

DAAD | Federal Ministry of Education
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on the International Mobility of German Students

Selected Findings from the 2nd Repeat Study
on Study Abroad by German Students

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DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
German Academic Exchange Service

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The new two-tiered degree structures in German higher education have continued to evolve at a rapid pace in recent years. Whereas two years ago only one-third of all students were enrolled in a Bachelor's or Master's course, that figure now stands at 53% of all students. These changes call for conducting regular analyses of key areas of reform, especially with regard to students' international mobility. Doing so will enable university administrators, policy makers, and grant makers to start exploring ways of strategically promoting study abroad among German students at an early stage.

For the third time after 2007 and 2009, the HIS Institute for Higher Education Research, on behalf of the DAAD, in early 2011 was able to poll a national representative sample of German students regarding their international mobility patterns. In an Internet-based survey, about 14,000 students provided information on their attitudes and experiences with respect to study abroad. As in the two previous studies, the questions covered a wide array of topics, including students' motivation for studying abroad and the problems they may have encountered along the way, as well as their reasons for choosing not to study abroad.

The design of the survey and the instruments used were essentially the same as in the two previous surveys, conducted in 2007 and 2009. This makes the findings from all three surveys fully comparable. In the present study, the written survey (based on a questionnaire) was replaced with a qualitative study involving problem-centred interviews with more than 30 students from six universities about the factors that influence students' international mobility. The findings from these interviews are also included in the presentation that follows.

The focus of the analysis is on the international mobility of students enrolled in Bachelor's and Master's courses. Information on the mobility rates among students pursuing the traditional *Diplom* or *Magister* degrees cannot be presented here—not only because of space limitations but also because a comparative analysis does not seem reasonable anymore. Even though *Diplom* and *Magister* courses continue to exist, the fact that the vast majority of them no longer enrol first-year or lower-level students makes comparisons with other courses of study, or even with the *Diplom* and *Magister* courses of several years ago, no longer appropriate. The fact that the traditional degrees courses are being phased out is an issue that also needs to be taken into account in the following assessments of information on general and subject-specific international mobility.

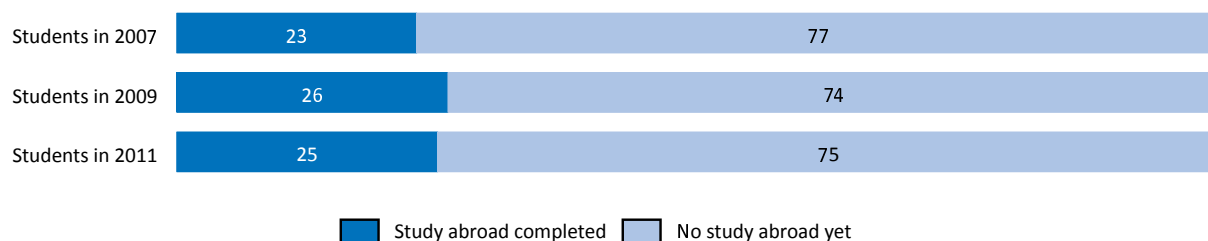
German students with international experience

In early 2011, 25% of all German students currently pursuing Bachelor's or Master's degrees had completed some sort of study abroad experience in the broadest sense of the term, including university study, work placements/internships, language courses, project work, study visits, and participation in summer schools abroad. This number has not changed much compared to the mobility rates found in previous surveys. In 2007 and 2009, the proportion of students who had studied abroad was 23% and 26%, respectively. These general figures may not be compared directly, however. Over the past four years, degree and enrolment structures have changed substantially. In 2007, *Diplom* courses still dominated the university scene, whereas today Bachelor's and Master's courses are the most important degree types. In light of these structural developments, we may assume that even though mobility rates seem to stagnate at the general level, significant changes have occurred in individual higher education segments.

Such developments begin to emerge as soon as we look at the mobility rates of various fields of study. The largest proportion of internationally mobile students is found in the field of Business Administration and Economics, where one third of all students have completed part of their studies abroad. This means that international mobility has increased by seven percentage points over the past four years. In Business Administration and Economics, therefore, the transition to Bachelor's and Master's courses has obviously not stood in the way of increasing mobility rates; it

1 German students who studied abroad

Shown in %



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may even have had a beneficial effect. Another field of study boasting a high share of internationally mobile students (31%) is Languages and Cultural Studies. We need to keep in mind, however, that study abroad is an essential component in many courses that belong to this field. Given this international outlook, it is worth noting that mobility rates here have dropped by six percentage points over the past two years. More in-depth analysis is required to find out whether this decrease in mobility is due to generally unfavourable conditions in the new degree programmes or to subject-specific differences in the way the new degree structure was introduced. A decrease in mobility rates from 2009 to 2011 may also be found in Medicine, where the percentage of internationally mobile students is now on par with the general average. The reason for this decline is that today's medical students tend to be less interested in completing a work placement abroad during the later part of their studies.

Whereas the percentage of students with some sort of international experience is comparatively high in the fields of study mentioned above, the situation is quite different in Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, for example. In these subjects, international mobility has dropped to a level clearly below the general average. Only 17% of all students in these fields have undertaken a study abroad period. In other words, the ongoing introduction of Bachelor's and Master's course has failed, thus far, to produce any progress in terms of mobility. This is equally true of the field of Engineering, where the proportion of internationally mobile students has remained as low as 16% and 17% over the past four years.

2 German study abroad students 2007–2011 by field of study

Shown in %

Field of study	2007	2009	2011
Languages, Cultural Studies, and Sports	29	37	31
Law	23	24	22
Social Sciences	22	26	25
Business Administration and Economics	25	28	32
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	23	19	17
Medicine and Healthcare Sciences	30	33	25
Agriculture, Forestry, and Nutritional Sciences	18	15	21
Engineering	16	16	17
Teaching	20	27	25

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Although a positive trend has emerged for Agricultural Science, Forestry Science, and Nutritional Science, mobility rates here continue to remain well below the general average of all students pursuing a Bachelor's or Master's degree. In other fields of study such as Law, Social Sciences, or Teaching, in contrast, the percentage of internationally mobile students is somewhere near the general average.

International mobility and type of degree

The type of degree course that students are pursuing provides an important general set-up with regard to international mobility. This is not to say, however, that the simple fact that someone is enrolled in a Bachelor's, Master's, or *Staatsexamen* (state examination) course is sufficient for drawing conclusions about that person's mobility behaviour. As our findings on the various subject groups have suggested, we always need to consider the specifics of different university types and disciplinary cultures. To a large degree, these factors determine the extent to which the conditions and regulations governing each course type influence students' study abroad activities. We only need to look at different university types to see very different effects emerge both at the Bachelor's and at the Master's level.

3 German study abroad students 2007–2011 by type of university and degree programme

Shown in %

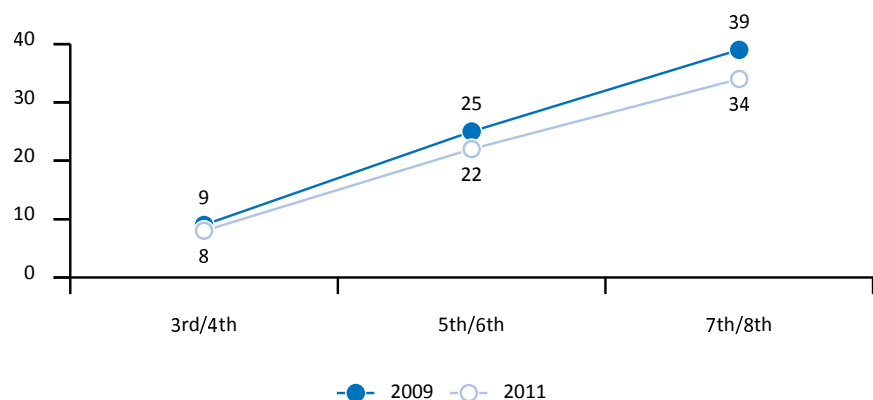
	2007	2009	2011
Bachelor's courses at universities	15	15	16
Bachelor's courses at universities of applied sciences	9	13	17
Master's courses total	30	27	35
Master's courses at universities	-	-	39
Master's courses at universities of applied sciences	-	-	31
Staatsexamen (state examination) course	23	28	25

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Bachelor's courses at universities, for example, are characterized by persistently low levels of international mobility. In 2011, only 16% of all students—a figure similar to previous years—had studied abroad. As students progress towards their degree, their mobility patterns may be described as follows: about one in ten had some study abroad experience during the 3rd/4th semester; during the 5th/6th semester, that number is up to 22% (compared to 25% in 2009). About one tenth of all students enrolled in Bachelor's courses at universities need more time to graduate than the standard time to degree (six semesters), studying for a seventh and eighth semester. This group is characterized by a particularly high proportion of internationally mobile students (34%). What this finding suggests, therefore, is that higher levels of international mobility are often only possible at the price of a longer time to degree—a conclusion also confirmed in our student interviews.

4 German study abroad students 2009 and 2011 in Bachelor's courses at universities by time of study abroad in semesters (in higher education)

Shown in %

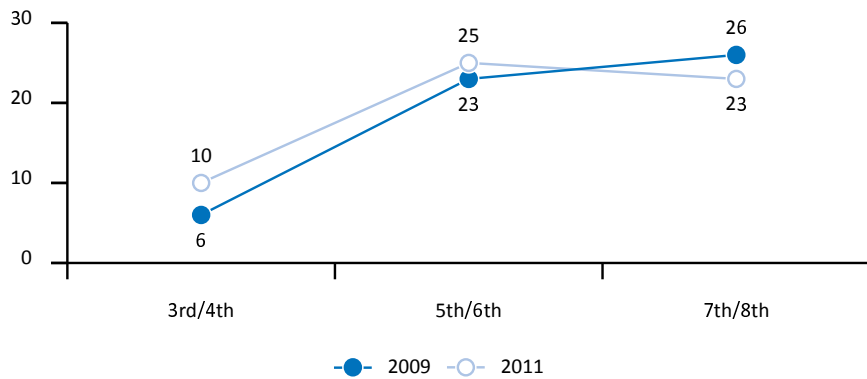


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More positive findings have emerged for Bachelor's courses at universities of applied sciences, where the percentage of internationally mobile students has been growing steadily. Starting with 9% in 2007, the number grew to 13% two years later, and now, in 2011, stands at 17%. This means the mobility rate among Bachelor students at universities of applied sciences is higher than

5 German study abroad students 2009 and 2011 in Bachelor's courses at universities of applied sciences by time of study abroad in semesters (in higher education)

Shown in %



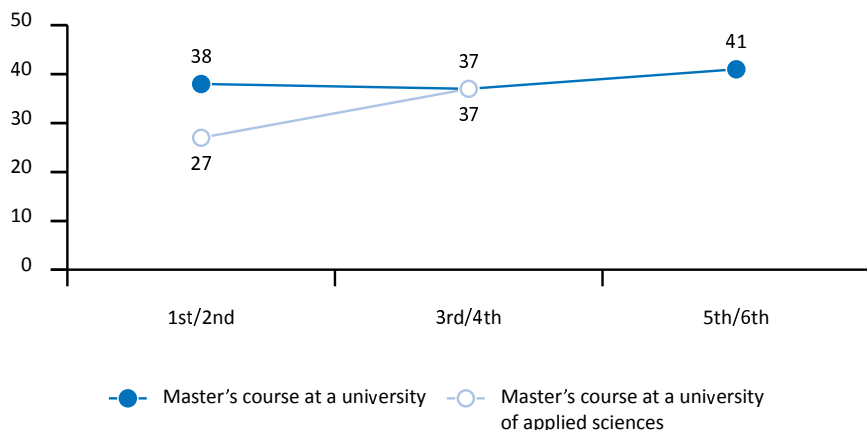
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for studying abroad. During the 7th/8th semester, however, we do not see any further increase in mobility at universities of applied sciences; the numbers even tend to go down a bit. This is because this figure mostly captures the mobility patterns of students enrolled in seven or eight-semester courses. While such courses do exist in significant numbers at universities of applied sciences, they are found in very specific fields of study, most importantly engineering—fields of study, that is, in which students are generally more reluctant to undertake study visits abroad.

A positive trend in mobility rates may be observed for students who enrol in a Master's course after graduating with a Bachelor's degree. At universities, 39% of all students in this category, and 31% at universities of applied sciences, have completed a study abroad period (including periods undertaken during undergraduate study). However, while the percentage of internationally mobile students can be seen to grow once again, from 27% to 37%, between the 1st/2nd and the 3rd/4th semesters at universities of applied sciences, there is no such growth among Master students enrolled at universities. For this group, mobility rates start out high (38%) during the first two semesters and do not change much in subsequent semesters, slightly rising to 41% only during the 5th/6th semesters. Apparently, Master students at universities tend to study abroad mostly during the first stage of their Master's course, or even directly after completing their Bachelor's degree.

6 German study abroad students 2011 in Master's courses at universities and universities of applied sciences by time of study abroad in semesters (in current study programme)

Shown in %



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that of their university-based counterparts. Like Bachelor students at universities, Bachelor students at universities of applied sciences are more likely to study abroad once they have arrived at a more advanced stage of their studies. There is a marked increase in international mobility from 10% to 25% between the 3rd/4th semesters and the 5th/6th semesters. Apparently, Bachelor students at universities as well as universities of applied sciences currently find the fourth and fifth semester of study to offer the most favourable conditions

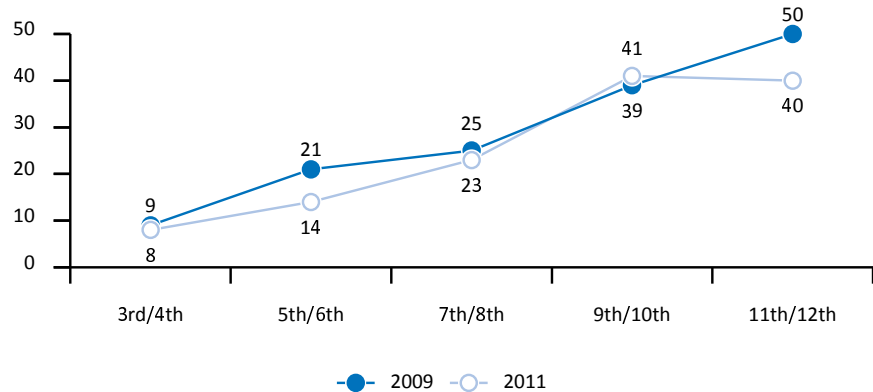
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The mobility rate in study courses culminating in a *Staatsexamen* (state examination) degree, such as Law, Medicine, or Teaching, stands at 25%. Here, study abroad activity can be seen to increase continuously starting with the 3rd/4th semesters, leading to a mobility rate of 40% during the 9th/10th semesters. This largely resembles the situation in 2009. There is no further increase in student mobility during the 11th/12th semester, however, which is mainly due to medical students' declining interest in completing a work placement abroad during the later part of their studies.

7 German study abroad students 2009 and 2011 in Staatsexamen (state examination) courses by time of study abroad in semesters (in higher education)

Shown in %



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Visit types and duration

As in previous studies, we find every second internationally mobile student to have studied at a foreign university for a certain period of time. This situation has not changed over the past four years. With only minor variations in the overall international mobility rate, university study thus remains the most important type of international mobility. Degree courses in Languages and Cultural Studies, as well as in Law or Business Administration/Economics feature a comparatively high proportion of students who spent a university term abroad, whereas the proportion is comparatively low in Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Forestry, and Nutritional Sciences.

Students enrolled in one of the latter fields of study tend to be primarily interested in work placements/internships abroad. However, the latest survey results indicate an overall decrease in the number of Germans doing work placements in other countries. In 2007, 41% of internationally mobile students completed such a work placement; four years later, that figure is down to 34%. The fact that work placements abroad have lost some of their attractiveness results from the increased prevalence of Bachelor's courses, in which work placements are less important than in the traditional courses.

Moreover, work placements in other countries do not play a major role in many Master's courses either, especially at universities.

University study abroad, by contrast, remains as important in the new two-tiered system as it was in the traditional degree structure, or has rebounded to previous levels (e.g. among international-

8 German study abroad students 2007–2011 by type of programme

Multiple responses; results shown in %

	2007	2009	2011
University study abroad	50	50	52
Work placement/internship	41	38	34
Language course	13	13	13
Study trip	12	11	12
Project work	6	5	5
Summer school	3	2	3
Other programmes	7	6	5

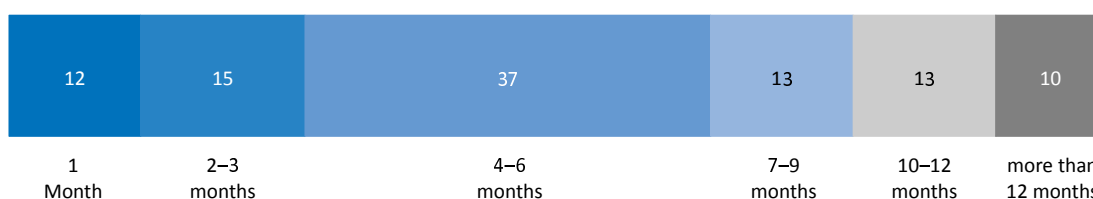
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ly mobile Bachelor students at universities). This finding is underscored by the fact that the proportion of students undertaking university study abroad is particularly strong among Master students at universities.

As in previous years, the average total duration of a student's combined study abroad experiences is approximately six months. About one-fourth of all students who studied abroad only did so for a maximum of three months, whereas one-third went abroad for four to six months. As a result, the proportion of internationally mobile students who studied abroad for a maximum of six months is 64%.

9 Total duration of students' study abroad period

Shown in %

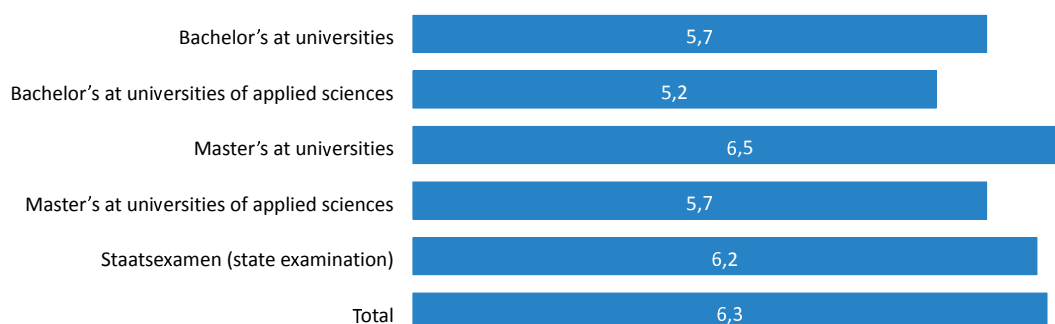


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Significant differences emerge between the various types of degrees. Considering the limited duration of a Bachelor's course, it should not come as a surprise that the average total study abroad duration of internationally mobile students enrolled in these courses (5.7 months at universities and 5.2 months at universities of applied sciences) is below the general average of 6.3 months. At the postgraduate level, too, however, only university-based Master students reach that figure; at universities of applied sciences, the average total duration is clearly below the overall average. What causes these trends? On the one hand, the number of students who complete multiple visits abroad has grown smaller. On the other hand, the total study abroad duration is shorter because both Bachelor and Master students at universities of applied sciences on average tend to spend comparatively less time on university study abroad, and university students tend to spend comparatively less time on work placements abroad.

10 Total duration of students' study abroad period by type of degree programme

Shown in months



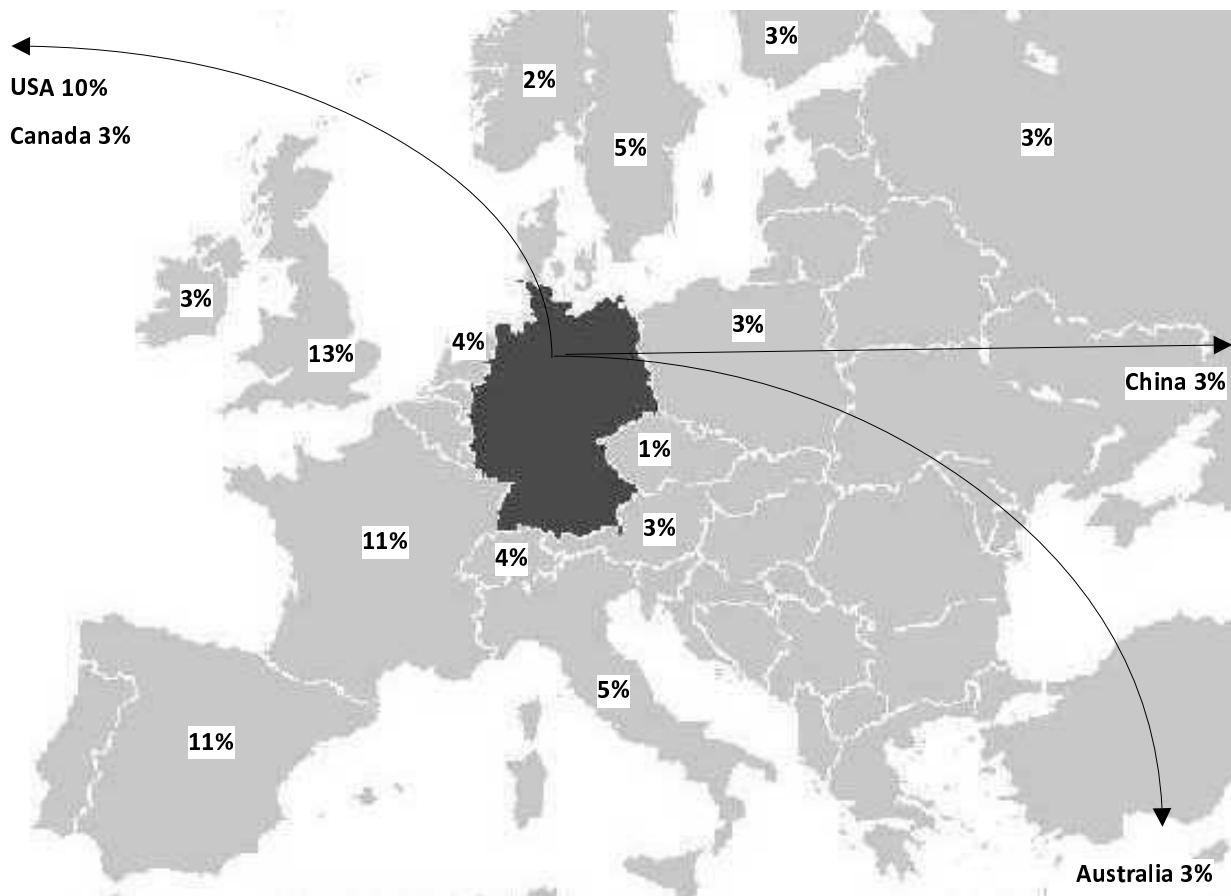
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Host countries and regions

Compared to previous years, there have not been any major changes in students' preferences regarding their study abroad destinations. Western Europe by far remains the most important destination for internationally mobile German students. 62% of all study abroad students spent one or several terms there. The United Kingdom, France, and Spain continue to top the list of host

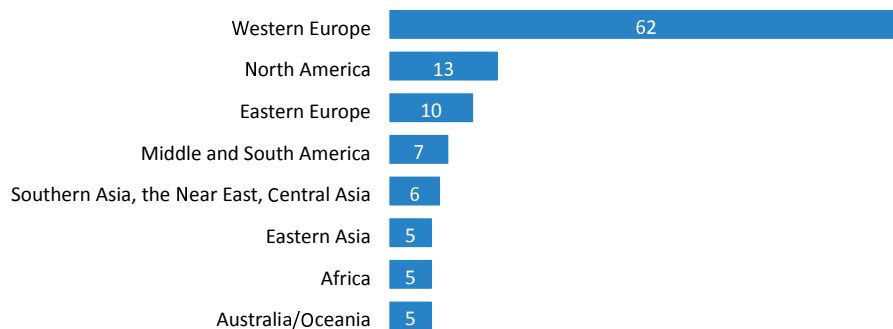
11 Key study abroad destinations

Multiple responses



Study abroad destinations by region

Multiple responses; results shown in %



countries. Next, by a clear margin, are Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 13% of all mobile students studied in the United States (10%) and Canada (3%). At 11%, the number of respondents hosted by an Asian country is only slightly lower. Here, China (3%) and Japan (1%) were the most popular destinations. Eastern European countries only managed to draw 10% of all internationally mobile students. Russia and Poland, each attracting 3%, were the most important host countries here. Finally, Latin America, Africa, and Australia/Oceania each hosted 5% of Germany's internationally mobile student population.

Study abroad experiences

As in previous years, the vast majority of German study abroad students reported positively about their experiences. Having learnt a lot about the working culture and lifestyle of another country, and not having experienced any problems relating to the mentality of the local residents are some of the most frequently made comments, irrespective of the host region.

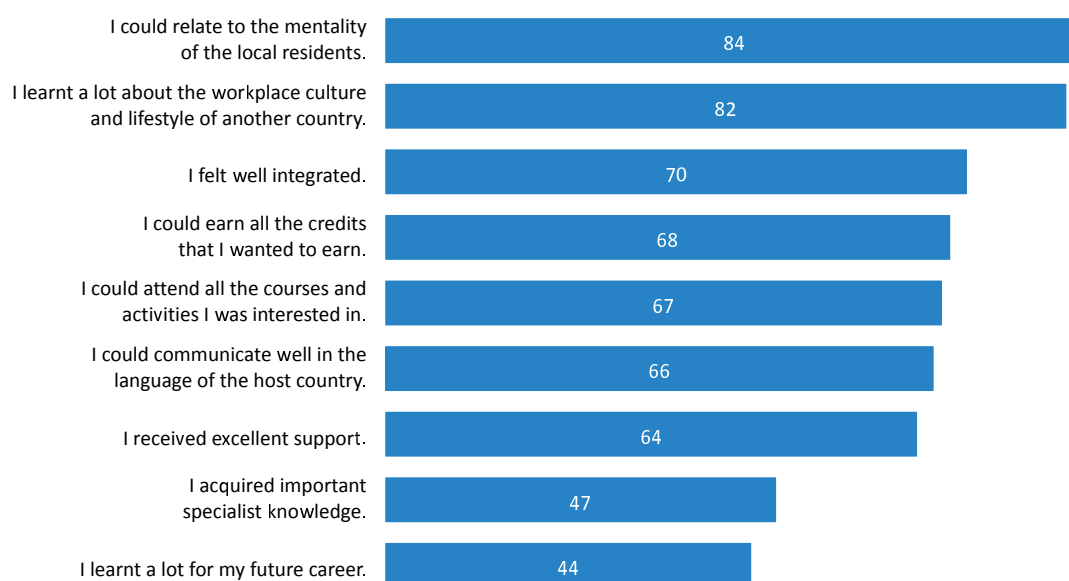
70% of study abroad students felt well-integrated during their time abroad, and—in a related finding—two-thirds say they were sufficiently able to communicate in the host country's language. In this respect, university students were slightly better prepared for communicating with the local residents than their counterparts at universities of applied sciences.

Concerning their actual academic activities, the vast majority of students did not experience any difficulties. Students were able to attend all the courses and other study-related activities they were interested in, and earned all the credits they had hoped for. More than two-thirds said they received excellent support.

What these assessments mean is that most students embark on their study abroad journey well prepared. Their expectations and attitudes are in line with the circumstances awaiting them in their host countries. Since they are well informed and without inflated expectations, they hardly experience any disappointments while abroad.

12 Study abroad experiences

Responses on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree); range values 4 & 5 shown in %



There is one exception to this overwhelmingly positive picture, however: students are ambivalent in their assessment of the academic benefits of studying abroad. This is a finding that has emerged in previous surveys and has not improved over the years. Only 47% of respondents said they acquired important specialist knowledge or skills during their term abroad. And merely 44% thought they learned a lot for their future careers.

In our interviews with Bachelor students, it became clear that these ambivalent experiences serve to curb the enthusiasm for studying abroad among those students who have not yet gone abroad for study purposes. Students in science and engineering in particular said they would only regard studying abroad as being worth the effort if it paid off academically. From these students' point of view, acquiring intercultural competencies and language skills are insufficient reasons for going abroad. Their fellow students' accounts of how doing a semester abroad does not require much of an effort or does not help much with advancing academically, for example, serve to reassure them in thinking of study abroad, and university study abroad in particular, primarily as a loss of time in the pursuit of their degree. Getting this group of students—not a small one in the above-mentioned fields of study—interested in studying abroad will require providing clear evidence of the strong academic and career benefits to be gained from such activities.

Problems in the organisation and execution of study abroad trips

When organizing and executing a study abroad experience, students are faced with a variety of problems. A comparison of the present findings with the results of the 2007 and 2009 mobility surveys shows that the scope of problems has essentially remained the same.

The fear of having lost time by studying abroad continues to be students' most prominent concern. Nearly one-third of all respondents who went on a study abroad programme said this was a major problem. Then again, half of all study abroad students claim not to have suffered any time losses with regard to their degree at home. This finding corroborates results from previous studies suggesting that it is only a very specific part of the student population whose progress towards their degree is delayed as a result of studying abroad. Students are similarly ambivalent in their assessments of funding availability for study abroad. Whereas one-fourth of all internationally mobile students experienced major difficulties in funding their study abroad trips, half of all respondents reported to have encountered no problems whatsoever with obtaining the necessary funds to pay for their study abroad experience.

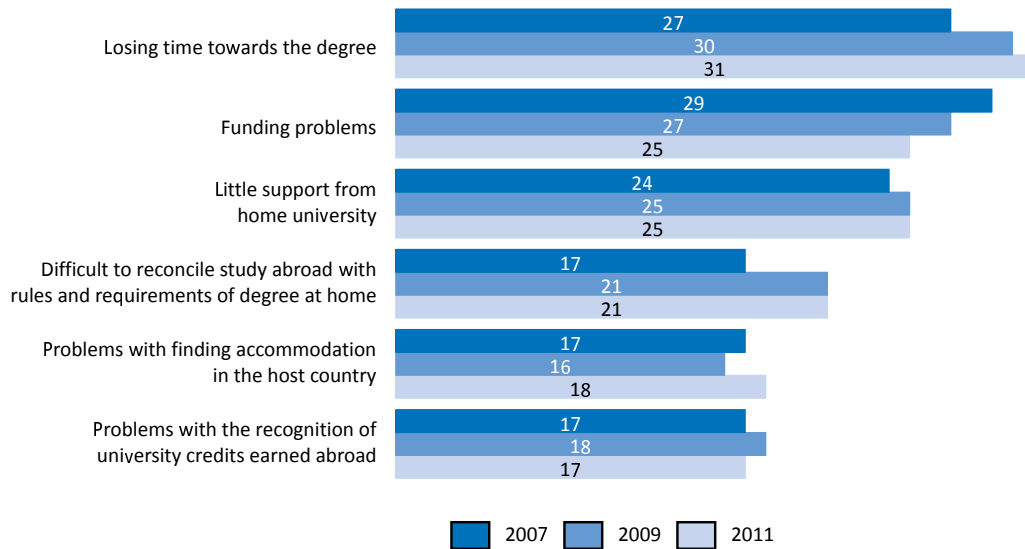
One in four study abroad students complain about having received inadequate support from their home institution when preparing for their trip. In contrast, every second student reports having received sufficient support and assistance from their home university. A related finding indicates that one in five students found it extremely difficult to reconcile their study abroad visit with the rules and requirements of their degree programme at home. The vast majority of students, however, did not experience any problems with integrating their study abroad trip into their courses at home. The situation is similar with regard to the credits earned at universities abroad: two-thirds of all study abroad participants were able to get their foreign credits accepted by their home institutions without any difficulties. However, as in the 2007 and 2009 surveys, nearly one-fifth of all respondents said they faced substantial problems in this respect after returning from their study abroad experience.

Finding accommodation in their host country was easy for 70% of all students. Only 18% of all study abroad participants reported having encountered major problems in this regard.

The problems that students encounter tend to vary from degree course to degree course. Whereas university students are primarily struggling with not losing any time as a result of their studying abroad, Bachelor students at universities of applied sciences are most concerned about funding. For Bachelor students at universities, the danger of losing time is combined with, and in fact in-

13 Problems experienced while studying abroad 2007–2011

Responses on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree); range values 4 & 5 shown in %

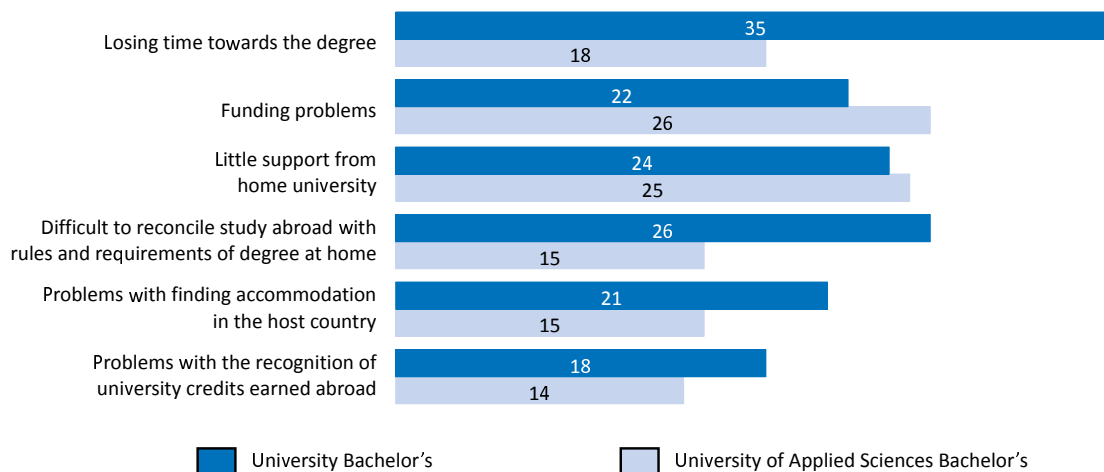


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tensified by, the greater difficulties they face when trying to reconcile international mobility with the study regulations at their home institutions. Moreover, study abroad plans are often abandoned because credits earned at foreign universities are less likely to be accepted in university-based Bachelor's courses than they are in other types of degrees. Bachelor students at universities of applied sciences, in contrast, more often feel left to their own devices when it comes to organizing a study abroad experience; they tend to require more assistance and support from their home institutions.

14 Problems experienced by Bachelor's students at universities and universities of applied sciences while studying abroad, by type of university

Responses on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree); range values 4 & 5 shown in %



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Master students at universities, too, frequently claimed to have lost time in their degree course as a result of having studied abroad. Compared to university-based Bachelor students, Master students were less likely to experience problems with the recognition of foreign credits or with bringing their study abroad trip in line with their home institution's study requirements. However, funding a study abroad experience has emerged as an increasing challenge for Master students. Among other things, this may be due to the fact that recipients of federal financial aid (BAföG) reach or exceed the maximum funding period if they choose to prolong their studies.

The challenges faced by Master students at universities of applied sciences have remained the same insofar as the two main problems—lack of funding and lack of support from their home institution—continue to prevail. Compared to Bachelor's-level study at universities of applied sciences, however, these difficulties have become even more pronounced.

The problems described here are confirmed to a large extent by what students said in our interviews. Due to the highly structured and modularized nature of most German Bachelor's courses, many students fear that studying abroad will only be possible at the cost of losing time. They often find that foreign universities do not offer course modules that match those offered at home; as a result, they can only earn a limited number of credit points. Other factors that contribute to a loss of time, according to the interviewees, are supposed or demonstrated problems concerning the recognition of credits earned abroad. What became clear from the interviews is that Bachelor students, regardless of whether they studied abroad or not, feel they are in a situation of pressure that leaves them with little flexibility for organizing, let alone for actually going on a study abroad trip. The prevailing assumption is that their degree programmes prescribe a clear rhythm that cannot and should not be interrupted without major difficulties.

Funding study abroad

Finding funding for their study abroad experience is a considerable problem for quite a few students. This is why the second repeat study on the international mobility of German students collected comparative information on students' financial resources for study both at home and abroad. These findings on funding correspond closely with those of the 19th Social Survey of the Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW).

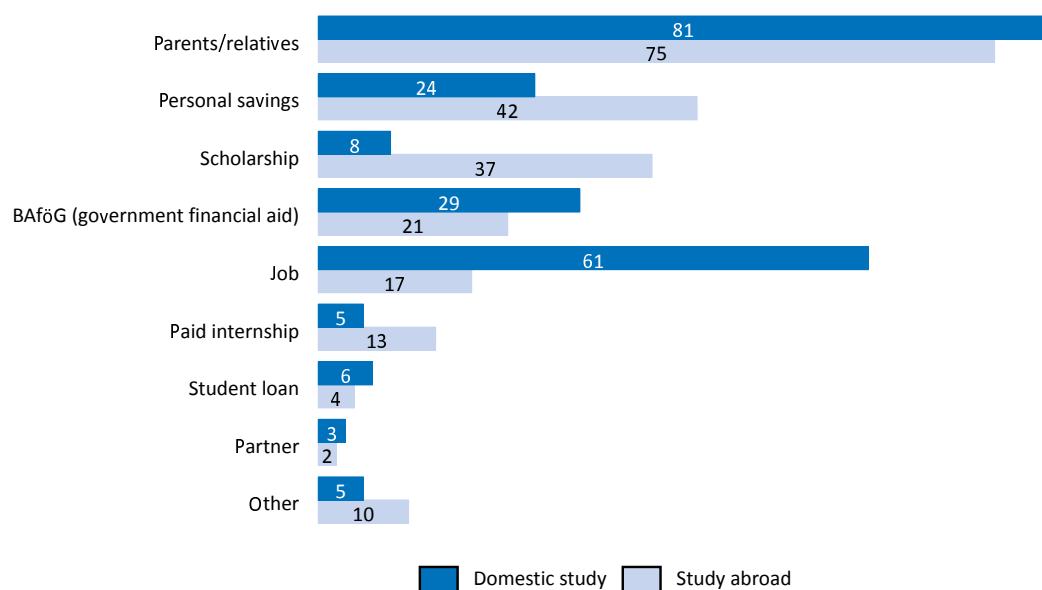
When it comes to financing a study abroad trip—or university study at home, for that matter—parents and relatives play the most important role. Three-fourths of all study abroad students received financial assistance from their parents to help fund their trip. The importance of family contributions also becomes evident from the fact that about two-fifths of those students receiving financial assistance from their parents said this type of support was their primary source of funding. Compared to funding domestic study, however, family support turns out to be slightly less important when it comes to study abroad. First and foremost, this is due to the availability of scholarships and financial aid, as well as paid internships in the cases of financing work placements abroad.

About two-fifths of students used their own savings to finance a study abroad experience. Compared to financing domestic study, this source of funding clearly becomes more important. It is worth noting that this type of funding is not only used more frequently when it comes to study abroad, it also plays a different role in the overall funding mix. Whereas personal savings are mostly used in a supplementary way when funding domestic study, they are more frequently used as the primary source of funding when it comes to study abroad. 17% of all students who used personal savings to pay for their study abroad experience said these were their primary source of funding.

Scholarships are another essential way of funding study abroad trips: 37% of study abroad students said they received this kind of financial support. Scholarships as a source of funding, there-

15 Funding sources used for domestic study and for study abroad

Shown in %



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fore, are also much more important with respect to study abroad than they are with respect to domestic study. This hardly comes as a surprise, considering the diverse range of scholarship opportunities available for study abroad (e.g. ERASMUS or DAAD scholarships).

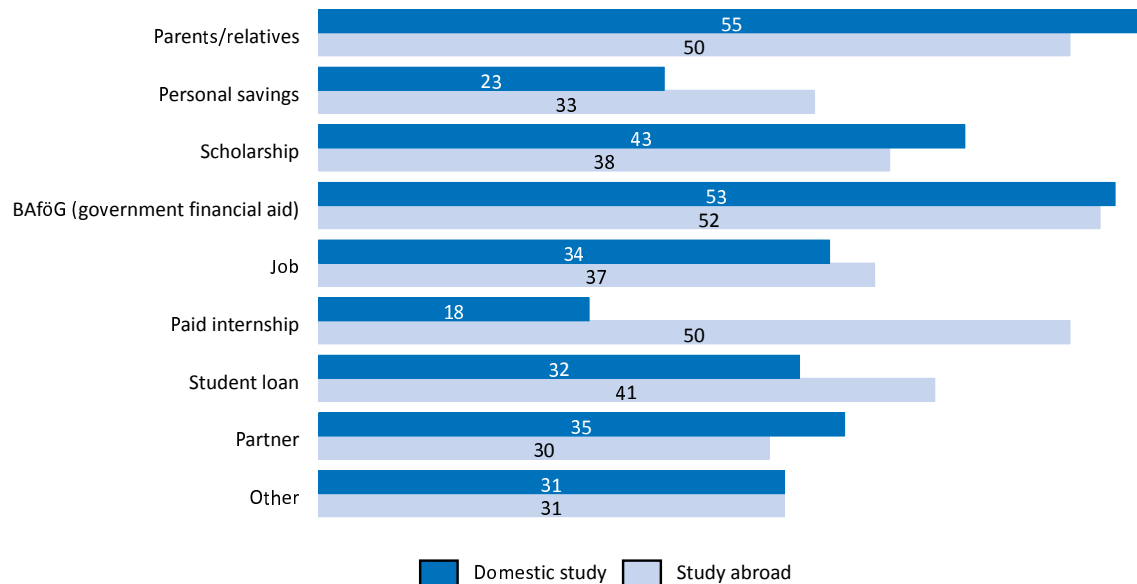
In addition to these scholarship programmes, students eligible for federal financial aid (BAföG) may also apply for *Auslands-BAföG* to finance their study abroad experience. Approximately one in five study abroad students has used this opportunity. A striking finding here is that among students using this type of financial aid, *Auslands-BAföG* also plays a key role in the funding mix: 42% of those students cite *Auslands-BAföG* as their primary source of funding. Even though *Auslands-BAföG* may also be available to students not eligible for domestic BAföG, the proportion of *Auslands-BAföG* recipients is down by eight percentage points. This finding suggests two conclusions: on the one hand, *Auslands-BAföG* requirements may not always match the type of study abroad experience students are planning; on the other hand, many students may not be aware of the funding opportunities available through *Auslands-BAföG*.

Employment is the one type of funding that loses most in importance when students switch from domestic study to study abroad. Only 17% of all study abroad students worked while they were abroad. The equivalent figure for domestic students is 61%. Whether students study abroad or in Germany, employment usually only serves to supplement the primary source of funding. The share of students who make a living primarily by working alongside their studies is comparatively small. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of students depend on this type of income. These students, when going abroad, have to compensate for their loss of employment-related income by drawing on other sources of funding.

One way of compensating for a loss of income is doing a paid internship abroad. 13% of all study abroad students made use of this source of funding. This corresponds to about 30% of all students who went abroad to complete an internship or work placement. One noticeable finding here is that among students who completed a paid internship, the share of those for whom their payments served as the primary source of funding is comparatively high. We need to keep in

16 Average share of individual funding sources in the overall mix of funding for domestic study and study abroad

Shown in %



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mind, however, that paid work placements abroad are primarily available to engineering and science students.

All of the interviewed Bachelor students were certain that, on the one hand, additional costs are to be expected when going abroad, and that, on the other hand, certain types of income are frequently not available while being abroad. As a consequence, studying abroad inevitably involves a funding gap for many students. Whether or not students eventually manage to go abroad, therefore, depends to a large degree on whether they are able to access what they see as realistic forms of alternative study abroad funding. In this context, it also became clear that students often lack basic information on institutional forms of financial aid.

In summary, financing study abroad is found to be notably different from financing study at home. Certain sources of funding are less likely to be used by study abroad students and need to be replaced by other sources. Personal savings and scholarships are especially relevant in this respect. From this we may conclude that a significant proportion of students unable to recruit funding from institutional sources has to set money aside prior to going abroad.

Obstacles to international mobility

A rising percentage of Bachelor and Master students (currently about two-fifths) say they are not interested in studying abroad. When questioned about the reasons for their inactivity, two-thirds of those students point out funding problems. They believe they lack the financial resources required for studying abroad. Additionally, every second student is unwilling to leave family, partners, or friends behind, even if it were only for the limited time of a study abroad trip.

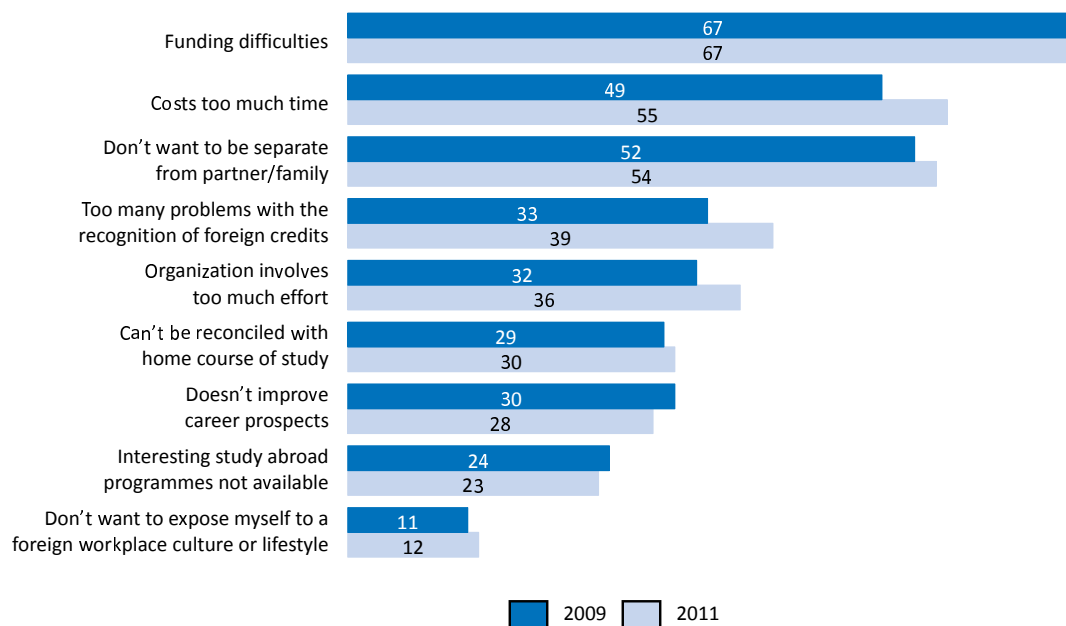
Just as many students (55%) argue that studying abroad would cost too much time. They feel that the benefits of pursuing university studies or work placements in other countries are not big enough to outweigh possible delays in their degree programmes at home. From their point of

view, completing their degree in Germany on time is more important for their personal academic or career goals than gaining international experience. This belief is often accompanied by the feeling that it would be a tremendous advantage to finish within the prescribed time-to-degree period at all costs.

Such assessments are increasingly combined with the argument that getting foreign credits recognized by one's home university involves too many problems. The proportion of inactive students who regard this as a major obstacle has grown to 39%, up from only 30% in 2007. Among the group of stay-at-home students, it is Bachelor students at universities in particular who believe this aspect to be especially important. Highly structured degree programmes and seemingly endless requirements have left them with the impression of not having enough free time available for additional organizational tasks. This is also why students who are not interested in study abroad for these reasons tend to regard the required organizational work as too troublesome. This is especially true when students do not see any possibility of bringing a study abroad period in line with the rules and requirements of their degree programme at home. Two-thirds of all uninterested students cited this reason for staying at home and pointed out the trouble involved in organizing a study abroad trip.

17 Reasons for a general lack of interest in study abroad

Responses on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree); range values 4 & 5 shown in %



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Furthermore, the belief that studying abroad will not improve their career prospects plays an important role for one-fourth of all immobile students; the same percentage does not even see any interesting opportunities for studying abroad. Only a small fraction of students are unwilling to adapt to a foreign workplace culture or lifestyle.

In a comparison of stay-at-home Bachelor students at universities and universities of applied sciences, remarkable differences emerge, even though the overall percentage of stay-at-homes is roughly the same. University students are much more likely to point out organizational problems as the main reason for their lack of interest. They are also more likely to believe that studying abroad involves too much organizational effort. In light of the expected personal commitment, quite

a few students think of such endeavours as a waste of time. Apparently, Bachelor students at universities of applied sciences more often get the impression that studying abroad is made easy for those among them who seek it, especially in Business Administration and Economics.

The interviews very clearly reflect the problems encountered or imagined by Bachelor students. However, they also show that avoiding international mobility is often based on an internal conflict of values. On the one hand, there is hardly a student who questions the general benefits of studying abroad. Improving employability is mentioned most frequently in this regard. On the other hand, students are not convinced that such an experience is indispensable for their own academic or professional careers. Stay-at-home Bachelor students tend to feel they may postpone study abroad to a later stage in their academic career, or go abroad after graduation. Even though these students acknowledge the benefits of study abroad, it is not the top priority on their scale of values.

Such feelings and judgements are often informed by implicit assumptions so self-evident from students' point of view that they don't see any need to check the facts. This includes the assumption that studying abroad involves substantial additional costs, which make it more difficult or—according to the stay-at-home students—impossible to finance such an experience. This opinion can be found with all students who decide against going abroad, but in most cases it is based on gross ignorance of the actual costs and, most importantly, of the funding opportunities that are available. The financial problems associated with studying abroad seem to be so obvious that students do not even start to get informed.

In addition to students' implicit opinions on international mobility, which are typically not based on personal experience and mostly refer to dispensability, lack of returns, and financial overload, it is also concrete study experiences that tend to minimize many students' interest in studying abroad. In their constant effort to meet requirements after requirements and to keep up with the resulting pressure characteristic of many Bachelor's courses, students tend to think of organizing a study abroad trip as a particularly troublesome activity. Given this context, if the benefits of studying abroad are not considered to be essential or at least partly essential, many students are left with the impression that such trips may lead to an undesirable loss of time. This is especially true if getting foreign credits recognized by one's home university is not considered to be a matter of course. In the case of Bachelor's courses, there is one more aspect that makes organizing a study abroad trip seem difficult: the very way these courses are structured. Since Bachelor's courses in Germany are usually limited to six semesters, students would have to start planning their study abroad experience at a comparatively early stage of their studies. This is unlikely to happen, however, since students typically spend their first few semesters trying to figure out what university study is all about. Moreover, many Bachelor's courses already require students to take important exams at this point. During the first two semesters, therefore, when preparations for going abroad during the third or fourth semester would have to begin, the thought of studying abroad is hardly on students' minds. If they begin their study abroad preparations mid-way through their undergraduate career, however, time starts running out quickly, since the closer students get to finishing their degree and writing their Bachelor's thesis, the less likely are they to see a window for studying in another country.

Conclusions

Of all German students enrolled in Bachelor's and Master's courses in early 2011, 25% have completed some sort of study abroad programme. Thus the student mobility rate is roughly the same as in previous years. Whereas mobility rates of 16% and 17% are found for Bachelor students at universities and universities of applied sciences, respectively, mobility rates for Master students are 39% (universities) and 31% (universities of applied sciences). During the 5th/6th semesters of undergraduate study, as many as 22% (universities) and 25% (universities of applied sciences) of all Bachelor students have completed a study abroad trip. Among Master students in their 3rd/

4th semesters, 37% have spent some time studying or working abroad, regardless of the type of university they attend.

International mobility—especially at the Master’s level—has thus reached the level that used to characterize the traditional *Diplom* programmes (if study abroad at the Bachelor’s level is included). We need to keep in mind, however, that only a certain proportion of Bachelor graduates goes on to study for a Master’s degree.

The findings from the present study provide evidence of the fact that the new two-tiered degree structure does not, in and of itself, lead to a decrease in international mobility. What matters most, rather, is how the various universities and disciplinary cultures make use of the study conditions associated with the Bachelor’s and Master’s course to promote study abroad among their students. Major differences may be found in this regard, especially between the various fields of study. Whereas Business Administration and Economics students continue to achieve comparatively high levels of international mobility even under the two-tiered degree system, mobility rates among students of Engineering and Natural Sciences remain comparatively low. It is obvious that the general attitudes toward study abroad prevailing in the various fields of study, as well as professors’ commitment to promoting study abroad among their students have a decisive impact on actual study abroad participation.

Even though the previously reached level of international mobility could essentially be maintained, a number of problems associated with the introduction of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees remain to be addressed—problems that work to impede or even prevent student mobility. For example, students continue to think of organizing a study abroad trip as requiring a tremendous amount of effort. This finding is related to the fact that they continue to see difficulties in reconciling a study abroad experience with the rules and regulations of their degrees. Moreover, many students—particularly those enrolled in the new degree programmes—feel they are studying under immense time pressure. Under such conditions, the benefits of studying abroad do not outweigh the required efforts in the eyes of many students. The percentage of students who fear that a study period abroad may cause them to lose time towards the completion of their degree has not gone down.

In the future, it will become even more essential to develop specific mobility opportunities for individual fields of study—opportunities customized to the structures and requirements of each degree programme. General solutions will always leave larger or smaller groups of students thinking that these opportunities are not for them. When designing customized programmes, it is the special responsibility of each department not only to provide favourable solutions adapted to the structure of the degree but also to motivate students to study abroad.

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