

# **New Skills for New Futures Higher Education Guidance and Counselling Services in Austria**

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FEDORA Project  
New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education in the European Union

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under the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme



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A country report of a study on  
“New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education”  
carried out under the auspices of FEDORA,  
with the support of the Commission of the European Communities  
under the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme

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## FOREWORD

This country report is part of larger study on "New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education". The study has been carried out under the auspices of the European Forum for Student Guidance - Forum Européen de l'Orientation Académique (FEDORA). It has been funded by the European Commission as part of its LEONARDO DA VINCI programme.

FEDORA provides a platform for counsellors and advisers in higher education to meet and exchange their experiences. Its activities have enabled practitioners to gain insight into the wide range of guidance methods and activities in Europe, and to benefit from the richness of this diversity.

In particular, the FEDORA Summer Schools have provided opportunities for practitioners to learn from each other's experience, and to relate this experience to recent theoretical developments. The Summer Schools revealed the strong demand for more systematic training in this field, and the potential benefits of responding to this demand at a European rather than purely national level. It was felt, however, that before planning any initiatives of this kind, a clearer map was needed of guidance and counselling services in higher education in Europe, and of current training provision for practitioners. A proposal for the study was presented to the European Commission, and the Commission agreed to fund it under its LEONARDO programme.

The study is of wide significance. For the first time, a comprehensive analysis is available of higher education guidance and counselling services across the whole of the European Union. In several cases, the study has provided the first such analysis even at national level. Because it is based on a common structure and methodology, the study also enables practices in each country to be contrasted with the others.

This report, together with the 15 other national reports on all Member States of the European Union and the synthesis report written by A.G. Watts and R. Van Esbroeck, is an important one both for FEDORA and for guidance and counselling in higher education in Europe.

This resource will be invaluable for international and national policy-makers, for higher education managers, and for guidance and counselling practitioners, as well as for employers in planning their higher education recruitment links. In particular, it enables the strengths and weaknesses of the different national systems to be identified, and is a powerful source of ideas on how the services in each country might be improved. It will also give clearer direction to the work of the European Commission, FEDORA and other European bodies in supporting such development.

Joachim Klaus  
President, FEDORA



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report on "New Skills in Vocational Guidance in Higher Education" has been compiled as part of a project covering all EU countries, which was initiated by FEDORA (Forum Européen de l'Orientation Academique) within the LEONARDO programme of the European Commission.

The study has the following aims:

- To provide a up-to-date overview of the current structure of guidance and counselling services within higher education, the roles of those who work in these services, and the training for such roles.
- To identify the extent to which training provision exists within the European Union to equip those in guidance and counselling roles in higher education with the new skills they require to meet the changing needs of an increasingly diverse student body, within a European labour market.
- To provide a basepoint for exploring the extent to which postgraduate and post-experience training modules might be made available across Europe, possibly leading to a European Master's Degree in guidance and counselling in higher education.

National reports are being prepared in all EU countries according to a common method which allows for comparability of results and for combining them into a synthesis report written by the project's operational team. The need for a uniform pattern, to facilitate cross-national comparisons, imposes restrictions. This can be frustrating, but at the same time it forces the authors to reflect thoroughly on their national situation.

The methodology pursued is based on an **expert approach**, which means that the findings presented in this report are based largely on the assessments of a small team of expert practitioners in the field which were checked and reassessed by an even larger group of experts. This proved to be a valuable method since very little empirical data and reference material are available on the subject. The interest showed by the expert practitioners involved in the project proved the importance and value of this study, even at a national level.

The report was written with the support of two other Austrian guidance specialists: Andrea Tschirf-Kainberger (Career Advisory and Placement Centre, University of Economics and Business Administration Vienna) and Andrea Waxenegger (International Office, University of Agriculture, Forestry and Renewable National Resources Vienna). Both helped to collect the initial information, which together with the results of questionnaire-based interviews conducted by the authors formed the basis for the report. Draft versions were reviewed by these two experts as well as by specialists, representing a wide variety of guidance services and roles. We would like to thank the two specialists for all their contribution as well as the other practitioner-experts for their time and their advice.

After a short presentation of the Austrian system of higher education (HE), with particular attention to ongoing changes that might have an influence on the field of HE guidance and counselling, the report in its first part (**2. Structures**) gives details on the existing institutions or services in the field.

In the next part (**3. Roles and tasks**) the persons working in these guidance and counselling services/systems are divided into occupational roles. According to the competence-based approach that provides the framework for this study, the tasks which they perform are listed and then presented in greater detail in the commentary and in three occupational profiles.

Section **4. Training and qualifications** provides a table and discussion on the training of guidance and counselling staff.

A detailed **Conclusion** is presented in the last part of this report. A variety of guidance and counselling institutions exists in HE institutions in Austria. They are, however, not linked into a systematic network and are considered peripheral to the activities of Austrian universities. Counselling is dominated, with a few exceptions, by information and advice giving. This is done by advisors and counsellors with different backgrounds who mostly do not have a specific formal qualification in guidance/counselling. Professional experience in a related field, training on the job, individual continuing training, as well as interest and enthusiasm in guidance and counselling, qualify them for their activities.



## 2. STRUCTURES

### Higher Education in Austria

The post-secondary university sector in Austria comprises a series of institutions that can be divided into two tiers: the traditional university system made up of 13 universities and 6 colleges (Kunsthochschulen) of Music and Drama and of the Arts maintained by the state, as well as 4 philosophical-theological colleges (Hochschulen) of the Roman-Catholic church; and the new system of "Fachhochschulen", which came into existence on the basis of the Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz (1993) as recently as 1994.

It is one of the main features of the Austrian System of Higher Education that it provides free access to university, i.e. no tuition fees are charged and there are no general admission tests. A secondary school leaving certificate, the "Matura", is the only general admission requirement. A few years ago a second access system was created with the "Studienberechtigungsprüfung" (admissions examination), on the basis of which students without Matura are admitted to specific courses of study. The state supports free access to higher education and also the elimination of social barriers by direct financial aid to students and indirect supportive measures such as family allowances, social security, and financial assistance to student hostels and cafeterias.

The bulk of first-year students still enters university via the traditional way, i.e. directly after leaving secondary school (the compulsory military service is a "detour" for many male students). The average age of first-year students is therefore about 20. In 1994, almost 60 % (58.7%) of school-leavers with the "Matura" opted for a university course of study within the first three semesters after leaving secondary school. This means that almost a fourth (23.5%) of all Austrians of that age group start study at university.

In 1995/96 more than 220,000 students were enrolled at universities and colleges of music, drama and art. About a tenth of them were first-year students (about 25,000). In the preceding academic year (1994/95) more than 12,000 graduates left university after having obtained a degree (Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Verkehr und Kunst 1996b). The drop-out rate has for many years been moving around an average of 50% (based not on a head count, but on the number of courses of study that were started but not finished), the rate for a change of course of study is about 25 %.

At the moment 42 courses of study are offered by 23 Fachhochschul-providers. The number of students in these institutions is steadily rising: whereas Fachhochschulen started with about 400 study places in 1994, the number had reached about 5,000 for the fall semester of 1997. Fachhochschulen offer courses of study which are more practically oriented, more "applied" and more geared towards specific professions. In order to emphasise their practical character they usually include one or two semesters of internships and maintain close contacts with companies and businesses. From 1997 on courses of study will be offered that are organised in such a way that students in full-time employment can pursue them. After seven or eight semesters, graduates of Fachhochschulen are awarded academic degrees which include the abbreviation FH to distinguish them from university degrees. At the time of writing this study the first FH graduates were being released on to the labour market.

Whereas students in the traditional university system are fairly free to choose classes and put together their own study programme, Fachhochschulen provide a clear and strict syllabus. Information on job-related matters is considered an integral part of classes or is made available to students on a voluntary basis. This is why, according to talks with Fachhochschul-providers, there is no need for specialised educational and vocational guidance beyond that provided in class, by individual teachers or in the main secretariat. As a consequence and due to their comparatively limited number of students (5,000 vs. about 200,000 at universities), Fachhochschulen are not specifically covered in this report, which will concentrate mainly on services catering for students/graduates in the traditional university system.

University students can choose between 184 courses of study branching out into 287 specialisations in the traditional university system. It is characteristic of this system that a fairly high degree of liberty is accorded to students. Although a general framework is set, no strict curricula are provided. The choice of classes, whether to attend or not, whether to take an exam or not, are mostly left up to the individual students. As a consequence and due to additional reasons such as too tightly packed courses of study, limited access to certain compulsory classes, prohibitive administrative procedures and the like, the minimum number of semesters necessary for obtaining a first degree (8 to 10 semesters at universities) is on average surpassed by three to eight additional semesters

In order to make universities more efficient, a new law was passed in 1993, the "Universitätsorganisationsgesetz" (UOG 1993), which changes the organisational set-up of



universities. The new law takes effect only gradually. Seven universities are already governed according to it (i.e. have "tilted over"); the others are still being organized according to the old 1975 law.

The UOG 1993 gives more autonomy to universities and takes them out of the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science and Transport to some extent. The Ministry will remain responsible for resource acquisition and controlling as well as legislative affairs, while the individual universities can manage their own budgets. The law aims at more efficient decision-making processes by giving more power to individual roles (such as the rector and deans) without retreating on the principle that students and teachers have a democratic say in the government of the institution. The new law also aims at giving increased value to teaching and research and calls for evaluative measures in this field.

The UOG 1993 goes hand in hand with another new law, the "Universitätsstudiengesetz" (UniStG 1997), which directly affects (the development of) courses of study. Its aims are first and foremost to stimulate innovatory power and generally to increase the sense of university courses being directed towards professional qualifications. Additionally, it is meant to reduce study periods, reduce drop-out rates and introduce a stronger curricular structure in universities.

At the present moment it is not possible to say whether these new laws will lead to changes (e.g. increased financial support, closer links to teaching) as far as guidance and counselling (services) are concerned. It is in any case clear that universities can create service-oriented entities. A major change is also to be expected due to the introductory phase set down in the new UniStG. During that phase the following has to be provided to students:

- introductory classes and classes representative of the course of study
- orientation classes
- information on general legal regulations for students, study programmes, graduates' qualifications, average length of course of study, drop-out and graduation statistics, and the job situation for graduates
- beginners' tutorials

Vocational guidance and counselling provisions might also become more important since university courses of study are to be more closely linked to professional matters. Students' needs



for more orientation and guidance might also gain increased attention by the introduction of a students' dean, who will be mainly responsible for matters of teaching.

In general, it can be said that the Austrian System of Higher Education has been in a process of change and reorientation over the last few years. A new tier has been added to the system by the creation of Fachhochschulen; universities are being organized differently; courses of study are to be changed according to the new requirements. It is too early to say what the effects of these changes at the level of universities will be on the guidance and counselling structures portrayed in this report.

## **2a. Main guidance and counselling services and systems**

Table 1 shows the main guidance and counselling services and systems in higher education. As agreed upon at a meeting of the national correspondents for the FEDORA project, services were included that either

- operate from within universities (locally and/or administratively) or
- are situated outside universities but devote the main part of their activities to university students or graduates.

This meant that some institutions which devote only part of their activities to students or operate on the level of secondary education (pre-entry) are not covered in detail in the study. A short summary of their activities is given under "Additional services" at the end of the commentary on table 1.

Most of the descriptive categories used in table 1 are self-explanatory. Only the category "level" needs some explanation. The concept is part of the holistic model developed by Raoul van Esbroeck of the Vrije Universiteit Brussels, which is used as a descriptive model in the survey of which this report is a part. According to van Esbroeck, it indicates whether a service is

First-in-line (1) part of the formal teaching function

Second-in-line (2) linked to the formal teaching function, but with some degree of specialisation

Third-in-line (3) separated from the formal teaching function, and offered by specialists

table 1

**Table 1.** Main guidance and counselling services and systems - structure and content

Service/system	Funding/administrative control	Location	Extent	Level	Target-group
Career Planning and Placement Centre <i>Zentrum f. Berufsplanung Büro f. Studierende und Arbeitswelt, Jungakademikerservice Steiermark</i>	private association, funded by members, sponsors, grants, etc.; 4 get material support by universities, controlled by board/chairman (reps. of sponsoring institutions)	mostly inside university	5 universities	3	all students and graduates of the respective university
Psychological Student Counselling Service <i>Psychologische Studentenberatung</i>	funded and controlled by Ministry of Science and Transport	outside university	6 offices covering all universities	3	all students; secondary-school leavers
International Office <i>Büro (Zentrum) für Auslandsbeziehungen</i>	funded and controlled by universities	inside university	all universities	3	all students and graduates; university teachers
Public Employment Service: University Graduate Counselling and Placement <i>Arbeitsmarktservice: Akademikerberatung und Akademikervermittlung</i>	private association with full public funding	outside university	2 university towns	3	(unemployed) graduates (plus in some of the institutions drop-outs and school leavers)
Disabled Students Advisors <i>Behindertenbeauftragte</i>	funded by universities, some by National Union of Students	inside university	most universities	3	disabled students
National Union of Students' Services <i>(Österreichische Hochschüler-schaft, Informationsberatung, Einführungs-Tutorium, Maturanten-Stundenberatung</i>	funded by student members (membership obligatory); support by the ministry and (partly by) universities; self-governing body	inside, some of their services also outside	all universities	3	all, but mainly first-year students of universities and prospective students



## 2b. Commentary

Information, advice and counselling on all various aspects of student life are available to students at Austrian universities. (Schilling 1995). The services listed in table 1 provide guidance and counselling in educational, vocational and personal matters, each specialising in one of them as described under the heading *Main function*. A number of services not covered in table 1 are described later under *Additional Services* (pp. 17-19)

No central counselling/guidance centres are installed at Austrian universities to which a student could turn with an educational question as well as with a personal problem, before enrolment as well as after graduation, when looking for a job as well as trying to decide on which course of study to embark. Students, prospective students, graduates and drop-outs in search of guidance and counselling have to show initiative and to find out which of the various guidance and counselling services is best equipped to deal with their questions, concerns and problems. This is in keeping with an attitude that is common at Austrian universities: students by the very fact of entering a university course of study are more or less expected to find their way around university, to be able to negotiate their way around bureaucratic barriers, to develop their own study programme and consequently also to find out which information and assistance to get where.

Finding the right guidance institution for one's particular concern is not facilitated by the fact that no umbrella organisation (such as a national professional association of advisors/counsellors) or other coordinating office exists that is aware of and does research into the scope of services provided by the different guidance systems, and so could provide an overview or act as a clearing institution.

Universities consider their main task to be teaching and research. Counselling and guidance are only peripheral to that. This can also be concluded from the fact that first-in-line or second-in-line guidance hardly exists at Austrian HE institutions, except for very few individual and exceptional cases. Universities as state-run institutions are not competing for students, as privately sponsored institutions in other countries do. Up to now, the existence and quality of service institutions at universities has therefore not been a factor in attracting students. The services covered in this study consequently operate more or less on the periphery of universities.



### Funding and control

With the exception of the international offices and some (6) of the Disabled Students Advisors, none of the services covered in this report are actually and wholly "run" by the universities, i.e. are funded and controlled by the universities with their staff being part of the university personnel, etc.

Those services that are physically located at universities (most Career Advisory and Placement Centres, National Union of Students, Disabled Students Advisors financed by the National Union of Students) usually get some material support from universities. This may take the form of provision of rooms, of administrative assistance (e.g. access to telephone system) or in individual cases even of university personnel. The extent of this material support may differ from university to university and from service to service. It may depend on the extent to which a service is being considered an integral part of the university, on the resources available at the university, and on the negotiating talent of the services concerned.

The Career Advisory and Placements Centres as private associations tap an array of different sources to secure their finances. As stated in the above paragraph, most of them get material support from their respective universities. This facilitates everyday business, but it is not enough to entirely fund it. Part of their income may come from contributions of members (who may be students as well as corporate members), from sponsorship by companies (e.g. for individual events staged by the offices) and in some cases from fees raised for recruitment services. Some offices are supported in part of their activities by the Labour Market Service. And the Federal Ministry of Science and Transport usually provides assistance in the form of start-up grants or funds specific projects such as studies or publications.

The Career Advisory and Placement Centres ask students to pay for some of their services, mainly seminars (e.g. self-presentation skills, public speaking, application training). These are offered at reduced student prices. Other than that, counselling and guidance is free of charge in all the services and institutions listed in table 1.

As far as control is concerned, the university career centres as private non-profit associations are governed by bodies such as chairpersons, boards and councils. Members of the university teaching staff are usually prominently represented on these bodies to ensure that the service is linked in with the university and its administration. A council might bring together persons with

a variety of backgrounds in university and business so that ideas developed in the running of the service and proposed by the Managing Director can be checked as to their feasibility.

The Federal Ministry of Science and Transport, the ministry under whose jurisdiction universities and other HE institutions fall, is - after the universities themselves - the second most important sponsor of guidance and counselling activities. In one way or another it provides financial assistance to most of the "inside" services covered in this report, usually by funding specific activities and/or projects.

In the case of the Austrian Student Union, i.e. the body representing all students, the Ministry provides financial assistance for the training of prospective student advisors and tutors as well as for the publication of information brochures. The Student Union is, however, mostly financed by the fees of student members, whose membership is compulsory. It governs itself via a Central Committee and via Main Committees at the different universities.

The Psychological Student Counselling Service is a system consisting of offices established in each of the six Austrian university towns and is the only service that is in its entirety financed by the Ministry of Science and Transport. A coordinator located in the Ministry is responsible for coordinating and controlling the offices, for providing a framework and for distributing financial resources. In general, however, the Psychological Student Counselling Service favours a decentralised approach which leaves decisions regarding the running of the offices largely to the leaders and the staff of the six offices.

Of all the services covered in this study, the guidance and counselling service by the Austrian Public Employment Service is farthest removed from university, physically, financially and organisationally. The Public Employment Service itself is a very large organisation whose main function consists of assisting unemployed people and placing them into new jobs. After having for many years been controlled by the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, the Public Employment Service has recently been outsourced. Jurisdiction over the organisation and operation of the counselling services mainly rests with the regional offices. It is publicly funded (with funds from social security contributions) and some influence still rests with the Ministry.

Of relevance to this study is not the whole organisation of the Public Employment Service, but only those services that specialise in guidance to university graduates, i.e. one in Vienna, where about 50 % of the currently unemployed university graduates are to be found, and another in



Salzburg. In Vienna, an additional office of the Public Employment Service provides assistance exclusively to new graduates and students about to graduate. In all other provinces of Austria no services especially for university graduates exist, although individual advisors within the regular system specialise in this group of clients.

### Main functions

In general, it can be said that each of the services specializes in a certain area of guidance and counselling as defined in this study:

- educational: guidance on choices of educational options, and learner support
- vocational: guidance on choices of, and placement into, occupations and work roles
- personal: guidance and counselling on personal and social issues.

It is laid down by law that the Students Union as the representative body of the student population provides assistance and guidance to its members. Consequently, the union sees its main functions as being to give general and specific information on life at university and on courses of studies. It is particularly active in educational guidance on the pre-entry and induction level and also provides general information about financing studies and about housing. It has developed an outreach programme where members of the Union go into schools to give information to prospective secondary-school-leavers. In Vienna, guidance for secondary-school-leavers is provided all year round. The Students Union also plays an important role during each semester's enrolment weeks when senior students provide information to freshmen on which courses to take and assist them in their first steps in the university system. The Students Union does not provide vocational guidance. This is made very clear by one of its representatives when she writes: *However, we cannot and do not want to give information about career prospects. We believe that in choosing a particular field of study, prospective students should be predominantly guided by their personal interests and talents* (Stuppäck 1996).

Besides its regular activities, the Students Union also organizes a special programme, the beginners' tutorials, to facilitate entry into university for first-year students. Led by a tutor who is a senior student in their field, they are organized into groups in which they are encouraged to acquaint themselves with their chosen field of study, the course of study, life at university, and the administrative framework in which they will have to operate, but also have the chance to get to



know fellow students to counter possible isolation. As has been pointed out in the introduction on the Austrian system of higher education, the new law on university studies (UniStG 1997) calls for increased activities in this field, which might make this activity of the Students Union more important.

International offices came into existence at Austrian universities at the end of the 80s, originally as very small units (which some of them still are). They are established at all universities. Their overall function is to support and promote all the international activities of their respective universities. This includes a broad range of activities and clients. Information and advice giving to students and graduates (and post-docs), especially on scholarship and other study-abroad programmes was, however, the original function of these offices and still remains one of their core activities (Edlinger 1996). They additionally have a wide range of other activities such as administration and organization of exchange programmes between their universities and international universities, and take part in administering European mobility programmes such as ERASMUS/SOCRATES and TEMPUS.

The Austrian Public Employment Service is an institution that is clearly active in the vocational field. Its graduate counselling and placement service is undergoing a shift from vocational guidance to career information (Kouba 1996). Since the reorganisation of the institution, placement has gained ever-increasing importance. Placement and other support activities are open to university graduates who are unemployed. Support is given in as much as the Public Employment Service

- organises training courses on how to apply for a job
- advises graduates on what additional qualifications they can acquire through courses
- organises graduate training courses to facilitate entry into the job world.

Due to the increasing number of unemployed university graduates, more and more resources are being diverted to placement. As a result, other activities such as guidance to secondary school-leavers have had to be reduced or abandoned. Information, especially for secondary school-leavers, is now provided in information centres ("Berufsinformationszentren" - see "Additional Services")

Whereas the specialised services of the Public Employment Service have little contact with university students during their studies, the five Career Advisory and Placement Centres, which

are also mainly active in vocational guidance, provide a range of services not only to graduates but also to current students. The programmes and goals of the various centres differ: some are active in actual placement; others definitely refuse to be involved in that activity or see it as a spin-off of other activities. Whatever their individual programmes, they have in common that they aim to provide a link between the university, students, graduates and the labour market and that by their activities they bring practical and vocational aspects into universities (Köppl 1996). Plans exist to create two more centres of this kind, one at the University of Vienna and one at the University of Linz.

Vocational guidance is only of minor importance in the activities of the Psychological Student Counselling Service, which is marked by a very strong psychological orientation. The PSCS has two basic goals: it offers assistance to students in dealing with study-related problems and with personal difficulties that become apparent during studies. It thus aims to contribute to reducing the number of drop-outs and to prevent unnecessarily prolonged study periods. These goals are pursued by teams of psychologists and psychotherapists who offer psychological tests and counselling, psychological treatment including psychotherapy, and support in personality development (Turrini/Schilling 1997).

Disabled Students Advisors, half of whom are covered within the universities' budgets and the other half by the Students Union, aim at supporting disabled students in all areas of life at university ranging from study conditions to living circumstances, financial support and job possibilities. Advice and information across the range of relevant questions and at all stages of a handicapped student's career is their main function. They have a very flexible approach since disabled students have very different questions and situations. They are oriented towards practical help and become active on behalf of their clients.

#### Stages in a student's career at which the services operate

If the existing services are to be categorized according to the stages in the student career at which they operate, the following picture emerges

**Pre-entry.** Secondary-school leavers seeking information, advice and counselling on whether to opt for a university study or which course of study to choose - besides talking to a teacher who



acts as an advisor (see Educational Advisors - in *Additional Services*) - might contact the Austrian Students Union or be contacted by them through their outreach programme. They might also turn to the the Psychological Student Counselling Service, to a Career Advisory and Placement Centre, or to the Public Employment Service's Berufsinformationszentren (see *Additional Services*). In one province the Public Employment Service has installed an Institute for Vocational Guidance, which advises pupils in schools.

Information on study and vocational possibilities is offered at the annual information fairs (Educational and Vocational Guidance Fairs) organised jointly by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Transport and the Public Employment Service. A broad range of study and training providers as well as professional associations and representatives of the world of labour are present at these occasions (see *Additional Services*).

**Induction.** Guidance at this stage is basically left to the Austrian Students Union with its enrolment advisors on the one hand and to the tutorial system on the other hand. Some university institutes already provide orientation and introduction classes. The introductory phase as called for in the new UniStG 1997 will add new support at this critical stage.

**On-course.** During their studies students can turn to the Psychological Student Counselling Service with a broad range of personal questions and concerns, for learner support and also for some educational guidance (e.g. change of course of study). Students interested in going abroad and some incoming foreign students will find assistance at the International Offices. In case students are interested in finding a job, in developing certain skills (self-presentation, public speaking, etc.), and generally in developing ideas about the future application of their studies, they can do so at one of the Career Advisory and Placement Centres, provided there is one at their university.

An area that in general gets little attention is on-course guidance on educational choices, such as choices of classes, development of a study programme, etc., although the loose structure of studies in Austria warrants increased activities in this area. The Students Union plays a part in decision making on curriculum design and on legislative and organisational questions and passes information on these matters on to the students, so providing some educational guidance. In individual cases, some first-in-line guidance may be provided by (assistant) professors, but overwhelmingly students have to rely on peer support to develop their study programme.



**Exit.** It is of course the Career Advisory and Placement Centres to which a student can turn when s/he is about to graduate or has graduated. At this phase, especially in Vienna where an office for new graduates exist, the Public Employment Service also offers specialised services. Graduates interested in going abroad can find assistance at the International Offices.

In general, no figures are available as to the client:counsellor ratio, so it is not possible to tell how many students make use of the different services at different stages. From talks with representatives of different occupational roles it can be assumed that counsellors do not have unused capacity. At the same time there is no indication that large numbers of clients actually have to be turned away because of demand exceeding supply.

#### Links and referrals

Basically, the different services coexist side by side. Each service attracts clients in its own way. When a case is not to be treated due to a lack of resources and expertise, the client is referred to other services and institutions. No formal referral system is in place. Referral depends on the individual counsellor's knowledge of other guidance services' existence and range of services. In the course of this study it became apparent that advisors/counsellors would welcome more in-depth information on the nature of the services provided by other guidance institutions in order to be able to more meaningfully refer clients. Informal contacts between advisors and counsellors usually develop during the Educational and Vocational Fairs which allow them to get to know each other's services better.

Some organisational links exist between a few of the services. Some regional offices of the Public Employment Service financially support individual activities of the Career Advisory and Placement Centres, which due to their proximity to university are better equipped to deal with students/graduates. A link also exists between the Disabled Student Advisors and the Austrian Students Union which finances six of the 12 existing positions.

### Needs of particular target groups

Within the main services listed in this report, not many provisions are in place to address the distinctive needs of the particular target groups identified as of interest in this study (disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, ethnic minority students, work-based, part-time, mature and distance students) .

Of course, a specialised service exists at most universities for disabled students who will find one person able to address their special needs. The Austrian Students Union runs a number of offices supporting special groups such as international students, mature/senior students, and female students. Assistance with financial questions such as housing, student grants, jobs, etc. is offered in another office. This assistance consists mainly of providing relevant information.

A system of direct and indirect public aid for students has been set up and is a federal responsibility. This system aims at reducing social and financial barriers that might prohibit someone from entering university, thus buttressing the principle of free access to universities. In 1994/95, almost 27,000 applications for direct financial aid were granted. The extent of the grant depends on the income of the student's parents and is linked to proof of successful progress of studies. Information and advice on application procedures and qualifying criteria is provided at the "Stipendienstellen" (see *Additional Services*).

The Austrian university system does not allow for the possibility of distance studies. Distance studies are offered to Austrians via the German Fernuniversität Hagen, represented in Austria by the University of Linz's Zentrum für Fernstudium and two study centres in the cities of Vienna and Bregenz. These study centres provide information to prospective students and offer support to Hagen's distance students, e.g. in the form of libraries. Meetings of the distance students are organised occasionally by the centres to provide training in group situations. The Euro Study Centre Vienna also offers distance study courses from the Open University (U.K.).

### Additional services

Within those Austrian schools that lead to a Matura, a guidance system is installed that provides first-in-line guidance in educational matters. Teachers are appointed to act as *Education Advisors* and devote part of their teaching time to information and guidance. Education advisors provide information on options in the field of further education and training. The pupils and their parents



are advised on fields of study, further training course, admission criteria and qualifications to be obtained. This may be done by classroom presentations, lectures at parent-teacher meetings, the dissemination of information material and presentations by external experts (Krötzl 1996). The quantity and quality of these services depends to a large extent on the commitment of the teacher appointed as education advisor and the interest of the school's director, and also on the many other tasks an Education Advisor has to do.

The *Ministry of Science and Transport's Information Service* centrally publishes information material and answers individual questions. A broad overview on studies and studying is given in the brochure "Universitäten / Hochschulen, Studium und Beruf", which has been published since 1989 in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs and is distributed to pupils in secondary schools in their pre-Matura year. The Information Service also provides additional information for a series of leaflets published by the Public Employment Service on different courses of study.

*Educational and Vocational Guidance Fairs* have been organised for eleven years, each year in Vienna and every other year in Austria's provinces, by the Ministry of Science and Transport together with the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Public Employment Service. Hundreds of participating services and institutions present information on a variety of educational and vocational choices. Each year thousands of school leavers, students and other interested persons make use of the opportunity to collect information material and to talk to advisors/counsellors and representatives of the various organisations. The Viennese fair has included a special section on "Universities of Europe" for the last six years (Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Verkehr und Kunst 1996a).

*Stipendienstellen* are a guidance system that is important to students and prospective students when it comes to dealing with the question of how to finance studies. They are established in all university towns as administrative units controlled by the Ministry of Science and Transport. Administration of students grants is their main but not their only task. Within the last few years they have turned into client-oriented institutions that not only provide information on state-sponsored grants and grants for studies abroad (for recipients of state grants) but also serve as a point of first contact and clearing house for financial questions, referring students to other services and authorities. Information can be provided on a broad range of finance-related matters such as family allowance, social security, claim of financial parental support, additional



scholarships and grants, etc. Special guidance is given to working students and prospective students who have earned their living for some time. *Stipendienstellen* also organise information-giving events at universities and Fachhochschulen.

Vocational and job information in a national system of *information centres* is provided by the Public Employment Service's *BerufsInfoZentren (BIZ)* and by the centres run by the Chamber of Commerce's Training Institutes (WIFI). Information is available there on different professions and jobs, on the training and the qualifications necessary for them, on the job market in general, on providers of initial and continuing training, etc. About 60 of those information centres have been established recently all over Austria. They already use new technologies and new media and are planning to further enlarge such usage. Berufsinformationszentren are open to everybody. About 10 % to 20 % of its clients are secondary-school leavers. University students use those centres rather rarely.

Besides running information centres, the *Chamber of Commerce's Training Institute (WIFI)* offers general educational guidance, also to secondary-school leavers, students and graduates. Information is available on different kinds of vocational and continuing training and in particular on seminars and Fachhochschul-courses of study offered by WIFI and other providers. Fees are charged for some of the guidance sessions and assessment tests.

### 3. ROLES AND TASKS

#### 3a. Introduction

The task analysis is based upon a student centred holistic guidance model (Van Esbroeck 1996). This model distinguishes three types of guidance:

Educational (E): guidance on choices of educational options, and learner support

Vocational (V): guidance on choices of, and placement into, occupations and work roles

Personal (P): guidance and counselling on personal and social issues

The focus of each guidance service/system has been analysed on a 7-point scale. The allocation of the 7 points is based upon a combination of several variables: time spent, and how the focus is perceived by the counsellor, by the client and by the institution.

The result of the analysis is given in table 2. The figures given refer to the number of persons active in the respective roles, no matter whether they work full-time, part-time or - as is the case with some of the advisors of the Austrian Students Union - only at special occasions. Those roles are included that involve direct contact with students. Purely managerial and secretarial positions are disregarded.

For each of the occupational roles defined in table 2, a task analysis has been performed. The results are given in table 3. The following task classification (Watts/Van Esbroeck 1996) is used:

1. **(A) General management:** general administrative management, including service/programme planning and evaluation. Includes managing guidance activities within the institutional setting, and general liaison with external bodies (e.g. education institutions, guidance agencies, social services, official bodies, and employers).
2. **(B) Information management:** the collection, production and display of information in relation to education and training opportunities, and/or careers, occupations and the labour market
3. **(C) Information-giving:** providing relevant information to individuals or groups in relation to education and training opportunities, and/or careers, occupations and the labour market

4. **Counselling:** helping clients to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present situation, about the options open to them, and about the consequences of each option.
  - 4.1. **(D) Short-term individual counselling:** helping clients on a one-to-one basis in a single or limited number of sessions.
  - 4.2. **(E) Long-term individual counselling:** as 4.1. but representing a planned programme over a longer period and more sessions.
  - 4.3. **(F) Short-term group counselling:** as 4.1. but on a group basis. Tends to be in smaller groups than teaching, to be composed of individuals who share some common characteristics, to focus on their expressed needs rather than on predetermined learning aims, and to be organised to encourage active participations by all the individuals involved.
  - 4.4. **(G) Long-term group counselling:** as 4.3. but representing a planned programme over a longer period and more sessions.
  - 4.5. **(H) Facilitating self-help groups:** encouraging individuals to form themselves into on-going groups to share experiences and to support each other.
5. **(I) Advice:** making suggestions based on the helper's own knowledge and experience and on assessment results.
6. **Assessment:** making judgements about individuals' suitability for certain options, based on inventories, tests, observations, interviews, etc.
  - 6.1. **(J) Facilitate self-assessment:** supporting individuals in choosing their own assessment devices and drawing conclusions from them.
  - 6.2. **(K) Diagnostic assessment:** selecting assessment devices, interpreting the result and making appropriate recommendations.
7. **(L) Referral:** referring individuals to services better equipped to deal with their problem
8. **(M) Teaching:** programmes of planned experiences, designed to develop the skills, concepts and knowledge that will help individuals to manage their educational, vocational and personal development



9. Placement: into education or training programmes, and/or into employment.
- 9.1. (N) **Liaison with providers:** liaison with employers and with education and training providers to obtain information on the opportunities they offer.
- 9.2. (O) **Coaching:** helping individuals to present themselves effectively (on application forms and in interviews etc.).
- 9.3. (P) **Vacancy information:** providing individuals with information on particular vacancies in education, training or employment.
- 9.4. (Q) **Preselection:** preselecting individuals for particular vacancies in education, training or employment.
10. (R) **Advocacy:** negotiating directly with institutions or agencies, within and/or outside own institution, on behalf of individuals, especially those for whom there may be particular barriers to access.
11. (S) **Supporting other guidance sources:** providing training sessions and disseminating information materials to teaching staff and other guidance providers.
12. (T) **Feedback to providers:** collecting information on the unmet needs of particular groups, and encouraging providers of opportunities to respond by adapting and extending their provision.
13. (U) **Follow-up:** contacting former clients to see what has happened to them. Its purposes may include data for use with subsequent clients, evaluating the effectiveness of the guidance given, and offering further support needed

For each of the tasks listed (see letter code), a rating on the importance of the task is given on a scale of 0 to 4, on the basis of the work normally carried out within the role. The scale is as follows:

- 4 major involvement
- 3 considerable involvement
- 2 some involvement
- 1 minor involvement
- 0 no involvement

The ratings were originally proposed by the national correspondents on the basis of questionnaire-based and/or in-depth interviews with several representatives of the services. These ratings, together, with the detailed profiles, were then revised by the members of the small expert practitioners team, consisting of four persons (including the national correspondents) who represented the three detailed profiles. The reviewed ratings together with the detailed occupational profiles and the comments on tables 1-3 were further submitted to a larger expert practitioner team whose comments were then incorporated into the final document. The members of the large team were chosen either to represent the different institutions covered in the report or because they have a broad overview of guidance and counselling in HE institutions. They comprised:

Career Advisory and Placement Centres: 2

Psychological Student Counselling Service: 2

International Office: 2

Public Employment Service: 1

Austrian Students Union: 1

Ministry of Science and Transport - Information Service: 1

Organizer of Educational and Vocational Guidance Fairs: 1



**Table 2.** Main occupational roles and focus

Service/system	Occupational roles	Number	Focus		
			E	V	P
Career Advisory and Placement Centre <i>Zentrum f. Berufsplanung</i>	Managing Director ( <i>LeiterIn, GeschäftsführerIn</i> )	5	1	4	2
	Career Advisor ( <i>BeraterIn</i> )	9	1	4	2
Psychological Student Counselling Service <i>Psychologische Studentenberatung</i>	Head of Service ( <i>LeiterIn</i> )	6			
	Psychological Student Counsellor ( <i>Psych. StudentenberaterIn</i> )	22	1	0	6
	Psychological Student Counsellor (educational/vocational emphasis) ( <i>Psych. Studentenberater Schwerpunkt: Studienwahlberatung</i> )	6	1	1	5
	Information Officer ( <i>Allgemeine StudienberaterIn</i> )	1	4	1	2
International Office <i>Büro (Zentrum) für Auslandsbeziehungen</i>	Head of Service ( <i>LeiterIn</i> )	19	5	1	1
	International Advisor ( <i>MitarbeiterIn BeraterIn</i> )	51			
Public Employment Service: University Graduate Counselling and Placement <i>Arbeitsmarktservice: Akademikerberatung und Akademikervermittlung</i>	Head of Service ( <i>LeiterIn</i> )	3			
	Advisor and Placement Officer ( <i>MitarbeiterIn Kundenservice</i> )	14 (+)	2	4	1
Disabled Students Advisor <i>Behindertenbeauftragte/Behindertenreferent</i>	Disabled Students Advisor ( <i>Behindertenbeauftragte r</i> )	13	4	1	2
National Union of Students' Services <i>Österreichische Hochschüler:schaft</i>	Prospective Students' Advisor ( <i>MaturantenberaterIn</i> )	(120)	5	1	1
	Study Advisor ( <i>StudienberaterIn, StudienrichtungsvertreterIn</i> )	(800)	5	1	1
	Enrolment Advisor ( <i>InskriptionsberaterIn</i> )	(1,000)	7	0	0
	Beginners' Tutor ( <i>TutorIn</i> )	(700)	5	0	2

**Table 3** Tasks performed in the main occupational roles (note: the roles are grouped according to their services as listed in Table 2)



### 3b. Commentary

Before some of the tasks are elaborated in greater detail, a few words need to be said on a terminological confusion that became apparent in the course of this study. Whereas the terms counselling, guidance and advice giving are distinct in the English language, the term used for all these activities in German is "Beratung". "Beratung" spans an even broader meaning as it also covers information giving in personal conversations. Within one session of "Beratung" different tasks as defined in the task list may occur: information giving (C), individual counselling (D) and advice giving (I).

Since "Beratung" is the main concern of the services in this report (and the reason why they are included at all), the three tasks (information giving (C), individual short-term counselling (D) and advice giving (I)) are indeed performed by most, if not all, of the roles included. Due to the terminological fuzziness special attention was given by the national correspondents to point out their different nature when talking to representatives of the roles. It became soon apparent that "Beratung", as understood by German-speaking advisors and counsellors, consists to a very large degree of information giving (C) which is linked to advice giving (I). Counselling in its truest sense, i.e. with an emphasis not on conveying of information but on a process-oriented task with the aim of making clients work things out themselves, is performed by the counsellors of the Psychological Student Counselling Service who have a strong psychological and psychotherapeutic background (see Detailed Profiles). It remains true, however, and was stressed by representatives of the roles, that meaningful advice and information giving (in personal interviews) are not possible without prior research into the client's situation, wishes and aspirations.

Information giving (C) is certainly done in a much more impersonal style, too, in newspapers, newsletters, brochures, on the internet, etc. It is of course linked to information management (B), which again is a task performed by the majority of roles. Hardly any of the services is big enough to allow for such a high degree of specialisation that a person can be employed wholly or mainly to perform these tasks.

The bulk of "Beratung" takes place in a one-on-one situation. In general, relatively little attention is given to working with groups. The Psychological Student Counselling Service is the only institution which works across the whole board of counselling tasks (short-term, long-term,

individual, groups; i.e. D, E, F, G). Self-help groups are rather rare in universities and university guidance institutions. The Disabled Student Advisors stimulate the creation of self-help groups among their clients, grouped by particular handicaps. The Students Union, too, works in groups with secondary-school leavers and in its tutorial system for first-year students. Again, one of the Career Advisory and Placement Centres as one of its main activities runs groups of newly-graduated students who are encouraged to actively tackle the job search together, but who are also provided with additional training (such as training in making applications). These activities defy clear classification into group counselling (F, G) and facilitation of self-help groups (H) and have to be situated somewhere between them, maybe with an additional element of coaching (O).

Assessment, if done at all, is usually diagnostic assessment (K), often on the basis of interviews. Self-assessment (J) is even more rare and only used as a systematic tool in the work of the Psychological Student Counselling Service.

Another activity that most of the services do not perform is advocacy (R). Defined as an intervention on behalf of clients, it seems to run counter to the attitude found in many counselling and guidance services of providing clients "help to help themselves". It is only the Disabled Students Advisors who regularly perform this task along to some extent with the International Advisors, who engage in advocacy on behalf of international students on exchange and mobility programmes.

Most of the institutions would be interested in follow-up activities (U) but do not have the resources to do so in a systematic manner. Others consciously abstain from it, as is the case with the Psychological Student Counselling Service where confidential treatment of clients is considered essential. The Disabled Student Advisors, too, find it impossible to attempt any follow-up since many of their clients are reluctant to have their names and addresses recorded.

In the ensuing sections, different roles and tasks as performed in some of the services are elaborated in greater detail.

### Career Advisory and Placement Centres - Placement

As has been pointed out, different individual organisations are subsumed under this name they are not organised in a national system and thus carry different titles. Although the oldest service



of this kind, installed at the University of Business Administration and Economics in Vienna, does have quite a sizeable staff, usually on a part-time basis, it holds true for this office, too, that the managing director shares most of the tasks with her staff. In very small offices s/he might be the person that "carries" the whole office, the more so since some of the services under this heading are fairly new.

In relation to the task list, this heterogeneity means that not all of the tasks carried out by one or the other office actually received a rating (in accordance with the rule that the modal score is to be given in the table). Quite fundamental differences exist as far as placement activities, and in particular preselection (Q), are concerned. It is clear that all of the offices in order to perform their core function have to keep close contacts with providers (N), which in the case of vocational guidance services means businesses and other employers. After the establishment of a first contact, which includes providing information on the aims and services of the guidance institution and might within the framework of this study be seen as part of external general management activities (A), a follow-up is necessary to keep informed about possible changes in the employer's organisation. The managing director acts in this respect as a go-between who collects information from providers to pass on to students, and also gives information about students, graduates and university developments to providers, so that both sides are realistic in their expectations of each other.

Preselection (Q), if it is performed, may come close to personnel management. It implies a clear definition of the corporate client in terms of what position s/he is looking to fill and what kind of qualifications are necessary. It also implies that the career advisor, based on his/her knowledge of a graduate/student's qualifications, can pare down unrealistic expectations and can assess, usually on the basis of personal interviews, whether the person is appropriate to be put in contact with the company in question.

There definitely is a wish in the career centres doing placement and preselection to provide good services to their corporate clients, i.e. to refer to them a selection of good and well-fitted candidates. Loyalty rests, however, with students and graduates, too. In cases where a person's entry into the job market is meeting particular difficulties, additional counselling is provided by the advisors, who might even try to promote such a person to an employer.

An activity not covered in the task list, but performed at one or another Career Advisory and Placement Centre, is the organisation of job fairs. These might not only be organised by a Career Advisory and Placement Centre, but also by a students' association such as AIESEC or by another organisation that takes the initiative. For Career Advisory and Placement Centres, job fairs can serve a variety of purposes: They are informative for students and company representatives; students might establish a contact that leads to a placement; and it serves as a marketing tool for the service itself, since it makes it better known to companies and students alike.

In one case, the Managing Director of a Career Advisory and Placement Centre additionally holds a class (M) which provides orientation to first-year and advanced students.

#### Psychological Student Counselling Service - Counselling

In 1994/95 a research study into its own activities showed that the tasks performed by the counsellors of the Psychological Student Counselling Service were distributed as follows (Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Verkehr und Kunst 1996d):

45 %	information giving, orientation and assistance in decisions on study-related matters: choice of course of study, change of course of study, dropping out, etc.
16 %	learning support: study problems, test anxieties, etc.
11 %	social and communication problems
21 %	psychological and personal problems
7 %	personality development training

Compared with similar institutions abroad, the Austrian Psychological Student Counselling Service performs a rather broad scope of activities since it devotes a sizeable part of its resources to counselling regarding choice of course of study, change of course of study, learner support and educational "career" guidance. In its methods, however, it remains a highly specialised service whose counsellors understand themselves first and foremost as psychologists and psychotherapists. This is supported by the fact that only the heads of the services perform managerial tasks (A), so leaving the individual counsellors to concentrate on counselling activities



The Psychological Student Counselling Service is the only service in this report that - except for its information officer - is hardly involved at all in information giving (C) and advising (I), the latter of which would run contrary to its understanding of itself. Counselling is the service's main tool and is provided in all its different forms. Individual counselling occurs more often than group counselling, with short-term counselling (D) sessions for clearly defined matters (mostly 3 to 12 sessions) and long-term counselling (E) for more complex problems (more than 12 sessions). Group counselling is considered useful when a sizeable number of persons faces a similar problem or when social processes constitute the focus of the counselling activities. Long-term groups may run for half a year.

In counselling (D, E, F, G) the counsellor cooperates with the clients in dealing with their conflicts, anxieties, doubts and resistances, in developing strategies that allow them to cope with the task at hand, and in tapping their own resources. In this process the counsellor has to accept the person and her/his cause, take into account the process of interaction, make problems, conflicts and wishes explicit, make cognitive emotional and psycho-dynamic interrelations understood, and step-by-step develop solutions to the problem in cooperation with the individual.

Tests of an individual's capabilities and personality (J, K) are mainly used in decision-making on choices or changes of course of study. They are designed to support a client's self assessment and serve as the basis for the counselling sessions.

#### International Offices - Information management and information-giving

International offices are instrumental in promoting international activities at university. As with most other services covered in this report, the international offices are rather small units (from 1.5 to 10 staff which might include secretarial staff) in which each of the individual advisors takes his/her share in general management and administrative tasks (A). Individual advisors might thus be involved in working out cooperative agreements with other universities and in developing European Masters' programmes. They administer European mobility programmes such as ERASMUS and Joint Study Programmes. They report to the university administration any new developments in their international activities. Furthermore, they assist incoming international teachers in establishing themselves in their new environment.

The clients of the international offices range from students to graduates and university personnel, incoming as well as outgoing. The main focus of their work is on information management (B) and information giving (C), which in the case of students is often linked to the question of how to finance a stay abroad. This kind of guidance is the original and core activity of international advisors. At international offices applications for scholarships provided by the Austrian state or by their respective universities have to be handed in. Since deadlines have to be kept in submitting applications, these activities sometimes have to override other tasks.

International advisors are approached by their clients with questions that can be categorised as educational (e.g. study programmes of universities abroad, questions of credit granted to foreign certificates), vocational (e.g. internships abroad) and oriented towards research (for university personnel who need to finance a research project). Offices that are involved in this latter kind of guidance actually provide career counselling to academic staff, without naming the activity as such. Careers in research (if one is not employed by a university) are closely linked to knowledge about which financial resources can be tapped, information that is available at international offices.

In order to get hold of this information, networking and liaising with providers (N) is a necessary activity. Internet and e-mail has become an important tool in this respect. International advisors will call up homepages of foreign universities and of national and international providers of scholarships, will subscribe to lists and discussion fora, and may send out requests via this medium (e.g. on the nature of an unidentifiable certificate submitted by a foreign student). The internet is also used to make information available to clients, university personnel and students, who are usually linked into a network.

### Students Union

The focus of the Students Union's guidance provisions is on information (C) and advice giving (I) to prospective students and beginners. Besides this, information brochures on different courses of study are produced for distribution to schools (S). Students are mainly referred (L) to other advisors situated at different university institutes, to other offices of the Austrian Students Union, as well as to exterior guidance systems such as the Psychological Student Counselling Service, the Public Employment Service's general information centres and the Ministry of Science and Transport's Information Service.



Basically, the guidance provided by the Students Union is a matter of peer-to-peer support. It is offered by advanced students who volunteer for these positions. Therefore the number of advisors differs from year to year, as may the extent and quality of the guidance provision.

On-course guidance is provided by the Students Union's study advisors. They are elected by the students every two years for each of the courses of study. They have a political function, too, as they represent the students' interests in various meetings of the governing bodies of the university's different schools. The decisions taken in these meetings, e.g. on curriculum changes, are then reported back to the students. They give information (C) mostly in educational matters and in administrative affairs as they have a better knowledge of the inner workings of the university than most other students.

During each year's peak time, i.e. the fall semester's enrolment weeks, the study advisors may additionally act as enrolment advisors. Their number is enlarged by additional volunteers; otherwise the masses of students could not be managed. Enrolment advice consists to a large degree of assistance in technical aspects of enrolment and helping freshmen orientate themselves through the bureaucratic thicket which the university may present to a new student in his/her first few days.

Another guidance measure provided by the Students Union at the induction stage is the beginners' tutorials. During their first few months at university, groups of first-year students are entrusted to the care of a tutor (G, H). The groups of students meet regularly to draw up study time-tables, to familiarise themselves with the central and departmental university libraries, and to get together socially. The tutorials are designed not only to provide information but also to introduce newcomers to university life and enable them to make contacts at the official and personal level.

Additionally, as a measure directed at secondary-school leavers, the Students Union organises an outreach programme to provide information to secondary-school leavers on life at university and courses of study. A group of prospective student advisors go "on tour" to schools. After a general introduction, pupils are divided into groups according to the field they are interested in and receive more in-depth counselling (F). Study guidance to prospective students is also provided all year round at the Central Committee in Vienna. This work is coordinated by two coordinators who add managerial tasks (A) to their guidance activities and are involved into the

production of information material, in cooperation with the Students Union representatives at the various universities.

### Disabled Student Advisors

These advisors were established at Austrian universities a few years ago. They give advice (I) and information (C) mostly to students with physical handicaps in order to help them negotiate any barriers related to their handicap at university and beyond. This includes guidance on a variety of matters such as courses of study, study problems, finance and grants, accommodation, transport and to some extent also vocational matters.

Half of the Disabled Student Advisors are organisationally part of their respective universities and employed in at least a part-time job. The others are financially supported by the Students Union and only work a limited number of hours. All of them receive support from the university, but not to a substantial degree, so that a lot of the administrative work rests with themselves. Since they are continually confronted with new and different problems and questions, they are involved to a high degree in general management activities (A).

Their clients often consult them on more than one occasion: information (C) and advice giving (I) stretches over an average of five to ten sessions. Individual clients may even be counselled for up to half a year (E). An important part of this process is to help clients to assess what they are capable of (J), which is done in intensive discussion.

Since they are experts on life at university for those with a handicap, the Disabled Student Advisors support other guidance sources for the handicapped (S) such as self-help organisations or schools that teach handicapped and non-handicapped children. Feedback (T) is given to the university or to individual teachers.

### Diversity of the student population

Hardly any data are available on the clients of the different service institutions that allow an assessment of how the student population is changing. In general, the student population has increased fourfold between 1971 and 1995. In the same period of time the percentage of female students rose from 28 % to 47 % and in 1995/96 the female first-year students made up 54 % of freshmen. Another change within the same period was that more students from non-academic



backgrounds made their way to university: in 1995, 77 % of students came from families in which neither the father nor the mother had an academic degree (in 53 % of cases, neither of the parents had the Matura).

In general it can be said that the student population has become more heterogenous within the last 20 years, a development that has taken place gradually. An increase has been experienced in the number of students of foreign origin (including those of developing countries), senior, handicapped and work-based students, and students entering university via "Studienberechtigungsprüfung" and thus having already had a job and acquired professional experience. To some extent, special service institutions exist for these student groups (see discussion of Disabled Student Advisors, Austrian Students Union, Additional Services and the international/European dimension).

From interviews with representatives of different guidance services and roles it can be deduced that they do not view their work as being much influenced by these changes. The assessment of some representatives that the counsellors "grew" with their clients, rather than abrupt developments necessitating a conscious reorientation in the daily work of the service, most probably holds true for most of the services. As a consequence, no guidance and counselling models and measures geared to the special needs of new student groups are being discussed at the moment.

#### The international/European dimension

In general, the Austrian university system is experiencing increasing internationalisation. Language skills among students are improving. They are much more mobile and ready and willing to go abroad. In 1994/95, 4,150 Austrian students and graduates went abroad on some kind of scholarship or mobility programme. No data are available on students taking this step on their own initiative without financial support.

Increasing attention is being given to the quality of the stay abroad by students, too. Will I get credits for classes taken at a university in another country? Will my work experience abroad help me in getting a job in Austria? Such and similar questions are being asked by students/graduates who are considering whether to go abroad. The interest in the quality of a study abroad may be linked to the fact that the national job market for university graduates is tightening (see "Trends

and changes") and that students are not so willing as previously to enter the job market at an even later stage.

The international offices as the main vehicles of internationalisation at university level are undergoing a similar change in their attitude to their own work. Whereas formerly they were more interested in quantity, i.e. to increase the number of Austrian students going abroad and thus create a momentum towards more internationalisation, they are now adopting a more qualitative approach. Moreover, diminishing financial resources on a programme level as well as an individual level increasingly lead to questions regarding the efficiency of stays abroad.

Internationalisation is also an emerging issue with Career Advisory and Placement Centres. Although all of them are basically concentrated on local labour markets, their clients are increasingly interested in going abroad for traineeships, work experience and maybe even full-time positions. The interest is in general an outgoing one; no noteworthy increase in incoming foreign students asking for the institutions' services has been registered (this also holds true for the Psychological Student Counselling Service and the Disabled Student Advisors). The number of international job offers is at the moment, however, still limited. Information on an international level is in principle more difficult to come by. Moreover, it is easier to establish and maintain contact with local companies since liaison with companies usually calls for very personal attention.

The Public Employment Service has also taken account of increasing internationalisation by establishing six Euro Job Centres and 18 Euro-BerufsInfozentren, which aim at promoting mobility in Europe and provide information as well as access to a network of experts.

As far as incoming students (14,089 from countries of the European Union, the European Economic Area, Switzerland and Liechtenstein in 1995/96) are concerned, there is hardly any provision in place for students who come individually, i.e. without being involved in some exchange and/or mobility programme. Advice and information is given to them by the Students Union which runs a service for international students.

Students coming to Austrian universities within an exchange or mobility programme are better provided for. If the exchange programme is organised between universities, the international office may welcome them, provide an initial orientation, and even become active on their behalf.



if problems arise. The same is true for incoming ERASMUS/SOCRATES students who get additional assistance from the person in charge of SOCRATES activities at each university institute (usually a member of the teaching staff, such as an assistant professor). This is mainly educational guidance and assistance in relation to administrative matters. The individual SOCRATES experts also provide educational guidance to outgoing students through information on the admissions criteria and curricula of the cooperating institutions. Information on EU programmes like SOCRATES and LEONARDO is also provided by the Office for European Cooperation (Büro für Europäische Bildungskooperation).

Outgoing as well as incoming students, especially those who are supported by grants of the Austrian state, can in addition obtain information and assistance from the Austrian Academic Exchange Service (Österreichischer Akademischer Austauschdienst).

#### Information technology in guidance and counselling

The one development in information technology that most services agree is increasingly used is the internet. It is mainly used as a means to secure access to information (B). This is particularly true for the international offices, who search out a lot of information on the study programmes of foreign universities, scholarship programmes and the like via this medium. Both of the institutions active in vocational guidance and counselling, the Career Advisory and Placement Centres and the Public Employment Service, use the internet as a means of researching open positions, both are also thinking of making information on job seekers available on the internet in order to promote them to employers. Some efforts are being made by different Career Advisory and Placement Centres to organise a national system of this sort so that data on their graduates can be made accessible beyond local labour markets.

Little use is made of computer-based technologies in guidance and counselling as assessment or diagnostic instruments. Computer-based tests are used by the Psychological Student Counselling Service and the education advisors of WIFI (described under "Additional Services").

A computer-based search and information game (inaptly named McJob) is being developed by the Public Employment Service with support by the Ministry of Science and Transport. It is designed to provide information on courses of study and jobs to secondary-school leavers. Information will be categorized and made accessible via the following categories: interests, course of study, job,

job provider. The section dealing with higher education is due to be released at the end of 1997. Furthermore, a CD-ROM titled StudyROM has just been released by the Ministry of Science and Transport and provides a wealth of information on courses of study and life at university.

#### The labour market: a dominant trend

The one change that was identified by all advisors as influencing their work and its future development was the increasingly difficult labour market for university graduates. Although their unemployment rate is still below the national average, they are facing a more limited and rapidly changing job market. The number of traditional jobs, i.e. full-time employment with social security benefits, regulated working hours and holidays, etc., is diminishing. Traditional employers such as the state have had to drastically reduce their recruitment of university graduates due to a strict austerity programme. The world of labour is changing and now demands more initiative and more self-marketing.

This situation is hitting graduates, the majority of whom are still anticipating traditional and secure jobs, particularly drastically. The job search period has gone up to an average of six months even for highly qualified graduates; the number of applications per person has also risen as has the level of frustration among graduates. Prospective and current students, too, are feeling the pressure of the new labour market. Vocational aspects are tending to become increasingly important to them when choosing a course of study. The need to study faster and acquire more skills and qualifications (such as language and computer skills, international experience, "soft" skills) in the process is increasingly felt by them. At the same time, the traditional university system often does not feel called upon to provide these and tends to leave students to their own devices.

As a consequence, counsellors and advisors are faced with increasingly complex questions that touch upon all three areas of guidance, educational and personal as well as vocational. The counsellors and advisors' ideas and proposals as to how this situation can be dealt with may well be seen as a move towards a more holistic approach to guidance. "Holistic" guidance in this respect is seen as guidance encompassing all three areas, regardless of whether it is or should be linked in with a teaching function. Thus a psychological counsellor may see the need to get better information on job-related matters, while a university career advisor in a placement centre or an



international advisor may feel that new skills are necessary to perform the increasingly individualised and personalised counselling necessitated by the new labour market situation.

### **3c. Detailed profiles**

Three occupational roles were chosen to be portrayed in greater detail:

- Managing Director of Career Advisory Centre
- Psychological Student Counsellor (educational and vocational emphasis)
- International Advisor

The roles were chosen according to the following two alternative criteria:

- an occupational role that either has a lot to do with vocational guidance
- or that deals almost exclusively with students/graduates.

#### **1. Managing Director of Career Advisory Centre**

The institutions/services covered under the heading of "career service centres" are rather heterogenous (see commentary, 3b). They differ not only in size, but also in their approach and their goals, which means that the tasks performed by the managing director may be differently weighted. The occupational role portrayed here is a central one and necessarily a very multifaceted one which comprises activities not only in general management, but also counselling, information work, in some cases placement, and - depending on the size of the service - maybe even clerical work.

The emphasis in this position is clearly on vocational guidance (I-4-2, E-V-P). It was, however, stressed by representatives of the role that there is a strong personal component to this work as a candidate's personal characteristics do play an increasingly important role in the selection process for a position and in the labour market as a whole. This is reflected in the fact that some of the institutions offer 'personality' training seminars as well as in their focus on counselling (D), coaching (O) and preselection (Q) activities for placement.

The personal focus is expected to deepen even further in the future, the reason being the dramatic change in the graduate labour market within the last few years which has led to increasing insecurity and frustration among the institutions' clients. Two ways are proposed as a reaction to

this situation: increasingly personalized and individualized counselling (D) on the one hand, and more extensive and more "realistic" information giving (C) on the other.

More than any other employee in such a service, it is the managing director of a Career Advisory Centre who moves in the triangle made up by the university as an administrative unit, by the students and graduates as the service's clients and by the "outside" world of potential employers and the public at large. Since Austria lacks a tradition of employers directly contacting university-run career offices, the existing ones have to actively raise interest in their services among students and graduates and maybe also among university staff, as well as employers, and have to raise money to finance their everyday work.

These are the main goals behind the managing director's *external* activities in general management (A). A managing director represents the service in negotiations with the university and/or the Ministry, and s/he makes the service known to companies and other potential cooperation partners, which also means that s/he to some extent advertises the university's activities, students and graduates. Besides good communication skills, marketing and PR skills are required to perform these tasks.

So far as *internal* management activities (A) are concerned, all personnel affairs may fall within the managing director's responsibility, calling for team and leadership qualities. S/he also plays an essential role in settling such questions as strategy, future developments within the institution and the range of services to be offered.

None of the services in Austria is so large that a managing director's role remains completely a managerial one. S/he also participates or carries most of the activities that constitute the day-to-day business in an office of this kind.

Since none of the services employs a specialist for information management, the collection of information (B) is another task to be carried out by the managing director. S/he has to be continually on the lookout for information on trends in the labour market in general and the graduate labour market in particular, on economic developments, on particular companies and the development of their business activities, on job vacancies, etc. At the same time s/he also has to screen developments within the institution of higher education in which the service is located to be able to act as an effective interface between the university and the job market



Most if not all of the managing directors represented in this study have at one point carried out scientific research and data collection on the job market, which can be seen as one form of information gathering. This activity calls for at least a basic insight into study design and research methodologies.

The results produced by these studies are turned into reports and usually published, which is one form of information giving (C). Information giving can also take the form of presentations in class, contributions to newsletters, brochures and similar publications. A lot of information giving is, however, done in personal talks with students and graduates. Information, of course, also has to be made available to the service's staff (which might, however, be considered part of internal management activities).

While no group or long-term counselling (E, F, G) is performed in Austrian Career Advisory and Placement Centres, due to a lack of time and resources, short-term individual counselling (D) is an important task. The counsellor (or the managing director in his or her role as counsellor) tries to draw out individuals' educational and other background, make them define their wishes and aspirations as to future employment, and counterbalance these with his or her own knowledge of the job market and its requirements. This activity can also result in advice-giving (I).

Self-help groups (H) are not in general organized at Career Advisory and Placement Centres, with the exception of one, which organizes, manages and administers what it calls "action groups". The graduates organized in these groups are provided with training, i.e. receive coaching, and are at the same time encouraged to help each other in active job search, gathering information and in general performing activities that will enable them to enter into the job market.

Whether or not assessment is carried out at Career Advisory and Placement Centres depends on the individual service's understanding of its own activities. No self-assessment (J) takes place. If an individual's suitability for e.g. a job is judged, this is done on the basis of individual interviews (K).

The institutions to which a managing director may refer a client (L) include the offices of the Labour Market Service (this also works the other way around), or the Psychological Student Counselling Service where a session with a client reveals some problem that calls for the attention of a psychologist.

One managing director of a Career Advisory and Placement Centre is also active as a university teacher, offering vocational orientation classes to his students (M).

Not all of the services described in this study consider placement as their task. Nevertheless most of them perform some of the tasks subsumed under this heading, such as liaison with providers (N), coaching (O) in matters of application procedures and effective self-presentation, and vacancy information (P) on internships, short-term positions, and regular full-time or half-time positions. Preselection (Q) is definitely rejected by some of the services; others do perform it, usually on the basis of interviews.

The wealth of information gathered in a Career Advisory and Placement Centre is also used to support other guidance sources (S), such as the Students Union or the offices of the Labour Market Service.

Feedback to providers (T) may be part of the liaison activities with employers, when e.g. companies are made aware of the specific qualifications of groups of students/graduates.

Follow-up (U) is an activity that is usually not done on a systematic basis. The studies mentioned under B (information gathering) might be considered as one form of follow-up. One institution has even established a service to assist graduates with up to five years of experience in finding new jobs.

## **2. Psychological Student Counsellor (educational/vocational emphasis)**

As can be seen from Table 2 and in keeping with the Psychological Student Counselling Service's (PSCS) overall aim and understanding of itself, the occupational role presented here has a strong focus on psychological counselling. Contrary to psychological services in other European countries, the PSCS does not restrict itself purely to dealing with matters that are rooted in the client's psychological and personal make-up but also deals with questions related to choice of and change of course of study, dropping out of studies and general information-giving on study possibilities. Nevertheless, as far as the view of the individual counsellors on themselves, their training (see 4c) and their everyday work goes, it is and will remain - as far as this can currently be judged - a role that is centred on psychological questions and competences, with a focus on students as the target group.



The fact that a small number of positions has been introduced to provide more in-depth information on the vocational aspects of study choice is a reaction to one of the changes that became apparent during the last five to six years, i.e. an increased demand from the clients and also from the controlling organisation, the Ministry of Science, to deal with issues of career and the job market. The Ministry's demand is rooted in the belief that a well-founded choice of course of study reduces the number of drop-outs. This increased consideration of vocational matters is also due to the fact that the graduate labour market is tightening, becoming more complex and differentiated, and therefore calling for more personal initiative by the students and graduates themselves. The focus of the role may therefore tilt a bit towards vocational aspects, but no substantial change is expected that would justify a re-rating of the 1-1-5 (E-V-P) ratio given in Table 3.

The psychological competence, based on the study of psychology and in most cases on additional psychotherapeutic training (see 4c), is therefore one of the central competences associated with this role. Psychological competence is defined as the ability to understand, make understood and work interactively on a client's wishes, conflicts, anxieties, personal dynamics and problems, to work together on solutions to problems of these kinds, and to take into consideration relevant networks of relationships. As in this role there is a heavy emphasis on counselling (D, E, F, G), and in most cases on long-term individual counselling (E), this competence is an essential one.

Knowing the "tools of the trade" in psychological aptitude testing, i.e. their mode of delivery, and being able to interpret the results and assess their value, is one competence that also might be subsumed under the heading of psychological competence and is, of course, necessary to successfully and meaningfully diagnose a client's situation (K). Despite the fact that the number of clients has risen in the last few years (with the exception of the two most recent ones) and that as a result individual counselling sessions are becoming shorter, there is no indication of an increase in the use of self-administered tests (J). Computer-assisted assessment tests are being used at all counselling offices if a case warrants it.

It is assumed that the fact that the student population has changed, e.g. an increased number of students from non-academic backgrounds and a higher percentage of women, does not affect or call for a change in the central psychological qualification of the counsellors, which "grew" with the diversification of the student population. Students of foreign origin approach the PSCS very rarely, nor is the wish to go abroad for a course of studies very often brought up in information

and guidance sessions. The "European dimension" therefore has hardly entered into the everyday work of the psychological counsellors at the moment. Accordingly, no need has arisen to develop a specialized inter/crosscultural competence. For information-giving and advice on this subject, students are referred to other services.

Information management and information giving (B, C) and advising (I), which due to the wide spectrum of tasks performed by the Austrian Psychological Student Counselling Service are also part of the individual counsellor's work, and to some extent also of counselling itself, have to be based on what could be termed information competence, i.e. the ability to find, analyse, store, retrieve and make accessible information material and to adequately introduce it or pass it on in a counselling or information and advice-giving session. But the PSCS is not primarily concerned with information management and information giving (B, C). These are left to other services such as the labour market service (AMS) with its Vocational Information Centres (BIZ), the Ministries for Science and Education, and the Students Union, as well as to the student fairs that are held in some university towns. The PSCS uses the information material provided by these institutions and makes students and graduates aware of them.

In general, it can be said that the wealth of information that is available on all the different subjects that might be of concern in a counsellor's work is difficult to grasp. It is therefore possible that some of the latest developments in Austrian higher education (such as the introduction of "Fachhochschulen" as a completely new type of institution, or recent changes in the labour market) are not yet fully considered. At the same time this also means that there is increased cooperation with other services and institutions which can provide the necessary information. This might lead to increased importance being attached to referral activities (L). New technologies such as electronic databases and the internet as means to get hold of relevant information are expected to increase in importance.

Another competence that is important to a psychological counsellor's work is the ability to manage groups, to enable a group to work effectively together and to find the right balance between the subject, the wishes of the participants and the group dynamics. This competence is of course necessary for all group counselling activities (F, G).



Self-help groups are rather rare in Austria. No such groups are facilitated by the PSCS (H), since the service is not integrated into the universities: this would make the organisation of self-help groups very difficult.

Advising (I) on a whole is done rather rarely and reluctantly since it is the philosophy of the PSCS to support clients in searching for and developing their own ideas and philosophies.

The ability to manage groups, noted above, may also play a role in training or teaching sessions (M), in which a group of students are trained how to deal more effectively with specific problems, e.g. learning or communication difficulties. This also calls for some didactic competences: the ability to present content and information in a way meaningful to the trainees, and to impart certain skills to them.

As is true for every counselling and guidance profession, a psychological student counsellor needs to have strong communication competences. She/he must possess the ability to carefully listen to a client, grasp the client's concern and understand his/her personal background which may have led to the problem at hand. Another necessary qualification is the ability to constantly adapt to new demands, new measures, and new forms of organisation, and to be able to react to and consider changes and new developments in the field.

Placement (N-Q) and working together with providers (R-T) are not seen as tasks of the PSCS.

No follow-up (U) activities are undertaken since psychological counselling calls for confidentiality and there are in any case no resources to do so.

In conclusion it can be said that this occupational role is strongly anchored in sound and up-to-date psychological training and competences. It is, however, possible that increased specialization and increased input of up-to-date information, e.g. on the labour market and on the qualifications necessary for certain professions, would further improve its services.

### **3. International Advisors**

International offices are to be found at all Austrian universities. Although they might be integrated administratively into the university in different ways, they do not differ in their overall aim and their core tasks. In keeping with their goal to promote and to support the international

activities of the universities as a whole and of its individual members, they are responsible for activities such as setting up and administering partnership agreements and programmes with universities abroad, organizing stays of foreign personnel at the university and of university personnel abroad, and the like. Assisting students, graduates and postdocs who wish to study abroad, especially in getting funding for their undertaking, is one of the original and most important tasks of the international offices. International offices deal with a wide range of clients: professors as well as researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, and to a lesser extent also graduates.

International offices may differ widely in the number of persons they employ. It is only natural that in small offices the advisors perform a wider variety of tasks whereas in larger ones a higher degree of specialisation (e.g. in SOCRATES/ERASMUS programmes) is possible.

The focus of this occupational role lies strongly on educational aspects (E-V-P: 5-1-1), naturally within an international context: in information collecting and giving, advising and counselling on foreign universities and their programmes, and on financing stays abroad. Vocational aspects and personal aspects are additionally considered in this role. They are, however, not a prime concern, although it can be argued that aiding graduates who opt for a career in research and teaching in their efforts to gain access to foreign universities is an activity that could be subsumed under "vocational".

Both the vocational and the personal aspects are expected to increase in importance in the future: the vocational aspect due to the fact that it is becoming more and more difficult for university graduates to enter traditional job markets locally, which might lead to an increased interest in working abroad, and especially in gaining internships and other short-term work experiences; the personal aspect due to the increasing complexity of students' lives, which is reflected in the questions with which they approach the service. This increasing complexity can only be accounted for if the personal aspect is strengthened in counselling and other activities.

The share of administrative and general management work (A) done by an individual advisor depends on the organizational set-up and size of the office s/he works in, on the kinds of international programmes a university is involved in, and also on the type of international office in which the individual advisor is employed - depending on whether the respective university has "tilted over" into the new law on the organisation of universities or not



The high amount of work in the field of information management (B) and information giving (C) is common to all offices. The advisors consider themselves "information brokers" who gather information and pass it on according to the needs of the clients, the aim being to "help them help themselves". Filtering of information is considered rather important in this context since international offices are regularly supplied with a large amount of data from different sponsoring institutions. A mere passing on of information would prove rather useless.

An advisor therefore has to be able to access and analyse a wealth of data, decide what is of use to particular clients (university personnel as well as students) and present the material in an accessible and understandable form. The internet, which is used by all foreign offices, serves as one important means to collect information on foreign universities and their programmes. The information gathered in this and other ways is then distributed by a variety of channels: in leaflets and brochures, in a newspaper, and most important in personal interviews, where the advisor has to be able to give a broad overview but also to deal with specialised questions in detail.

Some information may be distributed via the internet and on the phone; personal interviews are, however, still preferred by the advisors, who usually keep office hours every day. Counselling (D), based on developing an individual's background and motives, is thus part of the international advisor's activities, though only in one-on-one short-term sessions. The service does not feel itself called to or equipped to perform long-term or group counselling (E, F, G)

On the basis of the expertise built up by each individual advisor in his/her special field, advice-giving (I) is considered another important task in this role. It must be noted, however, that information-giving, counselling and advice-giving cannot be completely and distinctly separated and that all three may occur in one individual session.

In keeping with the service's stance of impartiality, no assessment is done (J, K). It is an important task of an international office to accept applications for scholarships and grants that have to be or are handed in via an international office. These applications are, however, only checked for completeness, and maybe also for effectiveness of presentation. The applications are then passed on to the sponsoring institutions or the university authorities which provide the scholarships, with no recommendations being given. It is, however, possible that the head of the international office is represented on those university bodies which decide on the granting of scholarships.

Information seekers are also referred to other institutions (L) in case the international offices do not feel well equipped to answer their questions. These institutions may be the Public Employment Service or a Career Advisory and Placement Centre in the case of questions dealing with the job market, or outreach institutions of foreign countries, such as the British Council, Fulbright Commission, cultural institutions and others.

International advisors do perform some of the activities listed under placement, such as liaison with providers (N), coaching (O) and vacancy information (P). It should be noted that all of this is done with a view to training providers and vacancies in *education* on an international level. In the context of programmes such as ERASMUS/SOCRATES the advisors provide information, assist students in applying for open positions and also support those members of the teaching staff who take part in the administration of these programmes.

In supporting incoming students, it may be necessary for an international advisor to provide some advocacy (R), e.g. when a foreign student runs into problems with the student hostel administration, the police or other authorities.

The support of other guidance sources (S) also has to be seen within the general context of this role (i.e. educational, international), other guidance sources being programme administrators and foreign offices of universities abroad, which are supplied with information about the university at which the international office is situated.

Feedback (T) is mainly given to providers within the university, e.g. on the need to offer lectures in English.

Since all recipients of scholarships and grants are obliged to hand in reports after their stay abroad, the international office also does some follow-up (U) on its clients (in case of assistance given directly by the universities). No systematic follow-up system is in place, however, which would identify who got which scholarship and grant and would provide information on the quality of particular programmes and stays abroad.



## 4. TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

### 4a. Introduction

In general, counselling and guidance in HE institutions in Austria is not yet highly professionalised. Professionalisation in this context is seen as a process which entails professional titles, restricted access to the profession, certified training, professional associations, etc. Most of these do not exist in this field in Austria. The training and qualifications named in Table 4 thus reflect the great diversity of backgrounds of those currently active in counselling and guidance roles at Austrian HE institutions.

Counselling is usually done by individuals who do not have a specific initial training or degree in the field (except for the counsellors of the PSCS) but who, due to their interest in and maybe dedication to the idea of providing orientation and assistance to students/graduates and possibly their experience in a related field, are active as counsellors/advisors. It is up to the individual service/institution to define the minimum qualifications necessary for entry. More often than not, this definition is not built around any explicit counselling qualifications, but around some other qualifications related to the position, e.g. a certain kind of first degree, international experience, language skills, etc.

The following table not only shows the minimum requirements necessary for entry into the different institutions and any in-house initial training provided but also a variety of measures and events offered to the counsellors that are not necessarily training (such as meetings and conferences, supervision) but add to the quality of their work.

The following abbreviations are used:

FT = full time, PT = part time

yr(s) = year(s), wk(s) = week(s), hrs = hours

(av) = on average

Table 4: Training and qualifications

Service/system	Occupational roles	Minimum educational qualifications for entry	Initial training in guidance and counselling	In-service training in guidance and counselling
Career Planning and Placement Centre	Managing Director	first degree (different kinds, 4 yrs or more);	none	training on the job * special seminars
	Career Advisor			
Psychological Student Counselling Service	Head of Service	5 yrs psychological degree (FT) + (most) 4-7 yrs psychotherapeutic qualification (PT)	6 wk course (FT)	1 wk (FT) course every two yrs (av); 1-2 wks (FT) p.a. psychological/ psychotherapeutic counselling; 30-40 hrs supervision p.a.
	Psychological Student Counsellor			
	Psychological Student Counsellor (educational/vocational emphasis)			
International Office	Information Officer	school-leaving exam	* 2 wk course (FT)	training on the job * 1 wk (FT) p.a. course
	Head of Service	mostly first degree (different kinds, 4 yrs or more)	none	training on the job yearly national seminar 2 days * individual workshops
	International Advisor			
Public Employment Service; University Graduate Counselling and Placement	Head of Service	school-leaving exam (often first degree)	26 wk course (FT)	1 wk course (av.)
	Advisor and Placement Officer			
Disabled Students Advisors	Disabled Students Advisor	school-leaving exam; partial or * completed studies	none	* yearly national meeting * individual workshops
National Union of Students' Services	Prospective Students Advisor	advanced studies	* 1 day introductory course	* 1 day yearly update (av); * training: public speaking, counselling
	Study Advisor		none	none
	Enrolment Advisor		none	none
	Beginners' Tutor		3-5 days training	1 day supervision (av.)



#### **4b. Commentary**

The full-time institutions active at or close to the university (Career Planning and Placement Centres, Psychological Student Counselling Service and International Offices) require most of their staff to have a university degree.

The Psychological Student Counselling Service is the most homogenous in its requirements: counsellors need to have graduated from a university study of psychology with a minimum requisite study time of five years. All of them have additionally undergone or are undergoing psychotherapeutic training provided by state-recognized professional associations. An initial training, inducting the counsellors into the work of the PSCS, is provided in a six-week course organised by the central coordinator and funded by the Ministry of Science and Transport. In this formalised training course, lecturers from within the service as well as outside experts deal with subjects such as psychological counselling of students, guidance/counselling for choice of study, legal and administrative framework, etc. The PSCS also provides for continuing training of its staff (for a more detailed discussion, see 4c: Detailed profiles).

Those active as career advisors usually also have at least a first degree. Some Career Planning and Placement Centres prefer their staff to have graduated from the university at which the centre is operating to ensure that they are familiar with study conditions there. Staff at other centres may have degrees as psychologists and pedagogues but also as lawyers, economists, etc. Professional experience, preferably in the field of personnel management, might also be considered helpful. Individual advisors looking for continued training might undergo different forms of training and attend seminars or workshops as offered by commercial providers in the training market, on subjects such as interview techniques, coaching, etc. These are not geared to the specific needs of (university) counsellors/advisors.

One course has, however, been started at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria, which specifically addresses the field of vocational guidance (a detailed description will be given at the end of this section). One of the Managing Directors of a Career Planning and Placement Centre is currently taking part in it.

The staff at International Offices, too, represent a wide variety of backgrounds. They increasingly hold first degrees, some of them from foreign universities. International experience and language

skills are considered an additional asset. Induction training and continuing training are not formalized. Again, it depends on the interest and the initiative of the individual advisor to organize some kind of continuing education (which will usually not be related specifically to guidance and counselling) (see also 4c: Detailed profiles).

Since the counselling provided by the Students Union is a matter of peer-to-peer support, the advisors naturally are students who have advanced enough in their studies to be able to give information and advice to fellow-students. In most cases this is the only formal requirement. Some introductory training in group working and presentation skills is provided to prospective students' advisors, who in an internal meeting every year are updated on any changes that might have occurred within individual courses of studies as to content, organisation and legal framework. Some of the students' advisors also take part in individual training on communication skills, cooperation, etc., provided by external trainers. A more substantial training is provided to beginners' tutors. This lasts up to a week and gives an introduction into group dynamics, the tutor's role, the aims of tutoring, and information giving.

Familiarity with university life is also required of Disabled Students Advisors who might be students or have graduated from different kinds of university studies. The disabled students advisors meet once a year to exchange experiences and coordinate activities.

The advisors of the Public Employment Service working with university graduates need as a minimum requirement a school-leaving exam, although they might hold first degrees of different kinds. Individuals who newly enter the service undergo an initial training that lasts 26 weeks and ends with an exam. It gives an insight into the tasks, goals and organisation of the service, communication and counselling processes, the causes of joblessness, an overview of jobs and professions, etc. The training is divided into three parts, each of which ends with a few weeks of practical experience under supervision. Placement officers and advisors are expected to continue their training, in particular in their first years on the job where this is mandatory. In general, all of the officers/advisors have had at least two, and some five to seven, weeks of training in guidance. This is organized by an in-house training department.

As mentioned above, the University of Klagenfurt has started a course on vocational guidance in the fall of 1996/97. This two-year course, called *Hochschullehrgang Berufsorientierung*, is specifically aimed at people already active in the field (teachers at teacher training institutions, university teachers, educational advisors in schools, school psychologists, employees of the



Public Employment Service, teachers at adult training institutes, counsellors and social workers for young people) and organized in such a way that it can be attended by a fully employed person. The course emphasizes the integration of each participant's personal and professional experiences into the training and also obliges students to gain hands-on experience in different guidance and counselling institutions and situations. Its aims are to look into different kinds of work, to assess the importance of work for human beings, to look into the changes and challenges in the world of labour, to allow graduates to find and assess information, to allow them to deal with the vocational and educational aspirations of predominantly young people taking into account their individual interests, skills, etc. and the situation in the job market, and to train them to develop didactic concepts for use in guidance in schools and other training institutions. The secretariat of the Hochschullehrgang Berufsorientierung is: Zentrum für Schulentwicklung, Kaufmannngasse 8, 9020 Klagenfurt.

#### **4c. Detailed profiles**

##### **1. Managing Director of Career Advisory and Placement Centre**

Being a university graduate is usually a prerequisite for this position. It may prove useful if the Managing Director of a career service centre graduated from the university where the office is located since this will provide him or her with an insider's view on the university authorities and the student population. It may also prove useful if this person has already gathered some professional experience, e.g. in the personnel department of a company. The counselling aspect of the position may be covered by some psychological or coaching training. No such training is, however, considered absolutely necessary to fill this position. No standardized in-house or continuing training is provided.

##### **2. Psychological Student Counsellor (educational and vocational emphasis)**

Since the role of the psychological student counsellor is so strongly rooted in psychological competences, it comes as no surprise that all counsellors are required to have a degree in psychology as offered by universities. This course of study, which takes a minimum of five years and leads to a Magister first degree, is a general one and does not specifically address counsellors. Graduates can go on to a doctoral degree but in the meantime will also find employment in the PSCS as a psychological counsellor.

All of the counsellors in the PSCS have additionally undergone psychotherapeutic training or are in the process of doing so. This training, which again is not specifically geared to the role of student counsellor, is offered by different state-recognized professional organizations and may last between 4 and 7 years. Depending on the counsellor's individual inclination, s/he may choose psychotherapeutic training in psychoanalysis, behaviour therapy, client-centred therapy, gestalt therapy or group therapy, to name just a few.

Once in the service, the psychological student counsellor will go through a 6-week full-time course offered in-house which is specifically designed for the needs of the student counselling service. This course not only offers the basics of relevant legal regulations, but also specialist training in short-term counselling, group counselling, educational counselling, aptitude testing and other methods, processes and competences that are needed in the everyday work of the service (see detailed profile). This knowledge is further deepened and strengthened by training on the job.

In order to ensure that the counsellors keep up to date with developments in the field of psychology, each of them is given up to ten days a year in which to attend further training, seminars and conferences, the choice of which is left to the individual counsellor. This ensures that new psychological and/or psychotherapeutic methods enter into the service's everyday work.

The training and qualifications of psychological student counsellors is complemented by 30 to 40 hours of supervision a year for each counsellor.

### **3. International Advisor**

No particular formal requirements are in place to become an international advisor. There may be a trend towards employing more university graduates in this position, but a degree is not an absolutely necessary prerequisite. International advisors might have a background in education or in the special fields taught at the universities they are working at. Of course they are also encouraged to have some international experience and a good knowledge of languages. Continuing training is not required or offered to them in a standardised way. It is left to the initiative of the individual to organise his/her own continuing training.

The international advisors meet once a year in a national seminar, which allows them to share experiences and coordinate their activities. Those who are members of international associations in the field also have access to continuing education. Individual membership is offered by EAIE.



(European Association of International Education), which is active in providing continuing education, or by NAFSA (Association of International Educators). The offices themselves may be members of ACA (Academic Cooperation Association), which promotes the international exchange of information.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In general, counselling and guidance provisions at institutions of Austrian higher education present themselves as a patchwork of services active at different institutions, in different geographical areas, with different forms of specialization, that are not systematically organized so as to make all kinds of guidance and counselling *equally* available to each student at each university. This is most probably linked to the fact that guidance and counselling is not considered a task which university itself has to carry out. The university's main tasks are teaching and research, and some effort also goes into administering itself. Guidance and counselling is not considered part of the teaching function, although it may well be provided by university teachers in individual cases. As a further consequence, the guidance and counselling services portrayed in this study operate on the periphery of universities in terms of their funding, their location and their control.

It is at the moment difficult to tell whether any substantial change is to be expected in this attitude towards counselling and guidance, since Austrian universities are undergoing a process of restructuring. On the one hand, the law on the reorganisation of universities (UOG 1993) and the law on university courses of studies (UniStG 1997) provides a framework which would allow for more service orientation. On the other hand, however, university budgets are generally tightening due to a national "austerity package", which might have adverse effects on guidance and counselling institutions.

As has been pointed out, guidance and counselling are indeed available at Austrian institutions of higher education. They are available in all three area -, educational, personal and vocational - in differing intensity. In particular, educational counselling, possibly with a view to implications for vocational opportunities, is rather hard to come by, which is the more noteworthy since traditional Austrian universities as compared to the new Fachhochschulen run a very liberal system which leaves a lot of choice to students and challenges them to organise their own life at university.

Guidance and counselling is also available at all stages of a student's career - again, however, provided by different institutions, at differing degrees of professionalism, and in some cases not evenly distributed. In the view of this patchwork character of guidance and counselling provision at Austrian HE institutions, activities leading to a more systematic networking of this provision are called for



Guidance and counselling is to a large degree seen as information giving. Counselling as defined in this study (i.e. helping clients to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present situation, about the options open to them, and about the consequences of each option) is mainly done in the field of personal counselling (as performed by the PSC, where it may even turn into psychotherapy). Personal components are, however, taken into consideration in all of the services covered and are gaining in importance.

Advisors/counsellors are aware of growing complexities and intricacies in students' lives (especially with a view to the increasingly difficult labour market for graduates, which casts a shadow over many aspects of students' lives, possibly influencing questions of choice of study, individual curricular development, etc.). The European dimension, the use of new technologies and the growing heterogeneity of the student population have up to now had limited influence on the work of most advisors and counsellors.

The assessment of advisors/counsellors that better information giving and more personalized guidance/counselling are necessary in face of the above-mentioned complexities may be seen as indicating a trend towards a more holistic approach to guidance and counselling. It might possibly also be interpreted as an indication that a specific counselling competence is being called for

In general, guidance and counselling at institutions of higher education is not yet highly professionalised, if the existence of professional titles, access restrictions, certified training and professional associations is to be taken as the defining factor thereof. Guidance and counselling is provided by individuals with a variety of professional and study backgrounds, many of whom are university graduates themselves or are pursuing a university course of study, as is the case with the Students Union advisors or some of the Disabled Student Advisors

One two-year postgraduate course of study in vocational guidance has been offered at the University of Klagenfurt since the fall semester of 1996/97. Participation in a European Master's programme in guidance and counselling in higher education - or at least in modules of it - might certainly be attractive to individual Austrian advisors and counsellors, who are only rarely offered formalised or standardised continuing education

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