



Study intensity and mobility at Swiss higher education institutions

Calculation methods based on the ABSOS data

Neuchâtel, 2023

Published by: Federal Statistical Office (FSO)
Information: sius@bfs.admin.ch, tel. +41 58 483 93 61
Editors: Katharina Gallizzi, FSO
Contents: Katharina Gallizzi, FSO
Topic: 15 Education and science
Original text: German
Translation: FSO language services

Layout concept: Section PUB
Downloads: www.statistics.ch
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1 ASBOS survey

1.1 Scope of the ASBOS survey

The ASBOS survey is a complementary survey to the per-capita student statistics of the SHIS. On the basis of assessed ECTS credits, ASBOS has been collecting data since 2013/14 on students' workload percentage, expressed in full-time equivalents (FTE), broken down by subject and place of study. The survey is carried out at all Swiss universities and institutes of technology (UIT) and universities of teacher education (PTE). Due to differences related to their system, credits at the universities of applied sciences are not collected at the moment.

The ASBOS survey contains the credits of students who are enrolled at Bachelor or Master level or for a diploma course of teacher education for upper secondary level (Upper Secondary Diploma). However, credits obtained by PhD students and students completing continuing education or a licentiate degree or diploma course under the former system are not included. Also excluded from the survey are student credits obtained as part of an international exchange programme (e.g. Erasmus) either abroad (international outgoing mobility) or in Switzerland (international incoming mobility).

1.2 Assessed ECTS credits

Higher education institutions use the ECTS credits to measure student performance. Assessed ECTS credits are used in the ASBOS survey to examine students' activities. An ECTS credit (regardless of the result) is considered assessed when the students' performance has been evaluated by the responsible authority. If a credit assessment is repeated, the credits are counted twice as it is assumed that this repetition is associated with renewed effort on the part of the student (e.g. preparing to retake an examination). As the effort involved in a repetition is likely to be considerably reduced when it takes place soon after the initial effort, the repetition of credit assessments that occur within the same semester are not counted twice.¹

1.3 Study intensity

For a full-time course (100% study intensity), students must be assessed for 60 ECTS credits per year. The time required for studying can therefore be deduced from the number of ECTS credits assessed. The resulting study intensity² is expressed in terms of full-time equivalents (FTE), i.e. workload as a percentage of full-time studies. An FTE of 100% is equal to 60 assessed credits per year.

¹ Further details on the calculation methods can be found in the following publication: BFS (2015): "Studienintensität und studentische Mobilität – Methoden und Resultate der ASBOS-Erhebung 2013/14"

1.3 Student mobility within Switzerland

Swiss students are generally enrolled at a single higher education institution where they complete most of their studies. They may, however, also attend courses at another higher education institution. In this case, they are considered as mobile students in this publication. Mobility may be compulsory or optional. It may involve a single course or an exchange semester or year.

Students are considered to be mobile within Switzerland if they were assessed within one year at at least one Swiss higher education institution at which they were not enrolled. Students who were enrolled at two higher education institutions, either because they were completing two separate courses at the same time (dual enrolment UIT-UTE or UTE-UTE) or because they changed higher education institution between the autumn and spring semester, are also considered mobile if they were assessed at both of the institutions at which they were enrolled.

1.4 Defining the variables for analysis

The analyses of the ASBOS data always refer to an entire academic year, and are carried out for each student with the level of study, the branch of study, the type of higher education institution and the higher education institution at the start of the academic year. These variables can change between the autumn and spring semester but as only one value per variable can be used for the analysis, changes cannot be taken into account. In such cases, the first value is used.

In some cases (e.g. for the upper secondary level teaching diploma) simultaneous enrolment at two higher education institutions is allowed (dual enrolment).³ This results in two sets of information about the type of higher education institution, the higher education institution itself, the level of study and the branch of study. But for the analysis, only one higher education institution, subject and level of study can be used. Consequently, the higher education institution included in the statistics is the one at which the student was assessed for the highest number of credits during the year. This determines the level of study and branch of study in which the student was enrolled and which are used for the analysis.

² According to the Bologna guidelines of the Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions, one ECTS credit represents 25 to 30 hours of studying. A semester of full-time study represents 30 ECTS credits. See <http://www.shk.ch/rechtliche-grundlagen.html>

³ This special rule concerns around 300-400 students per year

2 Comparison between enrolled students and students in the ASBOS survey

The ASBOS survey is based on assessed ECTS credits. For this reason, the populations of the student statistics and that of the ASBOS statistics are not the same. The ASBOS population is usually smaller than that of the student statistics. A distinction can be made between the following possibilities:

Students appear

- in both the ASBOS and the student statistics, if they were enrolled in an academic year at a Swiss higher education institution and were assessed at a Swiss UIT or UTE;
- only in the student statistics, if they were enrolled at a UIT or UTE in an academic year but were not assessed;
- only in the ASBOS statistics if they were no longer enrolled in the year under examination but were accredited ECTS credits for a thesis or examination. The latter case is uncommon.

In the following table the population of the student statistics for the study levels Bachelor, Master and Upper Secondary Diploma is compared with that of the ASBOS statistics.

Percentage of enrolled students who have been assessed for credits and are part of the ASBOS survey, by type of higher education institution and level of study, since 2013/14

	2013/14	2017/18	2021/22
Universities and institutes of technology	90%	92%	93%
Bachelor	92%	94%	95%
Master	85%	90%	90%
Upper Secondary Diploma	96%	91%	92%
Universities of teacher education	86%	92%	96%
Bachelor	90%	96%	97%
Master	78%	85%	93%
Upper Secondary Diploma	82%	85%	98%

Source: FSO - SHIS-studex, ASBOS

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On average, every year 7% to 10% of the students enrolled at a UIT are not assessed for any credits and are therefore not part of ASBOS. At the UTE, this is true for between 4% and 14% of the students.

There can be various reasons for this. For example, students can participate in study activities without being assessed for any credits during the academic year in question, or they interrupt their studies for a certain period, e.g. for an internship, military service or for health reasons.

The published study intensities and mobility rates always refer to the total number of students included in ASBOS who were assessed in the corresponding academic year; students who were not assessed are therefore not included. When interpreting the figures, it should be noted that the ASBOS population is somewhat smaller and not exactly identical to the population of enrolled students.