

Globalised learning in Deutschland

From various scholarships to job opportunities, the country has exciting options for Indian students.

STUDY ABROAD

SARTHAK SARASWAT &
SAKINA VALSADWALA

The pre-departure session for long-term DAAD scholarship awardees at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Information Center, Chennai, last week, saw a bright group of students, most of them from various branches of IIT, gearing up for studying in Germany. Achim Fabig, Consul General, Consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany, Chennai, briefed them about the country's politics, its society and the situation in Europe, among other things. He also spoke about the problems Germany is facing and encouraged them to think about how they could be part of the solution. "The students will find a stimulating, motivating and energising academic environment while studying in Germany. The universities provide a globalised way of learning and follow an international approach," said Mr. Fabig.

Scholarship process

The DAAD scholarships were awarded for three categories — Long-term PhD Scholarships (Full fellowship in Germany for 4 - 5 years), Sandwich Model

PhD Scholarships (One-year programme in Germany) and Master-Sandwich scholarships for students of IITs. Tathagata Basu, a student of IIT Bhubaneswar, who will be completing his project at RWTH Aachen University, came to know about the scholarship through his guide who encouraged him to apply. "My guide recommended me to a few of his professor friends in Germany and I sent them the abstract. I was able to apply for the DAAD scholarship only after I got an approval and the invitation letter from the RTWH professor, as that is the main criterion while applying for it," he said.

Vishnu Priya, who will be doing her research in Sustainable Communication at the University of Bremen, said, "Initially I was unsure because many of my seniors told me that the scholarship is highly competitive and difficult to get. I think I am one of the few non-IITians who received the long-term PhD scholarship."

Sri Rajeshwari, a student of IIT Madras, who will be doing the Sandwich Model PhD in defamiation of super alloys at the University of Muenster, said, "For PhD scholarships, the admission process is much more involved. After approval from the German professor and the application process, the research proposal is first reviewed by a technical team.



DAAD Scholarship awardees at the Information Center, Chennai. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Students have more freedom, but, at the same time, it is important to be organised."

Thereafter, there is a DAAD interview which is held at Delhi for short-listed students after which they are selected for the scholarship."

Vikrant Prakash, an Industrial Engineering and Management student from IIT Kharagpur, who won the Master-Sandwich scholarship, is looking for-

ward to completing his project at Technical University, Darmstadt. "The process was a little long and tedious but was worth it. When I received the award mail on May 31, I couldn't believe that I would be studying in Germany for six months!"

Learning German

For students going to Germany for studies, learning German is crucial. "It helps students get along well in their daily life, interact, understand and communicate with the people around them, and keep track of what's happening. It enables them to get a better understanding of their whereabouts," said Mr. Fabig, adding, "Learning German will also give them an opportunity to learn a bit

about the country, as language courses today are not just about grammar, but an introduction to the culture as well."

Challenges

What are the things students should guard themselves against while studying in Germany? "We believe in academic freedom which means that you're responsible for your studies and success. As there's no restriction, you also have to bring a lot of discipline to the table to get into the academic routine of what you're doing. It's something that you first have to get a better understanding of. Students have more freedom, but, at the same time, it is important to be organised," explained Mr. Fabig. Besides, every university has an academic exchange centre which helps students adjust to the place and figure out how to go about their studies and tests, among other things.

Career opportunities

The number of students going to Germany for higher education has risen substantially, and overall, the number of students from south India is steadily growing, said Mr. Fabig. "There are a lot of job opportunities and we feel that we can do with extra expertise, especially in the engineering and life sciences fields. Knowledge of German is also helpful," he said.