

Personal funds is the most frequently used source of funding. Seven out of ten degree students (69,1 percent) mention personal and/or family resources as an important source, and half (49 percent) mention part time work. Some students receive grants, scholarships or loans. For this kind of funding, the most common is to receive a grant from the student's home country (17,9 percent), or grants/scholarships funded by the Norwegian state (15,9 percent).

Figure 3.10: What are your most important sources of funding while studying in Norway? (percent, N = 2076)



Students who pay tuition fees have higher costs than those who do not. We find that a higher share of the paying students relies on personal/family resources compared to other students (83,6 percent and 64,6 percent respectively). We also see that within the group of paying students, those who pay an international tuition fee have part-time work to a larger degree than those who pay a domestic tuition fee (55,7 percent and 34,4 percent respectively).

Previous studies have pointed out that one of the benefits of coming to Norway as an international degree student, is that it is legal to combine studies with paid work (White paper 7 (2020-2021), p. 89). About half of the international degree students in the survey population (53,5 percent) have part time work. These students were asked how many hours a week they spend on paid work. On average, the international degree students work 17 hours a week, slightly more than two days full-time. This is significantly more time than Norwegian students spend on paid work (NOKUT 2025, p. 40). Perhaps somewhat surprising, students at private institutions work slightly less than average.

There is some variation between students from countries prioritised for academic cooperation and other students. While students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland and Panorama countries both work around 16 hours a week on average (16,44 and 15,86 hours respectively), students from other countries work around 18 hours a week. Thus, the students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation appear to be especially hard working: They spend more time on their studies than other students, yet they also spend more time on paid work than other students.

We also find that students of health and care work slightly more than other students. This might be related to the large demands for qualified staff in the Norwegian health sector.

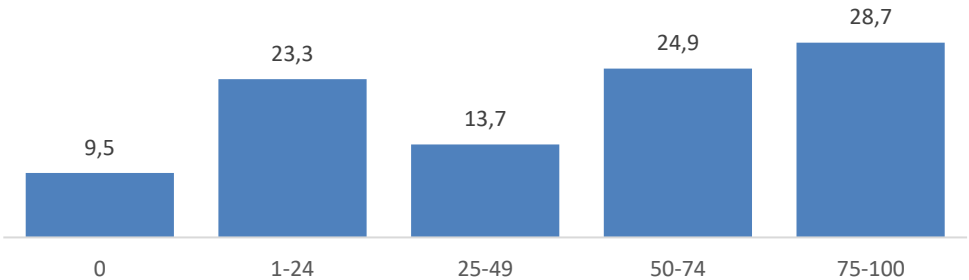
3.2.3 Study environment and socialisation

It is an aim for the Norwegian government that students in higher education are part of an international learning environment (White paper 16 (2016-2017), White paper 7 (2020-2021)). It is not enough that international students are present at Norwegian campuses, however. To achieve “internationalisation at home” where the international students contribute to creating an international learning environment for the Norwegian students, the two groups need to interact. This has proven to be a challenge, as international students often take classes in English that are attended by few or no Norwegian students (White paper 7 (2020-2021), p. 73).

In the survey, we asked the students to estimate how many Norwegians are in their courses/classes the current semester. Figure 3.11 shows that this varies significantly. A bit less than one in three

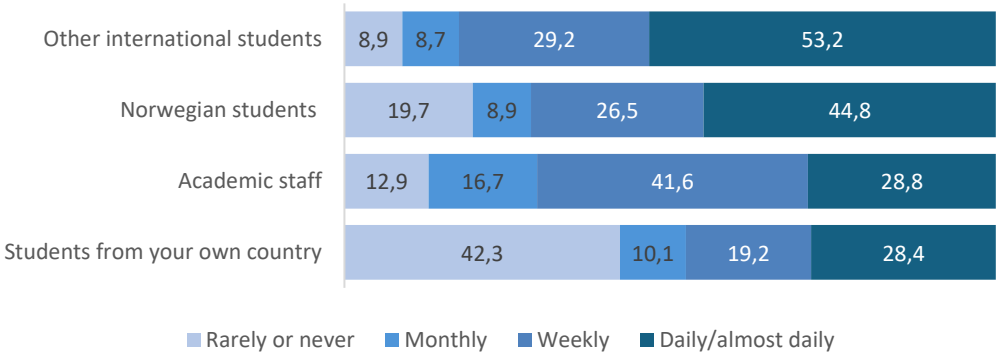
degree students (28,7 percent) attend classes where 75 percent or more of the attendees are Norwegian. At the same time, one in ten degree students have no Norwegians in their class, and almost one in four report that between 1 and 24 percent of their classmates are Norwegian. Note that nearly one in four degree students responded that they do not know the total share of Norwegians in their class. These students are not included in the analyses presented in Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.11: Please estimate the total share of Norwegians who attend courses/classes with you this semester (percent, N = 1541)¹¹



Even when degree students share classes with Norwegian students, the two groups do not necessarily have a lot of interaction. Therefore, we asked the students how often they interact academically with Norwegian students, as well as students from their home country, other international students and academic staff. The results are showed in figure 3.12 and indicate that there is a fair amount of contact between international degree students and Norwegian students in academic settings. More than seven out of ten (71,3 percent) are in contact with Norwegian students in an academic setting weekly or more often. The degree students have even more contact with other international students: more than eight out of ten have contact weekly or more often (82,4 percent). Many of the degree students (42,3 percent) rarely or never have contact with students from their home country in an academic setting.

Figure 3.12: At your university/college, how often do you interact academically with (percent, N = 2008)



One effort that can make it easier for the international degree students to come into contact with Norwegians, is learning some of the language. Making such an investment might also make it easier for the degree students to stay in Norway and find a job after they finish their degree. Slightly more

¹¹ Note that students who answered “none” are coded as zero

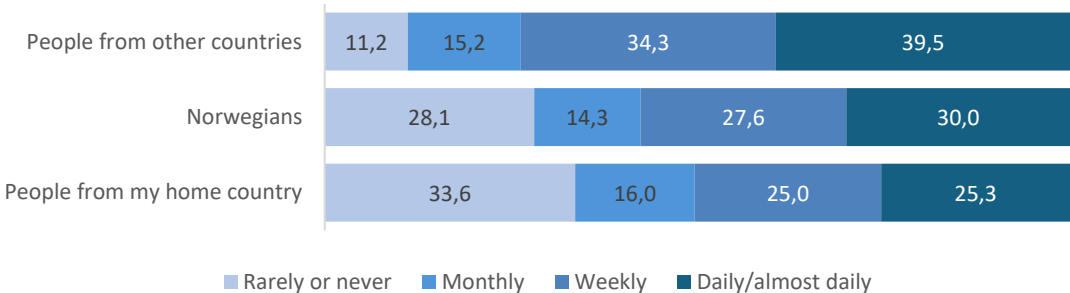
than half of the degree students (56 percent) have taken a Norwegian language course. Among those who did not take a course, one in three (32,7 percent) answer that they do not need to take a course, while a bit less than a third (30,3) percent did not know of any courses. The remaining students (29,8 percent) answered that they do not have time for a course.

A comment in the open text at the end of the survey field illustrates that despite high Norwegian language skills, getting in touch with Norwegians may not be that easy:

I found it very challenging to connect with Norwegian students, despite B2 level Norwegian fluency. It was much easier to connect with other international students.
 - North American degree student

Socialisation between Norwegians and international students can also take place during their free time. Therefore, we also asked how often the international students have contact with Norwegians in a leisurely setting, as well as with people from their home country and people from other countries (figure 3.13). Almost half the degree students socialise with Norwegians weekly or more frequently, which is less frequent than they do in an academic setting. The group they socialise the most with during their free time is other internationals: Three out of four meet this group weekly or more often. Most likely, a lot of this contact is with other international students.

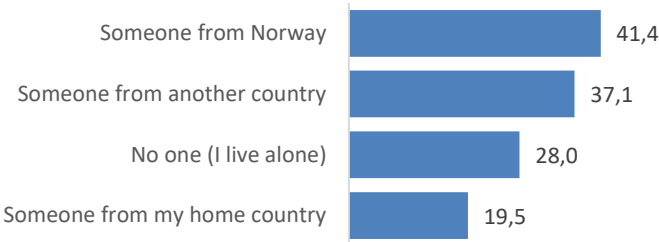
Figure 3.13: In your leisure time, how often do you socialise with the following groups?



The degree students’ place of residence is also an important arena for socialisation. At most universities, international students are prioritised to get a place in university/college residences (White paper 7 (2020-2021)). We find that slightly more than half of the degree students (56,8 percent) live in a university/college residence, while the rest live in other kinds of housing, many probably in the private rental market.

We also asked who, if any, the international students share accommodation with. Figure 3.14 demonstrates that for many of the students, their living arrangements facilitate contact with Norwegians: Two out of five answer that they share accommodation with someone from Norway, while almost as many (37,1 percent) live with someone from another country. Almost one in three (28,0 percent) degree students live alone.

Figure 3.14: I currently share accommodation with (percent, N = 2012)



In the survey, the respondents were presented with a list of statements about the social aspects of living and studying in Norway and asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Figure 3.15: Listed below are several statements about living and studying in Norway. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement (percent, N = 1998)

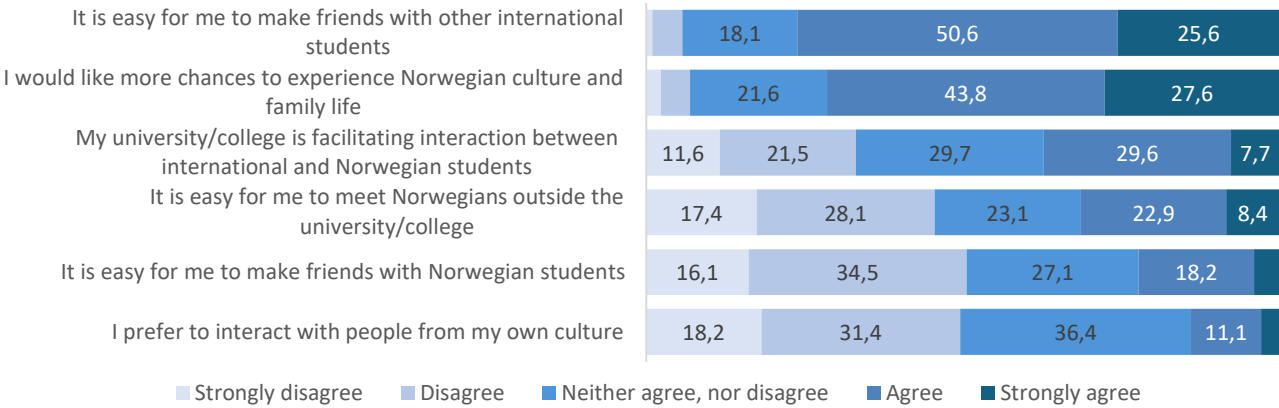
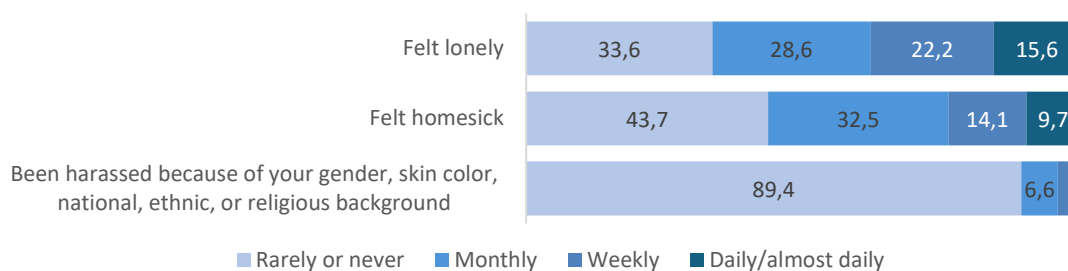


Figure 3.15 demonstrates that the degree students' answers vary a great deal between the statements. The two statements they agree the most with, is that it is easy for them to make friends with other international students (76,2 percent agree or agree strongly), and that they would like more chances to experience Norwegian culture and family life (71,4 percent agree or agree strongly). This is probably related to the fact that only 22,2 percent agree that it is easy to make friends with Norwegian students, and only a bit more than a third (37,3 percent) have experienced that their university facilitates interaction between Norwegian and international students. There is also quite few (31,3 percent) who find it easy to meet Norwegians outside of their university/college, despite the fact that more than forty percent of the degree students live with someone from Norway (figure 3.14).

Feelings of loneliness and homesickness are not uncommon when you are far away from home. Not getting all the social contact that you wish that you had might reinforce such feelings. Figure 3.16 shows that the international degree students indeed have felt lonely quite often: Almost two in five international degree students (37,8 percent) answer that they have felt lonely weekly or daily/almost daily during their stay in Norway. The degree students have felt homesick somewhat less frequently (23,8 percent weekly or daily/almost daily). When comparing students of different geographical origins, we find that students from outside the EU experience loneliness far more often than European students. When it comes to feeling homesick, degree students from South America, Africa and Asia experience this more often than other degree students.

Figure 3.16: During your studies in Norway, have you ever (percent, N = 2013)



Almost nine out of ten answer that they rarely or never have been harassed because of their gender, skin colour, national, ethnic or religious background. This means that about one in ten have experienced some kind of harassment monthly or more frequently. It is especially students from African and Asian countries who have experienced harassment this frequently.

In short, findings from this sub chapter illustrate that most of the international degree students interact with Norwegian students quite frequently in academic settings. This makes the international degree students important contributors towards internationalisation at home. They have less contact with Norwegians during their free time, however, even though quite a few of the international degree students live with Norwegian people and/or take a Norwegian language course while they are here. Comments in the open text field at the end of the survey illustrate that many would have liked to have more contact with Norwegians, but find them hard to make friends with:

Hard to get to know Norwegians, they rather spend time with other Norwegians
- European degree student

3.3 Assessment of the studies and future plans

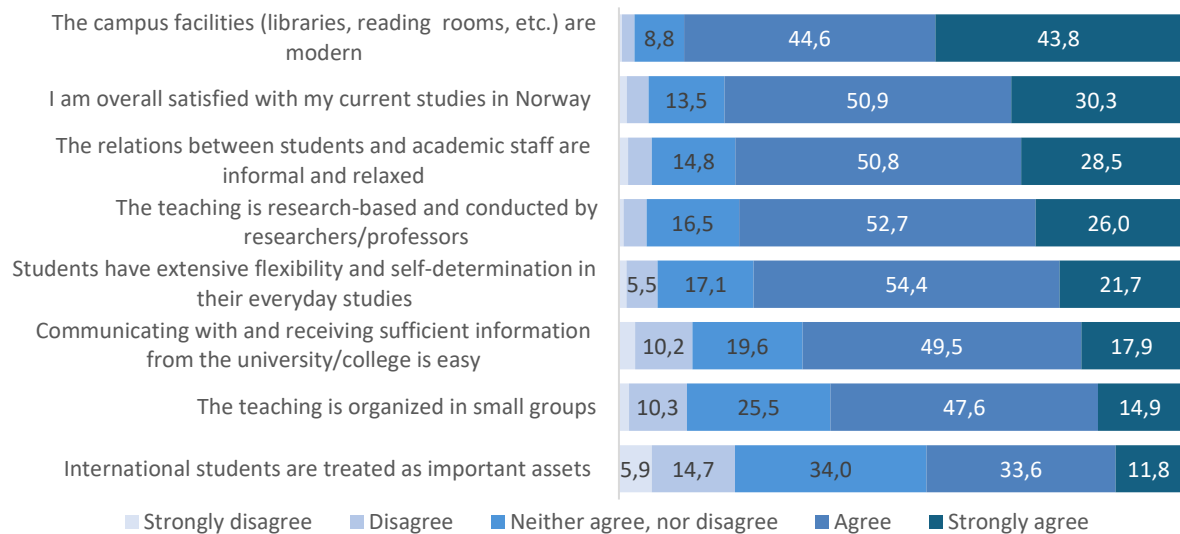
In the last part of this chapter, we present results from the degree students' assessments of their studies in Norway. We look at how satisfied they are with the teaching and academic counselling they have received. We also look at their overall assessment of their studies, and what are their plans after they finish their degree in Norway.

3.3.1 Assessment of Norwegian education

In figure 3.17 we show the international degree students' assessments of a number of statements about Norwegian education. The main finding is that the international degree students are pleased with the education they receive: More than eight out of ten answer that they agree or agree strongly with the statement that they are overall satisfied with their current studies in Norway.

A large majority of the degree students agree or agree strongly that the campus facilities are modern (88,4 percent), that relations with students and academic staff are informal and relaxed (79,3 percent) and that the teaching is research-based (78,7 percent). We find no significant variations between students who pay a tuition fee and those who do not.

Figure 3.17: Below is a list of statements about Norwegian education. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? (percent, N = 1983)



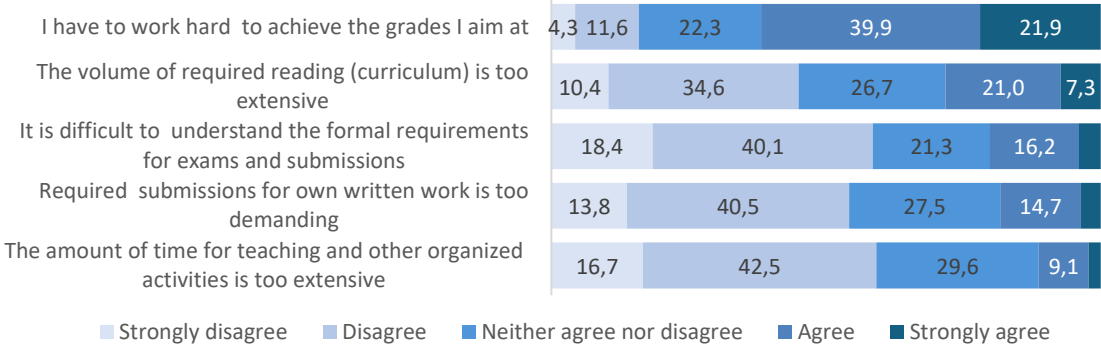
The statement that the degree students agree the least with, is that international students are treated as important assets. The students' assessments of this statement are quite varied: A bit less than half (45,4 percent) agree or agree strongly with this statement, while one out of five (20,6 percent) disagree or disagree strongly. As discussed in the previous sub-chapter, international students can be important contributors towards internationalisation of Norwegian education, but this requires some facilitation from the Norwegian institution. We have compared the answers of students from different institutions, but do not find any systematic variation that indicates that some institutions treat their international students as important assets to a larger degree than others. One possible explanation is that the variation lies at the department or faculty level, rather than at the institutional level.

3.3.2 Workload and learning outcomes

Further, the students were presented with some statements about the workload and formal requirements of their degree in Norway.

Almost one out of three degree students agree or agree strongly that they have to work hard to achieve the grades they aim at. As we saw in sub-chapter 3.2.1, most of the degree students wish to perform above average, and it seems reasonable that they have to work hard to achieve this goal. At the same time, findings from figure 3.18 indicates that many students find the workload to be at a suitable level: Almost half (45 percent) disagree or disagree strongly that the volume of required reading is too extensive, and 54,3 percent disagree that the required submissions for written work are too demanding.

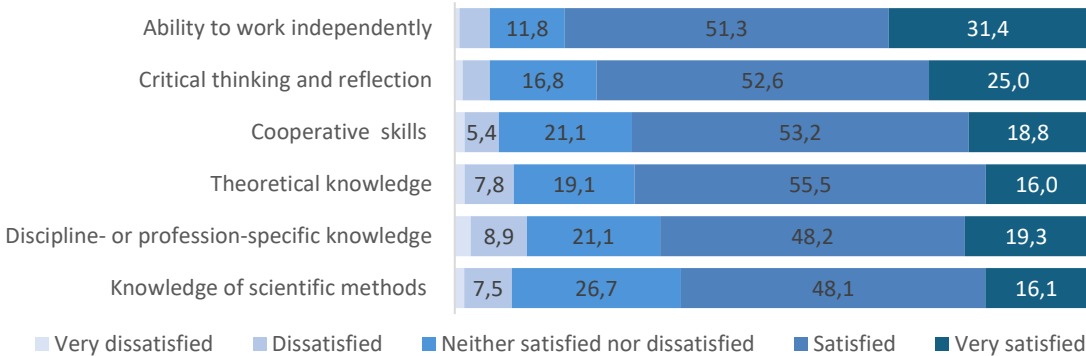
Figure 3.18: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding workload and formal requirements? (percent, N = 1929)



We find no significant variations between the assessments of students who pay a tuition fee and those who do not.

The main impression from figure 3.18 is that the workload and formal requirements are perceived as reasonable and appropriate by most international degree students. This interpretation is supported by figure 3.19, which shows that the students are very satisfied with their learning outcomes. For all of the skills mentioned in the question, there is a significant majority who answer that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their learning outcomes, and very few who answer that they are dissatisfied. The skills they are the most satisfied with, are the ability to work independently (82,7 percent satisfied or very satisfied) and critical thinking and reflection (77,6 percent satisfied or very satisfied). We find no significant variations between students who pay a tuition fee and those who do not.

Figure 3.19: How satisfied are you with your own learning outcomes so far, concerning (percent, N = 2021)



Compared to educational systems in other countries, Norwegian higher education is known to foster these skills. A comment from an African student in the open text field at the end of the survey illustrates why international students value this focus:

The emphasis on critical thinking is enriching my academic journey. My current university has created a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that encourages me to explore my passions and develop my own well-advised perspective.
 - African degree student

3.3.3 Contact with working life

Increased relevance of higher education for working life is an important goal for Norwegian authorities (White paper 16 (2020-2021)). For international degree students who want to stay in Norway to find a job, it is perhaps especially important to get useful information and guidance on working life through their studies, as many will be unfamiliar with the job market in Norway.

Figure 3.20: Please consider the information and opportunities provided by your university/college in Norway. To what extent do you experience the following (percent, N = 1904)

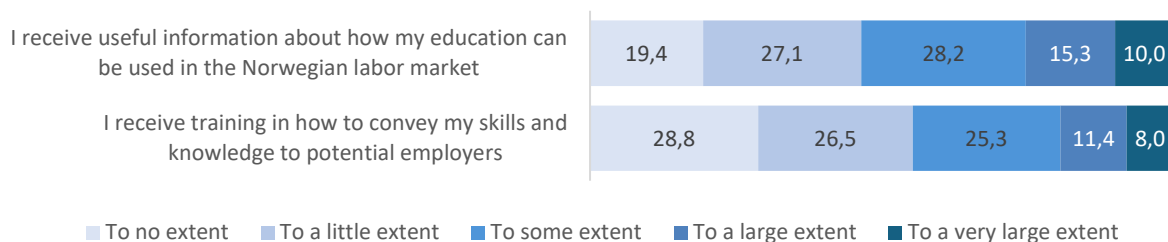


Figure 3.20 demonstrates that international degree students to a relatively small extent receive information or training related to the Norwegian labour market. Almost half of the students (46,5 percent) answer that they to a little extent or not at all have received useful information about how their education can be used in the Norwegian labour market, and 55,3 percent answer that they have received training in how to convey their skills and knowledge to potential employers to little or no extent. Still, it is also worth noting that about one in four (25,3 percent) have received useful information to a large or very large extent, and a bit fewer (19,4 percent) have received training in how to convey their skills and knowledge to employers to a large or very large extent. In other words, the degree students' experiences are varied. Results from the University and University College Student Survey (*Studiebarometeret*) show that Norwegian students also have quite varied experiences with the labour market related information and training they receive (NOKUT 2025, p. 35).

Frustration with lack of labour market related training and information was a recurring theme in the open text field at the end of the survey. For instance, an African degree student wrote:

I would suggest more talks and linkages to help international students who want to get professional jobs in Norway after their studies.
– African degree student

3.3.4 Future plans

The government White Paper number 7 (2020-2021), *A World of Possibilities – International student mobility in Higher Education*, states that recruiting talented students to Norwegian higher education institutions and making it easier for them to stay and find a job in Norway after their studies can help Norway secure the competency and skills that we need in the future.

In the survey, the students were asked whether they were considering staying in Norway after finishing their degree. Three out of four degree students answer that they consider staying in Norway. Students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland are considering this to a lesser degree than other students:

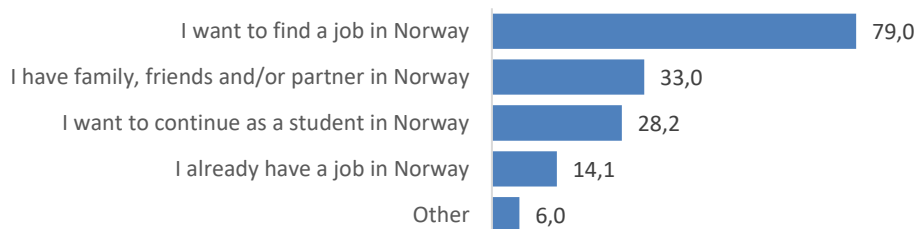
68,3 percent of these students answer yes, compared to 81,6 percent of the students from Panorama countries and 82,6 percent of students from other countries.

We find that students who pay a tuition fee are somewhat less likely to consider staying in Norway than students who do not pay a tuition fee, 69,5 percent and 77,6 percent respectively. Further analyses of the answers of different kinds of paying students show that this difference is accounted for by the students who pay an international tuition fee: In this group, 83,9 percent are considering staying in Norway, compared to 54,7 percent of those who pay a domestic tuition fee because they study at a private institution.

Figure 3.21 shows the reasons why the degree students are considering staying in Norway. The respondents could choose all relevant alternatives from the list. The most common motivation to stay, by far, is to find a job. This concerns eight out of ten degree students who are considering staying in Norway. It is worth pointing out, however, that we do not know how many of these students who actually will find a job. Only 14,1 percent of the degree students already had a job when they answered the survey.

We find that the motivations for staying are quite similar for students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland and students from other countries. This is also the finding when comparing the motivations of students who pay a tuition fee with students who do not. We find that a larger share of the students who pay a domestic tuition fee already have found a job, compared to those who pay an international tuition fee (16,3 percent and 5,4 percent respectively).

Figure 3.21: Why are you considering staying in Norway? (percent, N = 1501)



Given that recruiting international degree students into the labour market potentially can help Norway meet competency needs in the future, we have also looked at the study background of the degree students who want to stay in Norway to work, or to study more. The answers of students from different fields of study are fairly similar, but there are a few notable variations. It is especially students within pedagogy and training who already have a job in Norway: Within this group, almost a third (29,5 percent) answer that they have a job. Students of law and social science have found a job to a somewhat lesser degree than other students (8,2 percent). We also note that students of arts and humanities want to continue studying in Norway to a somewhat larger degree than other students (35,4 percent).

Concerns about transitioning from being a student to being an employee was mentioned frequently in the open text field at the end of the survey. Several mention that the Norwegian labour market feels inaccessible to foreign nationals and express a wish that their education had prepared them better for this transition. A degree student from Asia wrote:

I am grateful for stay in Norway as a student. I know that I am getting a quality education. I just hope that transitioning from a student to a job seeker would be a lot easier for international students in the context of job opportunities and job acceptance.

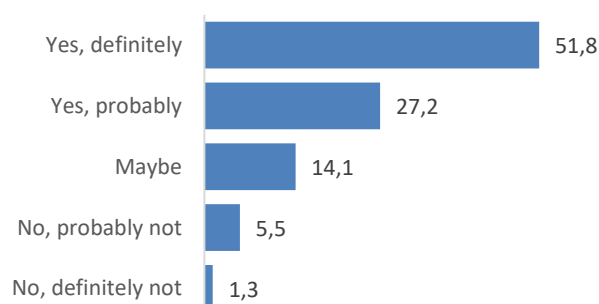
- Asian degree student

3.3.5 Overall assessment

Lastly in this chapter, we look at the international degree students' overall assessment of their studies in Norway. In the survey, we asked the students whether they would recommend studying in Norway to other students, which can be seen as an indicator that they have had a satisfying experience as an international student in Norway.

Figure 3.22 indicates that most of the international degree students are happy with their experience in Norway. Half (51,8 percent) would definitely recommend studying in Norway, and almost a third (27,2 percent) state that they probably would make such a recommendation.

Figure 3.22: Would you recommend studying in Norway to other students? (percent, N = 1983)



We find that the international degree students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland are more prone to recommend studies in Norway than students from the Panorama countries and other countries. Within the former group 85,1 percent would probably or definitely recommend studies in Norway, compared to 65 percent of the students from Panorama countries and 76,2 percent from other countries. Even though there are significant variations, it is worth pointing out that there is a clear majority that would recommend studies in Norway within all three groups.

We find that students who pay a tuition fee are equally prone to recommend studies in Norway as students who do not pay a tuition fee. There are some variations between the different groups of paying students, however. Among the students who pay a domestic tuition fee because they study at a private institution, 84,8 percent would definitely or probably recommend studies in Norway to other students. A significantly lower share of the students who pay an international tuition fee would do the same, 68,3 percent.

3.4 Summary

Three in four international degree students had Norway as their first choice for studying abroad. Many name studying in Norway, or studying abroad, as the primary motivation for their studies, rather than wanting to study at a specific institution. The degree students' most important motivations for

choosing to study in Norway were the quality of education and the fact that Norway is a peaceful and safe society. Non-European students put more emphasis on the availability of financial support, the opportunity to work during studies and work or career opportunities in Norway after studies. The most important motivation for the degree students' choice of institution is a specific study programme. Education quality and the location of the institution is also important for many of the respondents.

Overall, we find that the process of preparing for their studies in Norway runs relatively smoothly for most international degree students. Several of the challenges one might face when preparing for studies abroad are related to the student's country of origin, and we find that students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland experience some of the preparation processes as somewhat more challenging than other students, including providing proof of funding and obtaining and renewing their study permit.

The international degree students have high ambitions regarding their grades, most wanting to perform above average. They spend about 35 hours a week on different study activities, students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation spending a bit more time than others.

The most common sources of funding for the studies in Norway, are personal or family resources, and part time work. The students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation rely less on personal funds and more on part time work than other international degree students.

To achieve internationalisation at home, international degree students and Norwegian students should interact. We find that the international degree students have quite a lot of contact with Norwegians in academic settings but would have liked to have more contact with Norwegians during their free time. A significant share of the degree students has felt lonely quite frequently during their studies in Norway.

Overall, the international degree students are satisfied with their studies in Norway, as well as with the workload and learning outcomes. However, few international students find that they are being treated as important assets, indicating that there is still work to be done to reach the full potential of international students' contribution towards quality enhancement in higher education.

Three out of four international degree students consider staying in Norway after finishing their studies, and most want to find a job. Students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland are considering staying in Norway to a lesser degree than students from other countries.

4 Exchange students

In this chapter, we explore the experiences of exchange students in Norway. Firstly, we present findings regarding the start of their stay. We look at what motivated the choice of country and institution, and whether they experienced any challenges during the process of preparing for their stay.

Further, we look at what academic and social life in Norway has been like for the exchange students, including which academic ambitions they have, how they finance their stay in Norway, and the degree of contact with Norwegian students. We also look at how they assess the social environment they have been a part of during their stay.

Lastly, we look at how the exchange students assess the quality of their Norwegian host institution and the education they have received. We also look at how they evaluate their workload and learning outcomes. Lastly, we look at the exchange students' future plans, and whether they would recommend a similar stay in Norway to other students.

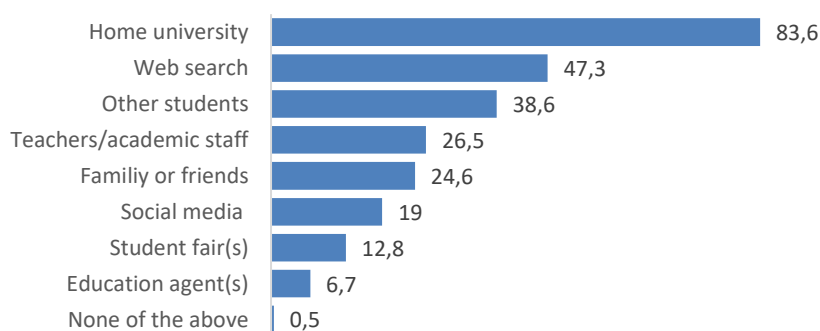
4.1 Coming to Norway

In the first part of this chapter, we present results from questions regarding the exchange students' experiences when planning their stay in Norway. We shed light on which sources of information were important when they were considering studying abroad, and what was the motivation behind the choice of study destination and institution. We also explore which challenges they experienced when preparing for the stay.

4.1.1 Sources of information

Figure 4.1 shows which sources of information the exchange students utilised when they started to consider studying abroad. More than eight in ten (83,6 percent) answer that they sought information from their home university, making this the most frequently used source of information. This is perhaps not very surprising, given that most exchange students go to institutions that their home university shares an exchange agreement with.

Figure 4.1: Where did you seek information about study opportunities abroad? (percent, N = 2041)



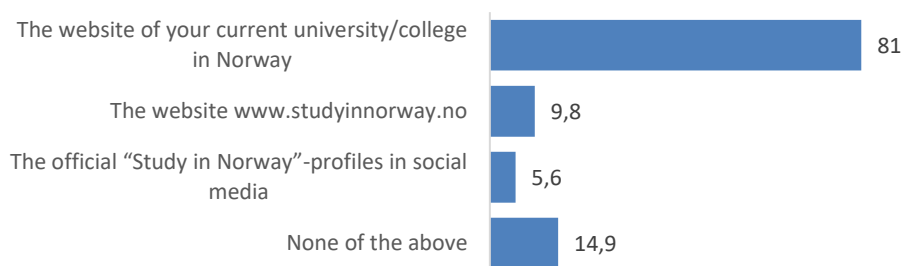
Digital sources of information are also quite important: Almost half of the exchange students (47,3 percent) sought information through a general web-search, while one in five (19 percent) looked for information on social media.

Quite a few exchange students sought information through personal contacts: Almost two in five (38,6 percent) talked to other students, and one in four (26,5 percent) talked to teachers or academic staff. A similar share (24,6 percent) sought information from family or friends.

We also asked the students about the usefulness of three different online resources for international students coming to study in Norway (figure 4.2). More than eight out of ten (81 percent) found the website of their current university or college in Norway to be useful when searching for information about study opportunities in Norway.

The students were also asked about the website and social media profiles of Study in Norway, an effort to promote Norway as a destination for international students run by HK-dir. Some international exchange students found these sources of information to be useful. About one in ten (9,8 percent) found the website as useful, and 5,6 percent benefited from the social media profiles.

Figure 4.2: When searching for information about study opportunities in Norway, did you find any of the following sources of information useful? (percent, N = 1870)



4.1.2 Motivation for choice of study destination

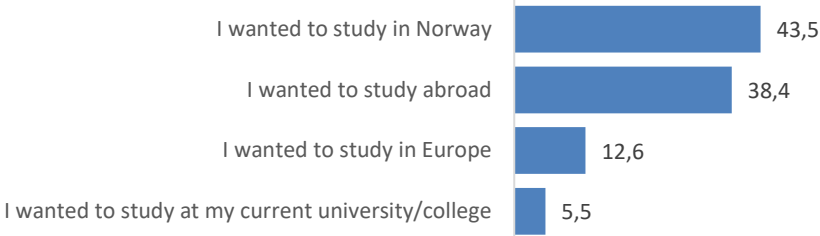
In this sub-chapter, we explore the exchange students' motivation behind choosing Norway as their study destination. This is an important question for Norwegian authorities in their work to make Norway an attractive country for foreign students.

In the survey, the international students were asked whether Norway was their first-choice country to study abroad. Three in four students (76,3 percent) answered that Norway was at the top of their list. When comparing the answers of students from countries prioritised for academic cooperation, i.e. the EU/EEA/Switzerland and the Panorama countries, with the answers of those from other countries, we find some variation between the three groups. Eight out of ten exchange students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland (79,6 percent) had Norway as their first choice, compared to 60,7 percent of students from Panorama countries and 68,3 percent of students from other countries.

Figure 4.3 shows the students' primary motivation for choosing study destination. About two in five students (43,5 percent) answered that studying in Norway was their primary motivation, and a bit fewer (38,4 percent) answered that wanting to study abroad was their primary motivation. Compared to the 2019-survey, the share of exchange students that primarily were motivated by the opportunity to study in Norway has increased by almost ten percentage points (from 34 percent to 43,5 percent).

Some students, about one in ten (12,6 percent), were mainly motivated by a wish to study in Europe, while fewer (5,5 percent) chose to study abroad because they wanted to study at their current university.

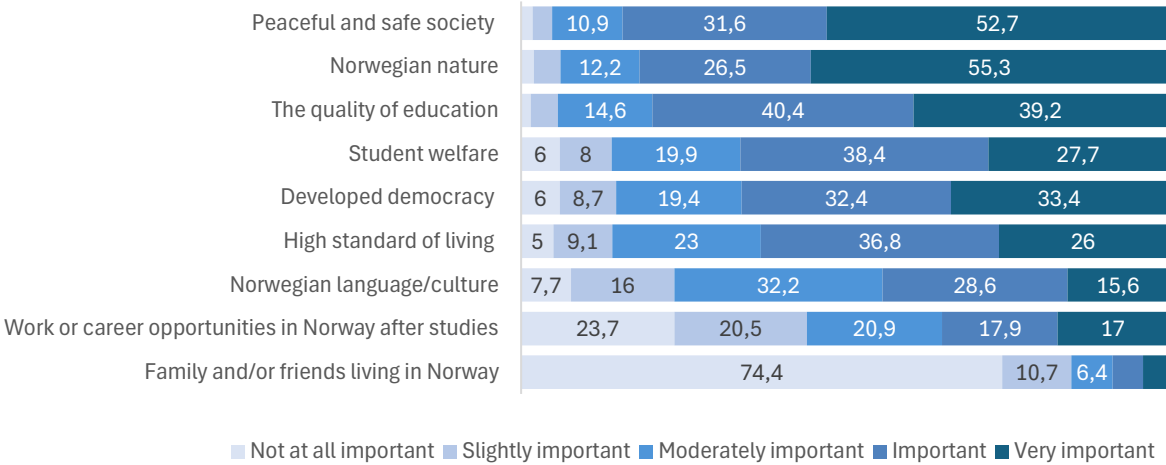
Figure 4.3: What was your primary motivation for choosing study destination? (percent, N = 2030)



In sum, it seems that factors at the country-level are the most important when the exchange students choose their study destination. The fact that they get to study in Norway, or in a foreign country, is more important than the specific institution they get to study at. This might be related to the fact that these students mainly travel to an institution that their home institution has an exchange agreement with, indicating that their home institution approves of the quality of the host institution. It is also possible that the specific institution is less motivating because the exchange students get their degree from their home institution.

Further, we look at the motivations behind the exchange students’ decision to study in Norway. Figure 4.4 shows how important a number of factors were when they made their decision.

Figure 4.4: How important were the following for your decision to study in Norway? (percent, N = 2019)



The factor that is ranked as the most important, is that Norway is a peaceful and safe society. Four in five exchange students (84,3 percent) answer that these societal features were important or very important when they decided to study in Norway. Even though this question was designed somewhat differently in the 2019 survey, it is still interesting to note that Norway being peaceful and safe was ranked as the third most important reason to study in Norway in 2019 for exchange students.

Norwegian nature is ranked as almost as important as Norway being peaceful and safe (81,8 percent name it as important or very important). The question also sheds light on the importance of some other features of Norwegian society: That Norway is a developed democracy, and that Norway has a

high standard of living. These are ranked as somewhat less important than Norway being peaceful and safe, but still there is a substantial share who answer that these factors were important for their decision (developed democracy 65,8 percent and high standard of living 62,8 percent). Norwegian language and culture are not as important for the exchange students. Almost half (44,1 percent) rank this as important or very important.

The question also included some factors related to education and life as a student. The quality of education in Norway is the third most important factor; almost eighty percent of the exchange students answer that this was important or very important for their choice. In other words, the quality of education appears to be almost as important as the fact that Norway is peaceful and safe, and Norwegian nature. Further, we see that the availability of student welfare schemes is also named as important by a large share of the exchange students. A third (66,1 percent) rank this factor as important or very important.

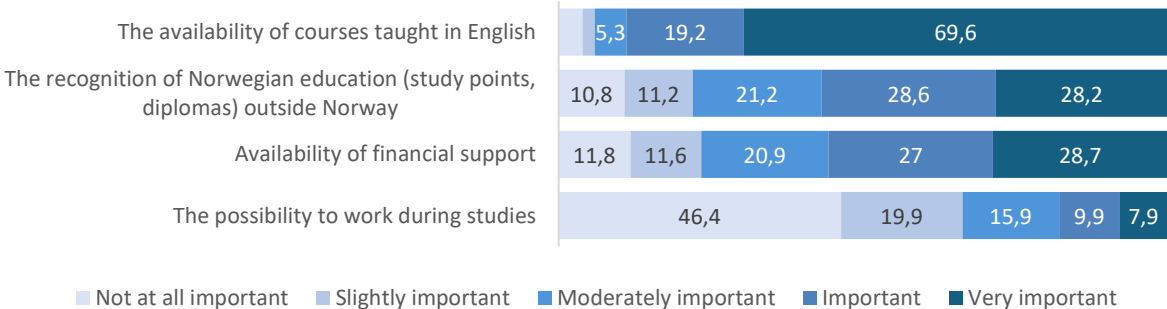
At the bottom of the list, we find some factors related to staying in Norway on the longer term. The opportunity to work in Norway after studies is not seen as especially important: Only about a third (34,9 percent) answer that this was important or very important. This is not very surprising, given that the exchange students return to their home university to complete their degree. We do note, however, that this is somewhat more important for students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland, compared to students from within this group.

Very few students emphasised having family of friends close by, which also is unsurprising given that most exchange students only stay in Norway for a semester or two.

We also asked the students about the importance of some prerequisites that need to be in place for them to be able to study in Norway. The answers are shown in figure 4.5.

The most important prerequisite by far, is the availability of courses taught in English. Almost nine out of ten students answer that this was important or very important for their decision to study in Norway. We find that about half of the exchange students found it important or very important that the education would be recognised outside Norway, and that financial support was available (56,8 and 55,7 percent respectively). Very few students found it important that they would be able to work during studies, again not very surprising since most exchange students stay in Norway for a relatively short period of time, and many will probably not have time to find a paid job.

Figure 4.5: How important were the following for your decision to study in Norway? (percent, N = 2019)



A comparison of the answers of students from prioritised countries and other countries show that among the latter group, the possibility to work during studies is more important than for the former group. Two out of five students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation (42,8 percent) found it important or very important that they could work during their studies, compared to 29,4 percent of students from Panorama countries and 12,3 percent of students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland. The students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation also emphasise availability of funding to a larger degree than other students (72,5 percent compared to 54,4 percent of Panorama students and 53,2 percent of students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland).

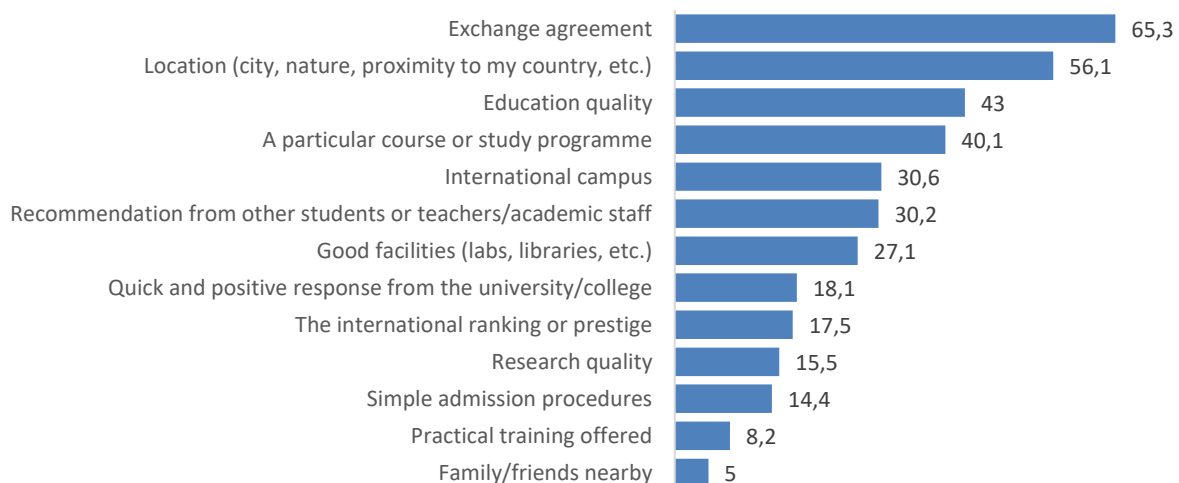
4.1.3 Motivation for choice of institution

In this section, we look at what motivated the exchange students' choice of institution.

A large majority, 81,7 percent, only applied to one Norwegian university/college. An even larger share, 88,2 percent, answer that their present university/college was their first choice. In other words, most students only applied for the university they most wanted to attend, and they did get a spot at this university.

In figure 4.6, we show the most important reason or reasons behind the exchange students' choice of institution. In the survey, the respondents were presented with a list of 13 alternatives and could choose up to five. A majority of the respondents chose four or five alternatives (20,8 and 40,7 percent respectively).

Figure 4.6: Please indicate the most important reason(s) for your decision to study at your university/college (percent, N = 2003)



The most common motivations for choice of institution, are practical. The alternative chosen by the most respondents, is that there is an exchange agreement between the student's home institution and the Norwegian HEI where they study, which is a prerequisite for most exchange stays. Two thirds (65,3 percent) name this as an important reason for their choice of institution. The second-most common reason is the location of the institution, which is important for about half of the exchange students (56,1 percent).

Factors related to the studies offered at the host institution were important for many students. 43 percent answered that the quality of education was important, and 40,1 percent were attracted by a

particular course or study programme. About a third (30,6 percent) emphasised that there is an international campus at the host institution. Still, these academic factors were emphasized by somewhat fewer than the practical factors at the top of the list.

Few students (14,4 percent) found it important that the institution had simple admission procedures. Even fewer (8,2 percent) emphasised the availability of practical training, or that they have family or friends nearby (5 percent).

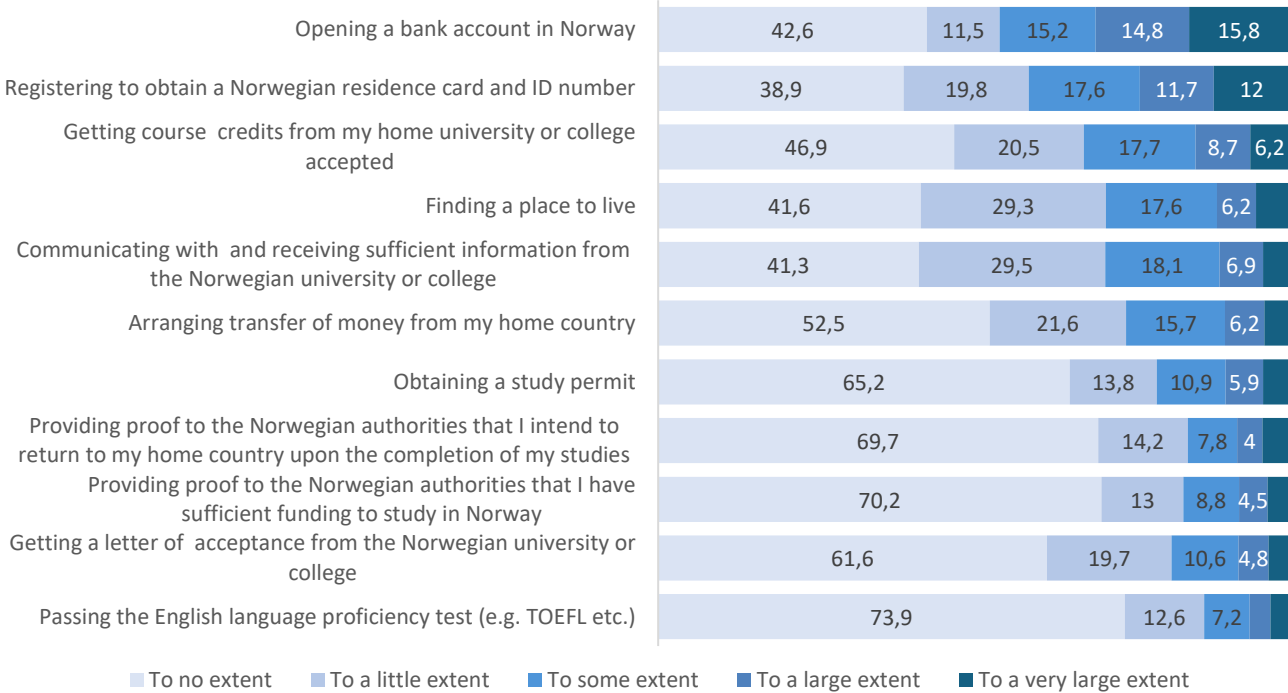
4.1.4 Challenges

When coming to Norway as an international student, there are several legal and administrative obstacles one might face. Figure 4.7 shows the extent to which exchange students experienced a number of different challenges related to the process of coming to Norway.

As discussed in chapter 3.1.4, this question included a “not relevant” alternative. This can be interpreted as a way of expressing that the respondent has not gone through the process in question, and respondents who chose this alternative are therefore left out of the analyses presented in figure 4.6. This means that for the overall population of exchange students, the challenges are less widespread than the numbers in the figure indicate.

Please refer to appendix 2 for a full overview of the distribution of answers to this question, including the respondents who chose “not relevant”.

Figure 4.7: During the time you prepared for your studies in Norway, to what extent did you experience any problems with the following? (percent, N = 1938)



The main impression from figure 4.7 is that these challenges are not very common. For all the alternatives, there is a majority who answer that they experienced the problem to little or no extent. In the open text field at the end of the survey, one student comments:

I appreciate that I did not have to go through a lot of red tape when applying for a study permit here. The application process was relatively simple and streamlined.

- Asian exchange student

The areas that appear the most troublesome, are opening a bank account in Norway and registering to obtain a Norwegian residence card and ID number. These are probably related, as you usually need a Norwegian ID number to open an account. Still, not a lot of exchange students found these processes troublesome: About one in three (30,6 percent) had problems opening a bank account to a large or very large extent, while one in four (23,7 percent) had an equally troublesome experience when trying to obtain a Norwegian residency card and ID number.

The administrative processes related to academic aspects of the stay seem to be relatively problem-free for most students. Only 15 percent experienced problems to a large or very large extent during the process of getting acceptance for course credits from their home university. Around one in ten experienced problems in the communication with the Norwegian institution (11,1 percent) or getting a letter of acceptance (8 percent). The same goes for immigration-related processes such as providing proof of funding (8 percent) and return plans (8,3 percent). About one in ten found it troublesome to obtain a study permit. We also asked whether the students experienced any problems when renewing this permit. Almost nine out of ten (86,4 percent) had little or no problems at all during this process. Note that 58,5 percent answered “not relevant”, indicating that they have not gone through the process of renewing their study permit.

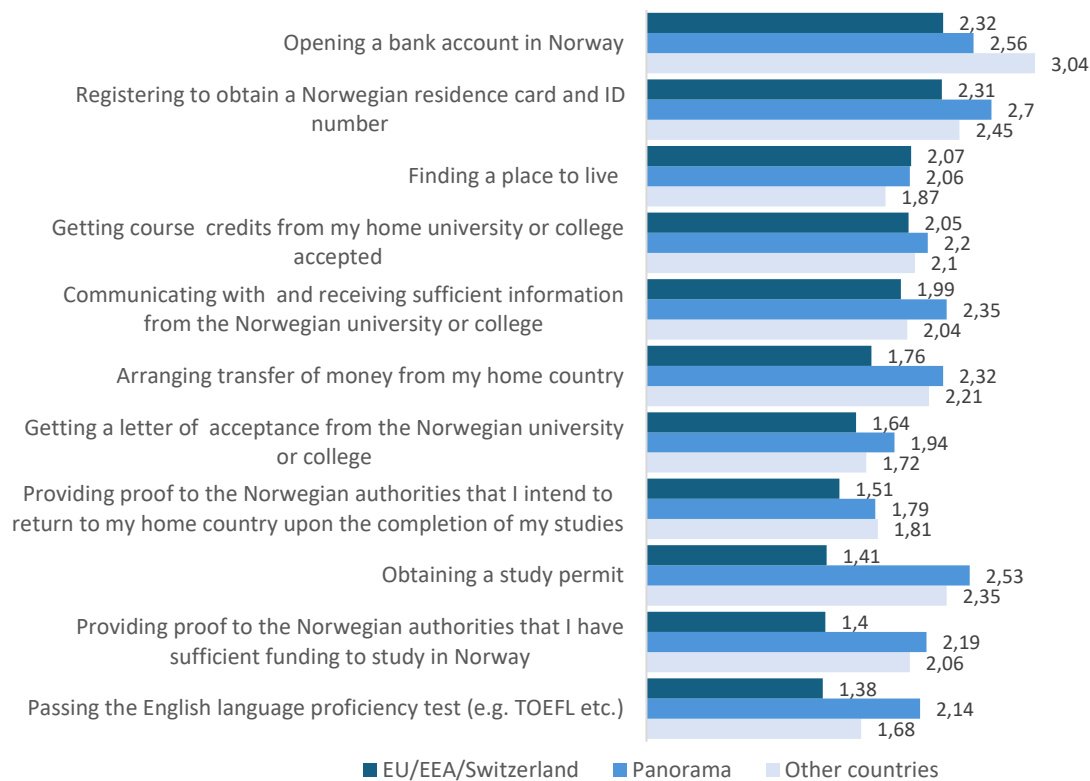
In sum, it appears that most exchange students experience relatively few problems during the preparations for their stay. However, some of the administrative and legal processes mentioned in the question are more cumbersome for students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland. Therefore, we have compared the answers of exchange students from within the EU/EEA/Switzerland with those of students from Panorama countries and other countries. Given that the Norwegian authorities wish to facilitate academic cooperation with the Panorama countries, it is especially relevant to shed light on whether these students face challenges during the arrival process that students from other prioritised countries do not.

The result of the comparison is showed in figure 4.8. The answers are presented as means on a scale from one to five, one being “to no extent” and five “to a very large extent”. The figure indicates that exchange students from these three groups have relatively similar experiences during the planning and preparations for their stay in Norway. The process where the experiences differ the most, is obtaining a study permit. Both groups of students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland experience problems to a larger degree than the students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland during this process. Among the students from Panorama countries, almost one in four (23,9 percent) experienced problems to a large or very large degree, while one in five students from other countries (20,1 percent) answered the same. When it comes to renewing the study permit, we find that this was somewhat more problematic for exchange students from countries not prioritised for academic cooperation; 15,1 percent experienced problems to a large or very large extent, compared to 6,3

percent of the exchange students from Panorama countries and 3,6 percent of the exchange students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland.

We also note that providing proof of funding and arranging transfer of money are two challenges that are experienced as somewhat more troublesome for non-EU/EEA/Switzerland citizens.

Figure 4.8: During the time you prepared for your studies in Norway, to what extent did you experience any problems with the following? Comparison of exchange students from EU/EEA/Switzerland, Panorama countries and other countries (percent, N = 1938)



In short, it seems that the process of preparing for the stay in Norway runs fairly smoothly for most exchange students. Even though some of the processes are experienced as slightly more challenging for students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland, even this group of students seem to face relatively few administrative and legal obstacles during their preparations for coming to Norway.

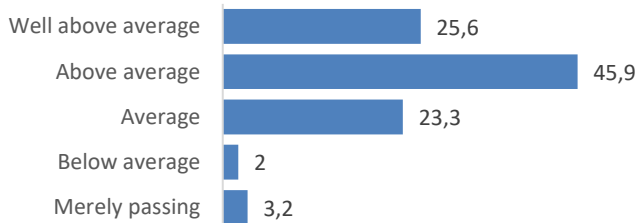
4.2 Academic and social life in Norway

In this sub-chapter, we explore how the exchange students spend their time during their stay in Norway. We look at how much time they spend on academic activities, and which goals they have for their studies. We also look at how much contact they have with other students, both Norwegian and international, and how they evaluate the social environment they have been a part of during their stay.

4.2.1 Academic ambitions

In the survey, we asked the students what goals they have concerning their grades (figure 4.9). The answers show that the exchange students are quite ambitious. A bit more than seven in ten students want to achieve grades that are above average (45,9 percent) or well above average (25,6 percent). We find that the master students are somewhat more ambitious than the bachelor students. In this group, almost 80 percent want to perform above or well above average, compared to 70 percent of the bachelor students.

Figure 4.9: What goals do you have concerning your grades? (percent, N = 1928)



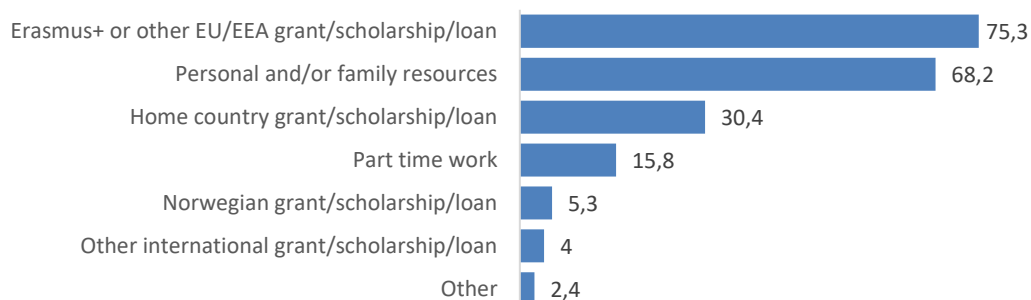
The exchange students spend a fair amount of time on their studies. On average, they spend 29 hours a week on different study-related activities. This is a bit less than Norwegian students, who spend an average of 32,2 hours a week (NOKUT, 2025, p. 40).

In this question, the students were asked about the time spent on learning activities organised by the institution, as well as the time spent on independent study activities such as assigned readings and assignments. The exchange students divide their time relatively equally between these two types of activities, with an average of 14 hours per week spent on learning activities organised by the institution, and 15 hours per week spent on independent study. We find some variation between the study levels, however. Exchange students at the master level spend more time on independent study activities than the bachelor students, 18 hours a week compared to 14 hours a week. This is perhaps to be expected, given that the academic level and workload usually is higher at the master level.

4.2.2 Funding and paid work

As seen earlier in this chapter, about half of the exchange students named availability of funding as an important reason behind their decision to study in Norway. In the survey, the students were asked to name the most important sources of funding while studying in Norway, and the results are presented in figure 4.10. The respondents could choose up to three alternatives.

Figure 4.10: What are your most important sources of funding while studying in Norway? (percent, N = 1960)



The most frequently used source of funding is Erasmus+ or other EU/EEA grants, scholarships or loans, which is an important source of funding for three in four exchange students (75,3 percent) in the survey. We see this in relation to the fact that a large majority of the exchange students are from the EU/EEA/Switzerland. It seems, however, that personal resources are an almost equally important source of funding. About two thirds of the exchange students (68,2 percent) rely on such resources. Further analyses show that among the students who rely on Erasmus+ or similar funding schemes, 67,9 percent also name personal resources as an important source of funding. This indicates that in some cases the scholarship is not enough to cover the costs of studying in Norway.

A third of the students (30,4 percent) have a grant, scholarship or loan from their home country. Within this group, there is also a fairly large share (63,9 percent) that rely on personal resources in addition to the funding they receive from their home country.

Overall, 17,3 percent of the survey population carry out paid work while they are in Norway, and 15,8 percent name paid work as an important source of funding while they are in Norway. In other words, most of the exchange students do not combine studies and work while they are in Norway. For those who do have paid work, however, it seems that they spend a fair amount of time on this. On average, these students spend about 14 hours a week on paid work, almost equal to two days full-time. This is significantly more than the Norwegian students, who on average spend around 9 hours a week on work (NOKUT, 2025, p. 40). We find that the students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland spend almost three hours more than their counterparts on work a week, 16 and 13 hours respectively.

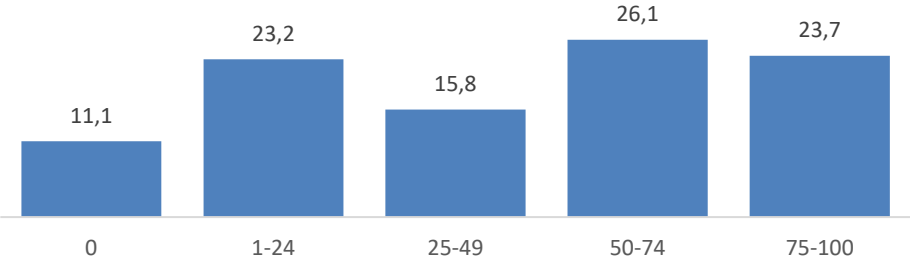
4.2.3 Study environment and socialisation

The Norwegian government aims to provide an international learning environment for all students in higher education and having Norwegian and international students in the same class can contribute towards this goal. Therefore, we asked the students to estimate how many Norwegians are in their class. On average, the exchange students estimate that about half of the students in their class are Norwegian. It should be noted that almost a third of the respondents answered that they don't know the share of Norwegians in their class or left the question open.

We also note that there is considerable variation behind the mean value (see Figure 4.11). One in ten exchange students report that there are no Norwegians in their classes, and almost one in four

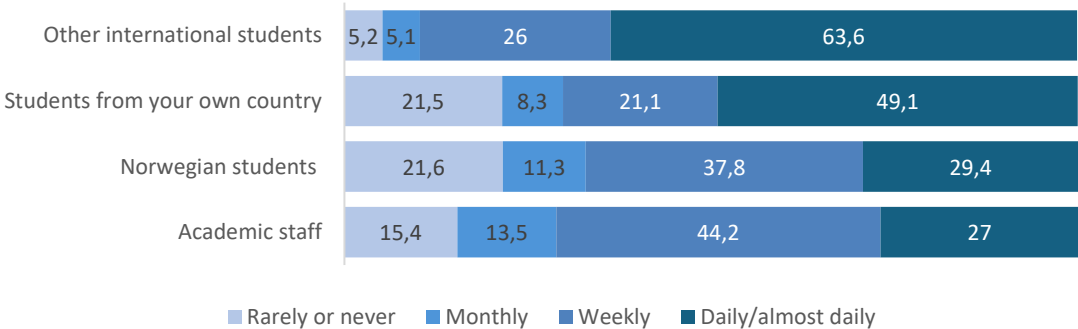
estimate that between 1 and 24 percent of their classmates are Norwegian. At the same time, nearly one in four state that the share is between 75 and 100 percent.

Figure 4.11: Please estimate the total share of Norwegians who attend courses/classes with you this semester (percent, N = 1373)¹²



Even though the international students share classes with Norwegians, it is not given that the two groups will have much contact. We therefore asked them how often they interact academically with Norwegian students and Norwegian staff, as well as students from their home country and other international students. Figure 4.12 shows that the group that the exchange students share the most contact with, is other international students. Almost nine in ten exchange students interact with international students weekly or on a daily basis, while seven in ten (70,2 percent) interact with students from their own country at this frequency. Interactions with Norwegians students and academic staff are somewhat less frequent than interactions with students from their own country.

Figure 4.12: At your university/college, how often do you interact academically with (percent, N = 1907)



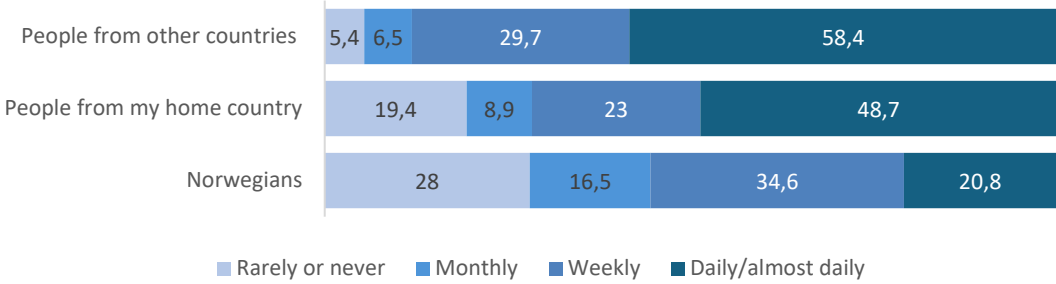
Another factor that can facilitate contact between international students and Norwegian students, is learning the Norwegian language. Almost two in five exchange students (37,3 percent) have taken a course to learn Norwegian. Among those who did not attend a language course, the most common reason was that they did not have time. This concerned about a third of the respondents in this group (34,3 percent). One in four (25,4 percent) answer that they did not need to take a course, and a similar share (26,8 percent) answered that they were not aware of any available courses.

The students were also asked about how often they socialise with other groups during their leisure time (figure 4.13). Almost nine in ten (88,1 percent) socialise with internationals from other countries weekly or daily, while seven in ten (71,7) socialise this frequently with people from their home

¹² Note that students who answered “none” are coded as zero

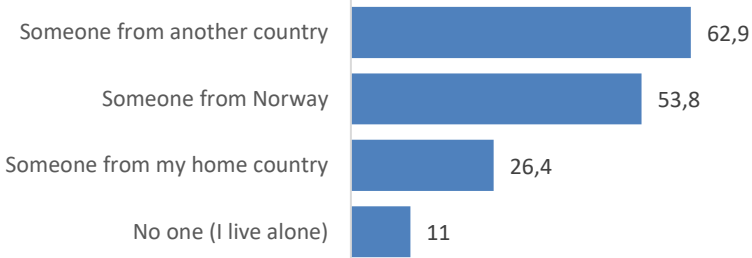
country. The contact with Norwegians in leisurely settings appears to be far more limited than the contact in academic settings. About half of the exchange students socialise with Norwegians weekly or daily, whereas almost a third (28 percent) answer that they rarely or never have such social interaction.

Figure 4.13: In your leisure time, how often do you socialise with the following groups? (percent, N = 1904)



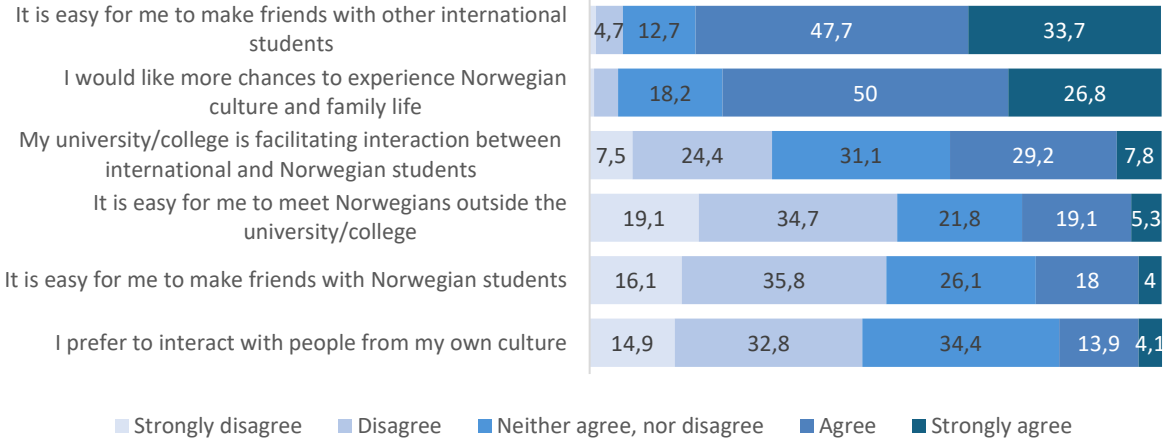
Where the students live, and who they live with, can also facilitate interaction with Norwegians or students of other nationalities. At most universities, international students are prioritised to get a place in university/college residences (White paper 7 (2020-2021), p. 73), and we find that eight in ten exchange students (79,3 percent) live in this type of housing. Further, we find that almost two thirds of the exchange students (62,9 percent) share accommodation with someone from another country, and around half (53,8 percent) live with someone from Norway. A fourth (26,4 percent) live with someone from their home country, while one in ten (11 percent) live alone.

Figure 4.14: I currently share accommodation with (percent, N = 1912)



The students were also asked to assess some social aspects of living and studying in Norway. Overall, figure 4.15 shows that while it is easy for most exchange students to interact with other international students, interaction with Norwegians is harder to come by. This mirrors the findings earlier in this sub-chapter. Four out of five agree or strongly agree with the statement that it is easy to make friends with other international students, while almost a similar share (76,8 percent) answer that they would have liked to have more chances to experience Norwegian culture and family life. Half the respondents (47,7 percent) disagree or disagree strongly with the statement that they prefer to interact with people from their own culture.

Figure 4.15: Listed below are several statements about living and studying in Norway. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement (percent, N = 1901)

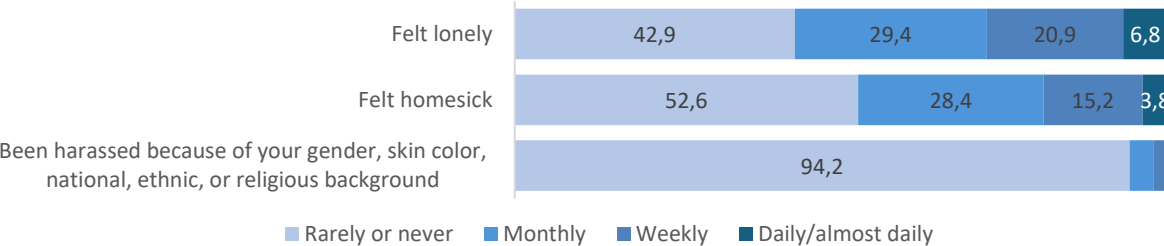


Some of the other statements in the question might explain why the exchange students do not experience Norwegian culture and family life as much as they want to. More than half (53,8 percent) disagree or disagree strongly that it is easy for them to meet Norwegians outside an academic setting. This was reflected in figure 4.13, where we saw that interactions between exchange students and Norwegian during their leisure time are fairly limited, at least compared to the interactions with other international students.

About half of the students (51,9) disagree or disagree strongly that it is easy to make friends with Norwegian students. The host university/college can be a facilitator of such contact, but it seems that the exchange students have very varied experiences regarding such facilitation. A fourth (24,4 percent) agree or agree strongly that their host institution facilitates contact between international students and Norwegian students, while almost a third (31,9) disagree or disagree strongly.

Feelings of loneliness and longing for home can be a part of a stay abroad. Figure 4.16 shows that more than half of the students have felt lonely during their stay, and for almost a third this happens weekly or daily. Slightly fewer have felt homesick, but a substantial proportion feels this way weekly or daily (19 percent). There are some variations in the exchange students' experiences according to their country of origin. We find that non-European students have felt lonely during their stay to a larger degree than the European students. It is especially students from Africa, Asia and South America who have felt homesick frequently.

Figure 4.16: During your studies in Norway, have you ever (percent, N = 1896)



Most students have rarely or never experienced harassment on the basis of gender, skin colour, national, ethnic or religious background. The few exchange students who have experienced this are mainly from Asia and North America.

Comments in the open text field show that the exchange students desire greater opportunities to socialise with Norwegians, but, in their opinion, this has not been facilitated sufficiently:

Being an Erasmus student, I had the opportunity to join some events to make all Erasmus students socialise. I would have loved if the same thing was done to get to know Norwegian students too, since after almost 10 months of exchange program here, I won't have any memory with any specific Norwegian person.

- European exchange student

I personally think the university needs to do more to engage Norwegian students with international students. Do projects where people from different backgrounds and places are mixed. Have more social events maybe for individual classes. This will create a space that is more open and inclusive, and it will allow students to engage with one another instead of just going to class and then leaving. That would make the experience more exciting.

- African exchange student

However, it is also worth noting that several students had positive comments about how international students were included at their institution:

I felt really welcome at the university, and it helped me join a sports club and interact regularly with people. I also have a lot of contact with Norwegians there, which is great!

- European exchange student

In sum, we find that the exchange students have extensive contact with other international students both academically and during their leisure time. There is also a fair amount of interaction between Norwegians and exchange students, but more so in academic settings than in a leisurely context.

4.3 Assessment of the stay and future plans

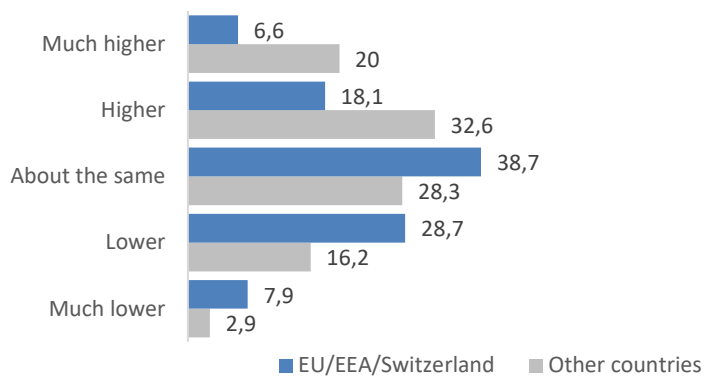
In the last section of the chapter, we present results concerning the exchange students' assessments of their stay. Further, we look at how they value the teaching and academic counselling they have received. We also look at which plans they have made for their future after they finish their exchange stay, and their overall assessment of the stay in Norway.

4.3.1 Assessment of Norwegian education

We asked the students to assess the level of their Norwegian institution, compared to their home institution. The exchange students are fairly divided on this question. More than a third (36,3 percent) rank the academic level of their Norwegian university as about the same as their home university, while almost a third (31,1 percent) rank it as higher or much higher and a third (32,7) rank it as lower or much lower.

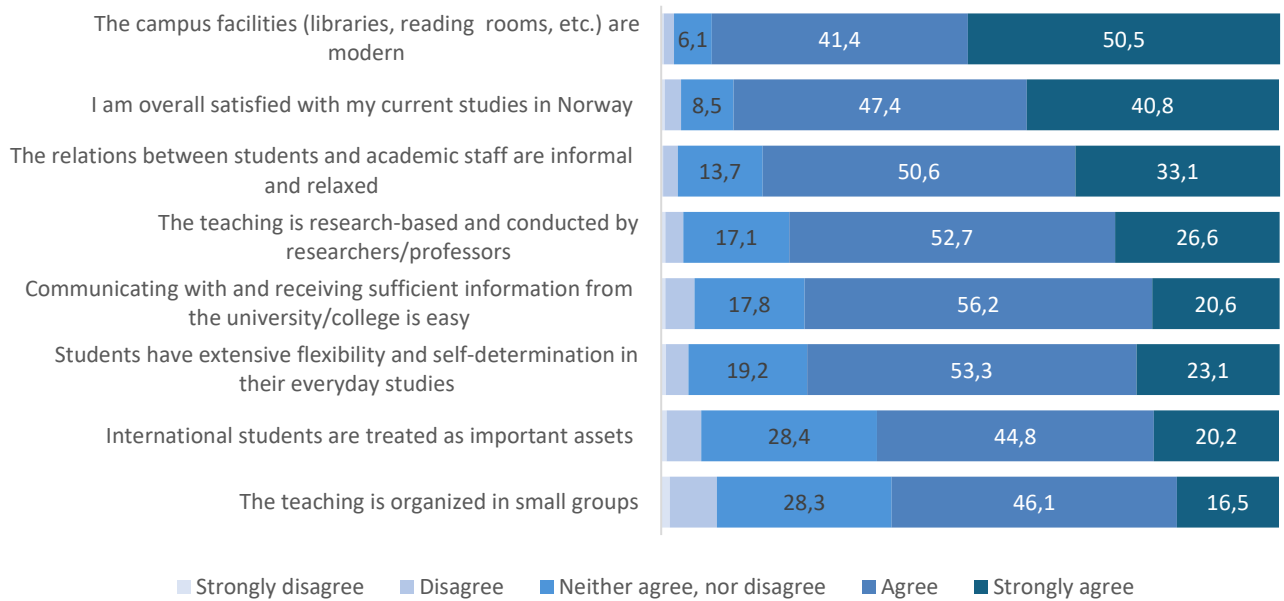
Because the academic level of universities can vary greatly between countries and regions, we compare the assessments of students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland and other countries in figure 4.17. The main impression is that most EU/EEA/Switzerland citizens experience that Norwegian education has about the same quality as their home university (38,7 percent), or lower (28,7 percent). For most of the exchange students from other countries, the studies in Norway represents an increase in academic level compared to what they are used to. A third (32,6 percent) answer that the academic level of the Norwegian institution is higher, and one in five (20 percent) answer that it is much higher.

Figure 4.17: Compared to your home institution, how will you rate the academic level of your Norwegian exchange institution? (percent, N = 1849)



In figure 4.18 we show the exchange students' assessments of a number of statements about the educational offer in Norway. Overall, the students are very satisfied with Norwegian education. For all of the statements in the question, two thirds or more answer that they agree or agree strongly, and very few answer that they disagree. We note that almost nine out of ten exchange students answer that they agree or strongly agree with the statement "I am overall satisfied with my current studies in Norway". Other statements that stand out with especially positive assessments are that the campus facilities are modern, and that the relations between students and academic staff are informal and relaxed.

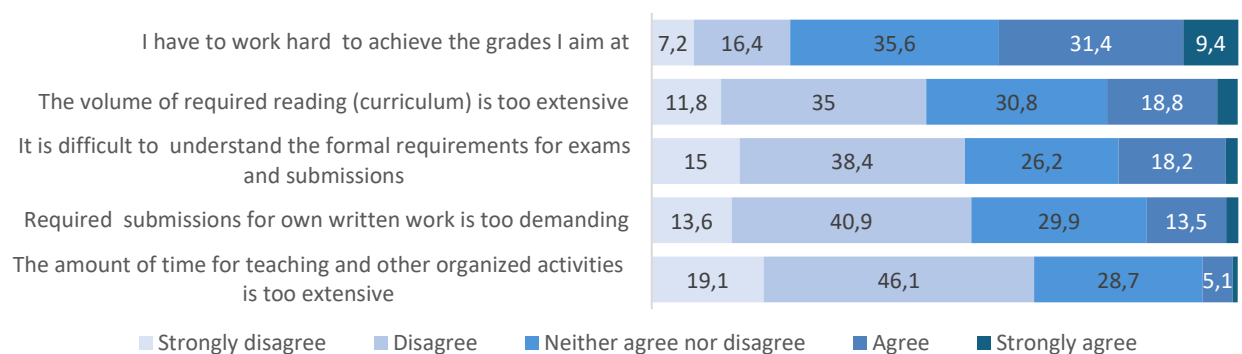
Figure 4.18: Below is a list of statements about Norwegian education. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? (percent, N = 1897)



4.3.2 Workload and learning outcomes

Further, the exchange students were presented with a number of statements regarding the workload and formal requirements of their studies in Norway (figure 4.19). These features of the education should be perceived as reasonable and achievable.

Figure 4.19: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding workload and formal requirements? (percent, N = 1928)

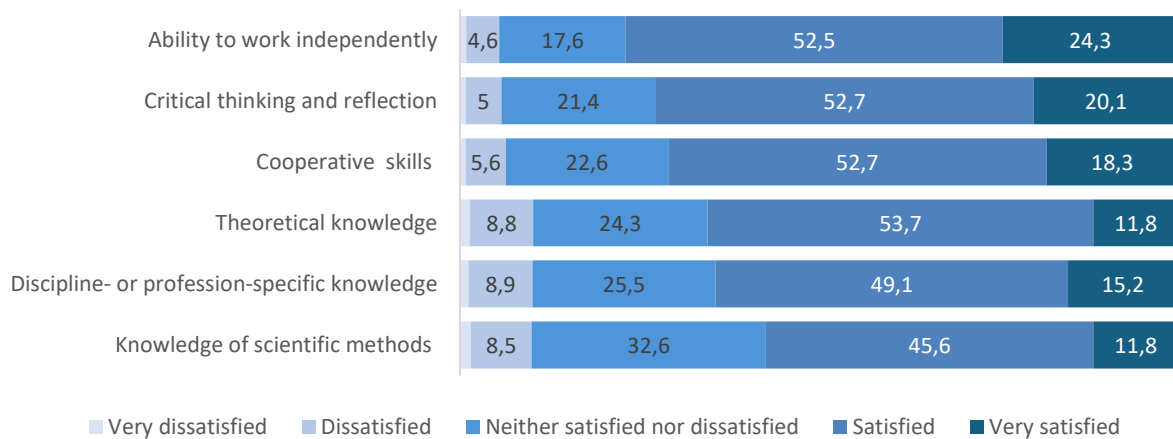


The exchange students' impressions of workload and formal requirements are fairly varied. The statement that the most students agree with, is that they have to work hard to achieve the grades they aim at. Two out of five students (40,8 percent) agree or strongly agree with this statement. Earlier in this chapter we have seen that most of the exchange students have fairly high ambitions concerning their grades, and the findings from figure 4.17 indicate that many students have to work hard to achieve their goals. This may indicate that the workload and requirements are not perceived as too low or too easy.

For the other statements, we observe that a majority, or almost a majority, answer that they disagree or strongly disagree. We take this as an indication that the workload and formal requirements are perceived as reasonable by most students.¹³

The findings regarding learning outcomes presented in figure 4.20 support this assumption. The exchange students appear to learn a lot from their studies in Norway, indicating that the workload and formal requirements are expedient. The outcome the exchange students are most satisfied with, is the ability to work independently: More than three out of four exchange students answer that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their learning outcomes regarding this skill. The other skills mentioned in the question receive quite similar assessments including critical thinking and reflection (72,8 percent satisfied or very satisfied), theoretical knowledge (65,5 percent satisfied or very satisfied). Very few students answer that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with any of the learning outcomes mentioned in the question.

Figure 4.20: How satisfied are you with your own learning outcome so far, concerning (percent, N = 1918)



4.3.3 Contact with working life

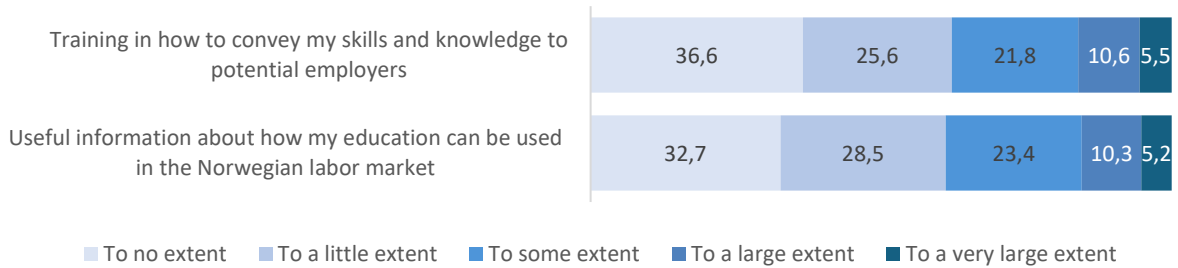
It is an important goal of the Norwegian authorities to increase the relevance of higher education for working life. One way of achieving this is to provide training and guidance to prepare students for life outside of academia. In the survey, we asked the exchange students whether they have been provided with such information and training. As we have seen earlier in the report, however, most exchange students stay in Norway for a short period of time before returning to their home university. Therefore, it should be noted that such information and training might not be as relevant for the exchange students as for other groups.

Figure 4.21 indicates that the international students receive such preparation to a fairly small degree. Only 16,1 percent agree or agree strongly that they have been provided with training in how to convey their skills and knowledge to potential employers, and a third (62,2 percent) disagree or disagree strongly that they have achieved such training. The assessments are similar for the statement that the

¹³ There is also a fair share, between 26,2 and 30,8 percent, who answer that they neither agree nor disagree with the statements. This might be interpreted as a way of expressing that they find the statement hard to assess, or that they do not have a clear opinion of the matter.

student received useful information about how their education can be used in the Norwegian labour market.

Figure 4.21: Please consider the information and opportunities provided by your university/college in Norway. To what extent do you experience the following (percent, N = 1610)



In short, it seems that the exchange students to a small degree are prepared for the Norwegian labour market during their studies.

4.3.4 Future plans

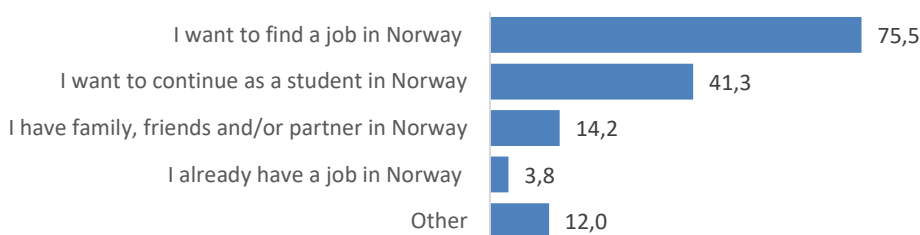
We also asked the students about their plans after they finish their current studies. Overall, almost half of the exchange students (44,5 percent) are considering staying in Norway. The share that considers staying is slightly higher among students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland; 48,8 percent, compared to 43,2 percent among students from within this group of countries.

The students who consider staying in Norway were also asked why they are considering this. The respondents could choose all the alternatives that are relevant for them. The results from this question are presented in figure 4.22 and demonstrate that the prospects of working in Norway is, by far, the most common reason. Three in four exchange students (75,5 percent) answer that the reason they want to stay is to find a job in Norway. However, only 3,8 percent answer that they already have a job, and the open text field at the end of the survey shows that, for many, entering the Norwegian job market is challenging. One exchange student comments:

I wish there was a little more support for international students in creating a career after their studies, that's what I am definitely struggling mostly with.
- European exchange student

As we saw in chapter 3.3.4, it is also quite uncommon for exchange students to have paid work while they study in Norway.

Figure 4.22: Why are you considering staying in Norway? (percent, N = 845)



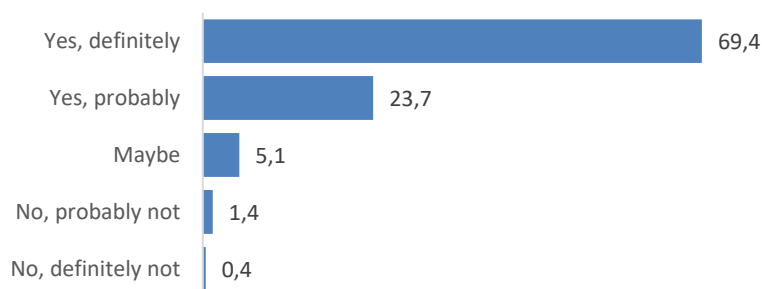
We do not observe any notable differences in the motivation for staying in Norway between students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland and other students, apart from the fact that the latter group want to continue studying in Norway to a larger degree than the former (53,1 percent versus 37,4 percent).

When comparing the answers of students from different fields of study, the main impression is that their reasons for staying in Norway are fairly similar. There are, however, some notable variations. We find that students of pedagogy and training who want to stay in Norway have found jobs to a larger degree than other students (18,2 percent). Students of economics and business want to find jobs to a larger degree than other students (84,5 percent). Looking at those who plan to continue studying in Norway, this concerns a larger share of the students of arts and humanities (50,6 percent), and a smaller share of students of health and care (32,1 percent).

4.3.5 Overall assessment

Lastly, the respondents were asked whether they would recommend studying in Norway to other students. The results are shown in figure 4.23, and are very positive. More than nine in ten students would definitely (69,4 percent) or probably (23,7 percent) recommend a stay in Norway, and hardly any students answer that they would not recommend it.

Figure 4.23: Would you recommend studying in Norway to other students? (percent, N = 1900)



When comparing the answers of students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland, Panorama countries and other countries, we find that these three groups are equally positive in their assessments. This also is the case when we compare students from different fields of study. Among many positive remarks in open text fields, one reads:

The experience has been truly transformative, both academically and personally. The high-quality education, supportive environment, and emphasis on work-life balance have allowed me to grow in ways I never imagined. I particularly appreciate the efforts made by my university and the Norwegian government to make international students feel welcome and included. Additionally, the cultural diversity among students has broadened my perspective and taught me the value of global collaboration. I will always cherish my time here and carry the lessons I've learned with me throughout my life.

- Asian exchange student

4.4 Summary

For the exchange students, their home university was the most frequently used source of information when searching for information about study opportunities abroad. Digital sources of information and personal contacts were also important for quite a few.

For three out of four exchange students, Norway was their first choice country to study in. Almost half were primarily motivated by the opportunity to study in Norway, and almost an equal share were motivated by the opportunity to study abroad.

When choosing to study in Norway, the exchange students found it important that Norway is a peaceful and safe society. They also emphasised Norwegian nature and the quality of education. The availability of courses taught in English was also important for many.

The most common motivations for choice of institution are practical, such as existence of an exchange agreement between the student's home institution and the Norwegian HEI where they study, and the location of the institution.

Most exchange students experience relatively few problems during the preparations for their stay. The most problematic areas appear to be opening a bank account and registering to obtain a Norwegian ID number. We find, however, that students from outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland experience problems to a somewhat larger degree than other students, especially during immigration related processes such as obtaining a study permit and providing proof of funding.

The exchange students in Norway have high ambitions for their grades, most wanting to perform above average. They spend about 29 hours a week on their studies.

The most frequently used source of funding among exchange students is Erasmus+ or other EU/EEA grants, scholarships or loans. Personal or family resources are also an important source of funding, and many combine the two. Almost one in five exchange students have a paid job while they are in Norway.

We find that a majority of the exchange students have frequent contact with Norwegians in academic settings. Interactions with Norwegians during their free time are less frequent, even though many exchange students live with someone from Norway, and quite a few have taken a Norwegian language course. Overall, the exchange students' assessments of their social environment suggests that while they have a lot of contact with other international students, they would have liked to have more contact with Norwegians. A significant proportion of exchange students have felt lonely during their stay.

The exchange students have varied assessments of the academic level at their host institution. While students from the EU/EEA/Switzerland rate it as about the same as their home institution, other students experience a higher academic level during their exchange stay.

Overall, a large majority of the exchange students are satisfied with their studies in Norway. They find the campus facilities to be modern, relations between students and academic staff to be relaxed, and teaching to be research-based. They mainly perceive the workload and requirements of their studies as reasonable, and they are very satisfied with their learning outcomes.

Almost half of the exchange students are considering staying in Norway after their exchange. A large majority want to find a job, but there are also quite a few who want to continue studying in Norway.

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Appendix 1

Table 1: HEIs in the net survey population

Institution	Abbreviation	N	Share (%)
Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo	AHO	32	0,7
Bergen Arkitekthøgskole	BAS	11	0,3
Dronning Mauds Minne Høgskole for barnehagelærerutdanning	DMMH	10	0,2
Handelshøyskolen BI	BI	288	6,7
Høgskolen i Molde - Vitenskapelig høgskole i logistikk	HiM	36	0,8
Høgskulen i Volda	HVO	55	1,3
Høgskulen på Vestlandet	HVL	158	3,7
Høyskolen Kristiania	HK	31	0,7
Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo	KHiO	61	1,4
MF vitenskapelig høyskole for teologi, religion og samfunn	MF	35	0,8
Nord universitet	NU	188	4,4
Norges Handelshøyskole	NHH	144	3,3
Norges idrettshøgskole	NIH	45	1
Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet	NMBU	156	3,6
Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet	NTNU	866	20,1
OsloMet - storbyuniversitetet	OsloMet	143	3,3
Sámi allaskuvla/Sámi University of Applied Sciences	SH	4	0,1
UiT Norges arktiske universitet	UiT	331	7,7
Universitetet i Agder	UiA	204	4,7
Universitetet i Innlandet	INN	99	2,3
Universitetet i Oslo	UiO	835	19,4
Universitetet i Stavanger	UiS	342	7,9
Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge	USN	191	4,4
VID vitenskapelige høgskole	VID	40	0,9
Total		4305	100

Appendix 2

Figure 1: During the time you prepared for your studies in Norway, did you experience any problems with the following? Degree students, including not relevant (percent, N = 2094)

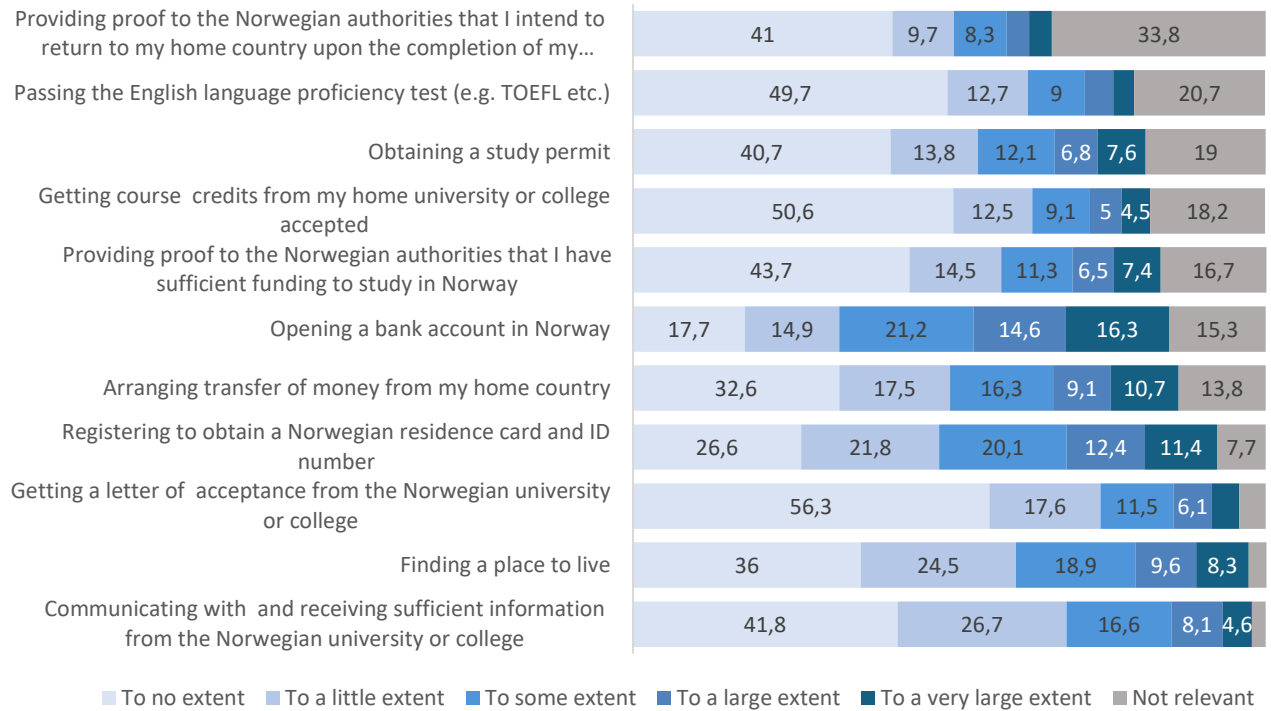
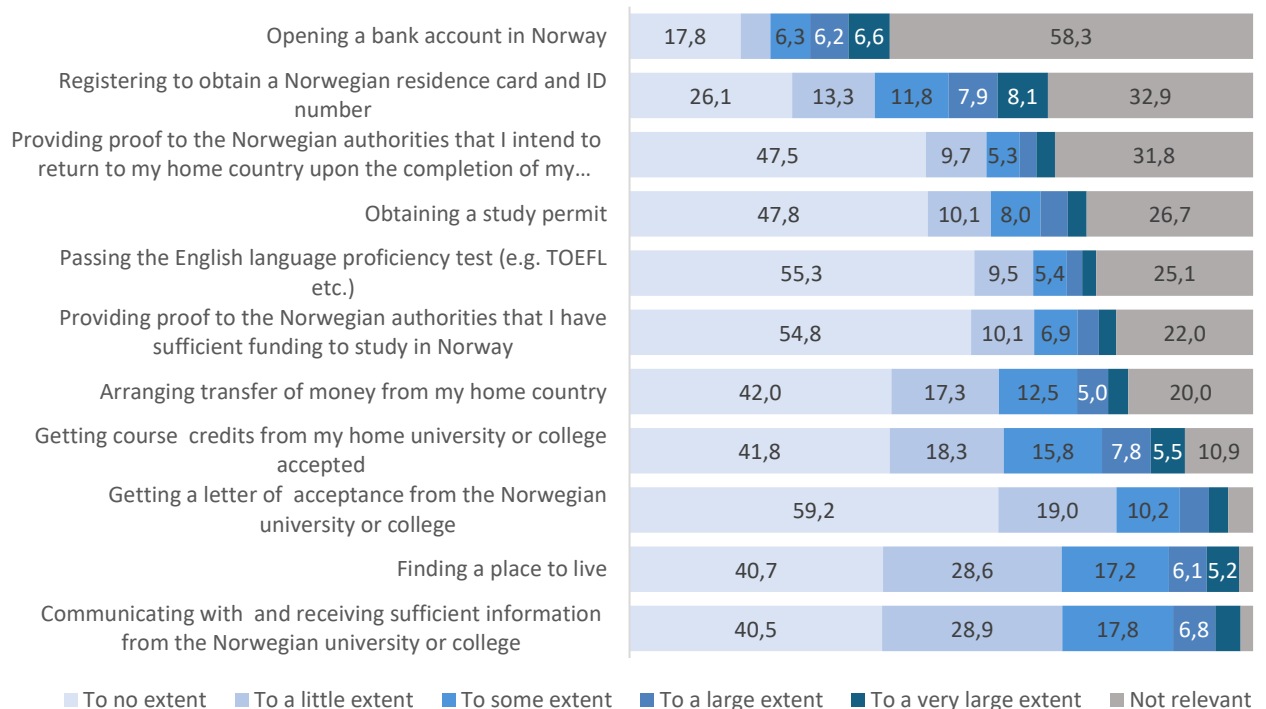


Figure 2: During the time you prepared for your studies in Norway, did you experience any problems with the following? Exchange students, including not relevant (percent, N = 1978)





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