

Press Release

DAAD Survey on COVID-19-Pandemic

Universities report on pandemic impact in the 2020 summer semester

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The impact of COVID-19 has been clearly felt at German universities in teaching and also in international student mobility. A recent survey of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) on the pandemic impact on German universities shows: As expected, worldwide travel restrictions have had a strong impact on exchange, but digitalisation measures have been successfully implemented by almost all universities. Unlike in the USA, it was also possible to largely avoid dormitory closures.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on student mobility in Germany. A new DAAD study shows how the closure of many attendance offerings and international travel restrictions have affected universities and international exchange in detail. The DAAD carried out a survey among the International Offices of 268 universities between the end of April and mid-May 2020. The results confirm that the universities are dealing flexibly with the crisis, but also confirm the negative forecasts for student exchange: At two thirds of the universities, international students were unable to begin or continue their studies in Germany due to pandemic conditions. Around 80,000 international students left Germany due to the pandemic.

In dealing with the crisis, the DAAD study also shows that German universities have been able to seize the opportunity for progress in digitalisation and have responded to the pandemic with commitment: Over 90% of the universities have supported their students abroad in their return journey. Half of the universities compensated for the cancellation of presence teaching with completely virtual events, the other half relied on a mixed model of classroom and digital teaching. 98% of the universities enabled their staff to work from home, and almost 90% offered virtual counselling hours to students.

A comparable survey of US universities also shows that while student residences were closed at only 2% of universities in Germany, this applied to over 50% of US universities. "Especially for international students, such closures lead to massive problems, as they often have no possibility to stay with friends or relatives, at least temporarily", says Head of Studies Dr. Jan Kercher. "It is therefore very gratifying that dorm closures could largely be prevented in Germany." A recent survey of international students worldwide shows that this prudent crisis management by German universities is also being noticed in other countries: when asked which country has so far best handled the corona crisis, only two other countries, New Zealand and China, were named more often than Germany.

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