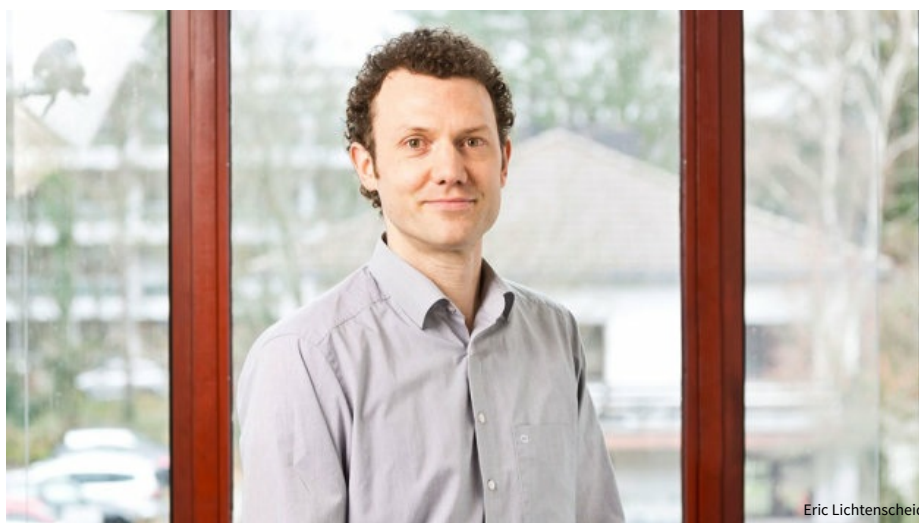


DAAD

“German universities showed a great commitment and flexibility in reaction to the pandemic”



Eric Lichtenscheidt

DAAD expert for external studies and statistics: Dr Jan Kercher

For the second time, the DAAD has surveyed German universities on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and internationalization. In this interview, Dr Jan Kercher, DAAD expert for external studies and statistics, summarises the most important results.

Mr Kercher, why did the DAAD conduct another COVID survey among International Offices in the winter semester 2020/2021?

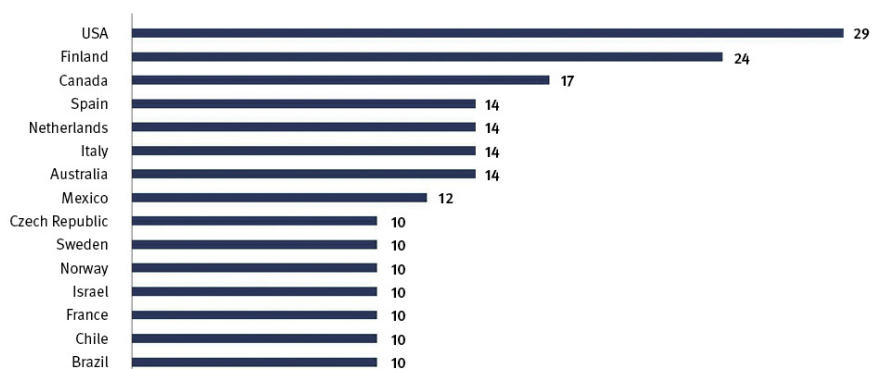
The first survey took place in April and May 2020 at the beginning of the summer semester, i.e. right at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that the impressions we collected at that time were still very preliminary. The universities had only just begun to switch to a pandemic-compliant study model. Now - at the end of the winter semester 2020/2021 and thus after two semesters under pandemic conditions - we wanted to find out how the situation at the universities has developed since then and what differences there were between the two semesters. Because the universities were already able to prepare much

better for the winter semester. Also, the pandemic situation was still relatively calm at the beginning of the semester, but unfortunately that changed again very quickly.

From your point of view, what are the most important findings of this second COVID survey?

First of all, I was impressed by how positive and optimistic the German universities continue to be about the situation. The vast majority, over 70 percent of HEIs, are convinced that there will be a recovery in physical student mobility very quickly after the end of the pandemic-related travel restrictions. In addition, many universities, around one third, assume that Germany as a place to study has become more attractive in international comparison since the beginning of the pandemic; only a small minority of less than 10 per cent expect its attractiveness to decline. For us at the DAAD, this is also very pleasing: almost three quarters of the universities assume that COVID-19 will not lead to a decline in the importance of higher education internationalisation, and a good 20 percent even expect it to increase in importance.

Conclusions of virtual collaborations with universities abroad due to the COVID 19 pandemic by partner country (in %)



DAAD

Question wording: Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, have you entered into new, virtual cooperation agreements with universities abroad, e.g. to enable your students to participate digitally in their courses? If yes, with approximately how many universities?

That actually sounds very pleasing, but surely there are also painful consequences of the pandemic for universities and their internationalisation activities?

Of course, that should not be concealed. International student mobility in Germany was again severely affected by the pandemic and the associated travel restrictions in the winter semester, and in both directions. At almost two-thirds of the universities, international students were unable to enter Germany despite having been admitted because they did not receive a visa. Extrapolated, about 14,700 international regular students and about 2,300 guest and exchange students did not receive a visa for their studies in Germany in the winter semester alone. And: about half of the universities assume that every second stay abroad planned for the winter semester and the coming summer semester was postponed or cancelled. A good third of the universities assume that their own students' interest in study-related stays abroad in the summer semester of 2021 will have fallen again compared to the summer semester of 2020. But: for the winter semester 2021/2022, more than 40 percent of the universities currently assume that interest in such stays will increase compared to the last winter semester and only 15 percent assume that interest will continue to decline.

Which findings surprised you the most?

I was surprised, for example, that only five percent of German universities discontinued all foreign and exchange programmes in the winter semester. In the summer semester, this share was still over 20 per cent. Since the beginning of the pandemic, more than a quarter of the universities have entered into virtual cooperation agreements with foreign universities in order to offer their own students at least a digital form of international mobility. We are of course very pleased about this and it also fits in well with the various digitalisation

programmes that the DAAD now has in its funding portfolio. The surprisingly high proportion of almost three quarters of universities that report having conducted online examinations in the winter semester also shows how quickly they have made the switch. So, from my point of view, German universities showed a great commitment and flexibility in reaction to the pandemic.

(6 April 2021)

FURTHER INFORMATION

The survey was addressed to the heads of the International Offices of the 268 member universities of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK). The DAAD conducted the survey from 15 to 26 February 2021. A total of 171 universities completed the questionnaire in full.

FURTHER LINKS

- [DAAD: Universities count on the return of international mobility](https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/communication-publications/press/press_releases/corona-survey-202021/)
[https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/communication-publications/press/press_releases/corona-survey-202021/]
- [DAAD Working Paper: COVID-19 and the impact on international student mobility in Germany \(english version\)](https://static.daad.de/media/daad_de/pdfs_nicht_barrierefrei/der-daad/analysen-studien/corona_ap_final_dt.pdf)
[https://static.daad.de/media/daad_de/pdfs_nicht_barrierefrei/der-daad/analysen-studien/corona_ap_final_dt.pdf]
- [International Programmes Digital \(IP Digital\)](https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/ip-digital/)
[<https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/ip-digital/>]
- [International Virtual Academic Collaboration \(IVAC\)](https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/ivac/)
[<https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/ivac/>]
- [International Mobility and Cooperation through Digitalisation \(IMKD\)](https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/imkd/)
[<https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/imkd/>]