who have received a tertiary education (completion of a university or tertiary level professional education course) is only slightly higher for those attending university than for the comparable population. In Germany and Denmark, in contrast, children of academic families are twice as likely to go on to study in higher education. Nevertheless, in Switzerland the types of HEI attended vary strongly according to the students’ social background. While the proportion of UAS and UTE students with academic fathers corresponds largely to the proportion of academics in the corresponding age group of the population, students at conventional universities are significantly more likely to have been born into an academic educated home (→ Figure 201). When taking account of students’ fathers’ education, there are twice as many students registered at universities with fathers who are academics as there are young people with fathers who have an academic education.

The considerably wider social disparity at conventional universities is down in part to the already socially selective access to baccalaureate schools (Scharenberg, Wohlgemuth & Hupka-Brunner, 2017; Buchmann, Kriesi, Maarten et al., 2016; Felouzis, 2014; Hupka-Brunner & Wohlgemuth, 2014), which are the most important source of admissions to conventional universities. At the same time, research shows that the choice of discipline and type of institution also varies in line with the degree of parental education (Denzler, 2011; Buchmann, Sacchi, Lamprecht et al., 2007).

When investigating the individual disciplines by social background of students, the same picture emerges as in the analysis by type of institution, with just a couple of exceptions. All subjects that are taught at conventional universities or the federal institutes of technology (ETH) are located in the upper right quadrant. These are the subjects studied more frequently by students whose parents have an academic education. The only exception is art, which is taught at universities of applied sciences but has a similar student body to the conventional universities. Humanities and social sciences at universities and the UAS specialising in design occupy the middle ground, while other UAS subjects and UTE teacher training all have lower proportions of students from academic families (→ Figure 202).