

Final Report: DAAD RISE Professional 2022

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Company: Leibniz-Institut für Verbundwerkstoffe GmbH (IVW)

Location: Kaiserslautern, Rheinland-Palatinate, Germany

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BACKGROUND AND WORK AT IVW

My research studies the effect of processing on the matrix morphology of high-performance thermoplastic composites and the impact that this has on part performance. My stay at IVW gave me the opportunity to work with equipment and resources that I did not have available at my home institution, truly allowing me to not only further my research, but learn about other characterisation techniques, materials and ongoing research that I would not necessarily have encountered had I not taken this opportunity. The work that I have done here has allowed me to complete previous research I did at my home institution, allowing me to publish collaborative work (and hopefully some more in the near future when I return to the UK!).



Once I knew I would be coming for the placement, I made sure to plan what work I wanted to do well ahead of visiting. My placement lasted for just over 10 weeks that flew by, so having at least an idea of a work plan before arriving definitely helped with work. I researched the equipment that IVW had available and made sure to prepare any materials I needed to take with me. Regular contact with my supervisors at my home and host institution, both before and during the placement, was key in this.

My typical workday during placement involved starting work at around 9am. I shared office with another PhD student who was my main support, along with our supervisor, throughout my entire stay. The work that I would do mainly involved either being hands-on in the lab, reading and researching, or writing up. Lab work was fully supported by other colleagues who were experts on the specific equipment I wanted to use, which made experimental work so much easier and stress-free, particularly when dealing with a new piece of equipment. We would take a short break for lunch somewhere between 12-1pm, and eat at the cafeteria of the Technical University of Kaiserslautern (IVW is located in the university campus).

MY STAY IN KAISERSLAUTERN

The University campus in Kaiserslautern is approximately a 30-minute walk from the city centre, so when looking for accommodation I decided it would be best to live in the centre and commute to work. The city is extremely bicycle-friendly and has bikes that students can rent for free for

short periods of time, as well as a bus network and electric scooters. I personally decided to walk every day, but plenty of students used all of the other options.



I personally decided to not take packed lunch to work, but did have breakfast and dinner at home most days. There are plenty of supermarkets around, but it is important to remember that these all close down most Sundays and bank holidays in Germany, which is not the case in other countries..!

Regarding accommodation, I was aware that renting for such a short time all the way from my home country would be challenging. In the end I decided to rent an Airbnb. I ended up living in a small apartment on my own, but there were plenty of options to rent a room in someone's home if you would prefer to have some company as well!

During the summer of 2022, the German government offered monthly 9-euro travel passes for use in most public transport, and I took advantage of this as much as possible. I did 1-day visits to cities and towns close by, such as Mannheim, Frankfurt, Heidelberg or Mainz; and a weekend stay at Munich and Stuttgart. For all travel booking I highly recommend using the DeutscheBahn app (DB Navigator) – I found it extremely intuitive and helpful to use. Kaiserslautern is located in the West of Germany, very close to France and Luxembourg, so visiting these countries is definitely an option too. As someone that does not speak much German at all, it was easy to get around, as the vast majority of people living here speak English.

As for activities to do in Kaiserslautern, mountain biking and bouldering are very popular amongst students. Bouldering is something that I had enjoyed in the past and picked up during my stay, and really got to use the city's bouldering gym.

Overall this stay has been a great experience, and I could not be more grateful for the opportunity that was awarded to me. I highly recommend for others to participate and seize an opportunity like this.



Prost!

Helena

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