

**Comparative Analysis of Academic Autonomy
in five countries
by indicators and sub-indicators**

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Academic autonomy (autonomy of the teaching and scientific research activity)

Refers to the university's ability to make decisions regarding its vision, mission and academic profile, the introduction or removal of curricula, structure and content, and issues such as admission or quality assurance of programs and awards.

The ability to decide on the areas, scope, aims and methods of research are important subcomponents of academic autonomy.

(Estermann, Thomas and Terhi Nokkala (2009): "University Autonomy in Europe I" Exploratory Study, European University Association. www.eua.be).

In its second study on university autonomy, Estermann defines academic autonomy by seven quantifiable indicators, specifically the university's capacity to make decisions regarding: the overall number of students, admission mechanisms, introduction and termination of degree programmes, language of instruction, quality assurance mechanisms and providers, and design of academic content.

(Estermann Thomas, Terhi Nokkala and Monica Steinel (2011): University Autonomy in Europe II Tableau de Bord, European University Association. www.eua.be)

10 indicators for the study of Academic Autonomy

- 1. Introduction and termination of degree programmes**
- 2. Admission**
- 3. Recognition of studies**
- 4. Accreditation of study programmes**
- 5. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**
- 6. Content and implementation of the study programme
(organisation of the study process)**
- 7. Graduates' employability**
- 8. Teaching load of the teaching staff**
- 9. University scientific research**
- 10. Doctoral studies**

1. Introduction and termination of degree programmes

Refers to the HEI's freedom to initiate and terminate BA, MA, and PhD programmes.

- ***Higher educations levels – programmes offered:***
 - academies → professional degree*
 - colleges → professional degree*
 - universities → BA, MA, PhD (scientific programmes)*
- ***Introduction of new programmes al the I, II, III cycles → specific problems***
- ***Language of instruction → official, English, other***

2. Admission

Refers to the universities' freedom to independently establish its admission process for all levels of study, setting the eligibility and admission procedures for both local and international students.

- *Admission procedure for cycle I*
- *Admission procedure for cycle II and III*
- *International students admission*
- *Forming the body of students*

3. Recognition of studies

Provides an analysis of the procedures and methods for the recognition of studies and qualifications obtained abroad and of the bodies responsible for recognition.

- ***Recognition of the periods of study abroad***
- ***Recognition of qualifications (documents) obtained abroad***

4. Accreditation of study programmes

Examines the existence of organisational structures for quality assurance and quality assurance agencies, the autonomy of these entities, having established their own procedures, methodologies, criteria for internal and external evaluation of the quality of education in line with the recommendations of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA”.

Another issue is the institution’s freedom to select the quality assessment agency. Analysis of the relationship between the quality assurance bodies and governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Education.

- ***Internal quality assurance bodies***
- ***Methodology, criteria for evaluation, external evaluation procedures***
- ***Freedoms in the choice of external quality assessment agency***
- ***Accreditation agency relationship with the Ministry of Education in the accreditation process***

5. National Framework of Qualifications (NFC)

The body responsible for the NFQ, the extent to which universities participate in the developing/initiating of new qualifications, the way in which NFQ requirements are reflected in the study programmes, educational standards, and the credit system applied in the country.

- *The body responsible for the NQF*
- *Universities' participation in developing new qualifications*
- *The way in which NFQ requirements are reflected in the study programmes (mandatory provisions, procedures, internal control, external evaluation)*
- *Educational standards*
- *Credit systems*

6. Content and implementation of the study programme (organisation of the study process)

Looks at the process of organising studies, focusing on the freedom of institutions to devise, approve and implement programmes, and on the usual initiators of the study programmes.

Another issue addressed in this indicator is the involvement of business in education, student internships and the implementation of the final evaluation.

- ***Devising programme content***
- ***Division among academic structures***
- ***Internships / graduate schemes***
- ***Final evaluation by cycles***

7. Graduates' employability

Focuses on the existence of an occupational framework and graduate's employability rates. It also examines the placement of MAs and PhDs in the occupational network. In the study, this indicator also includes internal structures (university level) and external (state level) for career guidance, as well as their role and functions.

- ***Occupational framework (ISCEO). Connection between level of study – qualification***
- ***Placement of MAs and PhDs in the job market***
- ***Career guidance structures (at the level of state, institution)***

8. Teaching load

Focuses on planning and distributing the teaching load, determining teaching assignments and workload that usually divides into teaching activities and scientific activity, and accounting of the teaching load.

It was found that 40% of all work is assigned to research activities, while the universities set their own methodology for calculating teachers' salaries.

- ***Planning the teaching load***
- ***Teaching load distribution among departments***
- ***Accounting of the teaching and research load***

9. University scientific research

Emphasizes the university structures involved in the implementation of scientific research, the universities' participation in national and international research projects, the mechanisms used by the institutions to promote the active participation of students and teaching staff in the scientific research process.

- ***University structures involved in the implementation of scientific research***
- ***Students' participation in the scientific research process, mechanisms to promote it***
- ***Scientific research of the teaching staff***
- ***Integrated centres for research, study, and business***

10. Doctoral studies

Examines the HEIs' right to offer doctoral programmes, the types and length of doctoral studies, authorization bodies, conferral of the title of supervisor, the requirements for writing, presenting and defending the thesis, the presence and design of doctoral schools, the right to confer PhD and Dr.Habil titles

- ***The right to offer doctoral programmes***
- ***Doctoral schools → forms of organisation***
- ***Study completion → conferral of awards/degrees***
- ***Postdoctoral studies → in-depth research programmes***
- ***Habilitation → qualification or title?***

Conclusions

- The analysis of the legislation of the 5 European countries with respect to their higher education systems and of the internal normative acts of 5 representative universities in these countries shows a near homogeneity in the treatment of the most important aspects of the academic concerns. This, in our opinion, is due to the baseline implementation of the Bologna Process, which aims to increase the compatibility of academic education systems. Higher education institutions in the EU countries in the consortium have a well-defined academic autonomy and specific obligations and responsibilities to the central administrative authorities.
- The central government determines education policies and development strategies and is responsible for assessing the achievement of these strategies.
- The institutions are autonomous in choosing tools and mechanisms to implement the educational and research process and take complete responsibility for the quality of the final results.

Thank you for your attention!

Indicators for the study of Academic Autonomy can be divided into two categories:

- a) Those falling under the responsibility of the central government → the establishment of new institutions, the introduction, termination, and accreditation of study and research programmes; NFQ
- b) Those falling under the responsibility of universities → the design and implementation of study and research programmes, planning and dividing the teaching load, graduates' placement in the job market