

Bilateral Academic Exchange with Down Under



Exchange between scientists: German PhD student Florian Gohr, Prof. Jason Mackenzie, Australian PhD student Alice Trenerry and researchers Prof. Dr. Florian Schmidt (left to right) outside the University of Melbourne.

As part of the “Bilateral Academic Exchange Program”, the DAAD has entered into a new cooperation agreement with the partner organisation veski for the Australian State of Victoria. The first grant recipient, the virologist Prof. Jason Mackenzie, has completed his residence in Germany.

After 19 months of lockdown for coronavirus in Australia, this cooperation is of particular importance: To promote bilateral exchange between scientists and international research cooperation, in March 2021 the DAAD signed a mutual grant agreement with veski, a body covering universities in the Australian state of Victoria. The program is intended for university employees, and its short duration of between 14 days and a maximum of three months means it is compatible with teaching-free periods. Each applicant can specify their desired funding period. All faculties at universities in Germany and the State of Victoria are eligible to take part.

Excellent science centre

The first grant recipient, Australian virologist Prof. Jason Mackenzie, has completed his residence in Germany. The international expert in the emergence, development and reproduction of novo- and flaviviruses currently holds a teaching and research position in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Melbourne. He is also a member of several associations, including the Australasian Virology Society. “It was a great experience, which has showed me once again that Germany is an excellent place to do research work,” summarises Mackenzie.





Prof. Jason Mackenzie, has completed his residence in Germany.

The scientist has had a long relationship with Germany: In 2002, he spent eleven months in Heidelberg researching at the European Laboratory for Molecular Biology as part of a research grant from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. In the twenty years since, he has travelled to Germany repeatedly to maintain and expand his network. “That is why I initiated this cooperation with Florian Schmidt at the University of Bonn”, says Mackenzie. Prof. Dr Florian Schmidt’s areas of research expertise are viral infections, immune signalling and nanobodies.

“My fellow researchers in Bonn created an exceptionally good working atmosphere during my time there”, the Australian praises. He unreservedly recommends cooperation with the DAAD and exchanges with Germany. He is currently in active discussion about further mutual visits and focus points of research with the research partners in Bonn.

Mutual exchange

Reciprocity forms the basis for cooperation between DAAD and veski: By visiting Germany, Australian scientists show that they are also willing to receive their German counterparts at their own faculties. The program is intended for doctorate researchers working at universities and research facilities. Research projects must be arranged bilaterally and both parties must apply for the grant at the same time. Each host pays for their respective researcher to travel overseas – in the case of a German researcher, this cost is borne by DAAD. Whilst each visiting researcher is on shore in the host country their residence costs are borne by the host or DAAD in the case of a visiting Victorian researcher to Germany and by the Victorian host University when a German researcher is visiting Victoria. “The entire online application process is highly intuitive”, highlights Mackenzie. “The system is easy to navigate”.

Jason Mackenzie’s stay in Germany has again shown him how connected Germany and his homeland are. “The approach to research in general is similar. We have comparable interests and goals,” considers the scientist. There are differences however between Australian universities and the German higher education system. It is customary in Australia for PhD students to initially rotate between multiple research laboratories before specialising. In Germany, however, students have to decide earlier. Mackenzie also notices differences in terms of research financing: “Funding capacity is significantly higher in Germany”, says the virologist. Thanks to these funding opportunities, he believes that researchers are in a better position to perform research and progress professionally at early and middle stages of their careers.

Further research cooperations planned in the Pacific region

“We cannot currently provide a detailed summary of the research program, as Professor Mackenzie is the first grant recipient to complete his residence”, explains Anna Katharina Rusche, Head of the “Asia, Pacific grant program” department at DAAD. “What we can say, however, is that cooperation with veski is going very well. We are greatly looking forward to starting the second round together in the autumn (spring for the Australian applicants)”. In addition, the bilateral academic exchange is also available in Korea, India, Vietnam, Taiwan and Mongolia.



Anna Katharina Rusche heads the “Asia, Pacific grant program” department at DAAD.

Niklas Kuschowitz (15 September 2022)

FURTHER INFORMATION

- [Scholarship Database - DAAD - Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst](https://www2.daad.de/deutschland/stipendium/datenbank/en/21148-scholarship-database/?status=&origin=&subjectGrps=&daad=&intention=&q=bilateral&page=)
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