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## **RISE final report**

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*I agree that my report and accompanying pictures are used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations and on the website in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE program.*

I want to begin by saying that I would highly recommend this program to anyone considering applying! I ummed and ahed for a long time before finally pressing the 'send' button with all my application documents, and then when I got through my email saying I'd been accepted in Mainz, my first reaction was a mix of excitement and (to be honest) pure fear! However as soon as I arrived, my PhD student and the German girl I was sharing an apartment with had made me feel comfortable and relaxed – knowing I could ask them anything I was stuck with! The research group I was working in consisted of 2 PhD students, 2 diploma students, and the boss, who was a post-doc. It was an extremely friendly team, and there were various socials in the evenings, including ice-cream eating and cocktail drinking! I was really impressed at how much they helped each other; they were willing to give as much time as needed to solve each other's problems.

A typical day in my internship would be arriving at 9, leaving at 4. I'd maybe have a meeting with the work group (very informal, with 5 other researchers just filling the group in about what you'd been up to in the last fortnight), a few hours in the lab, a few hours at the computer analyzing...it was different everyday, the only fixed task was the most important - lunch at 11:30! I was fully instructed by my PhD student about how to carry out all the procedures. The first week he simply let me observe him, and then the second week he observed me less and less until I was confident enough on my own – I never felt I'd been dropped in the deep end. During my stay I was given a mini-project to work on, which was a part of my PhD student's doctoral work. In the second week, with all the safety talks and introductions out of the way, I got my cells. I was now the proud owner of 4 cell lines, for which I needed to care for and keep alive! During the 5 weeks left, I undertook experiments on them, treating the cells with various substances. Having only previously done labs in University courses, where you know what answer you should get, but normally the experiment doesn't work out, I can't describe the thrill of pressing the button, when you've input all your data and played around on excel for a bit, and a graph appears. Real results that really showed something! At the end of my internship I had to say goodbye to my cells – it was a sad day.

There weren't really any specific "highlights" of my research project - every day was fun. However, it did feel pretty good when I'd got to the point where I had all the techniques under my belt, and I could confidently carry out the procedures without looking at the protocol every 5 minutes. In the last week I had to do a short presentation, just to the small work group, and although I was nervous it was really good to be able to present my own results, and the conclusions we'd come to. My impression of research in Germany is that it is of the highest standard. All the people I was working around were highly motivated and engrossed in their research. I haven't really had any experience with research in Britain yet (to be able to compare the two) however I would have thought that they are fairly similar.

Highlights out of the lab were numerous. In the six weeks I was there, I managed to visit Heidelberg (for the RISE conference), Berlin, Wiesbaden, Köln, and Rudesheim - all of which were fascinating to visit. The “largest cuckoo clock in the world” in Wiesbaden was however, I’m afraid to say, a tad disappointing... there wasn’t even a cuckoo! There were four other “risers” in my town, so we managed to meet up about once a week for a bier. Three of them were from Canada, and one from the USA, so it was also interesting to learn a little about the differences between the three participating countries – in terms of education, research, and general culture. For instance I never knew before that in the USA there is no “medicine” under-graduate degree program, you must first undertake a scientific degree. I wasn’t in Germany long enough to join them, however the others went on various trips together at the weekends, also with other “risers” they met along the way! At the Heidelberg conference all the participants assembled for 3 days of good food, bier, and lots of information about studying and working in Germany. It was a really fun weekend. It had the feel of my “fresher’s week” at Uni, when everyone is open and friendly, and one just strikes up a conversation with the person next to you.

I could speak fairly good German before my internship so I didn’t attend any of the language courses provided by the DAAD. I’d done German at A-level 2 years before, and it was rather rusty, but it soon came back. I didn’t get as much practice as I would have liked, as the people around me loved to practice their English. However, I’ve definitely improved, and have learnt the day-to-day things that you just can’t learn from a book! Additionally, during my stay I felt I had an insight into the German culture which you can only really see if you live in a country. It’s hard to describe how exactly it is different to mine. The buses are always on time, which took getting used to (however contrary to public opinion the *trains* are always late!). I think Germany is a country with its priorities sorted. The fact that **all** the shops are closed on Sundays is wonderful, and there’s lot of sport going on, and recycling is a normal way of life. A lot of people asked me in emails about the stereotypes people hold about Germany, however I’m afraid I had to let them down and give the truthful, yet slightly duller, answer that the Germans I met *didn’t* wear lederhosen and go walking in the mountains at the weekends.



In conclusion, I’m very glad I decided to press the send button! It was a wonderful experience. I’ve come away from it with not only scientific training and knowledge, but with wonderful memories, and an insight into the German culture. Vielen Dank RISE!