

University Autonomy in Europe IV

Country Profiles (I)

Austria - Denmark - Finland - Germany - Iceland - Ireland - Norway -
Poland - Sweden - Switzerland

October 2023



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Introduction

The EUA Autonomy Scorecard offers a methodology to collect, compare and weight data on university autonomy. The Scorecard is based on more than 30 different core indicators in four key dimensions of autonomy. These include:

Organisational autonomy

covering academic and administrative structures, leadership and governance



Financial autonomy

covering the ability to raise funds, own buildings, borrow money and set tuition fees



Staffing autonomy

including the ability to recruit independently, promote and develop academic and non-academic staff



Academic autonomy

including study fields, student numbers, student selection as well as the structure and content of degrees



The report *University Autonomy in Europe IV: The Scorecard 2023* details the scope and methodology of the Autonomy Scorecard.

Since its previous edition in 2017, the Autonomy Scorecard's data and results have been presented not only through a comparative report, but also in the form of dedicated profiles. This report features a selection of profiles updated with the information collected for the 2023 Autonomy Scorecard.

The profiles focus on individual higher education systems. They are referred to as 'country profiles' by way of simplification, although they may focus on sub-national systems (as is the case for Belgium, Germany or the United Kingdom).

The country profiles contain information that allows, on the one hand, a comparison of the 35 higher education systems and, on the other hand, to provide more details on each of the systems. The main focus is nevertheless on providing a comparative view rather than a detailed in-depth country study.

EUA developed the profiles on the basis of the data collected from its collective members (national rectors' conferences and university associations) throughout the process of updating the Autonomy Scorecard. This included a) a survey; b) follow-up interviews; and c) interview reports.

The 2023 Autonomy Scorecard comprises 35 higher education systems, as listed in the following table.

Code	Country/system	2011	2017	2023
AT	Austria	●	●	●
BE-fl	Flanders (Belgium)	●	●	●
BE-fr	Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)		●	●
CH	Switzerland	●	●	●
CY	Cyprus	●		●
CZ	Czechia	●		●
DE-bb	Brandenburg (Germany)	●	●	●
DE-he	Hessen (Germany)	●	●	●
DE-nrw	North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)	●	●	●
DK	Denmark	●	●	●
EE	Estonia	●	●	●
ES	Spain	●	●	●
FI	Finland	●	●	●
FR	France	●	●	●
GE	Georgia			●
GR	Greece	●		●
HR	Croatia		●	●
HU	Hungary	●	●	
IE	Ireland	●	●	●
IS	Iceland	●	●	●
IT	Italy	●	●	●
LT	Lithuania	●	●	●
LU	Luxembourg	●	●	●
LV	Latvia	●	●	●
NL	Netherlands	●	●	●
NO	Norway	●	●	●
PL	Poland	●	●	●
PT	Portugal	●	●	●
RO	Romania			●
RS	Serbia		●	●
SE	Sweden	●	●	●
SI	Slovenia		●	●
SK	Slovakia	●	●	●
TR	Türkiye	●		●
UK-en	England (UK)	●	●	●
UK-sc	Scotland (UK)			●

EUA will release the country profiles in batches from late 2023 to early 2024.

HOW TO READ THE PROFILES

Each profile includes several sections. These can be consulted separately, but together they depict the main characteristics of the system in question.

The first section describes the higher education landscape, providing information about the types of higher education institutions, student enrolment, and legal framework. It helps the reader understand how public universities, which are the core focus of the Autonomy Scorecard, feature in the broader higher education system.

The second section is a factsheet providing a snapshot overview of university autonomy in the considered system: score per dimension and over time, main changes recorded in the recent years.

The next four sections summarise the key features of the system per autonomy dimension: it dives into organisational autonomy (executive leadership, governance bodies, structures); financial autonomy (public funding allocation, financial management and tuition fees); staffing autonomy (recruitment, salaries, careers) and academic autonomy (student enrolment, academic programmes, external quality assurance).

The fifth section considers recent developments of relevance to university autonomy in the system, particularly when there have been changes posterior to the release of the 2023 report.

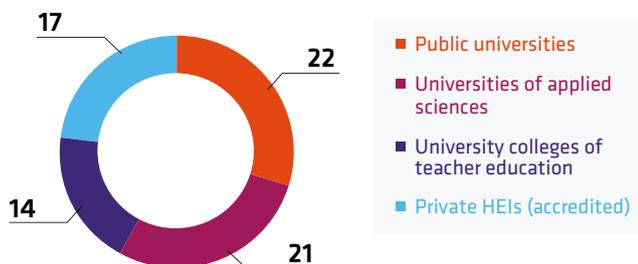
Finally, the sixth section outlines the views of the sector in relation to the university autonomy, sourced from EUA's collective members (national rectors' conferences and university associations).

Autonomy of public universities in Austria

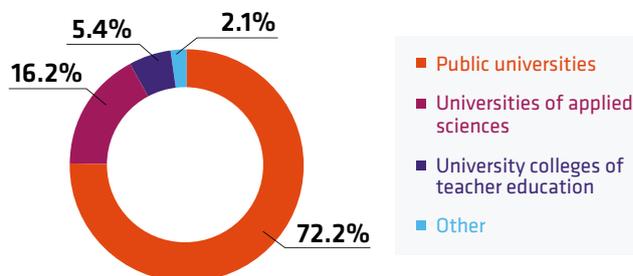
Higher education landscape

The Austrian higher education system comprises public universities, universities of applied sciences (UAS), private universities, and university colleges of teacher education. Public universities represent the largest part of the sector, with approximately 266,000 students enrolled, followed by universities of applied sciences, with around 60,000 students.¹ Graph 2 below indicates that university colleges of teacher education and private universities serve a relatively smaller proportion of students.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Austria



Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Austria



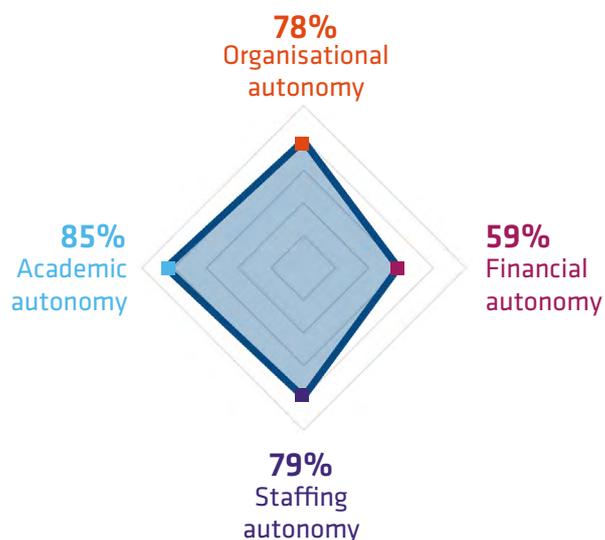
While public universities are subject to the Federal Law on the Organisation of Universities and their Studies ([University Act 2002](#)), other types of institutions operate under different legal frameworks, with varying degrees of autonomy and diverse funding modalities. Universities of applied sciences are basically funded by the central government and may also receive additional funding from the regional government.

The degree of autonomy markedly differs between public universities and university colleges of teacher education (hereinafter colleges). While public universities benefit from a higher level of autonomy, the colleges have limited freedom and must obtain government approval before engaging in any partnerships. However, colleges receive comparatively better funding from the state. Private universities receive funding either from the regional government or are fully dependent on private funding. In principle, they are the most autonomous institutions; however, they still need to comply with the law and undergo institutional accreditation.

The following description pertains exclusively to public universities unless otherwise specified.

¹ 2021 winter semester statistics

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	78%	78% →	78% →	Medium high	9
Financial autonomy	59%	59% →	59% →	Medium low	22
Staffing autonomy	73%	73% →	79% ↗	Medium high	16
Academic autonomy	72%	72% →	85% ↗	High	10

Timeline

2019 Introduction of a new funding model, under which Austrian universities receive a global budget in the form of a performance agreement.

2021 Amendment of the federal law “Universities Act 2002”, affecting contextual elements of institutional autonomy.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes to university statutes and related changes do not require prior approval from the ministry, provided that they comply with the law.

Executive leadership

The rector's selection process remains an internal matter and has not undergone any significant changes.

The amended law introduced new criteria for selecting the executive head. Specifically, the candidate must have international experience, knowledge of the Austrian and European university system, and experience in financial and organisational management to be eligible for the position of rector.

The term of office is fixed by law to four years, renewable twice (i.e. a total of 12 years).

The law stipulates the grounds on which the university board ('Universitätsrat') may dismiss the rector.

Governance bodies

In an international comparison, the governance model of Austrian universities may be considered as dual, with the law nevertheless defining the rectorate as a collegial governing body on an equal footing with the board/council- and senate-type bodies. The rectorate carries out executive and strategic tasks, which often are the responsibility of the executive head or leadership team in other systems. The board oversees budget and institutional strategic matters, while the senate focuses on academic issues and is responsible for academic recruitments. The board is composed exclusively of external members, with a minimum of five and a maximum of nine members. Half of the members are nominated by the senate, while the other half is nominated by the ministry, and the remaining member is selected by the nominated members. The government needs to justify the proposed candidates, albeit no control mechanism is established.

University senates in Austria consist of between 18 and 26 members, including academic and administrative staff as well as students. A gender quota applies, stipulating a minimum of 50% female participation in governing bodies, including the rectorate, board, and senate.

Structures

Universities remain free to decide on their academic structures and to establish legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Austrian universities receive public funding for a period of three years, which is a unique feature across Europe. The public funding model is based on block grant allocation. A reserve of up to 2% is set aside, which is allocated to the universities with the funding period of three years. Under the new funding model rolled out in 2019, universities receive a global budget, to be allocated in the performance agreements to the three budget pillars, 'teaching', 'research/advancement and appreciation of the arts' and 'infrastructure and strategic development'. The 'Higher Education Structural Funds', introduced in 2012, have been discontinued.

Financial management

Austrian universities are allowed to keep any surplus from public funding and borrow money. However, a 2016 amendment to the law requires universities to obtain approval from the federal minister for loans exceeding €10 million.

While universities are permitted to own their buildings, in practice, most facilities are owned by a company established by the Austrian state and continue to be rented due to the high costs of renovation.

Tuition fees

Austrian universities may not charge tuition fees for national and EU students since the academic year 2008/2009. However, universities have to charge fees to students taking more than the required time to complete their studies. The fees are determined by an external authority, and students are allowed two tolerance semesters at both bachelor's and master's degree levels.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

There are two types of employment status for university staff in Austria: civil servants and private employees, each with different terms and salaries. Civil servant status is generally associated with better protection and stricter regulation. However, civil servant status is being phased out, with about 20% of academic staff now holding this status. New recruitments are based on private employee contracts.

In line with general recruitment regulations, universities remain autonomous in hiring academic and administrative staff. In 2019, the University Act introduced 'opportunity hiring', which allows universities to hire a maximum of 5% of professors through a simplified process aimed at attracting top researchers.

Salaries

While salaries for civil servants are set externally, universities are free to set salaries for most of their staff. Minimum wages are set through collective bargaining.

Careers

The dismissal of staff is regulated by the general labour law except for civil servants being subject to public sector regulations.

Universities decide on promotions for their academic and administrative staff. Tenure track allows academic staff to work as assistant professors for 4-6 years before being considered for a permanent contract. The process entails international job advertisements.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

The number of programmes that require a selection procedure has significantly increased. Currently, these programmes enrol approximately 50% of all students. The remaining programmes operate under the free admission principle.

While previously universities had no authority with regard to student selection, a selection procedure can now be applied if applications go above the study places offered. The process is driven by evidence-based negotiation between the universities and the ministry.

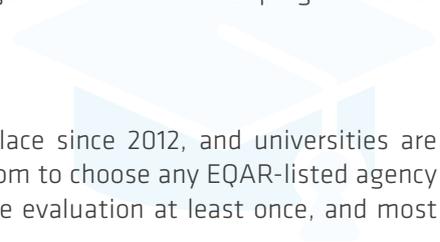
Admission to both bachelor's and master's degree programmes is thus co-regulated between universities and the external authority. While the law prescribes the admission process, specific selective mechanisms may be introduced by the institutions.

Degree programmes

Universities open degree programmes at bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree levels without prior accreditation. However, if the programme requires additional financial support, it must be included in the performance agreement. The termination of programmes remains a matter of negotiation between the university and external authority. Universities can choose the language of instruction for all programmes at all levels and design the content of their programmes freely.

External quality assurance

Mandatory external quality assurance at institutional level is in place since 2012, and universities are required to undergo an audit every seven years. They have the freedom to choose any EQAR-listed agency for the evaluation. In practice, all public universities have undergone evaluation at least once, and most have chosen non-Austrian agencies.



Recent developments

Several significant developments are noteworthy for contextual analysis, although they do not affect the Autonomy Scorecard results.

Amendment of the University Act

The revised University Act generated changes in academic matters aimed at reducing dropout rates and accelerating the study progress of students. Moreover, further education degrees have been regulated through amendments to achieve better alignment and consistency across the sector. All further education degrees are now under a special accreditation regime carried out by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria), which has the discretion to terminate programmes that do not meet certain quality standards.

The revised law strengthened the position of the rector on academic matters. The rector may now issue regulations for the general structure of the curricula or propose curricula issues to the senate, which must be discussed within six months. Nonetheless, the senate still retains full autonomy in this regard.

Funding model

The new funding model is aimed at increasing students' study activity and providing a more transparent account of universities' teaching and research activities. As foreseen in the law, an evaluation of this funding reform is planned to assess the state of play and cast light on the expectations from the university sector. One key focus will be the integration of non-traditional students by universities. The current model with its push toward active students does not support other types of students if they do not receive a certain amount of ECTS points.

Views from the sector

The sector reports that the public authorities' interest in university management has continued to grow, accompanied by an increased accountability burden on universities in 2022.

For instance, a first draft of the law sought to reduce the senate's role in re-electing the rector. However, this initiative was met with resistance from the sector and was ultimately not implemented. Additionally, an age limitation of 70 years for executive heads was proposed but dismissed due to strong opposition. Besides, the first draft of the amendment would have empowered the rector to intervene in curriculum matters only through performance agreements, which would have significantly increased the direct influence of the ministry. Consequently, this proposal was met with resistance and was not retained.

All further education degrees are under a special accreditation regime carried out by AQ Austria. In these cases, AQ Austria will have the discretion to terminate programmes if they do not meet certain quality standards. The sector views these provisions as highly intrusive since public universities have the autonomy to introduce and terminate all other degree programmes and considering that AQ Austria is not the statutory supervisory authority for public universities.

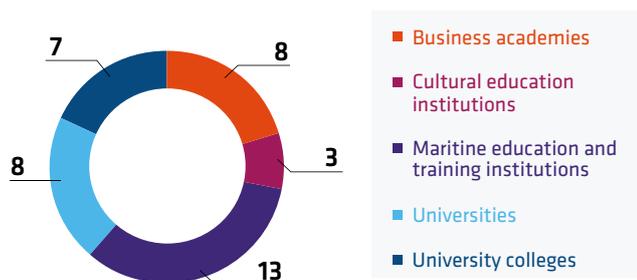
While the legal framework provides a reasonable degree of autonomy, the sector expressed concerns about a strong trend towards micro-management. This has been evident through detailed prescriptions in performance agreements and direct interventions that are very prescriptive. The ministry is seen to interfere in staffing matters through the performance agreements, specifying the number and fields of professors that universities may hire. Moreover, the prescriptive agreements result in a burdensome reporting cycle, adding to the complexity of administrative processes and draining institutional resources.

Autonomy of public universities in Denmark

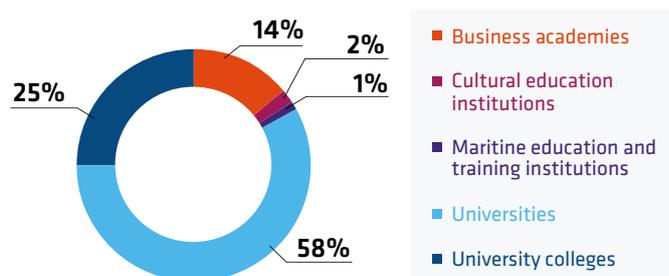
Higher education landscape

The Danish higher education sector is composed of public universities, university colleges (professionshøjskole), business academies, maritime education and training institutions, and cultural education institutions. Only universities and cultural education institutions have the authority to award doctoral degrees.¹ University colleges are only allowed to offer bachelor's degree programmes within their own regulatory framework. There are eight universities in the system, accounting for over half of the student intake. All universities are subject to the [Danish Act on Universities](#). There is no private sector at the university level, and the once-discussed introduction of foundation university status, similar to that in Finland, is no longer relevant. Despite maritime education institutions representing one-third of the higher education institutions in the system, they accommodate the smallest share of students.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Denmark



Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Denmark²

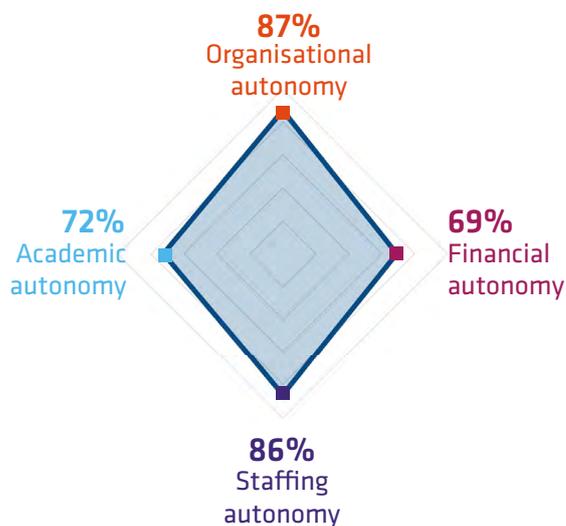


The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ Zahradnik, G. (2022). "Country Report on HEI types", ETER report, available at <https://zenodo.org/record/6770037#.YxXDMxNBz64>

² Statistics Denmark, the data from both graphs refer to the year 2021.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	94%	94% →	87% ↘	High	6
Financial autonomy	69%	69% →	69% →	Medium high	12
Staffing autonomy	86%	86% →	86% →	High	13
Academic autonomy	56%	75% ↗	72% ↘	Medium high	13

Timeline

2017 Amendment of the University Act: the nomination of the chair of the governing board requires approval by the ministry.

2020 End of the annual 2% budget cut for education.

2021 Government-imposed cap on English language programmes ratified in political agreement (decided in 2018).

2022 Government-imposed cut on enrolment by 6% in the four biggest cities to boost enrolment in rural areas of Denmark.

2023 Political agreement on reform of education programmes.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

The university board outlines and modifies the statutes, but approval from the ministry is necessary.

Executive leadership

The appointment as well as the dismissal of the rector rests with the university board. The selection process for the rector involves advertising the job opening. According to the law, the rector must hold an academic position within the university and have knowledge of the education sector as well as managerial experience. While the term of office is not stated in the law, executive heads typically serve for a term of four to five years, with the possibility of extension. The procedure for dismissal is not outlined in the law and remains an internal matter.

Governance bodies

Danish universities have a unitary governance model, with the board as the sole decision-making body. The senate-type body (academic council) only holds a consultative function. The board comprises a majority of external members. It must also include representatives from academic and non-academic staff as well as student representatives. According to the law, the selection procedure for external members entails setting up two bodies: a nomination body and an appointment body, which may or may not be the same.

The composition of the board must correspond to the university's profile, and external members must show expertise in finances and strategy. External members may serve on the board for a maximum of eight years. Internal members, including a minimum of two students, are elected by and from their communities. Academic staff, including doctoral candidates, who are members of the board, enjoy special protection against dismissals.

The nomination of the chair of the board requires approval from the ministry since 2017, while the rest of the procedure remains unchanged. According to the ministry, this change aims to prevent potential abuse of power, conflicts of interest, and nepotism. According to the law, the chair of the board must be external.

University senates may comprise academic staff, non-academic staff, and students, with academic staff making up the majority of members. There is no formal requirement to include administrative staff. The senate must be consulted on academic affairs, but it has no formal decision-making power.

Structures

Danish universities decide freely on their academic structures and may create for-profit and non-profit legal entities under specific legal and financial regulations.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Danish universities receive an annual block grant without specific restrictions on internal funding allocation. The government sets a three-year funding horizon for publicly funded basic research, but these funding provisions can be changed in finance bills.

Financial management

Public universities have the authority to keep and manage surplus on public funding and to borrow money from financial markets. By law, universities are allowed to own the buildings in which they operate; in practice, however, the state owns most of the property and has resisted requests from universities to devolve ownership. Only two universities, Copenhagen Business School and the Technical University of Denmark, own all or most of their buildings.

Tuition fees

Danish and other EU students are not required to pay tuition fees at any level of study. Higher education institutions may charge tuition fees to students coming from outside of the EU, but these must not exceed actual costs. Doctoral candidates are typically employed by the university and are exempt from tuition fees, regardless of their nationality.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Danish universities recruit senior academic staff freely, but the number of positions for some senior administrative staff is still regulated by an external authority.

Salaries

Salaries for senior academic staff are negotiated with other parties. Universities have some flexibility to set higher wages, subject to approval by the ministry. In contrast, the Ministry of Finance prescribes salaries for senior administrative staff.

Careers

Dismissal of academic and administrative staff is regulated by the national labour code, and there are no sector-specific regulations.

Promotions for both senior academic and administrative staff are subject to public sector regulations. All posts must be advertised, and an application process must take place before filling the position.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities collaborate with the government to determine overall student numbers. In practice, several developments have affected student numbers. These include a cap on study places for programmes delivered in English, a cut on the intake of students in major cities, and restrictions applied to various programmes since 2014 on grounds of low employability.

Admission at bachelor's and master's degree levels remains co-regulated between the universities and an external authority. There are two quotas; the first distributes applicants to the university according to final exam scores and prioritised study programmes, while for the second, criteria are set by universities themselves. Prior to 2013, admission to bachelor's degree programmes was fully externally regulated.

Degree programmes

All universities are allowed to set up new programmes without prior evaluation; however, since 2013, they need to prove the relevance and employability of the programme, known as 'pre-qualification' (for all programmes except at doctoral level).

The restriction on student intake in some areas has resulted in the termination of study programmes, primarily in humanities, although more programmes have since been included in the scope of these restrictions.

In 2018, the government decided to impose a cap on the number of study places for programmes delivered in English. This measure, in force since 2019 and ratified in a political agreement in 2021, aimed to control student intake and alleviate the related financial pressure on the system (all national and EU students being eligible for a seven-year student grant to cover their living expenses). The law now stipulates a specific number of study places for English programmes at each institution.

External quality assurance

The transition towards institutional accreditation is almost complete, with only Roskilde University yet to complete its first evaluation cycle at the time of writing. Once evaluated by the Danish Accreditation Institution, universities are allowed to establish new programmes without prior accreditation.



Recent developments

The recurring 2% budget cut for education, initiated in 2016, was halted in 2020. However, there is continued financial pressure on the sector, as illustrated by the developments relating to the cap on English-taught programmes to limit intake of non-domestic students eligible for study grants.

Property ownership has been a longstanding and contentious issue. The government believes that centralised governance of public properties is in the best interest of the state. For example, in 2015 the University of Copenhagen submitted an official request to acquire ownership of its buildings, which was denied. At present, universities are responsible for internal maintenance of buildings, while external maintenance falls under the purview of the ministry. However, universities wish to purchase their buildings in order to enhance efficiency, implement the green transition and support long-term planning. While it is possible to close or sell some buildings, this is a complicated process that requires extensive negotiation and administrative processes.

The 'study-progress reform', initiated in 2013 and aimed at incentivising students to progress faster, has resulted in a lower average completion time and graduate age. Timely completion unlocks part of the educational grant. The Danish higher education sector generally does not allow for 'tolerance semesters', with some exceptions for health and maternity-related circumstances. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the associated penalty was suspended.

Additionally, the government has pushed forward a policy leading to part of the country's tertiary education being relocated outside of major cities. In 2022, universities had to reduce enrolment by 10% in these areas. However, sector-wide negotiations lowered this target to 6%. A decision had not been reached, at the time of writing, regarding corresponding financial incentives for institutions.

A political agreement was reached mid-2023 on a reform of the Danish university education programmes, which includes restructuring part of the master's degree offer into shorter, 75 ECTS programmes. The agreement also foresees a general cut of admissions to academic bachelor's degree programmes by 8% from 2025 onwards. Finally, more study places are to be made available in master's degree programmes delivered in English.

Views from the sector

The Danish university sector highlighted several elements illustrative of a broader trend towards limiting universities' autonomy in multiple areas.

Steering via funding

The sector shares a growing perception of increased steering in research funding, with competitive and targeted funding becoming more common. However, this often comes with co-financing requirements and conditions attached. Therefore, universities have called for a revision of the Danish University Act as well as of funding modalities of research to improve career conditions for scientists.

Regulating the academic offer

According to Danish universities, the introduction of a cap on English-language programmes has had negative and asymmetrical consequences, leading to the termination of many programmes. This is expected to have a direct impact on the attractiveness of Danish higher education institutions toward both EU and non-EU students, as well as on internationalisation efforts in general. The academic sector has sought to engage in dialogue with the government to reconsider the regulation, highlighting the high return on investment from internationalisation. Among the options discussed is the introduction of loans in place of grants. Nevertheless, the topic remains politically sensitive and concrete measures are yet to be taken. Despite the lack of progress, the sector remains committed to continuing the dialogue with public authorities.

There are different views regarding the renewed external quality assurance system and its first evaluation cycle. While some institutions assessed the process as relatively efficient, others have found it to be overly heavy from an administrative perspective. The pre-qualification requirement for new programmes has proven to be quite burdensome for universities, particularly as regards the need to provide an economic justification.

Regionalisation

The state's decision to require universities to cut enrolment by 10% in the four biggest cities of the country, and thus relocate some of their activities, has raised concerns. The rationale behind such regionalisation policy is that it aims to prevent the concentration of educational attainment in urban areas and instead support smaller campuses. The sector considers that education policy is being used to address issues that fall outside its purview. Moreover, there are doubts about the practical implementation of this reform, as there may not be sufficient demand from prospective students. As a result, some universities decided to reduce enrolment at existing sites rather than opening regional campuses.

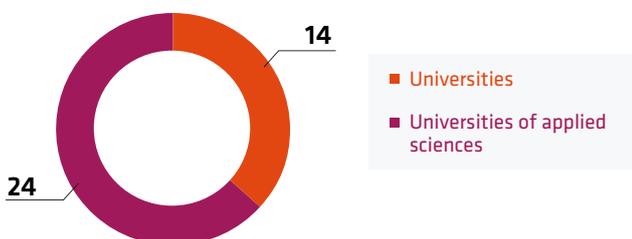
Autonomy of public universities in Finland

Higher education landscape

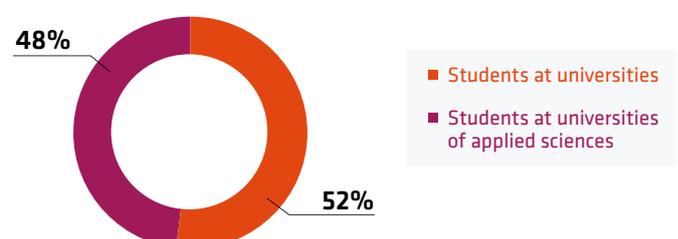
The Finnish higher education system consists of two types of institutions: universities ('Yliopisto') and universities of applied sciences ('Ammattikorkeakoulu'). All 14 universities in Finland are authorised to award doctoral degrees and operate within the Ministry of Education and Culture's administrative branch. The only exception is the National Defence University, which operates under the defence administration. Universities primarily provide higher education based on research, while universities of applied sciences focus on applied research and offer educational programmes at bachelor's and master's degree levels. Universities of applied sciences make up 63% of the higher education system and enrol approximately 48% of the student population.

Most universities operate as corporations under public law and are governed by the Universities Act (in force since 2010). Tampere University and Aalto University are foundations pursuant to the Foundations Act. The agreements between foundation universities and the ministry are similar to those involving public universities. The primary difference lies in organisational matters, such as internal decision making and the composition of the board. The board of foundation universities is composed solely of external members, and the selection process and internal power dynamics differ from those of public universities.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Finland

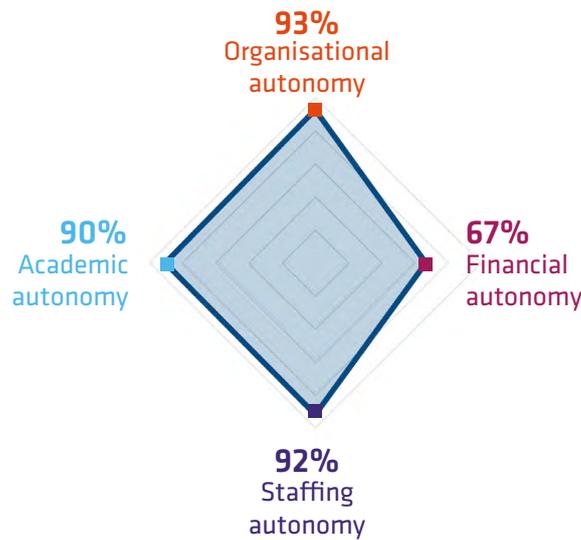


Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Finland



In 2019, the University of Tampere and Tampere University of Technology merged to create Tampere University (TAU). TAU subsequently formed an integrated consortium with Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), known as Tampere Universities'. Four universities - Tampere University, the University of Lapland, Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology, and the University of Oulu - own a majority stake in their neighbouring universities of applied sciences and can be categorised as consortia. Although they maintain their respective legal entities, the institutions can pool facilities and administrative staff within these consortia.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	93%	93% →	93% →	High	3
Financial autonomy	54% ¹	67% ↗	67% →	Medium high	15
Staffing autonomy	92%	92% →	92% →	High	8
Academic autonomy	90%	90% →	90% →	High	2

Timeline

2019

Merger between the University of Tampere and Tampere University of Technology

2022

Parliament's decision to increase investment in R&D up to 4% of GDP

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, may not be captured by the Scorecard if they fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as an absence of system-level change. The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ The deduction value for setting fees at master's degree level for non-EU students was corrected for the 2010 edition, thus 54% is shown instead of 56% previously.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes in statutes are considered an internal matter and do not require external validation.

Executive leadership

The selection of the university head remains an internal matter. The procedure is laid out in the law, as are the selection criteria and the maximum term of office. Each university's statutes elaborate further on the details. The rector is elected by the board of the university for a maximum term of five years, with no limit on renewals. Typically, the board sets up a small committee to prepare the selection process. In some universities, the senate² may have a role in hearings, although the main decision-making power is vested in the board. According to the law, the rector must hold a doctoral degree³ and demonstrate leadership skills. However, as the law does not prescribe the procedure for the dismissal of the rector, it is up to the university statutes to define the process.

Governance bodies

Finnish universities maintain a dual asymmetric governance structure, consisting of the board and the senate (collegium), with the former serving as the highest decision-making body. The senate primarily functions as an appointing body for the board, adopts financial statements and annual reports, and provides a forum for discussing transversal matters.

The board of public universities has either seven, or between nine and 14 members, with the specific number determined by the senate. It must include both academic and non-academic staff, as well as students and external members, the latter of whom must account for at least 40% of the board. The senate is responsible for appointing these external members to the board and determining their term of office, which may not exceed five years. The number of seats in the senate varies but these go to internal members. No university community group may hold more than half of the seats in the senate.

A foundation university has a seven-member board and joint multi-member administrative body, and may also establish other bodies, although these may not have significant decision-making powers. According to the law, the board of a foundation must comprise seven members. The chair and vice-chair of the board must be external to the university. The senate-type body of foundation universities may have a maximum of 50 members representing and selected by the university community.

Structures

Finnish universities have the freedom to decide on their academic structures and may establish both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.

² The senate is referred to as collegium in the law.

³ This requirement does not apply to the rector of the University of the Arts Helsinki.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Finnish universities receive basic public funding through an annual block grant without any restrictions on funding allocation. In addition, universities sign four-year performance agreements with the ministry.

Financial management

Universities may borrow money and maintain a surplus without restrictions. They may also own property. In practice, different models exist. While universities may directly purchase buildings directly, they also operate through separate companies. Two of these specialised real estate companies are owned fully by the universities of the Helsinki Region. Outside of Helsinki, real estate operations are supervised via the company SYK Ltd, of which they are shareholders. Universities may rent facilities from other owners than these companies. Universities have also carried out real estate operations in collaboration with local public authorities.

Tuition fees

Students do not pay tuition fees at any degree level for programmes taught in the official languages of the country. In 2015, the Finnish government established minimum fee levels for bachelor's and master's degree programmes taught in languages other than Finnish and Swedish, applicable to non-EU students, with universities free to set the level of fees beyond this threshold (€1,500).

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Finnish universities remain free to hire senior academic and administrative staff. The current regulations specify certain aspects of the recruitment process, stipulating that it can either be based on publicly advertised vacancies or conducted through invitation.

Salaries

Salary bands are negotiated between universities, as independent employers, and trade unions. Neither the government nor Universities Finland (UNIFI) are involved in the negotiation process.

Some universities have developed their own salary system in addition to the negotiated one. Senior staff such as rectors, deans and directors of services have salaries fixed outside of the salary frames.

Careers

There are no sector-specific regulations governing dismissals, and national labour market regulations apply. Nevertheless, the law stipulates that the employment contract of a research and teaching staff member in a university cannot be terminated on grounds aimed at infringing upon the freedom of research, art, or education.

Finnish universities can freely promote any member of staff. Currently, universities are developing their own tenure track systems, with the goal of aligning them and eventually creating a unified system.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities negotiate with public authorities at the beginning of every four-year agreement term to determine overall student numbers.

Universities independently set admission criteria (in addition to national eligibility criteria) and hold entrance exams at the bachelor's and master's degree levels.

Degree programmes

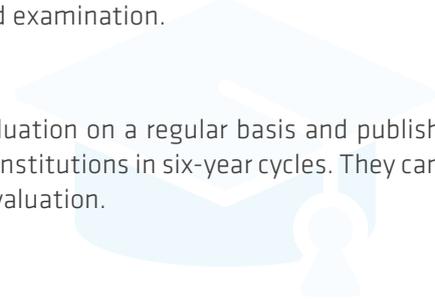
Finnish universities have the freedom to introduce new programmes within their pre-defined study fields (fixed by government decree).

Negotiations with the ministry are necessary if terminating a degree programme creates a change in the 'educational responsibilities' remit of the institution (and therefore the corresponding decree).

Finnish law states that the language of education is Finnish or Swedish. Universities are thus obligated to provide teaching and examinations in Finnish and/or Swedish, with regulations varying across institutions. Universities may additionally use other languages for instruction and examination.

External quality assurance

As per the Universities Act, universities must undergo external evaluation on a regular basis and publish the results. Institutional evaluations are offered to higher education institutions in six-year cycles. They can choose the quality assurance agency carrying out the institutional evaluation.



Recent developments

Finland regularly reviews its funding model for universities while maintaining its structure and components. The model has evolved since the end of the previous cycle (2017-2020). The rationale for the changes was to create stronger incentives for lifelong learning, employment, and competitive funding for internationalisation, as well as university publications. A specific part of the core public funding is dedicated to supporting 'National education and science policy aims'. For the current performance agreement cycle, a key aim is to subsidise the cost of accommodating an increasing number of students and strengthening international networks. However, there has been a trend toward funding the expansion of student numbers through temporary funding, such as the NextGenerationEU Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Developments regarding public funding to universities in Finland have been contrasted. The Finnish parliament made commitments to increase funding for R&D up to 4% of GDP. Large-scale cuts to the budget of the Research Council of Finland planned for 2023 were eventually reversed. The Research Council provides funding for basic research throughout the country, and the envisaged cuts had reflected the government's emphasis on applied research and company-based innovation. Growth in the Finland's national debt and the declining profits of the National Lottery, which traditionally funded youth, culture, sport, and science, add to the financial strain.

With regard to private funding, the model evolved after 2015, when tuition fees were introduced for international students. According to a recent survey conducted across Finnish universities, this did not lead to lower numbers of international students, and in 2023 these numbers were higher than before the introduction of fees. Universities and universities of applied sciences can decide on fee levels, and these have not converged across the sector. Universities must have a scholarship system for paying students.

The new governmental programme (since June 2023) in Finland foresees the creation of a national scholarship system and an increase of tuition fees for non-EU and non-European Economic Area students.

Finland has set an official target to triple the number of international students, while aiming to retain 75% of international graduates in the country. As a result, several legal changes have been made to simplify the visa process, and the availability of academic programmes offered in English has increased.

As in neighbouring countries, there have nevertheless been recent debates regarding the increased use of English as a language of instruction at Finnish universities, in particular at master's degree level. Finland's Deputy Chancellor of Justice issued an order to address English dominance at Aalto University, after a report underlined the low share of courses provided in the national language in some disciplines. To address this concern, Aalto University was asked to propose appropriate measures by the end of 2023.

Views from the sector

The sector is concerned about greater vulnerability vis-à-vis the political sphere. For example, debates on centralising and decentralising higher education frequently arise during parliamentary elections. In addition, the government tends to use public funding as a tool to direct universities towards specific political agendas, placing increased pressure on higher education institutions to meet government demands, often with limited or fewer resources. This, coupled with universities' growing responsibilities, may result in the redirection of resources away from research activities.

In this context, the lack of specificity regarding the 'strategic development' component of the funding model, gives the government greater steering power. It is anticipated that this issue will be addressed as part of the preparation of the new funding model. In 2023, a dedicated working group discussed the reform, with the intention to update the model in 2024. The sector highlights that the public funding model has a guiding influence and reflects policy objectives such as raising educational attainment or lifelong learning.

The sector welcomes the strategic interest and the effort from the Finnish parliament to increase investment in research and development. While the additional R&D investments have been decided by the government, the allocation of the funding for 2024 was yet not approved by the parliament at the time of writing. It is to be assumed that universities will receive significant additional investments in doctoral education starting from 2024 and that the funding of the Research Council of Finland will be increased by 45 to 55 million euros per year during 2024-2027.

Autonomy of public universities in Germany

There are several types of higher education institutions in Germany: universities, universities of applied sciences (fachhochschulen), colleges of art, colleges of music, colleges of theology and colleges of public administration. As of the academic year of 2022-2023, they together serve approximately 2.9 million students and employ around 781,182 staff. Universities are research-intensive institutions and have the authority to confer doctoral degrees. Universities of applied sciences conduct applied research and confer doctoral degrees in co-operation with universities. The system differentiates between state-funded and state-accredited institutions, with the former constituting the majority of institutions and the latter predominantly operating in a rather limited field. Private institutions may be founded by a church or a private organisation. Public universities enrol approximately 90% of the student population.

Each Land (federated state) has its own regulatory framework for higher education institutions. This law applies to both state-funded institutions and state-accredited ones, with the latter enjoying more autonomy in organisational matters. However, both types of institutions are subject to the same regulations, notably in the area of quality assurance.

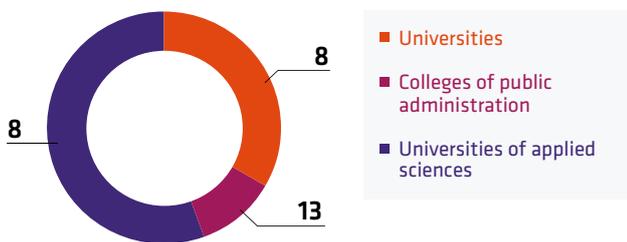
The following analysis separately considers three Länder: Brandenburg, Hesse and North-Rhine Westphalia, which were analysed in the previous editions of the Autonomy Scorecard. Recent developments, covering the whole of Germany, are also presented.



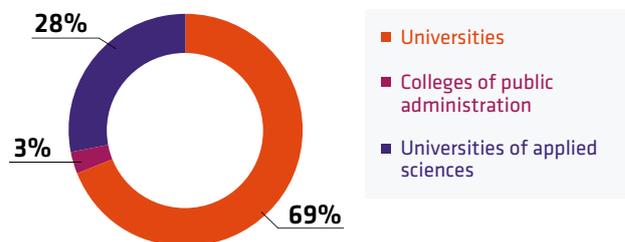
Brandenburg

In Brandenburg, the number of students enrolled in the academic year of 2022-2023 was 50,443.¹ Brandenburg counts four public universities. This includes the European University Viadrina Frankfurt, which is a foundation under public law, one private university, as well as eleven universities of applied sciences.

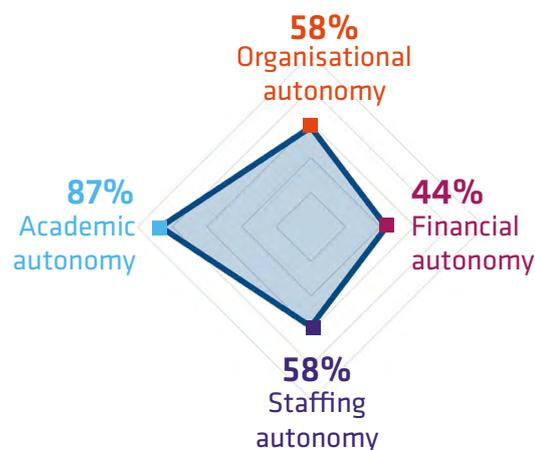
Graph 1. Higher education institutions in Brandenburg in 2021-2022²



Graph 2. Distribution of students in Brandenburg in 2022-2023³



Factsheet



1 Data for academic year 2022/2023 retrieved from DESTATIS: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Institutions-Higher-Education/Tables/total-states-further-indicated-winter-term.htm>

2 Data retrieved from: <https://www.datenportal.bmbf.de/portal/en/2.5.1>

3 Data retrieved from: <https://www.datenportal.bmbf.de/portal/en/2.5.22>

Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	58%	58% →	58% →	Medium low	23
Financial autonomy	44%	44% →	44% →	Medium low	27
Staffing autonomy	58%	58% →	58% →	Medium low	24
Academic autonomy	67%	87% ↗	87% →	High	9

The Autonomy Scorecard has not recorded changes in any of the four dimensions since 2017, due to the stability of legal frameworks of the higher education sector in Germany. The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes to university statutes ('Grundordnung') are typically approved by the university's senate- and/or council-type bodies and do not require external validation.

Executive leadership

In Brandenburg, the university senate elects the rector. The result of the election is validated by the ministry. Basic selection criteria for executive heads are stated in the law, such as holding a university degree and having several years of professional experience.

The exact term of office is stated in the law as six years with the possibility for re-election.

The procedure for the dismissal of the executive head is also stated in the law, with a two-thirds majority of the senate votes required for dismissal. In line with the selection procedure, the law states that the dismissal must be confirmed by an external authority.

Governance bodies

In Brandenburg, universities have a senate-based unitary governing structure.

The size and the composition of the senate vary across the sector, but it is composed of representatives of the academic and student communities. Universities may not include external members in the senate.

The European University Viadrina Frankfurt is an exception in this regard. It has a dual governance structure and involves external members. The board-type body of this institution includes a maximum of nine members, at least three of whom are women. It must comprise five external members, one university member, and one government representative. More broadly, as a foundation university under public law, European University Viadrina Frankfurt benefits from a higher level of autonomy on various matters.

One characteristic of universities in Brandenburg is the 'Landeshochschulrat' that provides strategic guidance to universities. This is a Land-wide council, and therefore not a university body.

Structures

Universities in Brandenburg can decide on their academic structures without constraints and can create both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities in Brandenburg receive funding in a two-year budget cycle, without specific restrictions on internal allocation.⁴

Financial management

Universities may keep surplus from public funding, but its allocation is predetermined by public authorities.

Universities may only borrow from a bank owned by the Land of Brandenburg, for a limited amount.

Universities are responsible for real estate management, but do not own their buildings, except for foundation universities.

Tuition fees

There are no tuition fees at universities in Brandenburg, either for national/EU or international students.

⁴ Public expenditure on education in Brandenburg in 2022 represented 5.41% of overall budget. (DESTASTIS)

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Universities recruit senior staff autonomously. Senior staff hold civil servant status. However, the rules differ depending on whether the staff member was hired before or after 2002. After this date, employment modalities for civil servants changed, offering more flexibility to universities.

Salaries

Staff salaries are decided by Land authorities and therefore differ across Germany. Decisions on individual academic staff salaries are restricted due to an overall limit for all staff payments. The system also differentiates between professors appointed before and after 2002. Salaries for professors appointed before 2002 are externally regulated, while the law regulates the minimum and maximum limits for the post-2002 hires. Salary bands for senior administrative staff are negotiated between unions and Land authorities.

Careers

Dismissal of staff remains strictly regulated. The civil servant status limits the causes for dismissal of staff to cases of gross misconduct.

Staff can be promoted if a post is available at a higher level.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities in Brandenburg negotiate overall student numbers with an external authority. The Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the admission process, which may entail a long waiting period in some disciplines (e.g. medicine), should allow students to train their competences (e.g. training as a nurse). Therefore, the legislation at Land level has not changed, but the overall approach has been modified through the court ruling, with the waiting period no longer included in the admission process. In 2022, the German Science and Humanities Council (Wissenschaftsrat), which is responsible for external quality assurance, has argued that universities should have more capacity to decide on the admission process.

Admission to bachelor's degree programmes is co-regulated by external authorities and universities. In Brandenburg, the law lists basic criteria, from which universities can choose those that are required for enrolment. Universities are autonomous in deciding the admission process for master's degree programmes.

Degree programmes

New bachelor's and master's degree programmes must be submitted for accreditation before they can be introduced unless a university is allowed to self-accredit its programmes. Universities can open new doctoral programmes without prior accreditation.

Agreements signed between universities and the Land authorities determine the study programmes that can be introduced or can be terminated. Termination of degree programmes requires negotiation between universities and an external authority. Introducing a programme is directly linked to funding. While universities may open programmes outside of the list, it is rare due to the funding being provided by the government. In the context of lifelong learning, universities are allowed to introduce short-cycle programmes and charge tuition fees.

External quality assurance

German public universities can choose between programme accreditation, 'system' accreditation and an 'alternative procedure' (all done by the 'Akkreditierungsrat', accreditation council). System accreditation allows universities to accredit their study programmes autonomously. Universities without system accreditation must continue to undergo programme accreditation. Universities with system accreditation have the freedom to set up an internal quality assurance body, composed of internal members, but may also include external members. Universities can therefore choose internal quality assurance mechanisms. Currently, not all universities have system accreditation.

Universities can select their quality assurance provider, including foreign agencies.

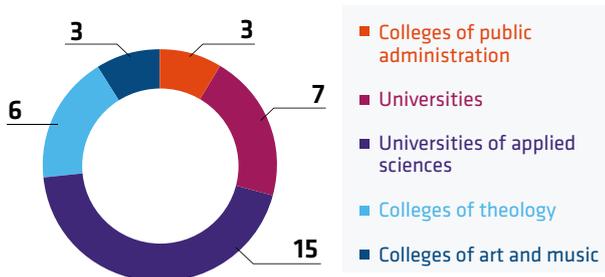
In Brandenburg, universities are free to decide on the language of instruction at all degree levels. In addition, they can design the content of their degree programmes without constraints.



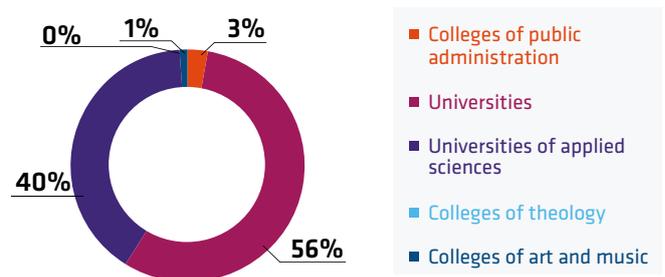
Hesse

In Hesse, the number of students enrolled in the academic year of 2022-2023 was 256,216.⁵ Hesse counts fourteen state institutions of higher education,⁶ including six universities, three art academies, and five universities of applied sciences. An updated version⁷ of the Hessian Higher Education Act was published in December 2021.

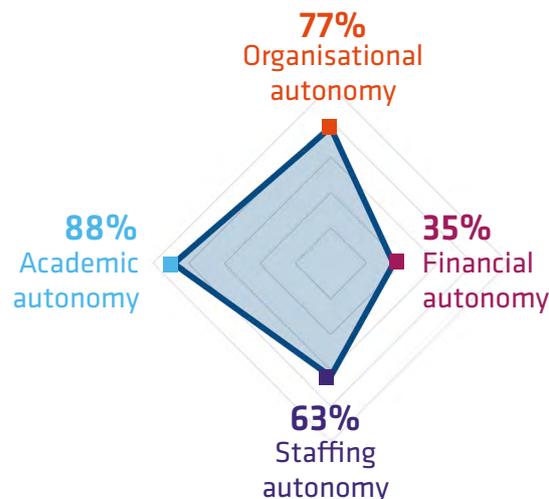
Graph 1. Higher education institutions in Hesse (2021-2022)⁸



Graph 2. Distribution of students in Hesse (2022-2023)



Factsheet



⁵ Data for academic year 2022/2023 retrieved from DESTATIS: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Institutions-Higher-Education/Tables/total-states-further-indicated-winter-term.html>

⁶ <https://wissenschaft.hessen.de/studieren/international-students/study-in-hessen>

⁷ <https://www.rv.hessenrecht.hessen.de/bshe/document/jlr-HSchulGHE2022rahmen>

⁸ Data retrieved from: <https://www.datenportal.bmbf.de/portal/en/2.5.1>

Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	77%	77% →	77% →	Medium high	11
Financial autonomy	35%	35% →	35% →	Low	32
Staffing autonomy	63%	63% →	63% →	Medium high	20
Academic autonomy	69%	88% ↗	88% →	High	7

The Autonomy Scorecard has not recorded changes in any of the four dimensions since 2017, despite the update of the law in Hesse in 2021. The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes to university statutes ('Grundordnung') are typically approved by the university's senate and/or council type bodies and not require external validation.

Executive leadership

Universities from Hesse internally elect their executive head and the result of this election does not require an external validation by the ministry. However, the rector is appointed as a civil servant for the duration of their term of office. The senate is responsible for electing the rector.

Basic selection criteria for executive heads are stated in the law, such as holding a university degree and having several years of professional experience.

The exact term of office is stated in the law as six years with the possibility for re-election.

The procedure for the dismissal of the executive head is also stated in the law with a two-thirds of votes in the senate required.

Governance bodies

In Hesse, universities have dual governance structures, including both a senate- and a board/council-type body.

The senate advises and decides on issues related to research, teaching and studies. The board/council holds a strategic oversight role, including the approval of the institutional development plan and budget.

The board/council includes up to ten members as stated in the law, with the exact number outlined in the university statutes. At least 40% of the seats must be occupied by women. It comprises only external members with half appointed by universities and half by an external authority. A representative of the ministry attends meetings and has consultative rights.

The law allows neighbouring universities to form a joint university council.

University senates are composed of 17 members by law, including nine professors, three students, three researchers and two administrative staff.⁹ Additional participants have a consultative role.

Universities that operate as foundation universities under the public law, such as Goethe University Frankfurt, enjoy a higher level of autonomy in designing their governance structure.

Structures

Universities in Hesse can decide on their academic structures and can create both for profit and non-profit legal entities.

⁹ The composition of senates differs between universities and universities of applied sciences.

Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities in Hesse receive funding on an annual basis, without specific restrictions in the allocation of funding.

Financial management

Universities in Hesse may keep surplus from public funding, but its allocation is predetermined by public authorities. They are not allowed to borrow money and may not own the facilities in which they operate.

Tuition fees

There are no tuition fees at universities in Hesse, either for national/EU or international students.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Universities recruit senior staff autonomously. Senior staff hold civil servant status. However, the rules differ depending on whether they were hired before or after 2002. After this date, employment modalities for civil servants changed, offering more flexibility to universities. In Hesse, universities can determine the procedures for selecting senior academic staff. However, the law specifies some conditions such as advertisement and the appointment of a special committee for the selection.

Salaries

Staff salaries are decided by Land authorities and therefore differ across Germany. Decisions on individual academic staff salaries are restricted due to an overall limit for all staff payments. The system also differentiates between professors appointed before or after 2002. Salaries for professors appointed before 2002 are externally regulated, while the law regulates the minimum and maximum limits for the post-2002 hires. Salary bands for senior administrative staff are negotiated between unions and Land authorities.

Careers

Dismissal of staff remains strictly regulated. The public status limits the causes for dismissal of staff to cases of gross misconduct.

Promotions for staff who retain civil servant status are linked to age. As a general rule, promotions are based on the time spent by staff in their current position.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities in Hesse negotiate overall student numbers with the Land public authorities.

Admission to bachelor's degree programmes is co-regulated by external authorities and universities. Universities in Hesse are autonomous to decide on the admission process to master's degree programmes.

Degree programmes

New bachelor's and master's degree programmes must be submitted for accreditation before they can be introduced unless a university is allowed to self-accredit its programmes. Universities can open new doctoral programmes without prior accreditation.

Agreements signed between the universities and Land authorities determine the study programmes that can be introduced or terminated. Programme termination may not lead to a reduction of the institution's allocated capacity in terms of study places. Therefore, universities must create new places in other study programmes to maintain their capacity at the same level.

Introducing a programme is directly linked to funding and while universities may open programmes outside of the list, it is rare due to the funding being provided by the government. In the context of lifelong learning, universities are allowed to introduce short-cycle programmes and charge tuition fees.

External quality assurance

German public universities can choose between programme accreditation, 'system' accreditation and an 'alternative procedure' (all done by the 'Akkreditierungsrat', accreditation council). System accreditation allows universities to accredit their study programmes autonomously. Universities without system accreditation must continue to undergo programme accreditation. Universities with system accreditation have the freedom to set up their internal quality assurance body, composed of internal members, but may also include external members. Universities can therefore choose internal quality assurance mechanisms. Currently, not all universities have system accreditation.

Universities can select their quality assurance provider, including foreign agencies.

In Hesse, universities are free to decide on language of instruction for all degree levels.

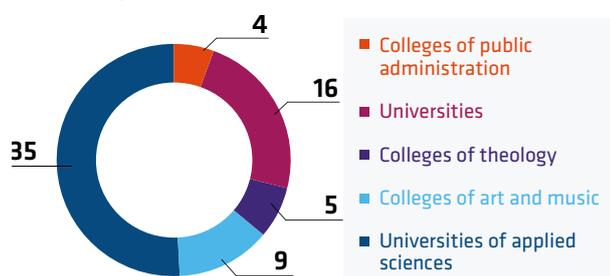


North-Rhine Westphalia

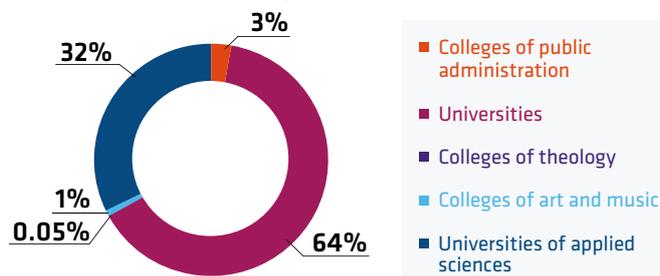
In North Rhine-Westphalia, the number of students enrolled in the academic year of 2022-2023 was 750,501.¹⁰ A majority of students are enrolled in universities, which are essentially public institutions. Other sub-sectors include more private providers.

The Higher Education Act applicable to higher education institutions in North-Rhine Westphalia was last amended in July 2019.¹¹

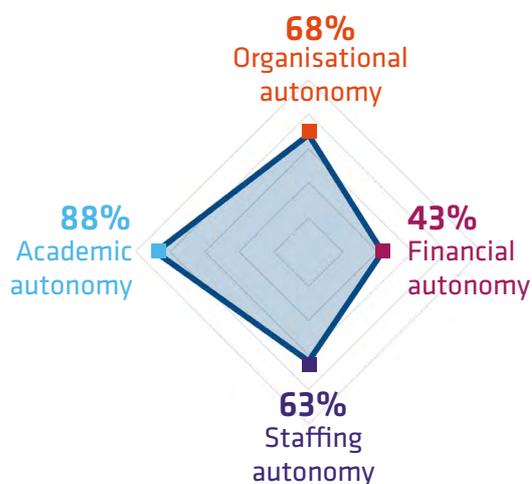
Graph 1. Higher Education sector in North-Rhine Westphalia



Graph 2. Distribution of students in per sector in North-Rhine Westphalia



Factsheet



¹⁰ Data for academic year 2022/2023 retrieved from DESTATIS: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Institutions-Higher-Education/Tables/total-states-further-indicated-winter-term.html>

¹¹ <https://www.mkw.nrw/hochschule-und-forschung/hochschulen/hochschulgesetz>

Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	82%	68% ↘	68% →	Medium high	17
Financial autonomy	58%	43% ↘	43% →	Medium low	29
Staffing autonomy	63%	63% →	63% →	Medium high	20
Academic autonomy	69%	88% ↗	88% →	High	7

The Autonomy Scorecard has not recorded changes in any of the four dimensions of autonomy since 2017. The legislative changes in 2019 had no impact on the scoring. The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

University statutes ('Grundordnung') are typically validated by the university's senate- and/or council-type bodies and do not require external validation.

Executive leadership

Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia internally elect their executive head through an electoral body consisting of senate and council members. The result of the election is validated by the ministry.

Basic selection criteria for executive heads are stated in the law such as holding a university degree and having several years of professional experience.

The law stipulates that the term of office is six years with the possibility for re-election limited to four years unless the university statutes provide for longer terms of office.

The procedure for the dismissal of the executive head is also stated in the law, with a five-eighths majority of the university body (comprising both the senate and the board) required for dismissal. In line with the selection procedure, the law states that the dismissal must be confirmed by an external authority.

Governance bodies

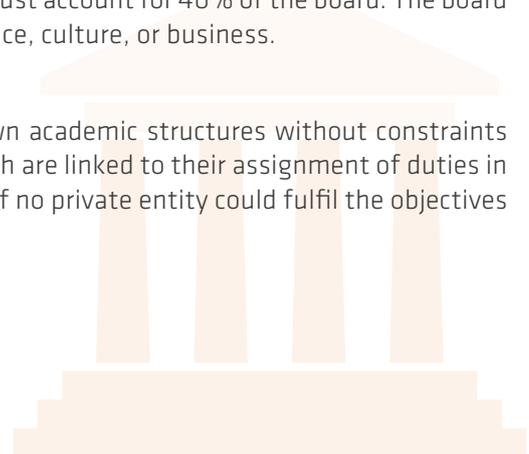
Universities have dual governance structures consisting of both a senate- and a board/council-type body. The senate is primarily responsible for teaching and research issues, while the board/council oversees institutional strategic matters. The membership of the senate is set in the law and consists of members from the following constituencies: academic staff, students, and non-academic staff. Professors hold half of the voting rights on teaching matters and the majority on research matters. Some senate members, such as executive leaders (rector and vice-rectors, chancellor, deans) and certain representatives, do not have voting rights.

Although including external members is not prohibited, it is not common practice.

The board is composed of a minimum of six and a maximum of twelve members, who are selected by a committee and validated by the senate and the respective ministry. All or at least half of the members must come from outside the university, and female members must account for 40% of the board. The board members hold relevant positions in society, particularly in science, culture, or business.

Structures

Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia can decide on their own academic structures without constraints and can create both for-profit and non-profit legal entities which are linked to their assignment of duties in the university law. For-profit legal entities can only be created if no private entity could fulfil the objectives of a venture.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

The main funding allocation mechanism is annual, without specific restrictions on internal allocation.

Financial management

Universities may keep surplus from public funding and use it according to their needs. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the surplus goes to a state account. Borrowing is also possible, up to a limit set by public authorities.

Public universities do not own facilities but are responsible for real estate management.

Tuition fees

There are no tuition fees at universities throughout Germany including in North Rhine-Westphalia, either for national/EU or international students.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Universities recruit senior staff autonomously. Senior staff hold civil servant status. However, rules differ depending on whether they were hired before or after 2002. After this date, employment modalities for civil servants changed, offering more flexibility to universities.

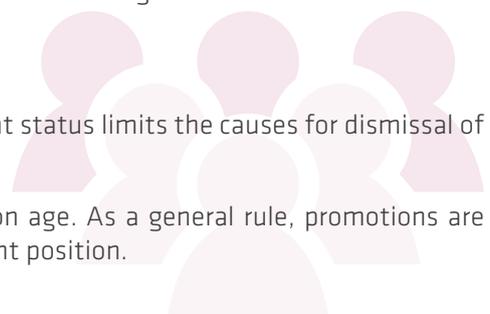
Salaries

Staff salaries are decided by Land authorities and therefore differ across Germany. Decisions on individual academic staff salaries are restricted due to an overall limit for all staff payments. The system also differentiates between professors who were appointed before and after 2002. Salaries for professors appointed before 2002 are externally regulated, while the law regulates the minimum and maximum limits for the post-2002 hires. Salary bands for senior administrative staff are negotiated between unions and Land authorities.

Careers

Dismissal of staff with remains strictly regulated. The civil servant status limits the causes for dismissal of staff to cases of gross misconduct.

Promotions for staff who retain civil servant status are based on age. As a general rule, promotions are based on the length of service of the staff member in their current position.



Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia negotiate overall student numbers with the Land public authorities. The Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the admission process, which can involve lengthy waiting periods in some disciplines (i.e. medicine) should allow students to train their competences (i.e. training as a nurse). As a result of the court ruling, the legislation at the level of Länder has not changed, but the overall approach has been modified, with the waiting period no longer included in the admission process. In 2022, the German Council of Science and Humanities, which is responsible for external quality assurance, advocated for universities to have greater capacity to decide on the admission process.

Admission at bachelor's degree level is co-regulated by external authorities and universities. In North Rhine-Westphalia, universities can select 60% of the students while the remaining 40% are reserved for students with long waiting periods. At master's degree level, universities are autonomous to decide on the admission process.

Degree programmes

New bachelor's and master's degree programmes must undergo accreditation before they can be introduced, unless the university is allowed to self-accredit their programmes. Universities can open new doctoral programmes without prior accreditation.

Agreements signed between universities and Land authorities dictate which study programmes can be introduced or terminated. Programme termination may not lead to a reduction of the institution's allocated capacity in terms of study places. Therefore, universities must create new places in other study programmes to maintain their capacity at the same level. Introducing a programme is directly linked to funding and while universities may open the programmes outside of the list, it is rare due to the funding being provided by the government. In the context of lifelong learning, universities are allowed to introduce short-cycle programmes and charge tuition fees.

External quality assurance

German public universities can choose between programme accreditation, 'system' accreditation and an 'alternative procedure' (all done by the 'Akkreditierungsrat', accreditation council). System accreditation allows universities to accredit their study programmes autonomously. Universities without system accreditation must continue to undergo programme accreditation. Universities with system accreditation have the freedom to set up their internal quality assurance body, composed of internal members, but may also include external members. Universities can therefore choose internal quality assurance mechanisms. Currently, not all universities have system accreditation.

Universities can select their quality assurance provider, including foreign agencies.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, universities are free to decide on language of instruction for all degree levels.

They can design the content of their degree programmes without constraints.



Recent developments

Reforms across Germany

The legal frameworks for higher education have been renewed in Hesse and Berlin. As of the time of writing, Bavaria was expected to amend its law to introduce a new governing body for universities, but the proposal has faced strong opposition.

In 2017, the Constitutional Court of Baden-Württemberg ruled that the procedures for the election or dismissal of the executive head must include a majority of academic staff (professors and researchers). All the other Länder had to change their regulations accordingly, although they maintained different procedures.

Funding

In 2022, public expenditure on education in Hesse accounted for 10.95% of the overall state budget.¹² Recent developments in this area include the Hesse Higher Education Pact 2021 to 2025, signed in 2020, which foresees public investment of €11.2 billion¹³ in state universities and universities of applied sciences. The multiannual financial framework is planned to grow by four percent annually until 2025, and channels together different funding instruments such as the LOEWE research funding scheme, HEUREKA university building project, and the Digital Pact for Higher Education. The Pact also includes recurrent core funding to develop research infrastructure and capacities in universities of applied sciences for the first time.

Public expenditure on education in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2022 accounted for 12.63% of the overall state budget.¹⁴ The North Rhine-Westphalia University Agreement 2022-2026 has set a basic funding budget of €20 billion for universities, which represents an increase of €330 million compared to the previous agreement.

¹² Data retrieved from DESTASTIS: <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis//online?operation=result&code=21711-0010&language=en#abreadcrumb>

¹³ <https://www.hs-geisenheim.de/en/studieninfotag-digital/research/translate-to-english-neuigkeiten/n/hessischer-hochschulpakt-2021-bis-2025-unterzeichnet-112-milliarden-euro-fuer-hochschulen/>

¹⁴ Data retrieved from DESTASTIS: <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis//online?operation=result&code=21711-0010&language=en#abreadcrumb>

Views from the sector

Tensions around staffing include the lack of attractiveness for research careers due to limited options for stable positions at the early-career stage, with the average age to become a professor being 40. In this context, discussions around fixed-term contracts and their duration aim to reconcile this objective while not imposing excessive rigidity for institutions nor weakening the international competitiveness of German universities (by offering contracts that are too short, for example).

In 2021, the federal ministry announced its intention to reform the law regulating academic contracts, which led to the '#ichbinhanna' Twitter campaign. The campaign drew attention to the working conditions of researchers and called for better working conditions and security.

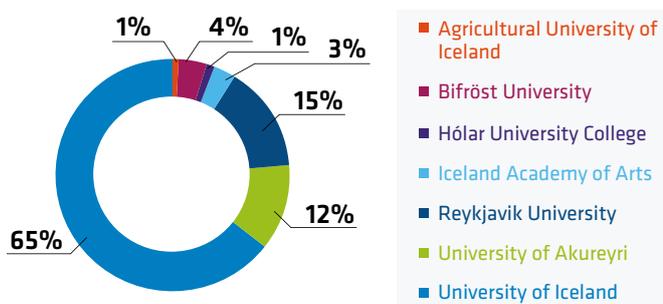
Autonomy of public universities in Iceland

Higher education landscape

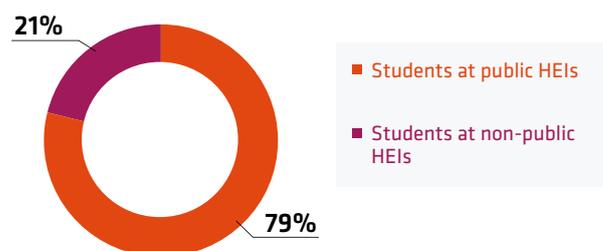
The Icelandic higher education system is comprised of seven institutions, including four public institutions regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (previously, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture). The sector is regulated by the 2006 Higher Education Act and the 2008 Act on Public Higher Education Institutions, both subject to amendments up to 2021.

The four public universities account for the majority of students (76% of the total FTE students). The University of Iceland accommodates 16,000 students, which is equivalent to 65% of the total student population.

Graph 1. Distribution of students across higher education institutions in Iceland¹



Graph 2. Distribution of students per type of institution in Iceland

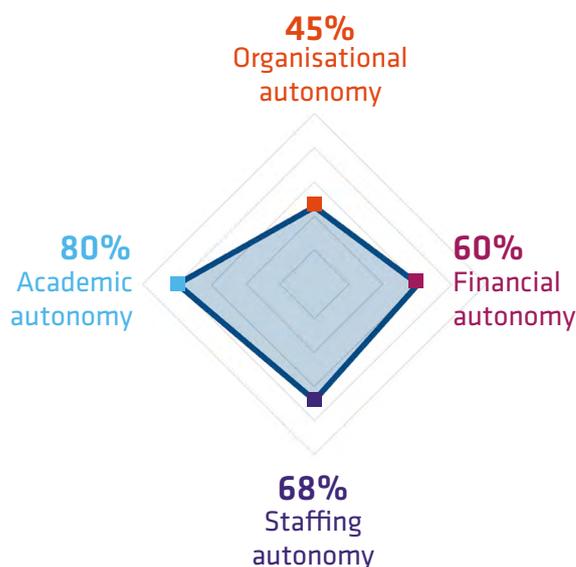


Private universities are more autonomous than public universities in terms of finance and staffing. Although public funds make for the largest part of their budget, private universities are not subject to external control on fees, may borrow, and their staff members do not have civil servant status.

The following description pertains exclusively the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ Data from graphs 1 and 2 retrieved from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER) database for the academic year 2020-2021.

Factsheet



The Autonomy Scorecard does not record significant changes in the four dimensions of autonomy since 2010. This is attributed to the overall stability of the legal framework of the higher education sector in Iceland (see table below). No major reform has been reported within the frame of the current analysis, but several amendments were adopted for both acts over the period.

Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy ²	49%	45% ↘	45% →	Medium low	34
Financial autonomy	60%	60% →	60% →	Medium low	20
Staffing autonomy	68%	68% →	68% →	Medium high	19
Academic autonomy ³	91%	80% ↘	80% →	Medium high	12

2 Correction (2017) regarding selection criteria set in law for executive leadership following the 2012 amendment of the higher education act.

3 Correction (2010, 2017) regarding the deduction value allocated to pre-determined study fields with regard to the introduction of new programmes.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

University statutes and related changes do not require external validation.

Executive leadership

The law leaves it to the public universities to design the selection process of the executive head (rector), whether through election or vacancy notice. The University of Iceland has an election process in place, detailed in its statutes. The position is advertised, and the entire university community can vote via a weighted voting system, meaning there is no pre-established electoral body. At the other three public universities the university governing council selects a candidate following the advertisement of the vacancy. In all cases, the selected candidates are appointed by the minister for a five-year term. There is no provision which limits the possibility to renew the appointment. The law was amended in 2012 to specify that the rector must fulfil certain qualifications for an academic position (i.e. a doctoral degree) in the study fields for which the public institution has received accreditation. The rules of the University of Iceland specify that the rector must fulfil criteria for professorship. Private institutions have larger freedom in this regard. Upon proposal of the university governing council, the rector may be dismissed by the ministry according to rules applicable to civil servants.

Governance bodies

The 2008 Act on Public Higher Education Institutions establishes the governance structures of public higher education institutions, which are composed of a governing council (the main decision-making body) and a representative assembly (an advisory, senate-type body).

The senate has a consultative role and, while it may vote on specific issues (such as the selection of members to the council), it does not have final decision-making powers. It forms a democratic forum that discusses important issues to the university community and may adopt statements and conclusions.

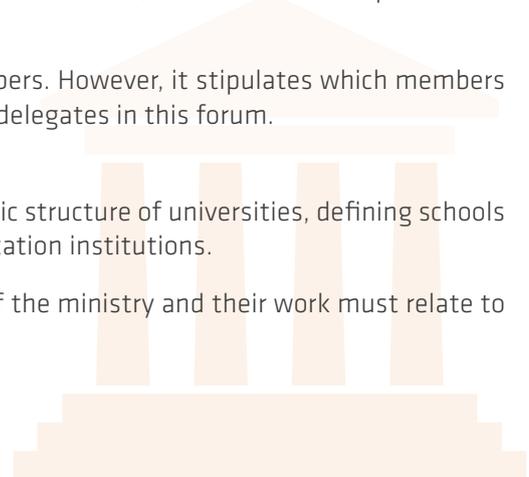
The size of the governing council depends on the number of students at the institution. For universities enrolling more than 5,000 students, it comprises of the rector, who acts as chair, and 10 other members. The senate elects three members representing the academic community and students elect two members. The minister appoints two of the external members, and the final three members are nominated by the governing council itself. The five external members must possess relevant knowledge and experience to support the university sector. They usually come from the business sector, often from start-ups or other knowledge-driven companies.

The law does not specify a maximum number for senate members. However, it stipulates which members of the university community should be represented and act as delegates in this forum.

Structures

The 2008 act includes provisions regarding the internal academic structure of universities, defining schools and faculties as main and basic academic bodies of higher education institutions.

Universities may establish legal entities with the permission of the ministry and their work must relate to university missions.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Icelandic universities receive an annual block grant, which is divided into three main categories (teaching, research and other), with the possibility for universities to freely reallocate funds across these categories.

Financial management

Public universities may keep surplus generated on public funding, up to a certain percentage (10% of turnover). Prior to 2017, keeping surplus was subject to the authorisation of the ministry.

Public universities cannot borrow money directly. However, independent legal entities established by public universities can borrow funds for specific purposes, such as infrastructure development.

The state owns public university buildings, which may be sold with the authorisation of parliament. In 2017, the law introducing balance sheets for public organisations generated significant changes with regard to building ownership and management. Buildings of the University of Iceland were placed in a state-owned company in 2021. The University of Iceland appoints the majority of the board members. The reform enables the university to use and rent property autonomously. Nevertheless, important decisions such as sale and acquisition still require governmental approval.

Tuition fees

Public universities in Iceland charge a maximum registration fee of 75,000 Icelandic króna, as set by the 2008 Act on Public Higher Education Institutions. Lower prices are practiced for specific segments of the student population.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

All senior staff at public universities hold civil servant status. Public universities are mostly autonomous in recruiting senior staff, although there are certain rules to follow regarding how vacant posts are advertised.

Salaries

At public universities, collective bargaining agreements are negotiated between unions and the Ministry of Finance, and set salary tables. Based on these, universities can make their own agreements with the unions. As a result of these agreements, salaries for academics are linked to their performance according to a specific point system.

Careers

All public university staff are civil servants and subject to civil service regulations. Therefore, dismissal is strictly regulated for both academic and administrative staff. However, universities may decide autonomously on staff promotions.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

In principle, Icelandic universities negotiate overall student numbers with the ministry to secure the corresponding funding. If universities have additional sources of funding, they are free to admit more students. Restrictions nevertheless apply in some areas, notably for professional programmes such as health sciences, which are tied to the availability of clinical placements.

Icelandic universities set the admission criteria for bachelor's and master's degree programmes according to the Act on Higher Education. In 2022, an amendment to the law further opened up student enrolment in higher education, which is no longer dependent on passing the final matriculation exam or equivalent. Universities continue to independently set additional admission criteria.

Degree programmes

Universities are free to design the content of degree programmes and courses and may introduce new programmes within the remit of the study fields for which the institution is accredited. The introduction of new programmes is approved by university council. Universities may also terminate programmes autonomously.

Universities can choose the language of instruction for their degree programmes. In practice, most bachelor's degree programmes are taught in Icelandic, while English-taught programmes are more frequent at master's and doctoral degree levels.

External quality assurance

Institutional evaluation by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education is mandatory. This independent body was established in 2010 and is comprised of international members. The Quality Board concluded its second round of evaluations (five-year cycle), which included the assessment of research activity for the first time.



Recent developments

System consolidation

Faced with political opposition to further mergers among higher education institutions, and the possible campus closures they can entail, the ministry proposed to establish a 'network of public universities' in 2010. The four public universities in the network work closely together, share a student registration system developed by the University of Iceland (in which some private HEIs now also take part), as well as respective data. The network has a joint system that evaluates the research output of the staff of the member universities. This has led to strengthening the capacities of smaller institutions through pooling of expertise. Student mobility among network institutions is encouraged.

In 2022 the ministry established a special fund to encourage increased collaboration between universities, in order to improve the quality and efficiency of their operations. Priority areas were identified within the education, research, and innovation missions. To take part, universities had to apply in consortia of at least two institutions. About 20 projects were funded in the first round and a second call was expected to be announced in 2023.

In 2022 the University of Iceland established a company owned by the university to support and oversee innovations generated from research within the university. Currently there are about twenty start-up companies in operation under the auspices of this company.

Views from the sector

The sector considers that societal trust towards the higher education sector has increased in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The sector remains positive that the ministry will continue to support universities and their development and welcomes a more holistic view of higher education adequately linked to research and innovation, as is reflected in the remit of the new ministry, as well as that of the institutional evaluation process.

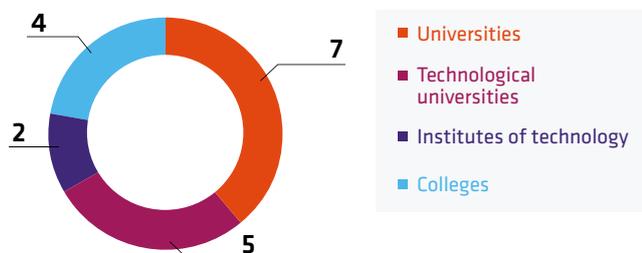
For Icelandic universities, financial sustainability remains an issue. In light of the increasing student population, the government has reaffirmed its commitment to improving public funding for higher education. However, short-term, temporary funding increases (for instance as a response to the pandemic) do not support universities' financial sustainability. Hiring additional staff on civil servant status requires long-term investments, but at the same time the pressure to use earmarked, temporary funds is also high for institutions. Public universities may not make decisions concerning the cap on registration fees, which has not been adjusted to inflation and no longer reflects actual costs incurred, which are higher than the amount set in law.

Autonomy of public universities in Ireland

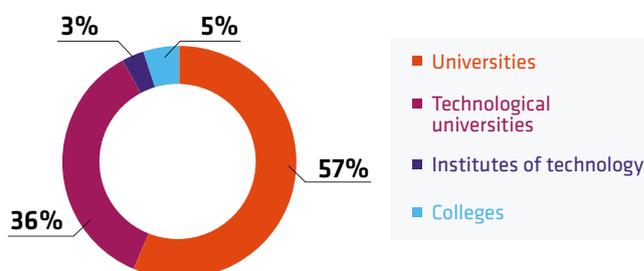
Higher education landscape

The higher education sector in Ireland distinguishes between universities, technological universities, institutes of technology and colleges. Since 2018, under Ireland's National Strategy for Higher Education, five technological universities have been established out of the mergers of 12 of the 14 institutes of technology (IoTs). It is anticipated that further mergers will occur in due course, resulting in the phased-out status of the IoTs. All universities and IoTs have public status, except for a specialist healthcare university and a pontifical university. Colleges are privately owned but state supported.

Graph 1. Composition of the higher education sector in Ireland



Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Ireland¹



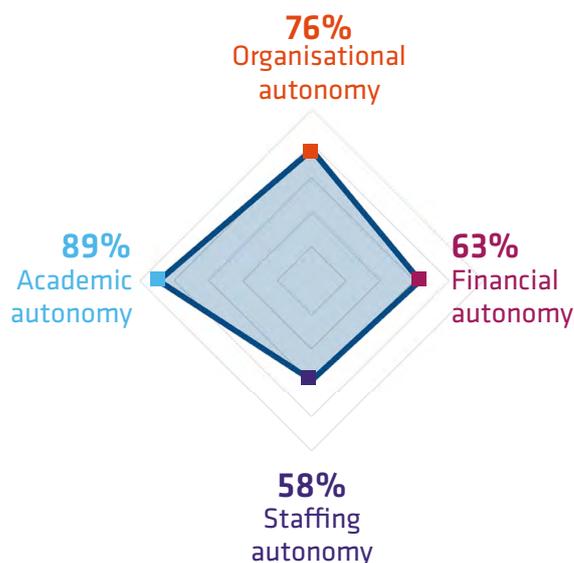
Traditional universities, whose operations are regulated by the 1997 Universities Act, enjoy greater autonomy than the technological university sector, under the 2018 Technological Universities Act. These differences can be traced back to the historically tighter government control over institutes of technology, while the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has acted as a buffer body between the state and universities.

The 2022 Higher Education Authority Act amends both the 1997 and 2018 laws and has led to several changes in the system, including granting designation to private higher education providers. As a result, they are more closely tied to the overall framework.

The following description pertains exclusively to 'traditional' universities (i.e. those regulated by the 1997 Universities Act) unless otherwise specified.

¹ Higher Education Authority, 2022/2023 data

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	81%	73% ↘	76% ↗	Medium high	12
Financial autonomy	66%	63% ↘	63% →	Medium high	18
Staffing autonomy	72%	43% ↘	58% ↗	Medium low	24
Academic autonomy	89%	89% →	89% →	High	3

Timeline

2018 Entry into force of the Technological Universities Act

2019-2022 Mergers of institutes of technology and establishment of five technological universities

2022 Funding reform

2022 Entry into force of the Higher Education Authority Act, including changes to university governance

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring may not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

The university's statutes and changes to those do not require external validation. However, universities traditionally inform the Higher Education Authority.

Executive leadership

There are no legal provision prescribing the selection procedure or criteria for the executive leader, generally referred to as president. The university statutes outline the rules regarding the selection, appointment, and dismissal of the president.

Traditional universities select the president via a recruitment process. An ad hoc recruitment committee is set up, including board members and a special selection panel comprising independent and international experts. Students may be represented on the interview panel. Trinity College, the oldest university in the country, stands as an exception, with the president being elected by the academic community.

In the case of technological universities, the ministry needs to formally appoint the president, although this process is broadly perceived as symbolic.

The law specifies the exact length of the executive head's term of office, which is fixed at ten years.

Governance bodies

Irish universities have a dual asymmetric governing structure with central power being concentrated in a board-type body, the 'governing authority', which oversees managerial and financial matters. The senate-type 'academic council' is responsible for the academic affairs of the university.

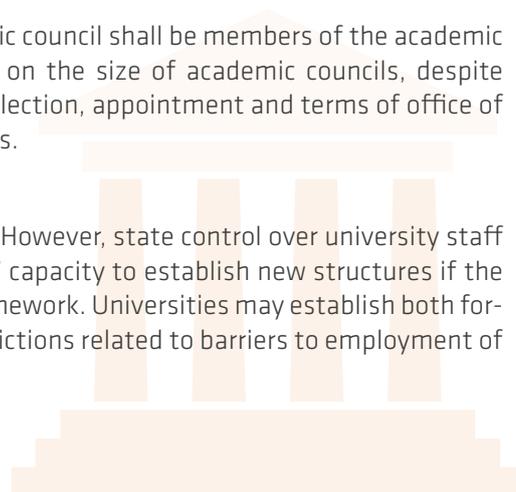
The 2022 HEA Act amended provisions regarding university governance. It has notably decreased the number of members of the governing authority from circa 40 to 19 in the name of enhanced accountability and effectiveness. The 19 members are comprised as follows: the chairperson, who must be an external nominee; nine other external members, three of whom are nominated by the minister; three student members and six internal members, including the university president. Trinity College is treated as an exception in the HEA Act and may appoint an additional six members to the governing authority from among the fellows of the university.

All members, including external nominees, must be appointed based on a competency matrix. The chair is elected by the governing authority from among the external members. The overall composition of the governing authority must respect gender balance requirements (minimum 40% male or female) and reflect the composition of Irish society.

The law stipulates that the majority of members of the academic council shall be members of the academic staff of the university. The legislation does not place a limit on the size of academic councils, despite earlier considerations to do so in the HEA Act. The members, selection, appointment and terms of office of academic council members are set out in the university statutes.

Structures

In principle, universities are free to create academic structures. However, state control over university staff remuneration persists, which effectively limits the universities' capacity to establish new structures if the denomination is not included in the employment regulatory framework. Universities may establish both for-profit and non-profit legal entities. There are nevertheless restrictions related to barriers to employment of university staff by university subsidiaries.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Irish universities receive public funding through an annual block grant, over which they essentially have control in terms of internal allocation. In 2022, the ministry published “Key elements of the funding and reform framework”, in which it recognises the need for enhanced core block grant funding, moving away from recent trends whereby any additional funding had been targeted or ring fenced for specific purposes.

Financial management

Universities may not keep surplus generated by public funding and may only borrow up to a maximum percentage. A ‘borrowing framework’ is agreed between universities and public authorities. Technological universities have not been allowed to borrow in the past but a mechanism to enable them to borrow is currently being finalised. Universities may own real estate and sell buildings, but they have an obligation to inform the Higher Education Authority.

Tuition fees

In theory, universities fix student fees, but in reality, the state pays a set amount via core funding on behalf of bachelor’s degree students, who pay a ‘contribution towards the full fee’. As a result, any change to undergraduate fee levels must be approved by the state. Thus, fees for national and EU students are externally set for bachelor’s degree programmes. Universities have the freedom to set the level of tuition fees at master’s and doctoral degree levels and may determine tuition fees charged to international (non-EU/EEA) students at any degree level.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Irish universities are free in principle to hire senior academic and administrative staff. However, the Employment Control Framework (ECF), which introduced restrictions in the wake of the economic crisis, is still in force. This framework imposes a fixed ceiling on permanent, publicly funded positions. The government-sanctioned increases in staff levels over the past few years are not enough to meet the growing demand linked to higher student numbers. The Irish government has signalled its intent to reform the ECF, but substantive changes to the rules have not yet been forthcoming.

Control on staff recruitment in the technological university sector is stricter, with senior posts requiring prior approval by government.

Universities can freely decide on the recruitment of staff who are entirely funded from other sources, such as international student fees or philanthropic income. However, these sources make up a relatively small proportion of the total staff at institutions.

Salaries

Irish universities may set the salaries of senior academic and administrative staff within salary bands prescribed at the national level per broad staff category. Nevertheless, restrictions imposed in this area have resulted in de facto reduced capacity to decide on salaries. University staff are classified as public sector workers and are accordingly entitled to pay increases and benefits determined by government.

Careers

The moratorium on staff promotion is no longer in force, allowing universities to promote senior academic and administrative staff according to their own procedures.

Staff dismissal is regulated due to public sector/civil servant status and a collective agreement concluded in 2010 between the Department of Public Expenditure and trade unions. This agreement requires universities to provide payments of between two- and three-weeks' salary per year of employment upon dismissal (in the case of voluntary redundancy or expiration of a fixed-term contract).



Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Irish universities have full autonomy to decide on overall student numbers. However, in 2020 and 2021 the government 'negotiated' a specific number of additional places in certain high-demand disciplines (mostly health sciences) at nominated levels of financial contribution and, thereby, exercised control on the allocation of those places.

Access to certain programmes leading to regulated professions, such as healthcare, medicine, pharmacy, or dentistry, are effectively controlled by professional bodies.

Universities may select students for both bachelor's and master's degree programmes. Bachelor's degree places are primarily awarded on a national points system basis. To balance supply and demand, universities decide the points level used. Some courses have additional subject specific requirements. At master's degree level, students apply directly to the individual institutions through their admissions offices based on admissions requirements determined by universities.

Degree programmes

Universities have degree awarding powers under the national qualifications legislation and may introduce new programmes without prior accreditation at any level. They terminate programmes autonomously. Furthermore, they may design the content of academic programmes without constraints. Irish universities freely decide on the language of instruction for all programmes.

External quality assurance

External institutional quality assurance procedures are the responsibility of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI, in place since 2012). Irish universities remain free to choose additional external review/evaluation procedures with other organisations, but these cannot replace the QQI process.



Recent developments

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) Act 2022

This new act has led to a relationship shift between universities and the Higher Education Authority. The act grants the minister significant and wide-ranging powers to give directions to universities via the issuance of guidelines, codes and policies. Furthermore, non-compliance with the guidelines can lead to direct intervention by the HEA, as well as the imposition of financial penalties and remedial measures.

Additionally, the Chief Executive Officer of the HEA has been granted extensive powers, including the authority to unilaterally mandate the implementation of remedial measures. Universities can only appeal the HEA intervention when remedial measures are imposed. The appeals board itself consists of three persons, all appointed by the minister. Even if an appeal is successful, it does not automatically overturn the original decision made by the minister or the HEA CEO. The external authority may reconsider the decision, but the appeals board cannot issue a binding judgement.

Funding reform

The funding reform announced in 2022 has not introduced substantial changes in terms of financial autonomy. The government confirmed that higher education should be based on a mixed funding model comprising contributions from the exchequer (public funding), employers, and students. Student loans have been explicitly ruled out as a funding option.

The government has expressed a commitment to address the funding shortfall in the coming years, but there is currently no specific timeframe or binding commitment in place. Additionally, there is a clear understanding and recognition that this funding deficit should be covered through utilisation of a block grant, which signals a departure from the recent trend of allocating funding for specific purposes through targeted and ring-fenced means.

In return for the additional investment in core funding, universities are expected to make progress across several key reform and performance priorities, including supporting the creation of a unified knowledge and skills system, strengthening representation from traditionally under-represented groups, enhancing quality and international standing, and driving the lifelong learning agenda. The government has also outlined a commitment to a reduction in student financial contributions and has introduced an annual review mechanism to evaluate the cost of higher education to students.

Views from the sector

The main narrative, reflected in the latest policies and legislation, is that of progressive convergence between the university and technological university sectors in terms of autonomy. While both sub-sectors of the university system share many challenges and respond to policy initiatives in similar ways, there is a concern that the newer technological universities have not been sufficiently differentiated from traditional universities. Without such differentiation, there is a risk that sufficient priority, or funding, will not be provided to enable individual universities to exploit their particular specialisms or competencies.

The two primary instruments of control exercised by government on the sector are employment controls and proxy controls effected through funding instruments. Increasingly, funding by the state is provided for designated activities and outcomes and, thereby, the flexibility and autonomy of individual universities is curtailed.

The sector remains concerned that steering through (dis)incentives has become the norm, notably with regard to study places. Government priorities include apprenticeships, primarily in technological universities but also impacting traditional universities, micro-credentials and lifelong learning. Government has also prioritised the development of an over-arching tertiary education policy and has placed particular emphasis on enhancing pathways between further and higher education including the launch of a first cohort of fully integrated further education-higher education courses.

The sector is also under increasing pressure, being limited in its financial and operational capacity to recruit staff while student numbers have been steadily increasing over the past years.

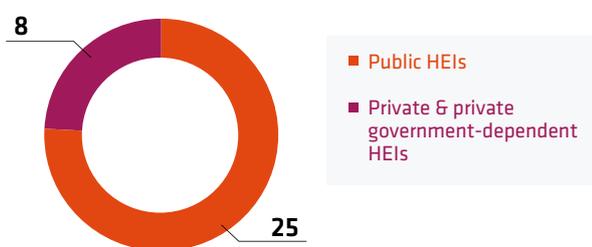
Technological universities face particular challenges with regard to human resources. These institutions have been established without the introduction of new contracts for academic staff. The current form of academic contract is inherited from the former institutes of technology, with no in-built structured provision for research activity by academics and deficiencies in academic career structures. These deficiencies represent an impediment to achieving the expanded research profile and research-informed education of a university. The sector advocates for a fundamental revision of the academic employment contract, addressing career pathways and workload arrangements, as a fundamental enabler of the transition to technological universities. Work on implementing a set of recommendations arising from an OECD review of the academic contracts in 2022 has commenced but will take considerable time to complete.

Autonomy of public universities in Norway

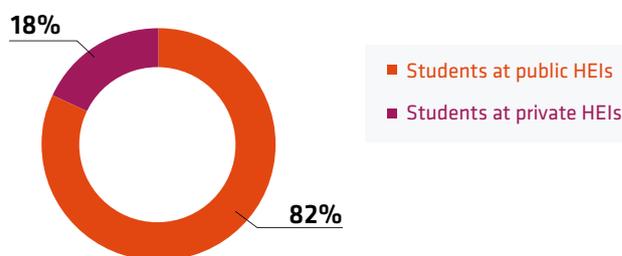
Higher education landscape

The Norwegian higher education sector comprises three types of institutions: universities, specialised universities, and colleges. The majority of these institutions are publicly funded, with less than a quarter of private providers. All higher education institutions must adhere to the same legal framework, laid out in the "[Act relating to universities and university colleges](#)". Private institutions are registered as joint-stock companies or foundations. They may have different board compositions, and may charge tuition fees, although most of private institutions do not.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Norway¹



Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Norway



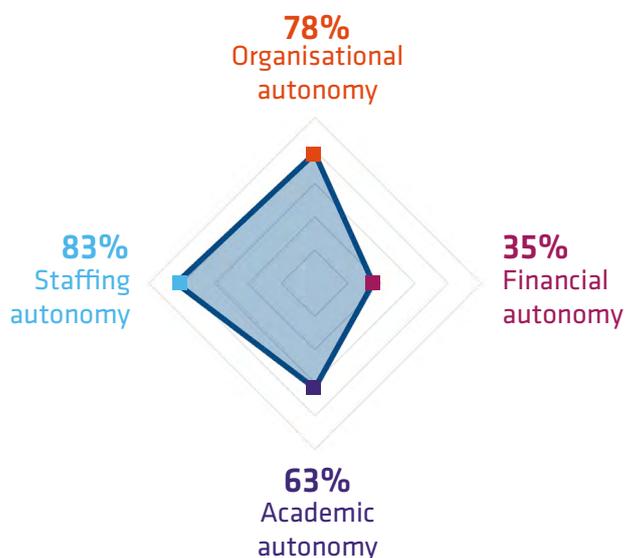
System consolidation

Eight new mergers² took place between 2016 and 2018, involving universities, specialised universities or universities of applied sciences. All mergers have been driven internally, except the Nord University merger. Drivers for merger processes include the creations of larger academic communities and expected reputational gains; it is also part of a broader phasing-out trend of the Norwegian college system.

The following description pertains exclusively the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ Data from both graphs come from the European Tertiary Education Register and Universities Norway and refer to 2019/2020 academic year.
² These include the University of Bergen, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Nord University, University of South-Eastern Norway, VID Specialized University, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. More information: <https://www.university-mergers.eu/>

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	78%	78% →	78% →	Medium high	9
Financial autonomy	42%	42% →	35% ↘	Low	32
Staffing autonomy	63%	63% →	63% →	Medium high	20
Academic autonomy	83%	83% →	83% →	High	11

Timeline

- 2016** System consolidation via mergers (2016-2018)

- 2017** Introduction of regulations for health education

- 2021** Government decision to re-open Nord University's Nesna campus

- 2022** Decision to introduce tuition fees for international students as of 2023/24

- 2023** Expected funding reform

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

University statutes, and subsequent changes to them, must be validated by an external authority.

Executive leadership

The executive leader may be elected or appointed. Making appointment the sole model was rejected in 2016 and universities remain autonomous to decide on the procedure. A majority of institutions have now moved to the appointment model. The appointment of the rector is an internal matter and does not require validation from an external authority.

Irrespective of the selection procedure, the length of the term is four years and can be renewed once. Universities are free to set up the election process autonomously but academic staff, technical (non-academic) staff and students must be included. Additionally, the law stipulates that the votes are weighted, with the votes of academic staff carrying greater weight than others. Subsequently, the appointment model offers greater flexibility. The hiring committee typically includes different groups from the university community. Depending on the institutional practice, attendance at the hearing might be reserved for an exclusive audience or open to a wider audience. The law prescribes the procedure broadly, and the university statutes may define it further.

The process for the dismissal of the rector is still stated in the law insofar as the rector is a public servant, who can only be dismissed in the event of gross misconduct. There have been cases of rectors resigning following a disagreement with the university board.

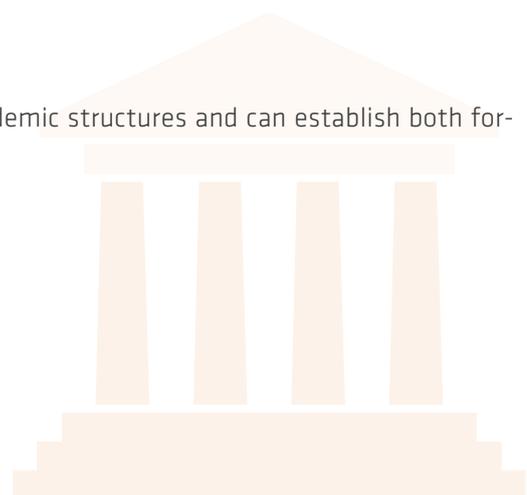
Governance bodies

The Norwegian university governance model continues to be classified as unitary, with central decision-making capacity delegated to a board-type body. The board comprises eleven members, four of whom are external. The other members are internal, including four academics, one non-academic representative and two student representatives. Elected rectors act as the chair of the board ex officio and occupy one of the seats reserved for academic staff. Appointed rectors are not a member of the board but act as board secretary and report to this body.

Although the composition of the board is stipulated by law, the board may decide to increase the number of external members with the support of two thirds of its members. Traditionally, universities propose external board candidates to the ministry, which formally appoints them. This process holds high strategic importance for the universities; therefore, thorough candidate assessment precedes the nomination process. External members are usually drawn from the international community, the business sector, or the public sector.

Structures

Norwegian universities continue to freely decide on their academic structures and can establish both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Norwegian universities receive public funding on an annual basis with no specific restrictions on the internal allocation of funding between different activities.

Financial management

In 2020, the law was amended and now permits universities to retain up to 5% of existing surpluses. However, universities may retain more than 5% if they can provide a valid justification and demonstrate the associated needs.

It remains prohibited for Norwegian universities to borrow money on the financial markets.

Since 2019, universities are required to seek advice from the Norwegian State Building Agency “Statsbygg” and its commissioner on all aspects related to real estate. Although some universities still own their buildings, they cannot purchase new ones and require the approval of an external authority to sell any historical buildings.

Tuition fees

Public universities are not permitted to charge tuition fees to neither students from Norway, the European Union, nor international students except for a small number of special programmes.

In the last quarter of 2022, the Ministry of Education announced plans³ to introduce tuition fees for students who come from countries outside the EEA and Switzerland as of the academic year 2023/2024.

³ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/utenlandske-studenter/id2930852/>

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Universities freely recruit both senior academic and senior administrative staff.

Senior university staff in Norway continue to have public employee status. However, there is a conceptual difference between civil servants and public employees in the Norwegian context. Top officials are appointed by the King of Norway and are regulated by the special law on civil servants. Whereas the bulk of staff fall under the national framework for public employees and general labour law.

Salaries

There are national and central salary negotiations between national employer associations and national unions, without involvement of the ministry. These negotiations set the minimum wage increase. At the local level, universities negotiate with local unions which can result in salary differences between institutions. The university board sets the salary for the rector within the executive salary regulations for public sector.

Careers

Dismissals are strictly regulated due to public servant status for all. The law stipulates the composition of the selection committee for the promotion of senior academic staff. Universities are nevertheless able to determine the promotion processes for senior administrative staff.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities remain autonomous to decide on the number of students they enrol, with the caveat that funding allocation is dependent on student numbers and performance.

At bachelor's degree level, the admission process is co-regulated between the government and the university, with prospective students required to meet nationally set and institutional-level criteria. Universities have the full capacity to regulate enrolment in master's degree programmes.

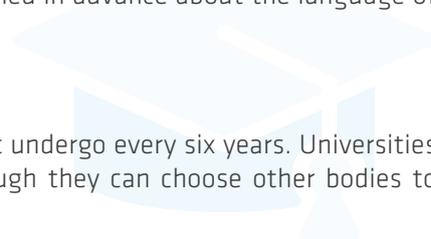
Degree programmes

Universities can introduce new programmes at all levels without prior accreditation and can terminate programmes independently. Neither is the content of degree programmes subject to any constraints.

While Norwegian is the main language of higher education in Norway, universities may offer courses and programmes in English or other languages. Students must be informed in advance about the language of instruction.

External quality assurance

Norway practices institutional accreditation, which universities must undergo every six years. Universities must use the Norwegian Agency for Accreditation (NOKUT), although they can choose other bodies to assist in the development of quality assurance processes.



Recent developments

External interference into the merger of Nord University and its real estate management has sparked a debate in Norway. Specifically, the board's decision to close the Nesna campus at Nord University was met with opposition from public authorities. After the election in 2021, the government intervened by issuing a royal decree to overturn the board's decision and reopen the campus, along with an accompanying extra budget. Although this intervention was within the government's legal remit, it was deemed unprecedented. The royal decree allows the government to make a legally supported decision without consulting the parliament.

As part of an ongoing funding reform, the ministry was expected to launch three-year performance agreements by January 2023. Public funding will however remain allocated on an annual basis and will not be attached to these agreements.

These agreements are tailored to the specific profile of the institutions while considering the national priority objectives.

There have also been some discussions to centralise student enrolment for master's degree programmes.

Views from the sector

The Norwegian university sector expressed concerns over an increase in political intervention. Examples include the re-opening of the Nesna campus, or the introduction (in 2017) of regulations for health education, covering various aspects of the national curriculum development, that were previously the universities' own responsibility.

The sector welcomed the initiative to introduce longer performance agreements, anticipating a less bureaucratic process. Annual agreements were deemed to hinder institutions from engaging in long-term planning and forecasting.

Despite the series of interventions, the sector remains confident that there is a common understanding that institutional autonomy is crucial in the Norwegian context.

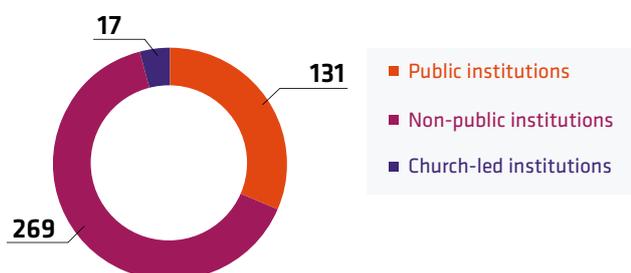
Autonomy of public universities in Poland

Higher education landscape

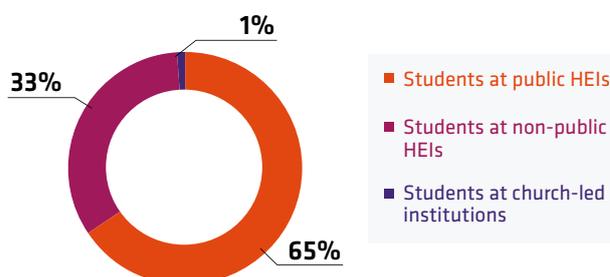
The Polish higher education system distinguishes between two types of institutions. Only universities may deliver doctoral degrees; they are required to reach the highest evaluation category in a minimum of six disciplines in at least three areas of the sciences. Other higher education institutions may only provide first and/or second-cycle programmes as well as vocational and specialist programmes. Public institutions are established by the state, while private ones may be founded by private individuals or local/regional authorities. Public universities are overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science, although a small number of public institutions are administered by other ministries such as the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

All higher education institutions are governed by the Law on Higher Education and Science. The primary difference lies in the fact that private institutions do not receive core funding from the government, but they otherwise operate in the same way as public institutions. Private institutions are nevertheless granted higher autonomy by the law to organise their internal structures. Although private institutions form a majority in the system, most of the student population is enrolled in public institutions.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Poland¹



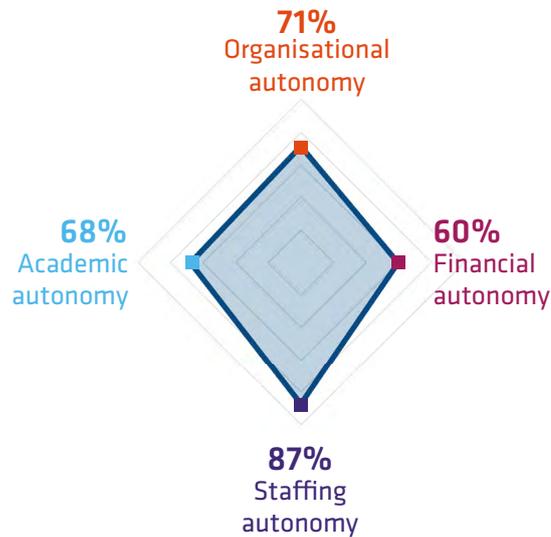
Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Poland



The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ The data is sourced from https://radon.nauka.gov.pl/raporty/uczelnie_2022. It is rounded up to the nearest whole number and refers to the 2022/2023 academic year.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	67%	67% →	71% ↗	Medium high	14
Financial autonomy	54%	54% →	60% ↗	Medium low	20
Staffing autonomy	78%	84% ↗	87% ↗	High	12
Academic autonomy	63%	68% ↗	68% →	Medium high	16

Timeline

2018 Adoption of the Law on Higher Education and Science

2022 Release of the results of the first performance evaluation round under new regulations

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including in some cases legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard if they fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

University statutes and any related changes do not require external validation. However, if a university's statutes are found to breach the legal framework, the Ministry of Education and Science may intervene to ensure compliance. Punitive measures are not typically taken in such cases.

Executive leadership

The process to nominate a rector has changed with the introduction of a new governance model at Polish universities. The newly established university council may identify candidates, who are then considered by the senate for an opinion. The details of the nomination and election process are regulated in the university statutes, but the law specifies that the rector is elected by the electoral college, which must comprise no less than 20% of students and doctoral candidates. The president of the electoral college notifies the minister about the appointment of the rector.

Private institutions may have a different process in place, with the board of trustees selecting the rector.

The law specifies two eligibility conditions: the candidate cannot be above 70 years of age and must hold a doctoral degree. It is no longer necessary for candidates to hold an academic position, as the intention is to enable candidates with different professional backgrounds to become rectors. Rectors are elected for four years and may not hold more than two consecutive terms.

The law stipulates that the rector can be dismissed by the electoral college by a majority of at least three-quarters of the votes cast in the presence of at least two-thirds of its statutory members. The minister may apply to the electoral college with a motion to dismiss the rector if the rector is found to have violated the law (the minister may dismiss the rector directly in case of gross or persistent violation of the law). Over the past 30 years, 11 rectors have been dismissed from Polish universities due to financial matters, plagiarism, or employment in other institutions.

Governance bodies

The 2018 law has modified universities' governing structure, transitioning from a senate-based unitary model to a dual asymmetric model. In this model, the senate holds central power and competences concerning strategy, budget, and academic matters, while the newly established council provides an opinion on the budget, strategy, and statutes, and oversees financial management as well as the nomination of candidates for rectorship. Considering that the senate remains the central figure, institutional practices have not undergone significant changes. The rector chairs the senate ex officio.

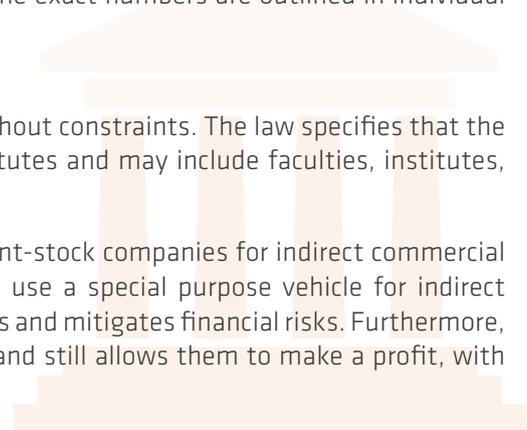
The council's members include the chairperson of the student council and six or eight members elected by the university senate. Among these members, at least half must come from outside of the institution.

The law includes provisions on the composition of the senate. Professors make up no less than 50% of members, students (and doctoral candidates) make up at least 20%. Other academic staff and administrative staff make up no less than 25% of members. The exact numbers are outlined in individual university statutes.

Structures

Polish universities may decide on their academic structures without constraints. The law specifies that the types of organisational units are laid out in the university statutes and may include faculties, institutes, departments, units, centres, and colleges.

While previously universities could set up limited liability or joint-stock companies for indirect commercial reasons, such as acquiring shares and assets, they may now use a special purpose vehicle for indirect commercial reasons. This offers better protection for their assets and mitigates financial risks. Furthermore, this new entity is better suited to universities' specific needs and still allows them to make a profit, with the universities being the sole shareholders.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Polish universities receive funding through an annual block grant. The 2018 law merged the two main streams of funding – for education and research – into one grant, with more freedom in the internal allocation of public funds (research funding was previously directly allocated to faculties).

Financial management

Universities may keep any surplus, but it must be used for investments.

Polish universities may borrow money from the financial markets. If the loan is to be guaranteed by university assets received from public authorities, the application must be approved by the State Treasury.

Since 2005, universities have acquired ownership over the buildings they operate in. However, they need prior permission to sell buildings provided by public authorities.

Tuition fees

Universities may not charge tuition fees to full-time national or EU students at any level. However, universities can charge for 'special educational services' and part-time students are included in this provision. However, the fees must not exceed real costs, and this rule also applies to the fees charged to international students.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

The 2018 law has granted universities greater autonomy when it comes to staffing decisions. While previously, the appointment of full professors had to be confirmed by the ministry, the law now defines two senior academic positions: professors and university professors. The former is open to persons holding the title of professor (conferred by the country's president), while the latter is open to doctoral degree holders with significant teaching, scientific, artistic or professional achievements.

There are no specific restrictions to the recruitment of senior administrative staff.

Salaries

Universities can freely decide on the salaries of senior academic and administrative staff, above minimum salary levels set by the ministry. They establish the terms and conditions concerning salaries for work in a corporate collective labour agreement or salary re-regulations.

Careers

Dismissals of senior academic staff are subject to regulations specific to the sector. While they are not civil servants, most academic staff have a special status that provides a high level of protection against dismissal. The rector may dismiss academic staff after two consecutive negative periodic assessments. These assessments must be carried out at least every four years, or at the request of the rector, and typically happens every two to four years. The process is undertaken centrally by a specially appointed group. Working in another institution without the rector's prior authorisation may also be a motive for dismissal.

For senior administrative staff, there are no sector-specific regulations, and national labour market regulations apply.

Universities are free to decide on promotion procedures for both senior academic and administrative staff (in the case of academic staff, provided that the candidate satisfies the formal requirements associated with a particular position).

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Polish universities have full autonomy in deciding the overall number of students they admit. The restriction introduced in 2011, which limited universities from increasing their student numbers by more than 2%, has been removed.

Student admission to bachelor's and master's degree programmes is fully controlled by higher education institutions. As in other systems, quotas/numerus clausus exist for certain fields such as medicine.

Degree programmes

Polish universities offer both academic and practical programmes. A university may introduce new academic programmes autonomously provided that it has a sufficiently high category in the corresponding scientific discipline, as determined through the research performance evaluation. This is not necessary for practical programmes, which can be offered at both bachelor's and master's degree levels.

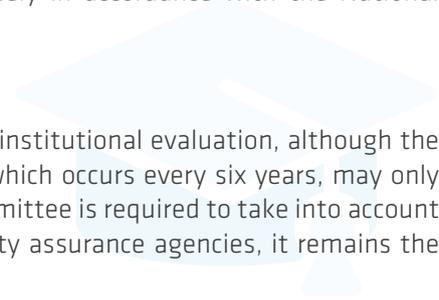
Polish universities may terminate programmes autonomously.

Universities are free to choose the language of instruction for their bachelor's and master's degree programmes.

Polish universities can design the content of the programmes freely in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework.

External quality assurance

There are two types of evaluation: programme-level evaluation and institutional evaluation, although the latter is carried out rather infrequently. Programme accreditation, which occurs every six years, may only be conducted by the Polish Accreditation Committee. While the Committee is required to take into account certificates and accreditations issued by foreign/international quality assurance agencies, it remains the sole agency responsible for mandatory accreditation.



Recent developments

The 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science

This reform, the most significant since 2005, represents an important milestone. It was notably shaped by international higher education trends and practices.

This process spanned approximately two years and involved various workshops, exchanges, and contributions from the sector, academia, and external perspectives.

This new law is essentially focused on deregulation, evaluation, and consolidation. As such, the reform introduced major changes in university governance and organisation, university funding, doctoral training, research assessment, etc. The reform has encouraged the institutional transformation of Polish universities, in the context of internal university discussions about their own institutional regulations and new statutes, including governance models and internal structure. The reform concentrates more decision-making capacity with the rector, while maintaining a collegial decision-making process.

Views from the sector

As part of the 2018 reform, new criteria for assessing university performance were introduced. The periodic evaluations rate every scientific discipline represented at the university with a score ranging from C (lowest) to A+, and this result has a direct impact on public funding (in addition to determining the right of the institution to award academic degrees in the field). Research and teaching activities are evaluated, and the results are multiplied by certain coefficients, with the total amount calculated through a predetermined algorithm. The sector finds this evaluation system restrictive and flawed, particularly as indicators and weights have been revised without consultation of the parliament (or the sector), and concerns have emerged that the process has become politicised. Each discipline has been assigned a list of scientific journals that academic staff are supposed to publish in, which puts interdisciplinary research at risk. The current evaluation system fails to recognise or incentivise outstanding researchers, as no more than four articles are considered. Therefore, the sector is lobbying for change in this regard.

Results of the first four-year cycle were published mid-2022 among significant criticism, which may lead to changes for the next evaluation period.

The sector points to a general tendency towards micro-management by public authorities outside of the primary legal framework. For instance, recent ministerial regulations concerning the classification of scientific disciplines based on the standard established by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), detailed regulations on the evaluation process, and the funding formula are not incorporated within the main law. This opens the door to political influence, as evidenced by the list of publications that can be considered for evaluation.

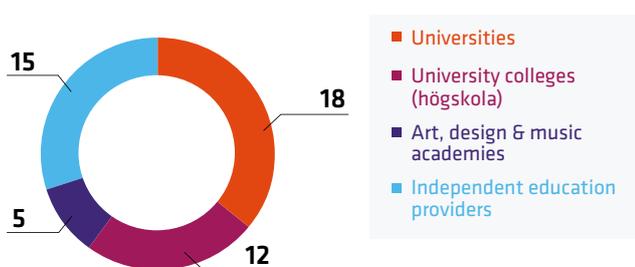
In April 2022, Poland passed a law establishing the 'Copernicus Academy', a new institution to be composed of Polish and foreign scientists appointed by the country's president. The sector is concerned that this body would duplicate the tasks of the Polish Academy of Sciences while being under more direct control of public authorities.

Autonomy of public universities in Sweden

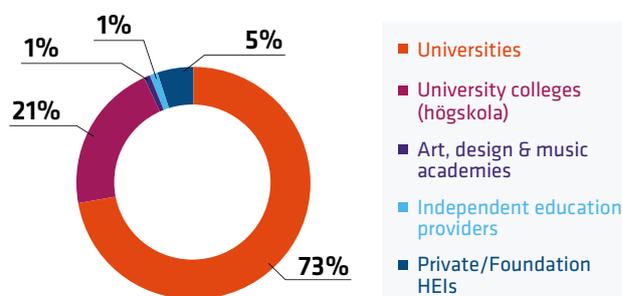
Higher education landscape

The Swedish higher education system differentiates between universities; högskola, referred to as 'university colleges' by the Swedish Higher Education Authority; art, design, and music academies; and independent education providers.¹ The main distinguishing factor between universities and university colleges is their degree-awarding capacity. Universities have been granted general degree-awarding powers at the second and third-cycle levels, while university colleges must apply for entitlement to award degrees at the second and third-cycle levels in specific areas. However, both types of institutions may lose their right to award degrees. In the international context, colleges are generally regarded as universities for better comparability.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Sweden



Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Sweden



Sweden has a uniform higher education system regulated by the [Swedish Higher Education Act](#) (1992:1434). Most higher education institutions are public, with two out of 17 universities being non-public. Moreover, Chalmers University of Technology and Jönköping University have foundation university status. There are also a few private institutions, including Marie Cederschiöld University, the Swedish Red Cross University, Sophiahemmet University, University College Stockholm, and the Stockholm School of Economics. The two foundation universities have agreements with the government that outline their operations. The aforementioned independent education providers are publicly funded and therefore not considered private institutions. The majority of students attend public universities.

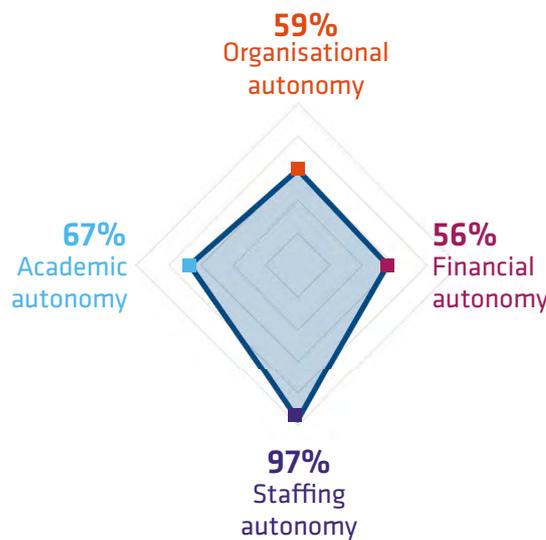
The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ Data used for the graphs is retrieved from the Swedish Higher Education Authority. Data for the first graph was update in January 2023, whereas data for the second graph relates to the 2019-2020 academic year.

While private universities are regulated similarly to their public counterparts in academic matters, they enjoy greater freedom in organisational and financial matters. For instance, public universities are subject to ‘mandatory openness’ laws, which require them to release public information to interested parties, while private institutions are not bound by the same regulations. Additionally, public universities are not allowed to make membership in the student union mandatory, while private institutions, such as Chalmers University of Technology, may establish such regulations. Other differences include the fact that non-public institutions may own buildings, establish companies and spin-offs, and operate on foreign soil, while public universities are restricted from engaging in such activities.

Unlike other institutions, the Swedish Defence University (Försvarshögskolan), has a unique legal framework and a specific governing body due to its status.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy ²	53%	59% ↗	59% →	Medium low	21
Financial autonomy	56%	56% →	56% →	Medium low	23
Staffing autonomy	95%	97% ↗	97% →	High	3
Academic autonomy	67%	67% →	67% →	Medium high	17

Neither legal amendments nor large-scale reforms have been reported within the frame of the current analysis.

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring may not necessarily be interpreted as the absence of system-level change.

2 Correction to the previous edition: the law sets the maximum (rather than minimum) duration for the rector’s term of office.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Swedish universities do not have statutes *per se*; rather, they are regulated by law and ordinances. Internal documents do not require external validation.

Executive leadership

The appointment of the executive head must be formally validated by an external authority, although the law does not stipulate the exact procedure. In practice, the board decides on the appointment, and procedures may vary across the sector.

The law states that the candidate is required to hold an academic position.

By law, the rector serves a term limited to a maximum of six years in the law. Their term may be extended twice, by three years per extension.

The rector may be removed by the government (with or without an internal process having been started), which may decide to appoint the rector to other public functions.

Governance bodies

Swedish universities have a unitary governing structure, with the board as the main decision-making body. Some historically established universities also have a senate-type body, but there is no provision for it in the law. Since 2011, universities have been free to set up a faculty board or assign a qualified person in charge of academic matters. Before 2011, universities were required to have a faculty board known, as a 'special organ'. The senate-type body typically has a consultative role.

The board is composed of 15 members, seven of whom are internal: the university's executive head, three members drawn from the academic staff, and three from the student body. The other eight members (including the chair) may not be employed at the institution and are appointed by the government based on the proposal of a two-person nomination committee (one nominator is proposed by the institution, but both nominators are appointed by the government). External members include alumni, academics from other institutions, individuals from arts/cultural bodies, business and industry representatives, and representatives from national and local public authorities. Union representatives may attend board meetings without voting rights.

Structures

Since 2011, universities have been free to re-arrange their internal organisational and academic structures.

Unlike foundation universities, public universities may only establish legal entities or sign legally binding contracts with residential or foreign entities with prior parliamentary approval, particularly when the agreement may involve the transfer of Swedish funds to entities abroad.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Public funding for Swedish universities is allocated through an annual block grant divided into broad activity categories, primarily teaching and research. Universities have limited flexibility to move funds between categories.

Financial management

Swedish public universities can keep a surplus from public funding within the category of the block grant, but its allocation is predetermined by an external authority.

Public universities are allowed to borrow money from governmental banks, typically for infrastructure development.

While foundation universities may own their buildings, public universities typically rent their facilities from different real estate owners, with the largest being a state-owned company, among other private and municipally owned companies.

Tuition fees

While universities may not charge fees to national and EU students at any level of studies, they must charge tuition fees equivalent to the full costs for international and non-EU students at bachelor's and master's degree levels. Doctoral programmes remain tuition-free for all students.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

On staffing matters, all universities are subject to labour law. However, an ordinance (2010: 1064) outlines certain conditions for recruiting senior academic staff at public universities. The 'nomination route' allows universities to use a faster, simplified recruitment process for highly rated academics and has been particularly useful in attracting international academics to Swedish universities. Recruitment of senior administrative staff remains fully controlled by the universities.

Salaries

Universities autonomously set salaries for both academic and administrative staff.

Careers

The absence of sector-specific regulations means that dismissal of academic or administrative staff is subject to labour law.

Similarly, promotion procedures for academic staff can be decided freely by universities. The absence of specific regulations for civil servant status for university staff explains Sweden's high score in staffing autonomy.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Swedish universities have full autonomy in deciding the overall number of students, with the exception of certain fields such as medicine and dentistry.

Admission criteria for bachelor's and master's degree programmes are co-regulated between universities and an external authority.

Degree programmes

Universities are autonomous in opening most academic programmes at all levels without prior accreditation, with the exception of some programmes leading to specific professions, which do require accreditation. However, all institutions must obtain prior accreditation for professional degree programmes. Universities can terminate programmes independently.

University colleges must apply for the right to award degrees for two-year master's degree programmes, while they may freely introduce one-year master's degree programmes.

Universities can choose the language of instruction for bachelor's and master's degree programmes, but information on programmes and their content must be provided in Swedish.

Universities can design the content of their programmes while respecting the learning outcomes provided by the law, with the qualification ordinances stating the required learning outcome for each degree.

External quality assurance

Since 2016, external quality assurance has partly transitioned towards institutional accreditation. The current system includes four elements: accreditation for professional degree programmes, institutional evaluation (which now also includes research), programme evaluation, and thematic evaluations.

The national agency has sole responsibility for carrying out quality-related tasks.



Recent developments

Several developments, while not affecting scoring, are important for a better contextual understanding of the analysis.

The fact that public universities are not entitled to sign legally binding contracts with any residential or foreign entities has created administrative constraints for universities in engaging in various partnerships, including European university alliances. While Swedish public universities are participating in Erasmus + projects, this regulation has made this difficult and burdensome for them to do so.

At the time of writing, a new funding model was under preparation. The parliament considered introducing a new instrument within the basic block fund, which aims to profile universities and encourage competition among Swedish universities. The new funding model was originally set to take effect in 2025. The four state science councils are responsible for fleshing out the framework for this new funding instrument. While the exact criteria remain to be formulated, they may include proxies for the quality of research and collaborations.

The introduction of tuition fees initially led to a significant drop in the number of international students. However, this was later balanced out, notably by an increase in the number of European students. However, the composition of international student cohorts has evolved, and a drop in female students has been observed in certain partner countries.

A bone of contention between public authorities and universities has been the issue of campus closure. While the matter is in theory the prerogative of universities, there have been cases of external intervention by the government. The case of Dalarna University illustrates the complexity of this matter: despite the common will of the university board, staff and students to close the campus, the government overruled the institutional decision and maintained the campus in operation. The process is not regulated by law, but the state intervenes through annual regulation letters. Universities themselves are public agencies and have no appeal possibility in these cases.

With the increased interest in lifelong learning, upskilling, and reskilling processes, the government has aimed to limit the possibility of hiring staff on short-term contracts. However, this would have made it difficult for universities to offer fixed-term contracts longer than one year, which is insufficient to obtain permanent resident status under Swedish immigration law. This may have negatively impacted internationalisation efforts. To address this issue, the sector and the trade unions negotiated a collective agreement that allows for three-year postdoctoral periods.

Views from the sector

While the sector welcomes improvements in the field of quality assurance, the process is still considered burdensome. Besides, the government tends to use quality assurance as a means of intervention. The topics for programme and thematic evaluations are often decided by external authorities and driven by political agendas. As a result, there have been ad hoc interventions, such as a focus on teacher education. Although universities can open programmes autonomously, when the government has concerns, they ask the Higher Education Authority to examine specific topics throughout all universities that are running the respective programmes.

The sector has expressed concerns that the qualification ordinance and related annual updates of expected learning outcomes limit institutional autonomy and leave a small margin for flexibility.

Regarding the forthcoming funding model, the sector is concerned about its implications for institutional autonomy. There are worries that the funding model could lead to a further trend of micro-management and strengthen steering through funding.

In April 2023, the Swedish government took the decision to shorten the mandate of external members of all university boards, from three years to 17 months. This measure was predicated on the rationale that institutions need expertise to address new security threats, and thus new profiles should be included in their boards. Both the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) and EUA condemned this decision, which represents undue interference in the institutional governance of universities, with the government unilaterally changing a well-established process regulating the nomination of external members on university boards. EUA recalled that while there may be grounds for the ministry and universities to define a skills-based approach to the selection of external members when new needs arise, this should only be done in dialogue with the sector and in full respect of the current legal framework.

Autonomy of public universities in Switzerland

Higher education landscape

The Swiss higher education sector is composed of cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences, and teacher education universities. Switzerland also counts two federal institutes of technology (in Zurich and Lausanne), which are regulated and funded at the federal level. Just about half of Swiss students are registered in the cantonal universities. The size of the private higher education sector remains insignificant.

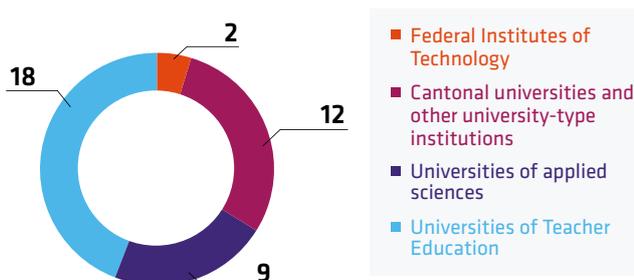
Regulations governing the activities of universities stem from both the cantonal and federal levels. Every cantonal university operates within a distinct cantonal regulatory framework, resulting in a highly diverse system. The Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (2011) steers the coordination of joint activities between the Confederation and the cantons within the sector.

Switzerland hosts 10 cantonal universities. Each canton bears financial responsibility for its student population. Consequently, the sending canton (in which the student officially resides) covers the student costs at the receiving university (if located in a different canton).

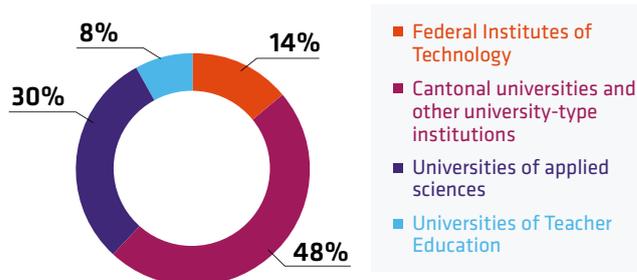
An important characteristic of the Swiss system is that the professional education sector accommodates the largest part of the age cohort in the country, followed by the higher education sector. The higher education sector caters to a total of nearly 275,000 students, of whom 168,000 are enrolled at cantonal universities and federal universities, while approximately 84,000 students are enrolled at universities of applied sciences. Teacher education universities cater to 23,500 students (2022/23 academic year data).

This profile primarily focuses on cantonal universities. Despite the diversity of their regulatory frameworks, it is possible to outline frequent or common features.

Graph 1. Composition of the higher education sector in Switzerland¹

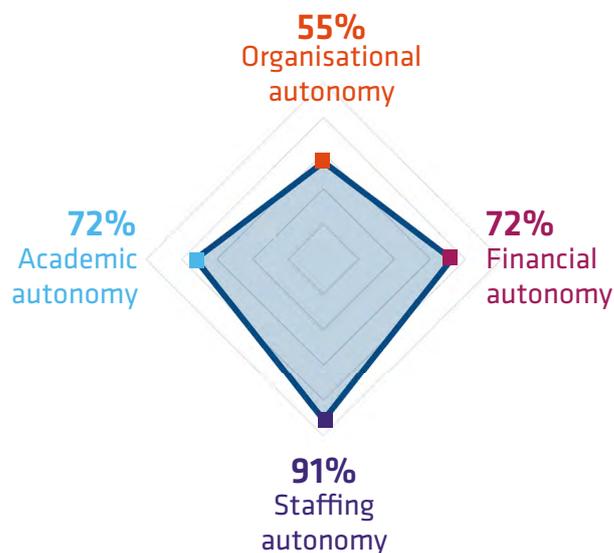


Graph 2. Distribution of student population



¹ Data for both graphs is retrieved and reconstructed from the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research and corresponds to 2022/23 academic year. In graph 1, the number of universities of teacher education excludes those that are integrated in a university of applied sciences, but students enrolled in those are included in the figures of graph 2.

Factsheet



The Autonomy Scorecard does not record changes in any of the four dimensions of autonomy since 2010, owing to the general stability of the legal frameworks governing the higher education sector in Switzerland. Given the diverse regulatory landscape, the analysis is based on an average.

Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	55%	55% →	55% →	Medium low	28
Financial autonomy ²	72%	72% →	72% →	Medium high	8
Staffing autonomy ³	91%	91% →	91% →	High	10
Academic autonomy	71%	71% →	71% →	Medium high	13

2 The 2010 and 2017 financial autonomy scores were corrected in relation to borrowing and capacity to retain surpluses on public funding.

3 The 2010 and 2017 staffing autonomy scores were corrected in relation to salaries.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Cantonal universities do not need approval or validation of public authorities to make changes to their statutes and diverse internal procedures apply. However, each of these universities is governed by an individual regulatory framework, the modification of which requires approval from the cantonal parliament.

Executive leadership

Rectors at Swiss universities are typically elected by the highest body of the institution (the board in dual governance structures, or the senate in unitary models), but the preliminary selection is usually carried out by an ad-hoc internal body. Depending on the canton, the law may include provisions on the selection procedure itself. Despite the variety in the system, the final decision must always be validated by an external authority.

The law does not include selection criteria for the rector but sets the term of office. Depending on the canton, it varies between two and six years, and re-election is possible.

Universities may dismiss the rector in accordance with their internal regulations.

Governance bodies

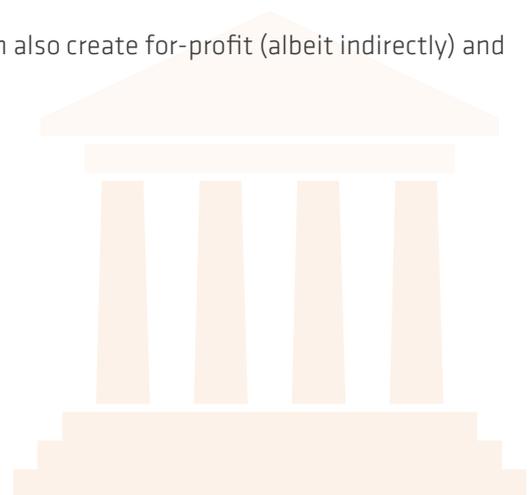
The governance of Swiss universities varies, with a majority featuring a dual governance model (senate- and board-types of bodies) and others operating under a unitary model (senate only). The distribution of competences between the two bodies varies; the board may concentrate decision-making powers or hold a more supervisory, strategic steering function.

Senates comprise academic and administrative staff, as well as students. In most cases, deans and vice-deans are also senate members. Senates do not include external members.

University boards include only external members, whose appointment is confirmed by an external authority. The rector may be a member of the board, with or without voting rights, depending on the regulation. The size and composition of the board are regulated by cantonal laws.

Structures

Universities may decide on internal academic structures and can also create for-profit (albeit indirectly) and non-for-profit legal entities (directly).



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities typically receive funding in the form of annual block grants from cantonal authorities within a four-year framework, without specific restrictions on internal allocation. Cantonal universities have two streams of public funding: a block for teaching, research, infrastructure, and special projects, and funding from other cantons that send non-resident students. The financial provisions of the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination came into force in 2017. This act notably granted universities of applied sciences and arts slightly more freedom regarding the allocation of funds.

Financial management

Swiss universities may keep a surplus on public funding, although in some cases, rules apply regarding maximum equity capital (amounts in excess will have to be transferred back to the canton or used for specific purposes).

Regulations on university borrowing differ across cantons, depending on the institution's legal status. Universities established as a legal entity have more autonomy to engage in a contractual relationship with banks, whereas others may require approval from the cantons.

Swiss universities may own buildings, and some do. However, they need approval from public authorities to sell real estate. In practice, cantons own most of their facilities.

Tuition fees

Universities and cantonal authorities cooperate to set the level of tuition fees for all cycles, for home and for international students. Decision procedures vary; the university may make a proposal that requires confirmation from the cantonal authorities; or the authorities may set the fees in consultation with the university.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Swiss universities are generally able to recruit senior academic and administrative staff, although cantonal specificities may apply. Civil servant status has been phased out across the country's universities.

Salaries

The wage system varies across cantons, with most cantonal salary bands fixed for one or two years but may be adapted in line with inflation. The salary bands are determined by both the cantons and federal institutions, and universities may decide on salaries while respecting these bands.

Careers

Universities decide on promotion procedures. General labour laws apply in cases of staff dismissal for most staff. Nonetheless, there are specific regulations on dismissal that apply to senior staff categories such as professors, whose contracts and conditions are akin to public sector employees.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Entry to Swiss universities continues to be based on free admission. A numerus clausus applies to specific programmes, notably in the field of medicine, health, or the arts. Restrictions on specific study programmes are decided by cantonal authorities.

Admission criteria to both bachelor's and master's degree programmes are set by public authorities. Admission to a bachelor's degree generally requires an upper-secondary school certificate and, in some cases, work experience. Admission to a consecutive master's degree programme is guaranteed to students holding the corresponding bachelor's degree from a Swiss university. Admission requirements for a non-consecutive and/or specialised master's degree programme are set by universities and vary across programmes.

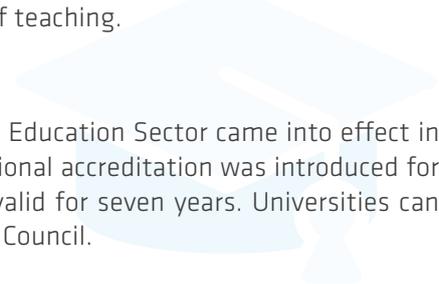
Degree programmes

Cantonal universities may introduce programmes at all degree levels without prior accreditation. Universities have the autonomy to terminate and design the content of their degree programmes without constraints.

Cantonal universities offer the majority of the programmes in the official language of the canton, (notably at bachelor's degree level) but they may offer programmes in other languages of their choice (more frequently at master's degree level). Exams are normally held in the language of teaching.

External quality assurance

The 2011 Federal Act on the Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector came into effect in 2015. With this piece of legislation, a system for mandatory institutional accreditation was introduced for all higher education institutions. The institutional accreditation is valid for seven years. Universities can choose agencies, as long as they are recognised by the Accreditation Council.



Recent developments

New financial provisions of the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination came into force in 2017, in particular generating more freedom for universities of applied sciences and arts to allocate funds internally, but without a significant impact on overall autonomy. The new law creates a more reliable role for the Confederation in university funding. Public funding as a whole has been rising but does not completely cover the growing student numbers.

Views from the sector

A specific point of attention for the sector continues to be the need for clarity regarding Swiss universities' participation in the EU's research and innovation framework programme. Switzerland is currently considered a non-associated third country in Horizon Europe. Rapid association to Horizon Europe remains the Federal Council's goal. For the sector, full participation to EU research programmes is necessary.

While considering the overall situation with regard to autonomy as satisfactory, Swiss universities remain wary of the turbulent political climate (Covid-19, war in Ukraine, demographics) and the pressure it puts on institutions, especially in terms of funding. Despite the disruptions, the sector remains confident that protecting autonomy is seen as a priority by all stakeholders.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.

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