

## Academic mobility and specialist migration

### The DAAD position

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**The DAAD advocates a cosmopolitan and hospitable Germany that welcomes qualified immigrants as well as international students and academics who wish to return to their homeland. We respect the decisions of responsible individuals with regard to their professional and personal pathways. We provide information on the many options open to German higher education institution graduates in Germany, in students' home countries and in third countries. Our funding programmes do not support the migration of specialists in any particular direction. We design our programmes to facilitate and cement connections to students' home countries. We support networking between Germany and other countries in all directions. Although responsibility for the creation of attractive working and living conditions in developing countries lies primarily with the respective societies and governments, we are in a position to and wish to help shape some basic elements.**

The international mobility of students and graduates is a major driving force for personal qualification, scientific progress and societal change. The DAAD, whose programmes involved over 80,000 Germans and foreigners crossing borders each year, has for many years worked for open-mindedness, hospitality and cooperation in Germany and almost every country in the world.

The academic and professional paths of mobile students and academics do not necessarily lead back to their starting point immediately after completion of a study or research visit. This is not new.

Academic mobility has increased drastically with globalisation. Opportunities for training and education abroad have become more accessible and in many regions the expansion of local capacity has not kept up with demand or requirements. There is also more cooperation and exchange between higher education institutions with comparable levels of development and high academic standards. The European Union's higher education programmes alone lead to more than 250,000 persons travelling every year. This is a good thing.

A significant number of international students and academics decide to continue living and working in their guest country either temporarily or permanently. Diversity and creativity have themselves become a driving force for academic and technological innovation. And it is not only the guest country that benefits: new cooperations, the transfer of money to home countries, investment and the return of specialists with professional experience later in their careers are also beneficial to the respective home countries. The mercantilist assessment that academic migration is a "brain drain" or "brain gain" is one-sided and not supported by current research. In some countries (neither Germany nor most emerging countries are among them), the emigration of specialists can endanger the functioning of the healthcare or education system, or even the few higher education institutions.

Germany is involved in specialist migration in both directions: 8.6% of academics in Germany come from non-OECD countries, while 2.8% come from other industrialised countries. On the other hand, 7.3% of German graduates live in other OECD countries. Overall, Germany has an academic migration gain of 4.1%. Although this is a little higher than the OECD average (3.6%), it is a lot less than in traditional countries of immigration, e.g. Canada (20.4%), Switzerland (16.4%) and the USA (12.7%). France's academic migration gain is 8.0%; in Great Britain it is only 1.0%.

Persons on study abroad programmes constitute a significant percentage of academic specialists immigrants in both Germany and other countries. In Germany it is around 25%. If one were to include familial reasons for staying (primarily marriage), it would probably be

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around 33%. The figures are similar for other important guest countries for international students.

For several years, foreign graduates from German higher education institutions have been able to obtain a temporary residence permit for employment in a job appropriate to their level of education. They may remain in Germany for up to 18 months after their degree to search for such employment. During this time there are no restrictions on paid employment to cover their cost of living. After two years of qualified work and payment of contributions into a pension fund they may apply for a permanent residence permit. If various conditions<sup>1</sup> are fulfilled, they become eligible for German citizenship after eight years of legal residency in Germany. In most German federal states, the period of study in Germany counts towards the necessary eight years.

These regulations, which are very liberal compared to other countries, are made use of on an increasingly regular basis. Almost half of foreign academics with a qualified job in Germany have a degree from a German higher education institution. Studies for foreigners therefore contribute to guaranteeing specialists in Germany.

The *opportunity* to work after completing one's studies plays a role from the decision on where to study abroad: even potential students without plans to migrate permanently value the opportunity to decide themselves whether they wish to remain in their country of study, return to their home country or move on to a third country. We make it clear in all of our information and advice that foreign graduates of German higher education institutions have all these options.

The main goals of most grant programmes (including those of the DAAD) are different: they include training skilled, reliable partners for Germany around the world, developing self-sustaining systems of higher education and training young executives for developing countries. DAAD programmes will continue to target academic, cultural and development policy objectives and will continue to be designed to allow and cement contact to the respective country of origin.

Particularly in the case of the programmes that are justified in terms of development policy, these include the provision of tools that facilitate and support the return of urgently required academics to their home countries and continue to provide support to those who have returned home. Many doctoral candidates that we support from developing and emerging countries gain their doctorates as part of a "sandwich process" that is jointly mentored by higher education teaching staff from Germany and the respective home country; they often involve topics related to development.

After completion of the academic studies, alumni networks maintain contact between Germany and other countries. We support contact between German academics in North America and their home country via the GAIN network.

Many mobile students and academics will decide to begin or continue their professional career in Germany (or in the case of mobile Germans: abroad). We respect the decision of responsible individuals. Ultimately, the options for determining the professional and academic plans of highly educated persons by administrative regulations or rulings on the law relating to aliens are very limited: even those who have to leave a country can usually decide themselves where they go next.

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<sup>1</sup> These conditions include covering the cost of living without recourse to social welfare, the absence of criminal conviction and sufficient knowledge of German.

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The DAAD advocates a cosmopolitan and hospitable Germany that welcomes qualified immigrants as well as international students and academics. We are therefore committed to a tolerant societal climate and contribute towards the development of an improved culture of welcome. Diversity is a driving force for creativity. We all benefit from more openness and tolerance. When qualified specialists decide to move to a country either temporarily or permanently, or to remain here, we respect their decision. We welcome the easing of laws relating to aliens introduced in recent years. Further improvements are necessary in certain areas, particularly in regard to employment opportunities during the search phase.

Highly qualified persons' choice of where to live and work is dependent upon many personal, social, economic, political and academic factors. The DAAD wishes to help shape some, but not all, of these factors.

Many highly qualified persons and academics in particular make their professional decisions not only based on salary and non-professional standard of living, but also on the attractiveness of the academic and social environment. This includes sufficient laboratory and library facilities, free academic and public discourse, stable employment, competitive access to research grants and opportunities for international cooperation.

While most of these factors are the responsibility of governments and higher education institution management, organisation such as the DAAD can contribute towards defining some basic elements. We therefore support further academic work by our alumni by donating books and equipment, reinviting them to Germany and organising events and specialist networks. Reintegration grants and financial assistance to establish themselves can aid the return of academics to developing countries, e.g. North African countries. We also offer financial assistance for German academics in foreign countries to travel to presentations and congresses in Germany as well as reintegration grants to establish themselves. We will continue to introduce and develop such instruments in future.

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