

DAAD: Change by academic exchange

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has been pivotal in providing millions of students and scientists with grants to further their scientific research. The DAAD is a joint organisation of German institutions of higher education and their student bodies, devoted to internationalising the academic and scientific research system. Under the leadership of DAAD's President, **Prof Dr Margret Wintermantel**, the DAAD continues to improve the prospects of both German students and foreign students living in Germany, by implementing change by academic exchange.

Back in 1922, Carl Joachim Friedrich was a 21-year-old Social and Politics student from Heidelberg, a small town in Germany. During a visit to the United States that same year, he, together with the Institute of International Education (IIE), prepared scholarships for 13 German students of Social and Political Studies – a course he was also studying at the time. On his return to Heidelberg, he opened a 'Political Studies Exchange Office' which, shortly after, became known as the 'Akademischer Austauschdienst' or the AAD.

Several years later, in 1931, the AAD merged with both the German Academic Foreign Office of the Association of German Universities and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to form the 'Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst', otherwise known as the German Academic Exchange Service or DAAD.

FROM 1925 TO 2017

Fast-forwarding 92 years that have passed since then, the DAAD has become a prominent funder of all German-related

scientific exchange across the globe. Their motto – "Change by Exchange" – exemplifies the work that they do: awarding competitive, merit-based scholarships for students and researchers at institutions of higher education in Germany. Not only that, but the DAAD also awards grants to German students undertaking their studies and research abroad. For example, back in 2016 the DAAD funded 131,229 scholars across the world – comprising 55,754 foreigners and 75,475 Germans.

The DAAD's main headquarters are based in Bonn in Germany, but there are 15 other regional branch offices around the world, which tailor funding towards students within that region. So, for instance, the New York office funds American students to carry out their work in Germany but, likewise, it also funds German students studying at universities within the New York region of their office.

MEET THE PRESIDENT

Prof Dr Margret Wintermantel is the current President of the DAAD. Following her role as the President of Saarland

In 2016, the DAAD funded 131,229 scholars across the world – 55,754 foreigners and 75,475 Germans



Prof Dr Margret Wintermantel. "Our work focuses on providing talented individuals the opportunity to pursue university studies or advance their research careers"

The DAAD is an organisation which understands the importance of exchanging ideas and opportunities, to implement positive change on the world



The DAAD's main task is much broader than providing education for refugees. As their website states: "The DAAD supports the internationalisation of German universities, promotes German studies and the German language abroad, assists developing countries in establishing effective universities and advises decision makers on matters of cultural, education and development policy."

In other words, providing scholarships, experiences and programmes to the betterment of both German students and Germany as a whole, remains the DAAD's top priority. Through Prof Dr Wintermantel's tireless leadership, the organisation has already funded more than 1.9 million scholars both in Germany and abroad, and that does not appear to be slowing down any time soon.

STRATEGY 2020

The DAAD's "Strategy 2020", released in 2013, outlines the ways in which the organisation hopes to continue their previous success, but also builds on that, emphasising the need to cope with new challenges. This includes three key action areas: "Scholarships for the Best", "Structures for Internationalisation" and "Expertise for Academic Collaborations".

Firstly, the DAAD aims to utilise its experience and expertise to continue providing scholarships to both German and foreign students. Secondly, it aims to provide information and advisory services to institutions of higher education and other academic exchange stakeholders, both in Germany and abroad, and hopes to expand its already unique worldwide network.

And thirdly, it hopes to focus on creating and maintaining the structures that make academic exchange and mobility possible – living up to their motto: "Change by Exchange".

The DAAD represents a fantastic organisation, demonstrative of the ruthless efficiency many associate with Germany – the organisation's work on the refugee crisis and its dedication to ensuring educational development for all students, regardless of nationality, exemplifies this. With Prof Dr Wintermantel at the helm, the DAAD is an organisation which understands the importance of exchanging ideas and opportunities, to implement positive change on the world.

If you would like to find out any more information about the DAAD or the extensive range of programmes it offers, please visit their website at www.daad.de.

Q&A WITH PROFESSOR DR MARGRET WINTERMANTEL, PRESIDENT OF THE DAAD

Hello Professor Wintermantel! Could you tell us about what your role as President of the DAAD involves and what kind of responsibilities you have?

As President of the DAAD, it is my responsibility to represent the DAAD in all organisation-related matters. I serve as the chairperson of the Executive Committee, prepare its deliberations and resolutions, and ensure their implementation. I also chair the meeting of the Board of Trustees and the General Assembly. My responsibilities include appointing the Secretary General following confirmation by the Executive Committee and supervising the management of the organisation.

Fostering international academic co-operation is one of the DAAD's key aims. How does the DAAD achieve this? What other aims does the organisation have?

The DAAD supports the German universities and their international partners in their commitment to development policy. The instruments developed for this purpose have proven effective and sustainable. Through the linking of individual and institutional

University, she was elected President of the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK), or the Rector's Conference, in 2006. She stayed there for six years before, in 2012, becoming the President of the DAAD, following the death of Prof Dr Stefan Hormuth – the DAAD's President at the time.

Since 2012, Prof Dr Wintermantel has been responsible for the DAAD's active involvement in internationalising the German universities, working alongside the German government to send German students and

researchers abroad and to accommodate foreigners. The most notable and recent example has been the DAAD's help for young Syrians who want to study. See overleaf for an exclusive interview with Prof Dr Wintermantel.

REFUGEE CRISIS

Back in 2014, the DAAD and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked together to launch a programme called 'Leadership for Syria'. The programme is specifically geared to young people who have had

to interrupt their studies or could not commence them due to the war. A sound education gives them future perspectives and prepares them for the task of helping to shape the Syria of tomorrow. In line with this, the DAAD funded 271 Syrians (either from Syria itself, or a bordering country) with scholarships to study at various universities throughout Germany – ensuring their safety from the war.

Not only that but, rather than hideaway from the massive influx of refugees in 2015,

Prof Dr Wintermantel and the DAAD rose to the challenge, developing a four-year package alongside the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to make it easier for refugees to gain access to higher education. They also actively promote engagement between German students and refugees, by waiving examination fees for them and teaching them how to speak the language, to ensure that their integration within German society is as straightforward as possible.





promotion, the DAAD is extremely well-positioned for reacting appropriately to the needs of its partners and scholarship recipients. The motto of the DAAD is “Change by Exchange” – and not only does it apply to the students and researchers we support, but to the DAAD itself. A challenge we successfully meet every day.

The DAAD is currently carrying out multiple projects. What are the key focuses for the organisation over the next two years?

The programme portfolio of the DAAD is quite large and varied. We continue to support the internationalisation activities at German universities by funding partnership projects. We also react flexibly to political developments – right now, for example, we are intensively cultivating collaborations with Africa, the Middle East, Cuba, Iran and China. In terms of thematic focus, we are developing new funding instruments for digitalisation.

Practical orientation also continues to be an important topic. The key issue here is how to make practice-oriented or dual degree programmes more international – especially those offered at universities of applied science. It turns out that in many countries, such as China for example, there is a great interest in the German models of practical orientation.

How influential has the DAAD been on scientific research since it was first established in 1925? Are there any achievements that really stand out for you? Between 1996 and 2014, the DAAD financed 4,907 long-term lectureships, mostly in Africa and the Middle East. These were supplemented by more than 15,500 DAAD-financed short-term lectureships in the same period.

From 1950 to 2014, the DAAD has helped finance a total of 69,023 research visits for individual university professors and instructors. During this time, more than 17,500 DAAD lecturers actively taught at foreign universities in over 110 countries around the world, getting young people very excited about German Studies and “German as a Foreign Language”. (Source:

catalogue on the 90th anniversary of the DAAD, p 124 ff.).

Since 2006, the DAAD has organised annual Science Tours to give international researchers the opportunity to find out more about research in Germany. Could you tell us a bit more about this? How important has this initiative been in encouraging research collaboration between Germany and its international partners?

The format “Science Tour” is targeted at foreign scientists, offering them a comprehensive insight into the German science and research system while focusing on their personal research area. By changing the scientific and regional focus with each tour, the whole spectrum of German science is covered. Participants are selected through an open and competitive

selection procedure. After receiving detailed information on funding opportunities, they get to meet and talk with renowned scientists from the same research area at various institutions. This ensures the best starting conditions for future cooperation. Exploring Germany as part of a group of fellow researchers is a most rewarding experience and positively influences their view of Germany in the long term.

Through the Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians project (HOPES), the DAAD is currently financing higher education scholarships for Syrian refugees in Turkey and the Middle East. Why is it important to provide opportunities in science and research for young Syrian academics?

There is a risk that a whole generation of

young people will not receive a proper education and, therefore, will not be able to build a life for themselves. With its support of individuals and institutions, HOPES is helping to give these young people the prospect of a better future and that will be needed for the reconstruction of Syria which will hopefully start soon. The project benefits from the relations the DAAD and its partners have cultivated in the region over the past decades.

Earlier this year, the DAAD was awarded the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Europe Award for Excellence in recognition of its accomplishments in the internationalisation of higher education. How do you feel about the DAAD winning such a prestigious award? Do you think enough is being done to encourage international academic mobility?

The DAAD was delighted to win this award, especially because the IIE historically supported the DAAD from the very beginning, indeed, the first DAAD scholarships for German students and young researchers were granted in 1925 by the IIE. Indeed, we were very proud and honoured to learn that the IIE presented us with the Europe Award for Excellence in recognition

of our accomplishments within the area of internationalisation of higher education.

We believe that even more should be done to encourage international academic mobility as the global challenges we face today can only be met by drawing on the expertise of well-prepared, outstanding scientists and decision makers who have had personal experience with other cultures and are accustomed to achieving solutions in international teams.

How do you see the landscape of international scientific research changing over the next ten years? What strategies will the DAAD be putting in place to facilitate future developments?

The research landscape is undergoing far-reaching changes due to the rapid development of research quantity and quality in Asia, especially China. This region will attract more and more researchers. For young researchers who are looking for long-term positions at well-equipped institutions, geography cannot be an issue. In fact, nowadays researchers are mostly globally mobile.

To participate in this “brain circulation”, the

DAAD is developing new funding schemes to attract international researchers and strengthen their relationship to Germany. A good example is Postdoctoral Researchers International Mobility Experience (PRIME), the DAAD’s programme for outgoing post-docs. It is open to applicants of all nationalities, but after funding ends, all scholarship recipients spend a six-month integration period in Germany in order to foster a strong relationship to our country.

And finally, from a more personal perspective, your research as a social psychologist has included some fascinating studies in the field of psychology and psycholinguistics, as well as on the state and development of the higher education system. Given your current leadership commitments, do you still have time for hands-on research?

I’ve had to put aside my research due to my numerous responsibilities at the DAAD, which fortunately involves a lot of travelling. My many visits abroad with our German delegations and also on my own when working with our partners on location, have been professionally and personally enriching to me because I strongly value the personal exchange with people from different cultures. This is what gives me tremendous energy.



Contact

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
Bonn Headquarters
Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst e.V. (DAAD)
Kennedyallee 50
D-53175
Bonn
Germany

T: +49 228 882-0
F: +49 228 882-444
E: postmaster@daad.de
W: www.daad.de

There is a risk that a whole generation of young people will not receive a proper education and, therefore, not be able to build a life for themselves

