

22

SCHRIFTENREIHE  
HOCHSCHULMARKETING

## The International Study Experience in Germany

Findings from the  
International Student  
Barometer 2022 (2023)

INTERNATIONALE  
STUDIENERF  
AHRUNG IN  
DEUTSCHLAND  
BESUN  
DEUTSCHLAND  
INTERNATIONALE  
STUDIENERF  
AHRUNG IN  
DEUTSCHLAND

**GATE** // Germany  
Internationales  
Hochschulmarketing

## Imprint

### Publisher

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst e.V.  
German Academic Exchange Service  
Kennedyallee 50, D – 53175 Bonn

Tel.: +49 228 882-0, Fax: +49 228 882-444,  
E-Mail: [webmaster@daad.de](mailto:webmaster@daad.de), Internet: <https://www.daad.de>  
Authorised Representative of the Executive Committee: Prof. Dr. Joybrato Mukherjee  
District Court of Bonn, Register of associations, number VR 2107  
Sales tax number: DE122276332

Person responsible according to § 18 Abs. 2 MStV:  
Dr Kai Sicks, Kennedyallee 50, 53175 Bonn



Section GATE-Germany Office and Marketing Expertise  
[www.gate-germany.de](http://www.gate-germany.de)  
DAAD, Kennedyallee 50, D – 53175 Bonn

### Research and Manuscript

Nannette Ripmeester,  
Director i-graduate Europe & North America, i-graduate, Rotterdam, Netherlands

### Project Coordination

Dr Nesrin Calagan (project lead), Marie Buchta, Stephanie Stromeyer (PhD),  
Dr Ursula Egyptien-Gad, Stefan Hase-Bergen, DAAD

### Publishing house/ Editorial staff

Fazit Communication GmbH, Frankfurt am Main  
Janet Schayan (responsible), Clara Krug, Christopher Cave, Viktoria Vieweg (Layout)

Published as a digital publication on the internet, 1. Version, December 2023  
© DAAD

This volume is published as part of the Consortium for International Higher Education Marketing – GATE-Germany, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Reprinting and use, including excerpts, only with the express permission of GATE-Germany.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



# The International Study Experience in Germany

Findings from the International Student Barometer 2022 (2023)

Author: Nannette Ripmeester, Director i-graduate Europe & North America, i-graduate  
This report is based on the International Student Barometer™ (ISB) 2022 (2023) conducted in Germany on behalf of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

[www.gate-germany.de](http://www.gate-germany.de)



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> Methodology explained	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> Decision making: What makes international students decide to study in Germany?	<b>16</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> Arrival phase: How easy is it for international students to find their way in Germany?	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> Learning: How do international students value their learning experience in Germany?	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b> Living: What makes international students happy whilst studying in Germany?	<b>41</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b> Support services: How to best support the international student experience in Germany?	<b>50</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b> Employability: The next step after graduation	<b>60</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b> Conclusions and recommendations: What makes (or breaks) the international study experience in Germany?	<b>65</b>
<b>Chapter 9</b> Overview of previous ISB surveys conducted in cooperation with GATE-Germany	<b>72</b>
<b>Overview of participating institutions worldwide</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Imprint</b>	<b>2</b>

## Executive Summary

The International Student Barometer (ISB) is a benchmarking survey aimed at providing higher education institutions (HEIs), regions and countries with information concerning their international students in a multitude of aspects in comparison to both national and international standards. Responses to the 2022 International Student Barometer survey at universities in Germany form the basis of this report, shedding light on those aspects of the learning and living experience that matter most to international students studying in Germany. This report is based on 8,100 international students from 17 German HEIs, with an average institutional response rate of 16% (against an average European response rate of 22%).

Germany is a popular destination for international students due to its high-quality education system and world-renowned universities, and because it offers a relatively clear-cut pathway to career opportunities. To ensure that these students have a positive experience, it is essential to understand their needs and identify areas where support for international students can be improved. In this report, we will examine the data collected in the ISB 2022 to provide insights and recommendations for enhancing the international student experience in Germany.

### What drives a study choice decision?

What makes international students choose a particular university, often in a country they have never visited? One of the most prominent developments we have noticed in the past years is that getting a job upon graduation has become a critical criterion for students. 'Future career impact' is what primarily drives international students to opt to study in Germany (96%); the next most important component is the specific course title (95%), closely followed by research quality (94%). Throughout the ISB results for both Germany and the Global ISB benchmark, it is clear how important employability is to this current generation of students.

### Arrival phase

The arrival process is the start of any international student's journey at their new institution. For many years this has been an area with room for improvement at

German institutions, particularly by global standards. However, the ISB survey conducted in 2022 revealed that 87% of international students felt welcomed upon arrival in Germany. This marks a significant improvement on the 2018 survey, which exposed some challenges in the easing-in process. The current ISB study found that there have been noticeable improvements, with students reporting that they better understand how their course of study works and are more satisfied with the face-to-face orientation provided. Additionally, students mentioned that they were happier with the pre-arrival information and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with academic staff upon arrival. Nevertheless, only 63% of international students surveyed in Germany indicated that it was easy to navigate their new country upon arrival, with the ISB element 'accommodation and living orientation' scoring 14% below the Global ISB benchmark. To improve this aspect of the arrival phase, universities should consider providing more comprehensive orientation programmes that make it easier for new students to navigate their host study destination. To support international students upon arrival, more information on navigating the local public transport system, for example, would alleviate much of the initial stress.

### Learning experience

The key area of any study abroad experience is of course the actual learning experience. The ISB data indicates that international students highly value the quality of education in Germany. 97% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with the academic standards of their programmes. However, there were concerns about the workload and the connection between academic learning and the practical application of this knowledge in their careers after graduation. Since employability is crucial to this generation of students, not only in Germany but also globally, the link to the world of work is essential. To address these issues, universities could consider offering more internship opportunities, bringing in study cases more directly related to the work field and providing support for students to balance their workload. It is critical to offer guidance and support to help students bridge the gap between academic learning and its practical application in the professional work domain.

### Living experience

The living experience in Germany stands out from both a global and a European perspective due to the relatively low cost of living (although the cost of

living has gone up in Germany as well) and the affordable cost of accommodation compared to some other countries. However, there is room for improvement concerning the social aspects of the living experience for international students. In the ISB 2022, 88% of international students surveyed in Germany reported that they were happy overall with life at their host institution (against a Global ISB benchmark of 89%). The ISB survey goes into detail and looks at ‘happiness’ in a broader context, as people need to have social connections and to feel at ease in order to experience happiness. When asked about their overall living experience in Germany, 81% reported being satisfied, which is below the Global ISB benchmark of 85% overall satisfaction. The German ISB benchmark scores well in aspects like ‘feeling safe and secure on campus’ (95% satisfaction against the slightly higher Global ISB benchmark at 96%), but shows clear room for improvement when it comes to ‘making friends from this country’, where the German benchmark scores 16% below the Global ISB benchmark and ‘making good contacts for the future’ scores 11% below the Global ISB benchmark. Particular attention should be paid to ‘good contacts for the future’. This ISB survey question is relevant to employability and additionally has the highest global derived importance<sup>1</sup> within the living category.

### Support services

Most international students surveyed (82%) were satisfied with the support services provided by German institutions. However, in comparison with the Global ISB benchmark of 86% satisfaction and the European ISB benchmark of 84%, the German ISB shows room for improvement in specific categories. For example, satisfaction with accommodation offices in Germany scores 6.4% lower than the global benchmark. Higher education institutions in Germany could address this in cooperation with the ‘Studierendenwerk’. They may consider offering more guidance regarding the housing market, even if only with respect to housing upon arrival. Another area of concern remains the careers services at German HEIs, which achieve an 84% satisfaction rate – 6% lower than the Global ISB benchmark of 90%. We have seen satisfaction rates soar by 24% between the first ISB conducted in cooperation with GATE-Germany in 2009 and the latest survey, indicating that German universities have achieved a lot in establishing

---

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 1, page 12 for an explanation of derived importance.

and improving careers services. Nonetheless, the fact that satisfaction is lower than the Global ISB benchmark should not be ignored.

### Impact of employability

A job upon graduation and a future career is a key consideration for international students when deciding whether to study in Germany. The ISB showed that 96% of international students (both in Germany and globally) choose their university in the hope that it will help them improve their career prospects. Of the final-year international students surveyed in Germany, 77% indicated that they felt prepared for their future career goals, against a Global ISB benchmark of 71%. Hence Germany is doing relatively well in creating a ‘line of sight’ towards a future career and connecting education to the world of work. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of strengthening the connection between curricula and employability and enhancing careers services. Furthermore, 36% of international students in Germany do not know how to access the institution’s careers service. An additional 40% of international students mentioned that they had not used the services, while 11% indicated that they did not see the careers services as being relevant to them. Institutions could improve this by making it clearer that the career counselling services they offer are also aimed at international students and by acknowledging and addressing any cultural barriers that may affect students’ willingness to seek career support. Moreover, providing international students with opportunities to network with employers and alumni would add additional value.

### Conclusion

Overall, the data from the International Student Barometer 2022 indicates that international students are generally satisfied with their study experience in Germany. However, there are areas where improvements must be made to enhance the support and opportunities available to international students. By addressing the issues highlighted in the report, higher education institutions in Germany will be able to continue to attract (and retain) talented international students while providing them with a high-quality educational experience.

# 1 Methodology explained

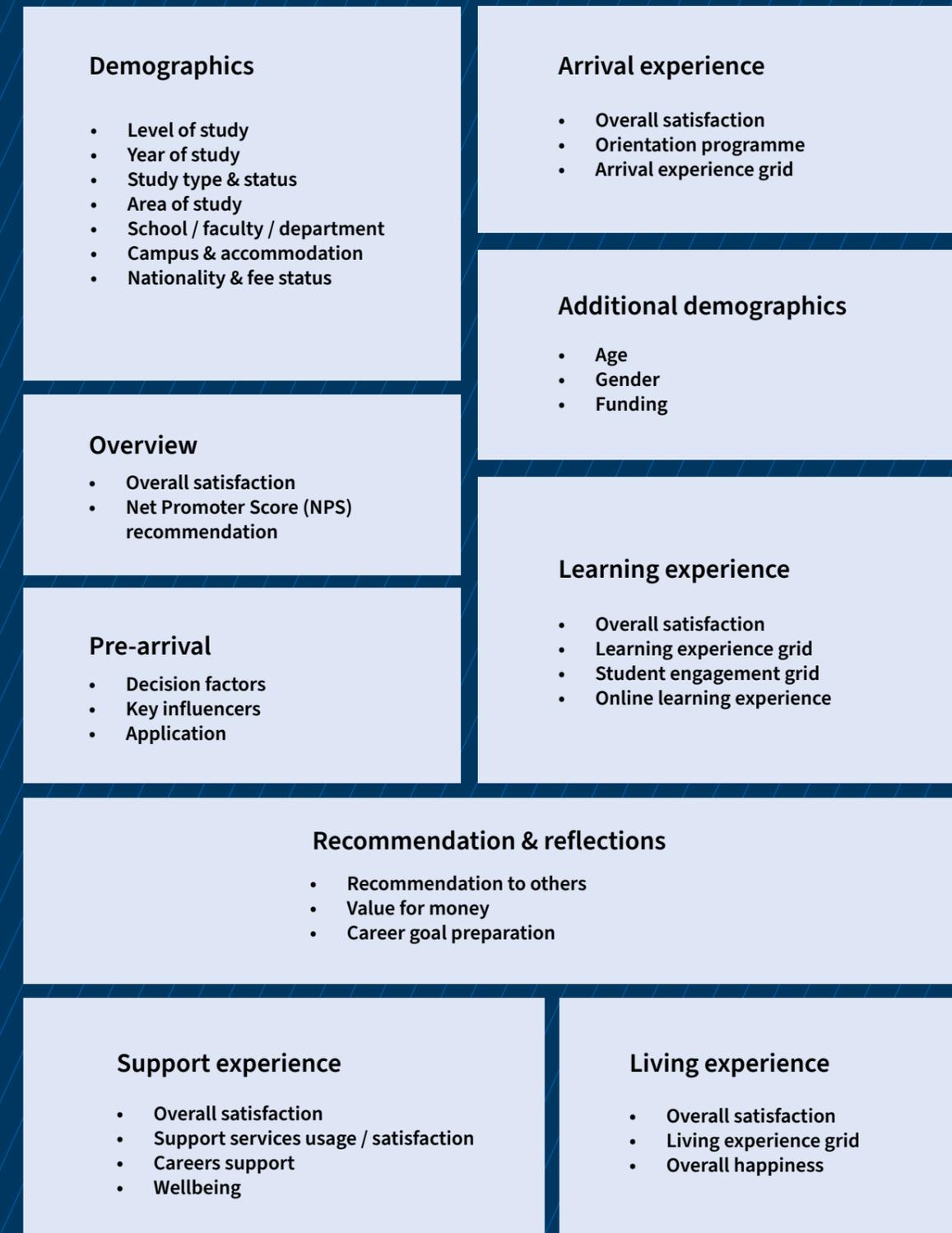
When discussing the international student experience, it is essential to understand what students want and how they perceive their international study experience. The International Student Barometer (ISB) is an indicator of how successful institutions are in meeting the hopes and ambitions of international students who decide to study at the respective institution. The ISB is the world's largest annual survey of international students and has been used by over 1,400 higher education institutions in 33 countries since 2005.

The International Student Barometer is a benchmarking survey aimed at providing HEIs with information about how they perform in many aspects compared to national and international benchmarks. The ISB is a quantitative empirical study, allowing institutions and (national) governments to track students' perceptions and satisfaction over time. Taking place annually at the beginning of the academic year, the survey asks international students to provide feedback on their experience of studying at their chosen higher education institution and give insights into why they decided to study in a particular country. The ISB was conducted in Germany in cooperation with GATE-Germany in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2016, 2018 and 2022. This report reflects the results of the 2022 survey and is based on 8,100 international students from 17 German higher education institutions, with an average response rate of 16%. Please note that an institution had to have a minimum response rate of 10% and a minimum number of 100 responses to be included in the benchmarks.

The ISB survey tracks and compares international students' decision-making factors, expectations, perceptions and intentions, from application to graduation. It enables institutions and regions to make informed decisions aimed at improving the international student experience and to drive successful recruitment and marketing strategies. Most importantly, it will help identify whether international students would recommend their German institution to others.

The international student experience at the participating German institutions was analysed for institutional- and national-level comparison against the Global ISB benchmark to gain an insight into each institution's performance and Germany-wide issues. The dimensions of the international student experience include arrival, learning, living and support services. Within each of

## Questionnaire flow Topics covered in the International Student Barometer 2022



those categories, students were asked to rate their satisfaction with several elements, including the quality of teaching, social activities and facilities, student engagement, library facilities, student well-being, accommodation quality and cost, making friends with local people and students as well as with students from other countries. Moreover, the ISB asked final-year international students how well-prepared they felt for the job market. Students were also asked about their use of and satisfaction with the support services provided by their institution.

In addition to measuring overall satisfaction, we also calculate the global derived importance for the categories arrival, learning, living and support. This metric assesses the correlation between satisfaction with the different elements in those categories and a student's willingness to recommend the institution with respect to those specific aspects relative to the global benchmark. Derived importance is based solely on correlation, which indicates whether two variables are associated with each other. However, it does not indicate the causal relationship between the variables or the level of impact each has on the other.

The primary function of the derived importance slide, which we include in each ISB feedback presentation, is to provide a hierarchy of importance for each specific element within that section. It will help institutions to focus their resources on what students truly value. The lower percentages indicate a less clear link between a student's satisfaction score for these elements and the likelihood of their recommending the institution (see figure 'Derived importance: Measuring what is important to students').

The data from the ISB survey is reported to each institution involved, including institution-specific and international results. Participating institutions can customise their survey to a certain extent, paying careful attention to ensure that the results can be benchmarked. Each ISB partner institution can use its results comparatively to understand its strengths and weaknesses in the international market and implement the necessary structural and financial measures for improvement.

The number of respondents bolsters the Student Barometer's legitimacy; it has received over 4.2 million student responses to date.

## Derived importance: Measuring what is important to students



### How it works

- Each student's satisfaction scores (for each of the Arrival, Learning, Living and Support elements) are correlated with their score for their 'likelihood to recommend' their university.
- A high correlation (positive or negative) means that scores for that element are strongly related to the scores given for the likelihood to recommend.
- In this way, derived importance helps identify which factors have the greatest impact on students, and on them recommending the university to others.

### How are respondents sourced for the International Student Barometer?

The ISB can be completed by all currently enrolled international and EU students, including study-abroad and exchange students, in all years and at all levels of study. Each higher education institution contacts its own international student body during the live period of the survey; in 2022, the Student Barometer was live from 22 September to 19 December and included 120,622 international students and 69,408 domestic students from 146 institutions in 17 countries. The institution-specific results are compared against comparator groups and national and international benchmarks and reported to the

individual institutions. The benchmarks are based on a two-year research period. This so-called rolling benchmark combines the data of institutions participating in the 2021 and 2022 Student Barometers in both the Northern and Southern Hemisphere waves. We only use the most recent data for those who participated in both years. Institutions that do not reach the benchmark cut-off (a minimum of 100 responses and a 10% minimum response rate) are removed. As a result, the benchmarked data is based on 131 institutions globally, 36 in Europe and 15 in Germany<sup>2</sup>.

### The 2022 ISB in Germany

Responses to the 2022 International Student Barometer (ISB) survey at institutions in Germany form the basis of this report, shedding light on those aspects of the learning and living experience that matter most to international students studying in Germany. In 2022, 8,100 international students studying at 17 higher education institutions in Germany took part in the ISB. Of those 8,100 international students, 59% are in the process of acquiring a master's degree, 29% are studying for a bachelor's degree and 9% for a PhD degree, and 3% are pursuing some other kind of degree. The STEM fields and medicine are well-represented among the respondents. The two largest nationality groups in Germany are Indian (19%) and Chinese students (7%), followed by a wide variety of other nationalities.

<sup>2</sup> 17 higher education institutions in Germany participated in the 2022 (2023) benchmark study; two institutions were not included in the benchmarks as they needed a minimum response rate of 10% and a minimum number of 100 responses. The institutions did receive their own data set, however.

	Response	Population	Response rate
<b>Germany</b> ISB 2022	<b>8,100</b>	<b>51,615</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Europe</b> ISB 2022	<b>30,004</b>	<b>137,239</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Global</b> ISB 2022	<b>120,622</b>	<b>556,170</b>	<b>22%</b>

### Participating German universities / ISB 2022 (2023) (8,100 international students responded)



## 2 Decision making: What makes international students decide to study in Germany?

The number of international students enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide has increased by 70% over the past decades and reached 4.4 million international students in OECD countries in 2020<sup>3</sup>. But what influences international students in their decision to choose a particular university, often in a country they have never visited? Do international students first choose a specific country and then find an institution there? For 83% of the surveyed international students within the German ISB, Germany was their first choice for an international education. While the reputation of the German educational system as a key driver in prospective students' decision-making ranked more highly than that of any other country in 2018, however, this has declined slightly in the current 2022 survey. For 90% of international students in Germany, the reputation of the German education system was a driver of choice. In the Global ISB 2022 benchmark, this factor ranks more highly at 92%. It highlights the fact that no country can afford complacency when it comes to country branding.

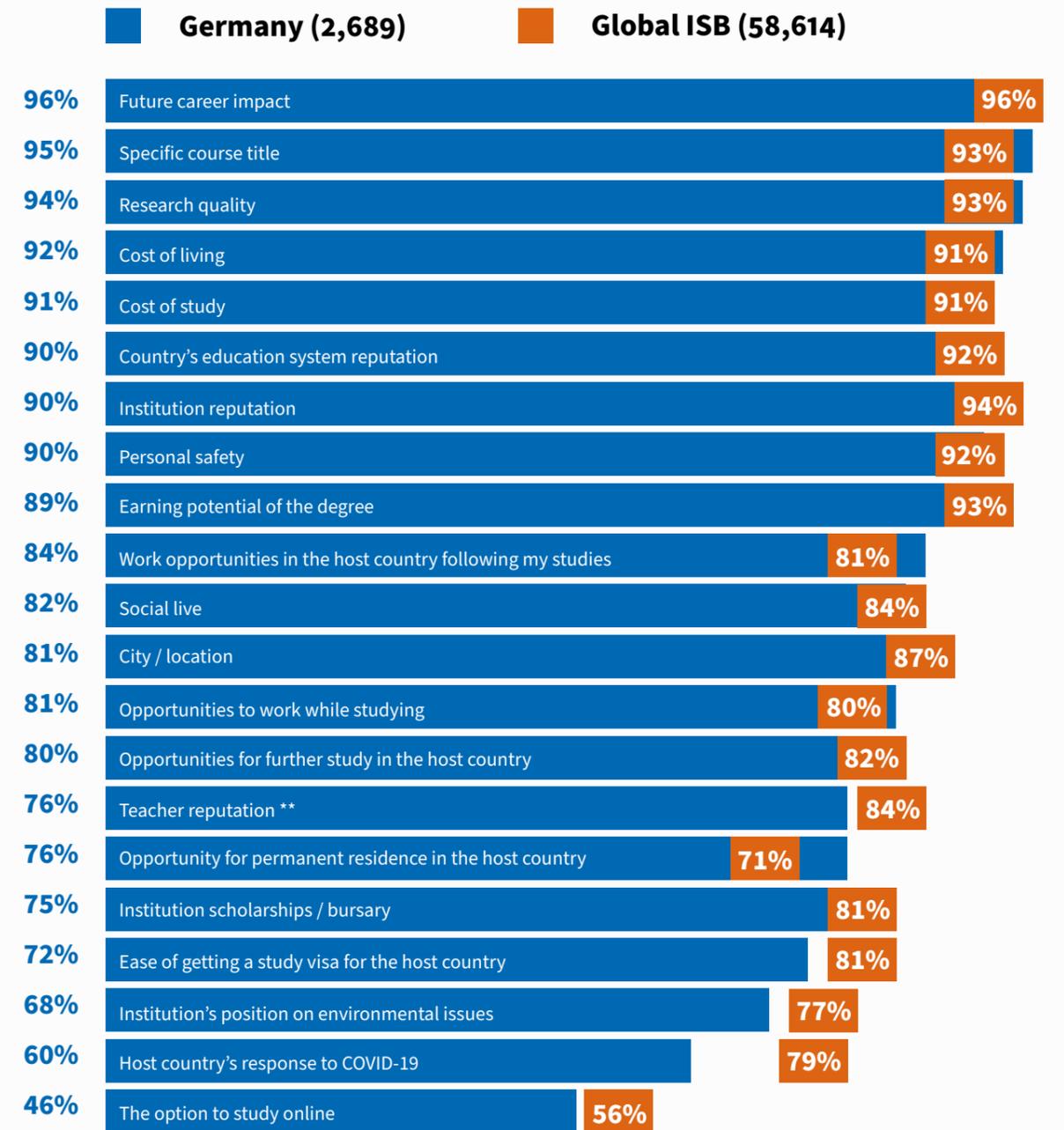
The driving factor for study decision-making, though, both globally and for international students in Germany, is the importance of the next career step upon graduation. 'Impact of the qualification on my future career' is the primary driver for international students deciding to come to Germany (96%), followed by the specific course title (95%) and, subsequently, the quality of research (94%).

The fact that German HEIs charge no or relatively low tuition fees and affordable semester contributions is a constant subject of discussion. Does the low cost of study play a role in international students' decision-making? According to the ISB data, very little. 'Cost of living' in Germany is just 1% above the Global ISB, while 'Cost of study' scores 91% in both ISB benchmarks.

<sup>3</sup> OECD, International Migration Outlook 2022

### All study decision factors (% important or very important)

How important were the following factors when deciding where to study?



\*\* Postgraduate students only

Nevertheless, ‘Cost of living’ and ‘Cost of study’ are in the top ten elements influencing the decision of where to study. International students were presented with 21 possible responses to determine the most decisive factors, and ‘Cost of living’ was ranked as the fourth most important at 92%, closely followed by ‘Cost of study’. The fact that Germany offers a high-quality education at an affordable cost, coupled with the recognition by 77% of final-year international students that their degrees prepare them effectively for their career goals, strongly supports the message that Germany is a highly regarded study destination.



*“Apart from the dorm experience, I would definitely say that the living experience has been great so far. The cost of living, beautiful town, university buildings and the student environment is so good.”*

(Nationality: India, study level: master’s)

Germany was the first choice of study location for 83% of the international students surveyed in the German ISB, which is slightly higher than the figure of 82% recorded in 2018 and surpasses the global benchmark of 79% in 2022. When asked ‘Which was most important in your decision of where to study: country or institution?’, 54% placed greater emphasis on the country, while 42% leaned towards the institution. This contrasts with the Global ISB benchmark, where only 39% cited the country as the primary factor, again highlighting that German higher education as a whole is a strong brand.



*“Germany is wonderful. Students here are not competitive but are very supportive instead. If you are looking to study 24/7 with people who never get tired, that’s not how it is here. Everyone knows what they need to study for their future, but are doing it in a relaxed fashion. Everyone looks happy and satisfied, so I like this concept.”*

(Nationality: Ukraine, study level: undergraduate)

The institution’s website is the main influencing factor when we look at what helped international students to decide on a particular study destination. However, we should not of course underestimate the factors that prompt

## Chapter 2

### Decision making: What makes international students decide to study in Germany?

prospective students to visit an institution’s website (such as DAAD-supported events across the globe, alumnae and alumni, current students, league tables and rankings). While league tables and rankings are the eighth most important factor for study-related decisions (18%), word of mouth from friends, current students, and alumnae and alumni carries greater weight. For German institutions, recommendations from current students (26%) play a more significant role compared to the global benchmark. Relatively few German higher education institutions use agents. If we look at which of the following elements helped students to choose their host institution, agents in Germany account for only 11%, whereas the Global ISB benchmark places them as the second most important element after the institution’s website, with a score of 32%.



*“When I applied for my master’s degree abroad, I also got offered a place at a few other universities, but initially I chose xxx over others because of its global ranking. And now I can see why xxx is one of the best universities in the world.”*

(Nationality: Bangladesh, study level: master’s)

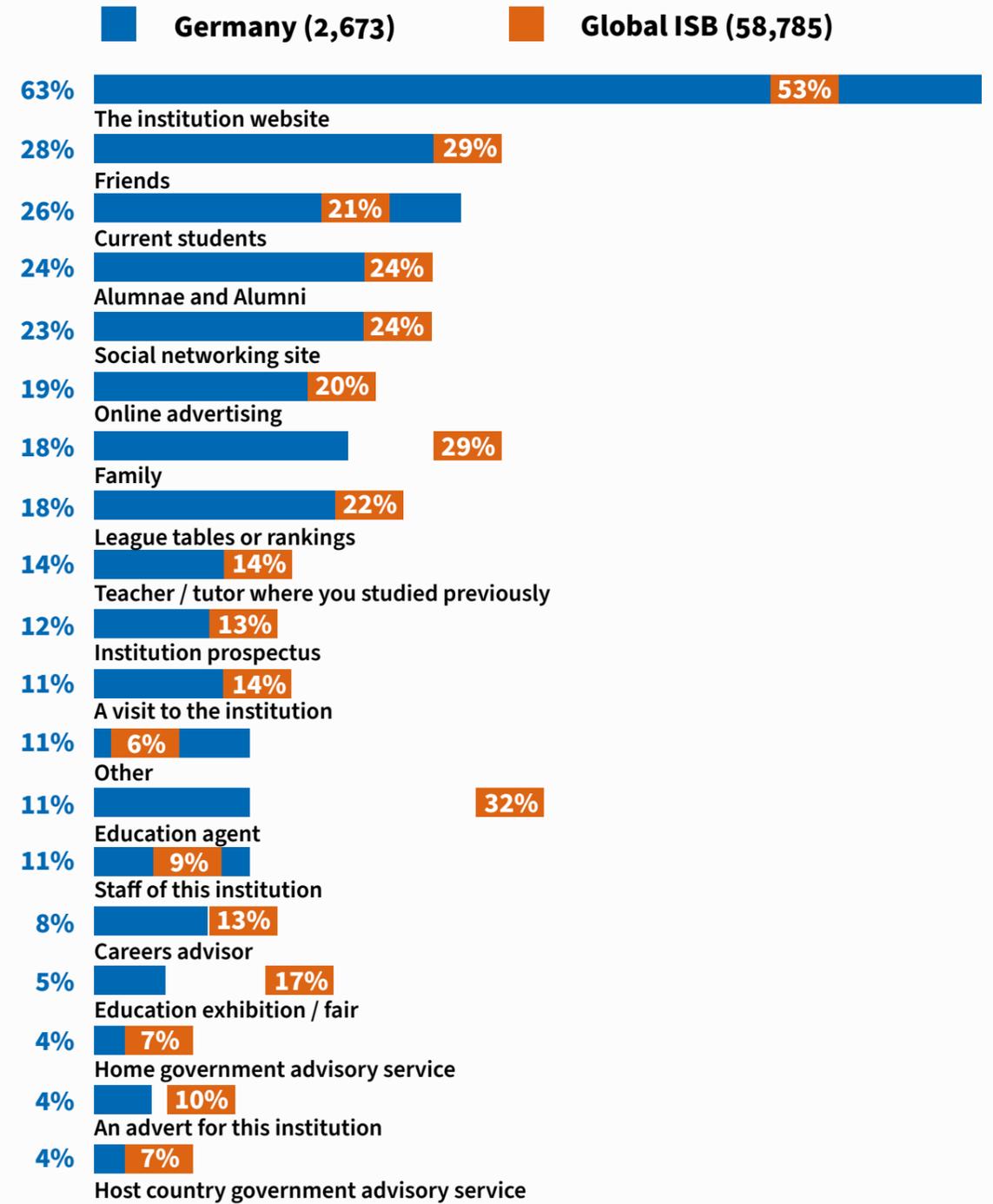
In short, ‘Future career impact’ is the principal driver for international students to opt for a study experience in Germany. At 96%, it is on a par with the Global ISB benchmark – followed by ‘specific course title’ (95%), and ‘research quality’ (94%) – highlighting how important employability is to this generation of students. It is apparently important for German institutions to integrate employability skills into their curricula in order to support international students in navigating the constantly changing world of work.

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to take a look at the video featuring the University of Jena.



### All influencers (choice of institution)

Which of the following helped you to choose this institution?



### 3 Arrival phase: How easy is it for international students to find their way in Germany?

During the arrival phase, students across the globe try to find their path within their new host country. Some hurdles in this adaptation phase are institution- or location-specific, others are regional or national, and some are more universal to the experience of settling in as a new international student. In this chapter, we will aim to shed some more light on the various aspects of the arrival process. Most importantly, we need to realise that the arrival phase is crucial for international students, as it sets the tone for their study abroad experience. Based on the ISB 2022 data, international students in Germany generally have positive arrival experiences. Since 2018, the overall satisfaction of international students with the arrival phase has increased. 27% of the international students are very satisfied (18% in 2018) and 60% satisfied (66% in 2018), compared to 26% very satisfied and 63% satisfied globally in 2022.

During the pandemic, i-graduate continued to conduct the Global ISB survey, albeit without the participation of German institutions. We decided to leave in some of the questions from the version of the survey carried out during that unprecedented period, as some effects are still being felt today. For instance, the ISB in 2022 asked about virtual onboarding and face-to-face orientation. 38% of the international students in the German ISB benchmark attended a face-to-face orientation (10% higher than the global benchmark), while 16% attended virtual onboarding (against 32% in the Global ISB benchmark). However, 36% did not attend the orientation programme at all (compared to 29% in the Global ISB benchmark). The main reasons for not attending were a lack of awareness of the existence of the orientation programme (36%) or the fact that the student in question had started their course after the orientation took place (35%). During the ISB feedback presentations, the backlog in processing student visas that appears to have accumulated following the pandemic is mentioned as a severe issue, causing students to arrive later than initially planned. If we ask international students about their level of satisfaction regarding the processing time for visa applications, however, Germany outperforms the Global ISB benchmark with a 21% satisfaction rate. Nevertheless, having students attend orientation events is crucial as these lay the

#### Chapter 3

##### Arrival phase: How easy is it for international students to find their way in Germany?

foundation for the rest of the study abroad experience. It also suggests that there needs to be more communication (not only via email but also through other social media channels) about the orientation programmes to ensure that students can participate.

**We asked Dr Britta Salheiser from the International Office at the University of Jena why she believes the University of Jena has scored so well on the arrival process. Her answer highlights the good practice they have adopted: “New students experience the enrolment as demanding – we try to alleviate this process and offer admitted candidates several online workshops in preparation for their time in Jena. This virtual onboarding has been evaluated very positively.”**

**We also spoke to Julia-Sophie Rothmann, Director of the International Office of Fulda University of Applied Sciences, who explained: “The ISB is a valuable tool for us to showcase fields of action in which we are doing well and where improvement is needed. We are really happy about the high scores we achieved in the ISB 2022 survey, especially for the arrival phase, and about the high recommendation rate in general that we received from our international students. This encourages us to further follow the path we’ve taken: welcoming students and giving them the best possible support in their arrival phase has always been very important to us. It is good to note that the high recommendation rate shows that Fulda University’s study programmes, in combination with the familial campus atmosphere, the high quality of life in our region as well as the city and geographical location, are attractive to international students.”**

Compared to the previous ISB report of 2018, German institutions scored 4% higher in overall satisfaction with the arrival experience. Achieving an overall satisfaction rate of 87%, they now rank equally with the European ISB benchmark, but still 2% lower than the global benchmark. Looking at the average score of all the various questions in the ‘arrival’ section, we see a 6.5% lower satisfaction rate than the Global and 1% lower than the European ISB benchmark. According to the students surveyed in Germany, the main concerns involve getting to the accommodation for the first night’s stay, the condition of the accommodation upon arrival, the support provided by the accommodation office and the orientation regarding living in the new place and introductions to clubs and societies. However, the lowest score is for the ‘welcome and /

Chapter 3

Arrival phase: How easy is it for international students to find their way in Germany?

or pick-up at the airport, train or bus station'; this is 16% lower than the Global ISB and 6% lower than the European ISB benchmark. This was regularly discussed during the feedback presentations: How much should you 'spoon-feed' international students? In Germany, students are traditionally expected to find their own way and deal with any challenges as part of their international study experience. Although this may support young individuals' personal growth, some guidance seems to be essential to ensure that international students quickly get to grips with their new situation.



*“On the way from xxx to xxx, transportation opportunities were difficult for someone who has no local knowledge and there are few travel options. It would have been better if there had been someone to welcome me at the airport or if I could have come directly to xxx by shuttle.”*  
(Nationality: Turkey, study level: master’s)

One of the more universal issues when settling in as a new international student is connecting with other students: ‘Making friends’ is a common concern across the globe that plays an integral part in finding one’s way and feeling happy at the new study destination. Hence the level of satisfaction with ‘Making friends from this country’ is critical. In Germany, the overall national satisfaction score is 16% lower than the Global ISB benchmark and 6% lower than the European benchmark. It has further deteriorated in comparison with the 2018 data, doubling from 8% below the Global ISB benchmark in 2018 to 16% below the Global ISB benchmark in 2022. However, satisfaction in this category (‘Making friends from this country’) ranges from a mere 40% to 70% among the German institutions participating in the ISB 2022. The German climate, with fewer opportunities for outdoor activities, coupled with a culture where people are less likely to invite new friends into their homes, are often cited as significant factors in ISB feedback presentations. The open comments often indicate language issues when it comes to making friends but also suggest that friendships, when they are formed with German students, become deep and long-lasting connections. For German institutions the key may be to offer more language courses but also to work with the German students to help them understand the value that an international classroom may have for them, particularly in relation to their career aspirations with employers looking to hire candidates with a proven cultural awareness capability.

Benchmarking arrival

below above

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
ARRIVAL AVERAGE	78%	84%	79%
ARRIVAL OVERALL	87%	89%	87%

Arrival			
Pre-arrival info	86%	90%	86%
Condition of accommodation on arrival	70%	81%	74%
First night – getting to where I would stay	68%	82%	77%
Welcome – pickup at airport, railway, coach station	59%	75%	65%

Face-to-face orientation	91%	91%	86%
Finance Office	89%	90%	85%
Virtual onboarding	87%	87%	82%
Formal welcome at the institution	86%	87%	85%
Enrolment / academic registration	86%	90%	87%
Meeting academic staff	84%	89%	85%
Making friends from other countries	83%	85%	87%
Accessing online learning materials	83%	89%	84%
Internet access	82%	86%	84%
Social orientation	80%	83%	78%
Introduction to support services	80%	86%	78%
Intro to campus and facilities	79%	81%	74%
Making friends from my home country	79%	86%	80%
Understanding how my course of study would work	79%	86%	81%
Introduction to the local area	79%	81%	75%
Social activities	78%	84%	80%
Accommodation Office	71%	84%	74%
Introduction to clubs and societies	66%	78%	71%
Accommodation and living orientation	63%	77%	65%
Making friends from my host country	60%	73%	64%

Questions about arrival put to all first year students



*“Finding German friends has been a bit difficult because they’re a bit closed and some of them are scared of speaking English. However, those who are interested in other cultures are very good friends.”*

(Nationality: other, study level: master’s)



*“Sometimes I feel that because I do not speak German fluently, I am left out of something. However, this is really my fault. I think it is important to learn the language when studying abroad. I will attend a German course [...] when the timing is appropriate.”*

(Nationality: other, study level: PhD)

The integration of international and domestic students appears to be an important area in which there is room for improvement at German higher education institutions. To understand why some institutions do better in this area than others, we asked Dr Britta Salheiser from the University of Jena why she believes Jena scores well in this category: “We are happy to see that most students feel well integrated into the overall student population. We are sure that our mentoring buddy system, the social events during our Welcome Days and at our International Centre, plus the language tandems make it easy for new students to connect and feel welcome.”

In the ISB survey we look at those factors that would make international students recommend their international study experience to others. The factors that contribute most to the institution’s recommendation with respect to arrival are the overall arrival experience, the social activities upon arrival, virtual onboarding, the social orientation and the introduction to the local area (see figure ‘Derived importance – Arrival’). The arrival process is only the start of the student’s journey, however. In order to ensure that international students will genuinely recommend their experience to other prospective students who are considering applying to study abroad, a higher education institution needs to provide a rewarding experience throughout the student’s journey: from the application process to the provision of an education, complemented

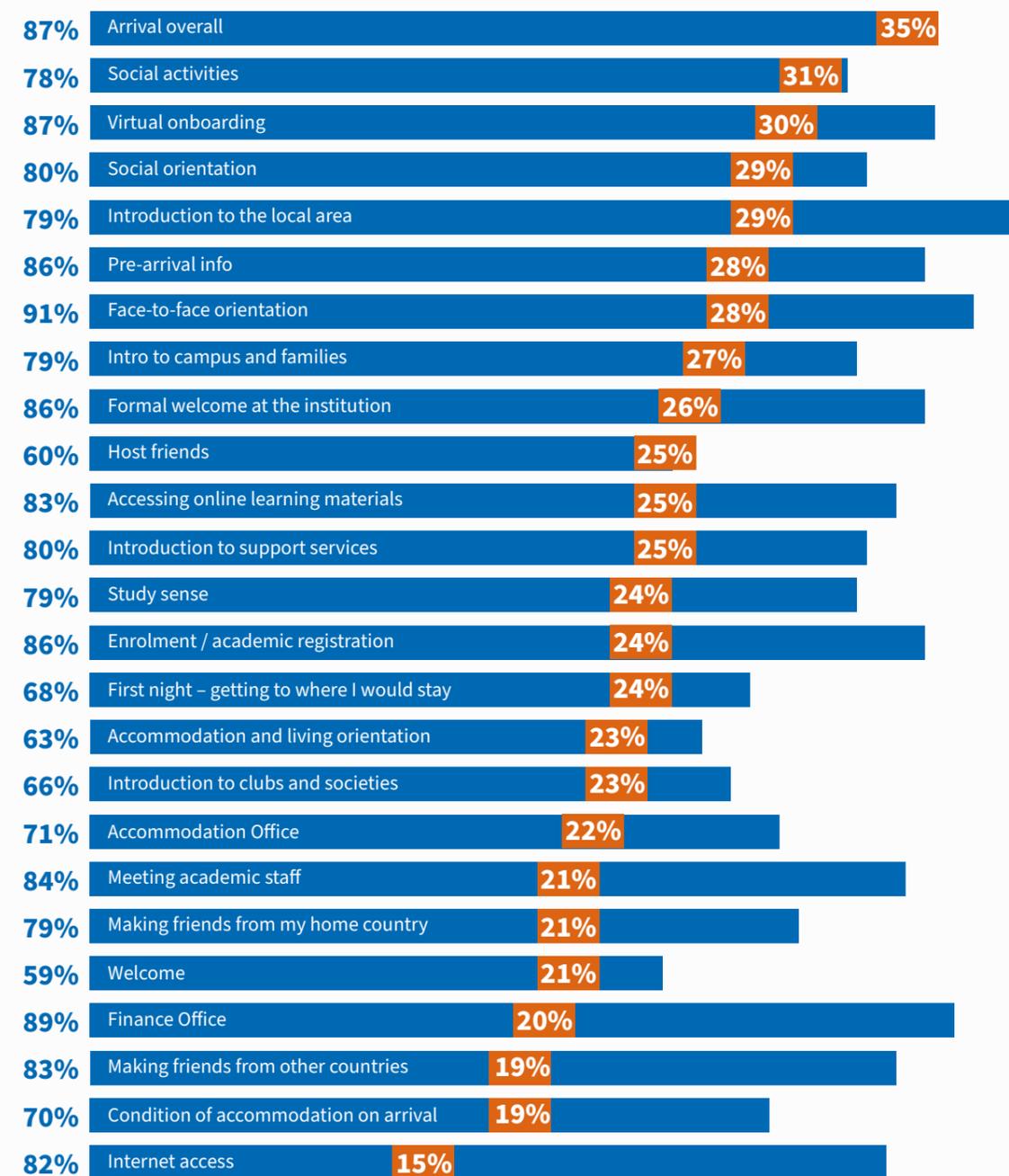
### Chapter 3

#### Arrival phase: How easy is it for international students to find their way in Germany?

#### Derived importance – Arrival

##### Correlation (recommendation)

See chapter 1, page 12 for an explanation of derived importance.



Questions about arrival put to all first year students

with support services, that meets the student’s expectations in terms of career prospects.



*“The exchange coordinators really helped us with our arrival in xxx, providing us with information before we arrived and offering a pickup service provided by the International Office. Later, we were able to get to know the city better thanks to the tours we took.”*

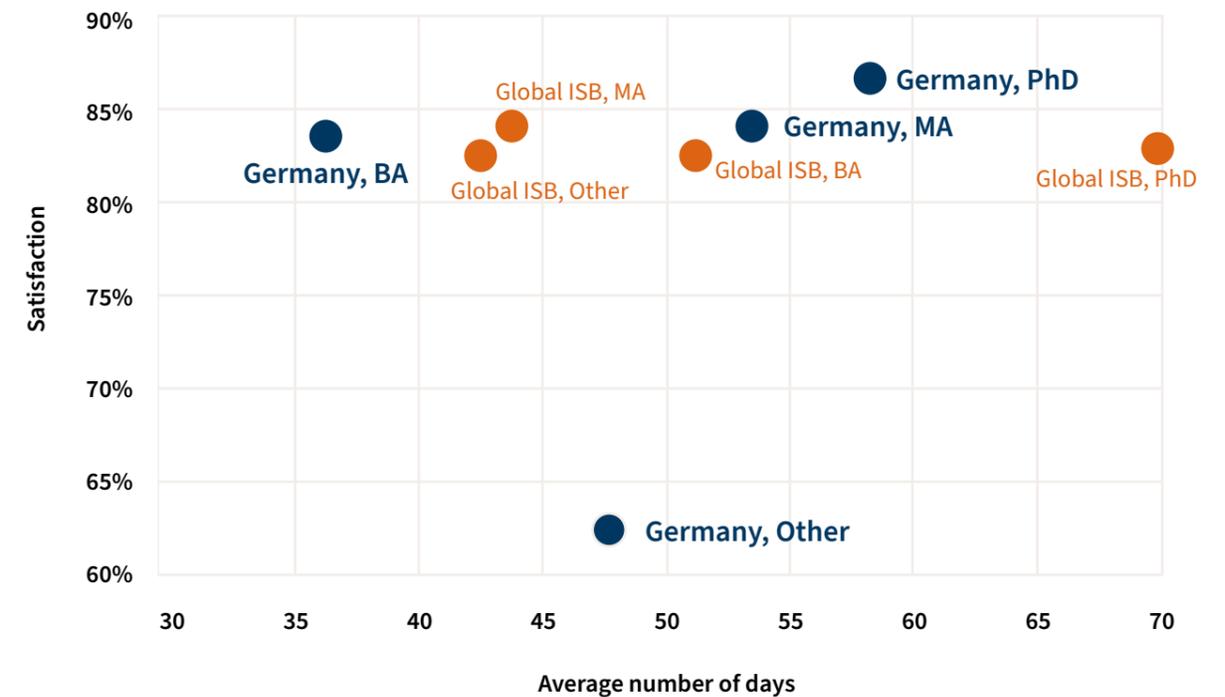
(Nationality: Jordan, study level: undergraduate)

The process of feeling welcome and fully integrated starts even before the students arrive, however. Hence the ISB survey asks how long students had to wait between applying and receiving an offer from their university. Germany outperforms the Global ISB benchmark for PhD and bachelor’s students when it comes to this criterion. Nonetheless, this process takes longer for master’s students, the largest group of international students in the German ISB (54 days in Germany vs 43 days globally). During the application process, it is not only speed that matters – feeling that there is a personal connection does, too. International students can apply to any institution worldwide and usually contact several institutions simultaneously. Four weeks is already a long time to wait for a student awaiting an answer about whether they will be accepted onto a course that will shape their future at an institution where they will spend the next few months or years. A higher education institution that provides a speedy response and also establishes a personal connection with prospective students will have the best chances of selecting the most suitable candidates from the pool.

In summary, the 2022 ISB study showed clear improvements with respect to the arrival process, which has been an area in which German higher education institutions have been struggling for some time and still score below the Global ISB benchmark. International students say that they better understand how their course of study works, are more satisfied with the orientation and are happier with the pre-arrival information. Nevertheless, navigating their new country upon arrival remains an issue.

### From application to offer – number of days and satisfaction

How long did you wait between applying and receiving your offer from this institution?



Attention should also be paid to the fact that international students find it difficult to make friends with German students. To improve this aspect of the arrival phase, universities should focus probably on the German students. International students are already out of their “comfort zone” and willing to connect, yet domestic students are most likely to play the key part in any such connection. Explaining to the domestic students what they gain by being in an international classroom and exposed to cultural differences is crucial. Furthermore, to support international students upon arrival, information on navigating the local public transport system would probably diminish a lot of stress.

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to take a look at the video featuring Fulda University of Applied Sciences.



## 4 Learning: How do international students value their learning experience in Germany?

The international students' views of the learning experience in Germany tend to be positive. Learning is the key component of any study abroad experience, and overall satisfaction with learning is a not insignificant 1.4% higher in Germany than in the Global ISB benchmark. Most international students surveyed in the German ISB benchmark reported being satisfied with the lecturers' subject area expertise (94%) and the quality of the lectures (90%) they receive in Germany (on par with the Global ISB benchmark). This suggests that most international students surveyed in the German ISB are pleased with the level of education they are receiving and that they feel their tutors and lecturers are knowledgeable and engaged in their teaching.



*"My learning experience here is great. I like the lecturers and the course content is advanced and has an international focus. As an international student who is studying here, I feel like I am respected in a diverse environment."*

(Nationality: China, study level: undergraduate)

For students to grow academically, assessment and feedback are critical components of the learning process. A positive learning environment is vital for student success, and the ISB data suggests that international students in Germany are generally satisfied with their learning environment. Although learning support ('Getting time from academic staff when I need it / personal support with learning') scores relatively well (82% satisfaction), it lags behind both the Global ISB benchmark (88%) and the European ISB benchmark (84%). The ISB data shows that international students in Germany are generally satisfied with the performance feedback they receive in comparison with the European ISB benchmark (outperforming the European benchmark by 3%). There is some room for improvement when it comes to 'Course organisation', as it scores 4% below the Global ISB benchmark (85% Global ISB vs 81% German ISB). This suggests that some students may struggle with course schedules, deadlines or other logistical

### Benchmarking learning – Teaching

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
LEARNING AVERAGE	84%	88%	85%
LEARNING OVERALL	89%	87%	88%

#### Teaching

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
Expert lecturers	94%	94%	95%
Submitting work remotely	92%	94%	95%
Quality of lectures	90%	90%	89%
Communicating with tutors	89%	91%	90%
Course content	88%	90%	89%
Level of research activity	88%	90%	88%
Good teachers	87%	89%	87%
Assessment	87%	90%	86%
Learning support	82%	88%	84%
Performance feedback	81%	86%	79%
Course organisation	81%	85%	81%
Marking criteria	79%	85%	79%

### Benchmarking learning – Studies

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
LEARNING AVERAGE	84%	88%	85%
LEARNING OVERALL	89%	87%	88%

#### Studies

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
Managing research*	88%	91%	88%
Studying with people from other cultures	86%	90%	91%
Language support	86%	91%	91%
Topic selection*	83%	90%	84%
Communication with students	76%	84%	80%
Employability	72%	81%	74%
Opportunities to teach*	69%	79%	76%
Opportunities for work experience	65%	74%	64%
Careers advice	63%	76%	64%

\* Postgraduate students only

Benchmarking learning – Facilities

■ below ■ above

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
LEARNING AVERAGE	84%	88%	85%
LEARNING OVERALL	89%	87%	88%
<b>Facilities</b>			
Laboratories	91%	93%	92%
On-campus facilities access	90%	88%	92%
Learning spaces	89%	92%	90%
Physical library facilities	89%	93%	91%
Online study materials	89%	91%	91%
Virtual learning environment	88%	91%	90%
Learning technology	86%	92%	89%
Online library	84%	91%	89%

aspects related to the organisation and smooth running of their course. While scheduling and organisation may seem straightforward from a German perspective, it may be less obvious and easy to understand for people from other cultures. It is essential to recognise the influence of culture and acknowledge that additional guidance could be beneficial for international students. While most



*“I like that xxx has a five-week module per subject. But the grading at the end of the module is not particularly accurate or satisfactory. It would be nice if we could be graded partly or if our grades could include all the extra reports and presentations that we do during the course. This would help us focus more week by week.”*  
(Nationality: India, study level: master’s)



*“Feedback is a point that I had to write to professors many times to ask about, as the norm seemed to be to send the grade without having a transparent evaluation methodology.”*  
(Nationality: other, study level: master’s)

international students surveyed were satisfied with the actual teaching, students did report being slightly less satisfied with the quality of facilities such as labs (93% in the Global ISB vs 91% in the German ISB benchmark), libraries (93% in the Global ISB vs 89% in the German ISB benchmark), and learning spaces (92% in the Global ISB vs 89% in the German ISB benchmark). This suggests that there may be room for improvement with regard to the resources and infrastructure provided by institutions to support student learning. However, the major area for improvement in the learning category in Germany concerns employability, i.e. learning that will help the student obtain a good job upon graduation. The current generation of students is looking for a direct return on investment from their study experience. Hence the significance of the question ‘Learning that will help me get a good job’ is evident, and the German benchmark falls 9% short of the Global ISB benchmark and 2% short of the European ISB benchmark. In terms of employability, the ‘Advice and guidance on long-term job opportunities and careers from academic staff’ scores 13% below the Global ISB benchmark and just 1% below the European benchmark. This indicates that German institutions need to focus on this area, but that there is also room for improvement at European institutions overall as far as employability is concerned, suggesting a Europe-wide need for greater attention to be paid to graduate outcomes.

Overall, the data points to a very strong correlation between ‘Learning that will help me to get a good job’ and the likelihood of a student recommending the institution. This is the second most important element for recommending a study experience globally, and is in the top three in the German ISB benchmark.

The global top three for derived importance in the learning category:

1. Course organisation
2. Employability
3. On-campus facilities access

Versus the German top three for derived importance in the learning category:

1. Learning overall
2. Quality of lectures
3. Employability

To enable us to understand why some institutions outperform the benchmark, we asked Tatjana Erlewein-Paulsen from the International Office at Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences (TH Rosenheim) why she believes

the TH Rosenheim achieves such high scores regarding course organisation. “Funded by a project of the Bavarian ministry, we changed our course organisation to a digital version. Students can find information on and select English-taught courses online and already start before they arrive. That helps immensely with the immersion process.”

Today’s (international) students consciously decide to invest time, money and energy in studying abroad and expect a return on investment in the sense of then being prepared for the next step upon graduation. Within the ISB we have noticed this constant growth in the importance of employability; in the Global ISB data of 2022, employability shows one of the highest correlations (40%) with the likelihood of the student recommending the study experience. Within Germany, the highest-ranking element is ‘Learning overall’ (i.e. the question ‘Overall, how satisfied are you with the learning experience at this stage in the year?’), while employability ranks second, at a similar level as ‘the quality of lectures’ – both answer categories show a 40% correlation with recommending the study experience in Germany.

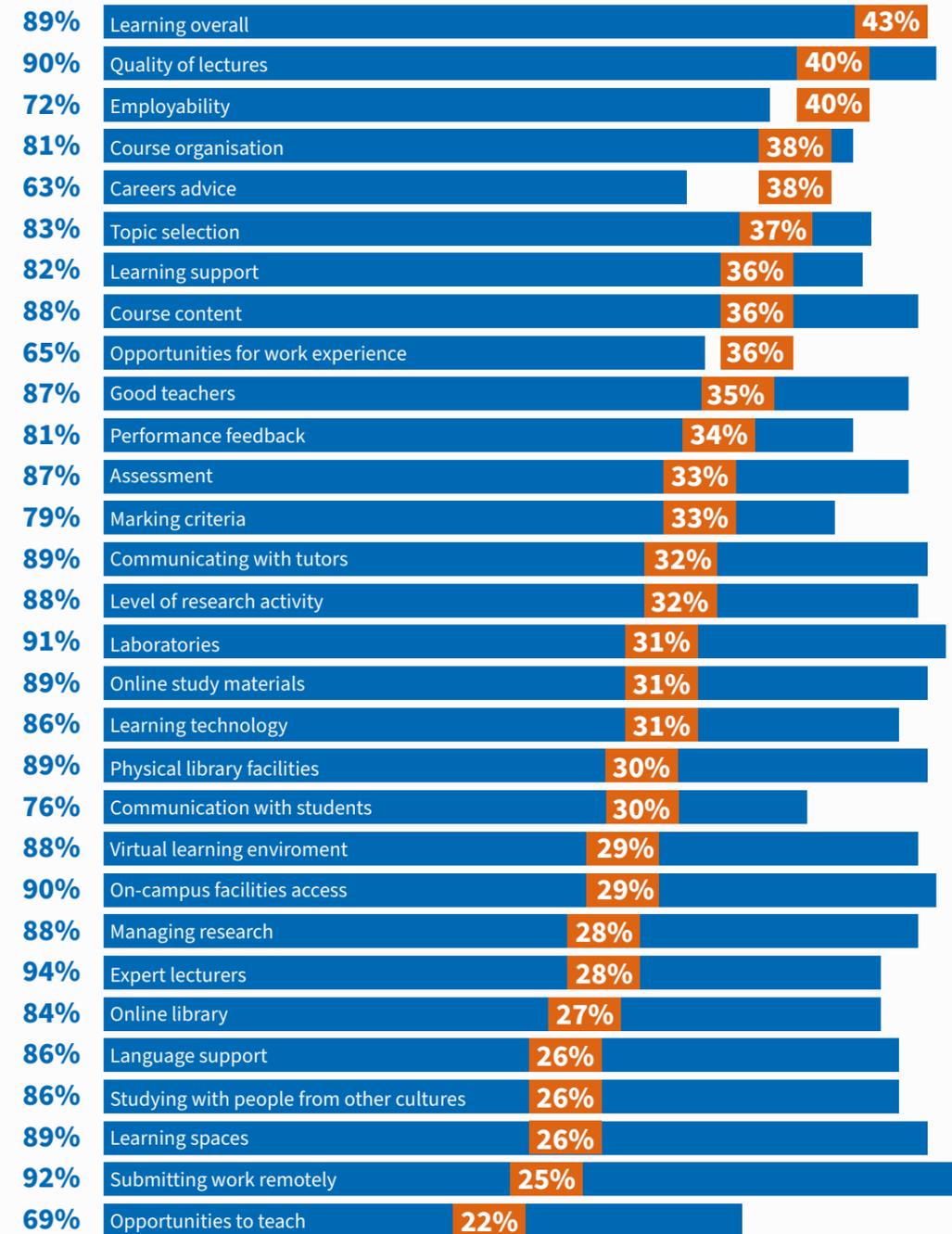
When attempting to understand the good practices being followed elsewhere, it helps to hear what other German institutions are doing in a particular area and why they score notably higher than others. We asked Kerstin Frodl, Director of the Center for International Students at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, what she believes has impacted their good practice regarding employability and how they try to support the connection between education and the world of work: “At Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, all study programmes are relevant to the German job market. This is reflected in our teaching and learning, where theoretical knowledge is applied to actual problems in cooperation with business and industry partners. All professors have worked outside academia and can therefore give careers advice based on their experience. The results of the ISB 2022 show us that our international students profit from this strategy, as they express a high level of satisfaction – and consequently, the vast majority of them would recommend our university to others!”

The importance of employability is evident: ‘Future career impact’ is the number one reason for international students to come and study in Germany. Moreover, in the learning category, ‘employability’ is in the top two (equally important as ‘quality of lectures’) when it comes to the likelihood of a student recommending an institution. It is obvious that the next step after graduation is

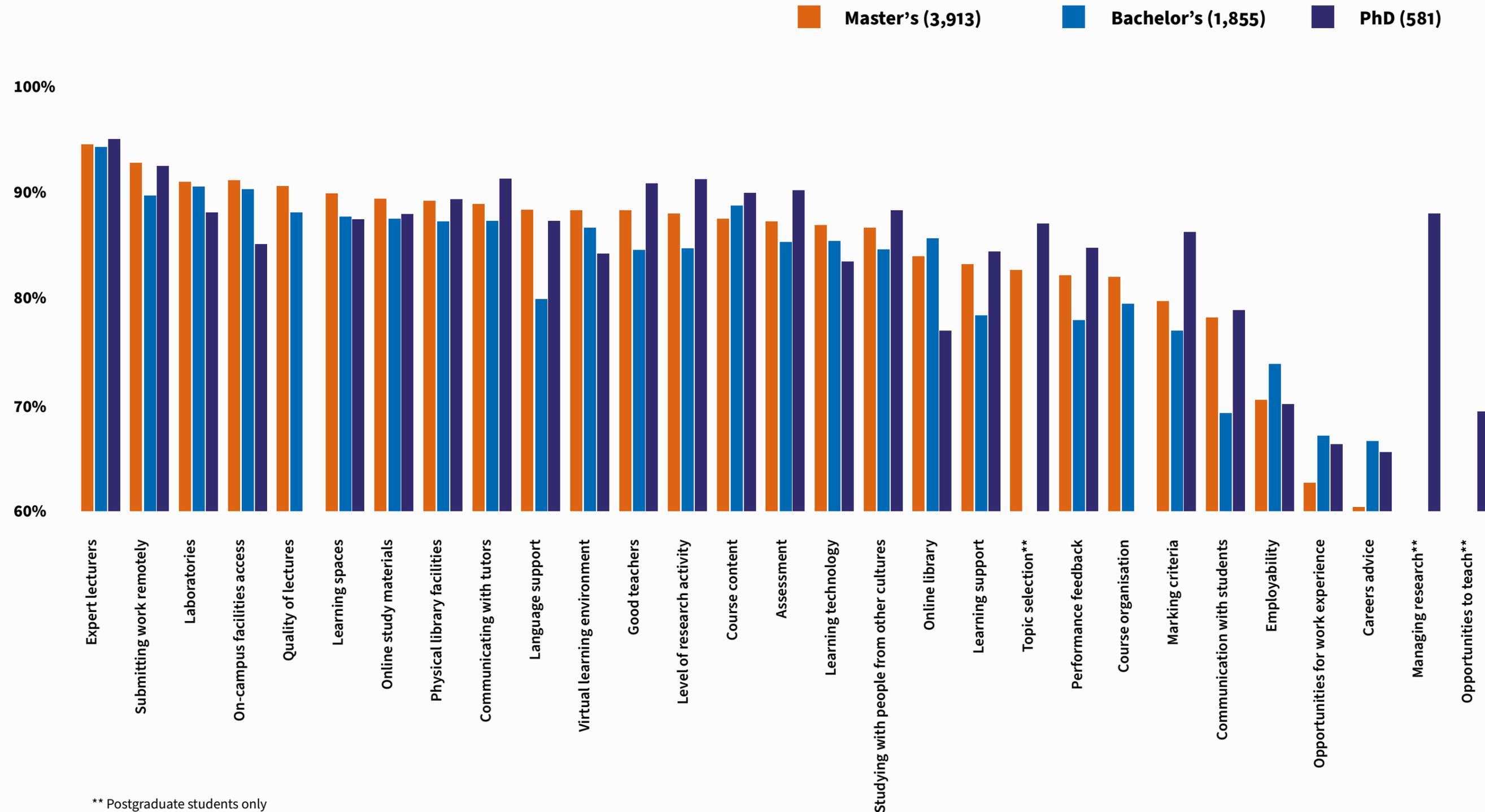
### Derived importance – Learning

#### Correlation (recommendation)

See chapter 1, page 12 for an explanation of derived importance.



Learning satisfaction (by study level)



\*\* Postgraduate students only

essential to students, which means it is also critical for German higher education institutions from both a recruitment and retention perspective. Attracting and retaining international talent has become tremendously important, not just for higher education institutions but also for regions and countries. A clear link to the world of work may be the most effective way to attract international students. And since employability has a considerable impact on learning satisfaction too, it cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, current levels of satisfaction regarding employability in Germany (i.e. the question: 'Learning that will help me to get a good job') lag behind by international standards at all levels of education (9% lower in Germany than the Global ISB).

Having just experienced the pandemic, i-graduate decided to ask some additional questions in the ISB. One rather interesting question with respect to designing education curricula is: 'Based on your current online study experience, would you choose to study online again in the future?'. A striking 60% of international students in the German ISB answered 'yes', against 54% globally. Another interesting question, also a legacy of the pandemic, is: 'Do you have any concerns about completing your studies?'. Only 26% in the German ISB are 'not at all concerned', compared with 30% in the global benchmark and 34% in the European ISB benchmark.



*"The availability of online lecture materials increased my learnability by more than 200%, I would say. Even if we miss the lecture or part of it, we can still get the material online. In the past, I was unable to sit the exams for many courses because I had missed."*

(Nationality: Pakistan, study level: master's)

The ISB also asked about 'learning engagement challenges'. The overall conclusion could be that international students in Germany might be slightly less challenged academically, as the overall scores for these questions are below the Global ISB benchmark. Nevertheless, there are quite considerable differences in this respect between German institutions, namely as much as 12% between the highest- and lowest-scoring institutions regarding the question, 'Thinking back over this academic year, to what extent has your course challenged you to do your best work?'. The data does not suggest that research universities provide a more academically challenging environment than universities of applied sciences, as the picture is mixed here. It is important to remember that the ISB is a

## Chapter 4

Learning: How do international students value their learning experience in Germany?

benchmark survey and that the students of a particular higher education institution rate the level of satisfaction they experience within their own institution. Hence, a university of applied sciences can outperform a research university in any element of the learning category if they have recruited the most suitable student for their type, style and level of education.

To summarise, international students in Germany highly value the quality of education, 97% of respondents reporting that they were satisfied with the academic standards of their programme. However, the main concern relates to the connection between academic learning and the practical use of this knowledge in a professional career after graduation. Employability is crucial to this generation of students, not just in Germany but also globally. The link to the world of work is therefore essential. To address this, higher education institutions should consider options such as offering more internship opportunities, bringing in study cases more directly related to the work field and inviting international alumnae and alumni to give guest lectures. This would help ensure that employability is integrated into curricula and at the forefront of the minds of teaching staff. It is critical to provide guidance and support to help students bridge the gap between academic learning and the practical application of that learning in the professional work field.

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to take a look at the video featuring the University of Göttingen.



## 5 Living: What makes international students happy whilst studying in Germany?

The ISB asks international students about their arrival in the new country, how they perceive the actual process of learning at their institution, and about their living experience whilst studying. The importance of the living experience should not be underestimated, as this may be a source of either joy or anxiety and can therefore colour how they feel about studying abroad in Germany. According to the ISB 2022 data, international students in Germany generally report that living in the country is a positive experience for them. Most international students surveyed (81%) said that they were satisfied with their overall living experience in Germany. Even though this is below the Global ISB benchmark of 85% overall satisfaction, it still suggests that most international students enjoy living in Germany and find the experience positive. Furthermore, we asked international students about their ‘overall happiness’. Germany scores satisfactorily at 88%, which is just 1% below the Global ISB benchmark, albeit with scores differing considerably between German institutions in a range from 78% to 94%.

// *“The best time of my life. I’ve met so many people from so many countries and they all enriched me in a unique way.”*  
 (Nationality: other, study level: master’s)

// *“xxx is a very safe place with really friendly people but the soaring living prices have made it virtually impossible to have a decent quality of life.”*  
 (Nationality: other, study level: undergraduate)

Although the ISB 2022 data shows a lower rate of overall satisfaction with living in Germany than in the Global ISB, Germany outperforms both the global and the European benchmarks by a significant margin when it comes to the cost of living, namely by over 7% compared to the Global ISB and a staggering

### Overall satisfaction – Living

Overall, how satisfied are you with the living experience at this stage in the year?

#### Germany (5,617)



#### Global ISB (78,844)



Very satisfied Satisfied Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied

19% compared to the European ISB. It is obvious that accommodation is an important aspect of student life, and the ISB 2022 data suggests that international students surveyed in Germany are generally satisfied with their housing situation and costs. Interestingly, ‘Access to suitable housing’ scores lower than the Global ISB benchmark (by 8%) but outperforms the European benchmark by 5%. This may be an indication that the European continent is facing a student housing crisis. Compared to the Netherlands for example, Germany still seems to offer a relatively good range of accommodation options for international students. When interpreting the degree of satisfaction with housing in the German ISB 2022, however, one should bear in mind that several of the participating universities are situated in smaller cities and that the situation in Germany’s major cities may be different.

Costs are always a sensitive issue, however. In our experience, international students sometimes associate ‘low cost’ with ‘low quality’. For Germany, it is about finding the right balance in communicating the fact that the country offers high-quality and for the most part state-financed education coupled with low living costs. Even though the students surveyed in 2022 expressed a 17%

Chapter 5

Living: What makes international students happy whilst studying in Germany?

decrease in satisfaction with regard to living costs compared to 2018, they are still 7% more satisfied in Germany than globally (the Global ISB shows a 63% satisfaction rate vs 70% in the German ISB benchmark).

Another key part of the living experience is the social aspect of an international study experience, particularly the connection between international and domestic students. Though Germany used to score quite well in this area, we note a 9% decrease compared to the previous German ISB in 2018 regarding the question of ‘making friends from this country’. In comparison to other countries included in the European ISB 2022 benchmark, German higher education institutions also score less well, lagging 5% behind them (and 16% behind the Global ISB benchmark) in terms of fostering connections between international and domestic students. This tallies with the discussions that have been conducted during many of the feedback presentations in Germany and that highlight this as an area of concern: connecting people from various nationalities

Benchmarking living – Accommodation & living costs

below above

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance		Benchmark and deviance	
		Global ISB		Europe ISB	
LIVING AVERAGE	75%	80%		75%	
LIVING OVERALL	81%	85%		80%	
Internet access on campus	84%	90%		87%	
Internet access at my accommodation	82%	85%		84%	
Quality of accommodation	79%	82%		77%	
Living costs	70%	63%		51%	
Access to suitable accommodation	69%	77%		63%	
Opportunity to earn money while studying	65%	62%		58%	
Cost of accommodation	64%	58%		48%	
Availability of financial support	47%	57%		47%	
Finding accommodation	45%	45%		45%	

Benchmarking living – Social

below above

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance		Benchmark and deviance	
		Global ISB		Europe ISB	
LIVING AVERAGE	75%	80%		75%	
LIVING OVERALL	81%	85%		80%	
Making friends from other countries	81%	85%		87%	
Making friends from my home country	78%	84%		80%	
Sports facilities	76%	82%		81%	
Opportunities to experience the host culture	74%	82%		78%	
International classes	74%	78%		78%	
Social activities (organised events)	73%	82%		78%	
Social facilities	71%	84%		78%	
Making good contacts for the future	67%	78%		74%	
Making friends from this country	55%	71%		60%	

requires a lot of hard work in all areas of the university experience, from initial arrival to learning, living and support services.

Overall, Germany offers a wide range of social and cultural activities for students, and the data suggests that international students are taking advantage of these opportunities. Nonetheless, there is room for improvement with regard to social facilities (13% below the Global ISB benchmark, with the Global ISB at 84% and the German ISB at 71%) and organised social activities (9% below the Global ISB benchmark). Given the role they play in increasing the likelihood of students recommending their international study experience to prospective applicants, it is crucial for German institutions to prioritise this aspect.

Safety is essential for any student (and their parents) studying abroad. The data suggests that international students in Germany generally feel safe, with the vast majority reporting that they feel safe and secure in their environment (with a 95% score in the German ISB benchmark vs 96% in the Global ISB benchmark).

Benchmarking living – Day-to-day life

■ below ■ above

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
LIVING AVERAGE	75%	80%	75%
LIVING OVERALL	81%	85%	80%

Day-to-day life

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB	Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB
Feeling safe and secure on campus	95%	96%	97%
Institution surroundings	91%	92%	93%
Campus environment	91%	94%	93%
Institution's eco-friendly attitude	89%	92%	88%
Transport between university locations	86%	86%	85%
Campus buildings	84%	91%	88%
Transport links to other places	83%	85%	84%
Worship facilities	76%	89%	81%
Visa advice	69%	83%	75%

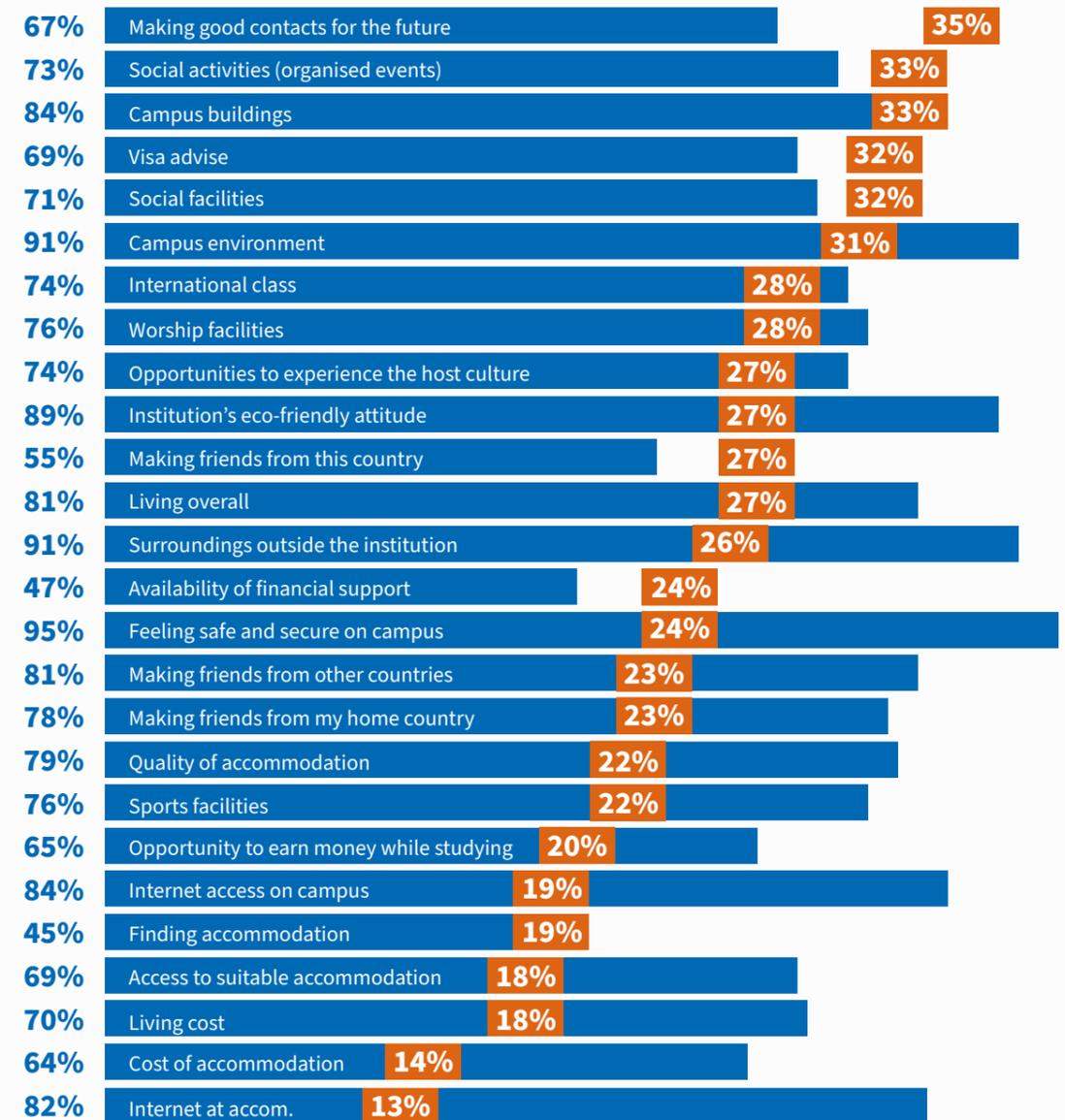
To understand what makes a living experience stand out for international students and PhD candidates, we talked to Dr Arnim Heinemann, Director of the International Office at the University of Bayreuth. “For more than a decade, we have been building the capacity of our professional welcome services, using a one-stop-shop approach with a strong network of local and regional networks to make international guests feel at home from the very beginning. Our charming mid-sized baroque town and competent local partners (Student Union, City of Bayreuth Welcome Service) make living affordable and easily accessible, which contributes to the satisfaction of the UBT study experience in times where the housing market is tight.” Dr Heinemann continues “Our interdisciplinary campus where everything is within easy reach and communication is straightforward fosters the development of a future professional network that we support by organising social events designed to bring national and international students together from an early stage in their studies.”

The ISB survey also includes a question about ‘good contacts for the future’ in the section on life experience. The survey does not specify whether these good contacts are the academics who taught them, the peers they have met

Derived importance – Living

■ Correlation (recommendation)

See chapter 1, page 12 for an explanation of derived importance.





*“It is overall a very nice environment. The university offers a couple of events for international students, which is very nice. Germans are usually not easily reachable / not very open to new friendships, but are always very respectful and friendly. The city doesn’t have many leisure activities and it is not very easy to reach other big cities by public transportation, but it is calm and has some beautiful spots.”*

(Nationality: other, study level: undergraduate)

and formed relationships with, or whether they may be employer contacts that some international students have made at their institutions of higher education. For Germany, this is an area with room for improvement, as it scores 11% lower than the Global ISB. It is important to realise that this is by far the most critical element within the ‘living’ category when it comes to the recommendation, given the 35% correlation between the question and the likelihood of the student recommending the institution (see figure ‘Derived importance – Living’). If we combine the importance of ‘good contacts’ with the importance of ‘future career impact’ when deciding where to study, as well as the importance of ‘employability’ in learning, this is clearly an issue that deserves attention.

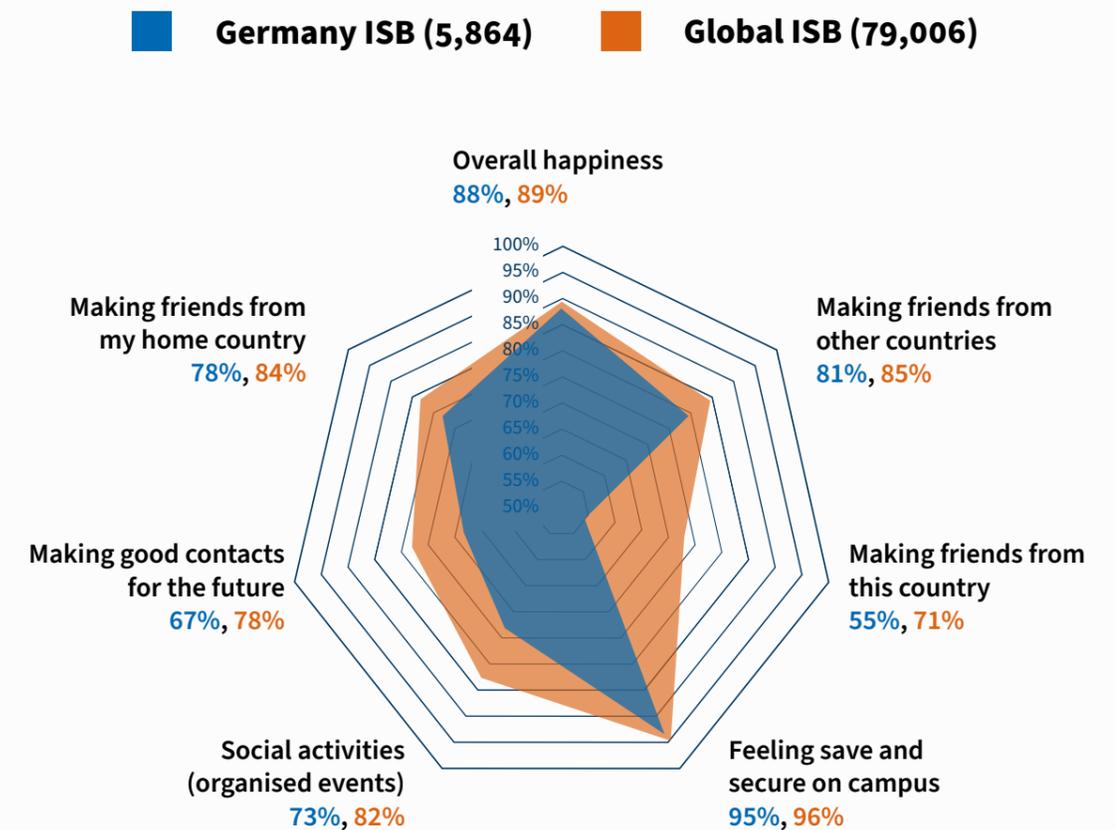


*“The best aspect is living on campus. The university feels very safe and homely, it is extremely easy to go to lectures and all scheduled events, it is easy to get around and there are many things you can do such as walk around the campus. Overall it has been a great experience.”*

(Nationality: India, study level: master’s)

In short, international students perceive student life in Germany to be generally positive, as the country offers the possibility to obtain a high-quality education in a safe environment with comparatively low living costs. There is room for improvement with regard to establishing ‘good contacts for the future’ and the social aspects of student life, particularly ‘making friends from this country’.

## Student wellbeing



**88%** of your international students are happy with their life at university so far

**89%** in the Global ISB benchmark

For German higher education institutions, the focus should be on the social aspects. German students are probably the key to improving the connections between domestic and international students. To score better in the category ‘good contacts for the future’ – another element related to employability – institutions could for example opt to arrange more guest lectures in an attempt to bring the world of work closer to the students.

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to take a look at the video featuring the University of Bayreuth.



## 6 Support services: How to best support the international student experience in Germany?

The ISB survey also asks international students to rate the support services offered at universities. This section differs from other parts of the survey in that respondents are guided through the survey depending on whether they have used a particular service. Only if a student has used a specific support service will they be asked to comment on it. In the case of students who indicate that they have not used a particular service, the questionnaire seeks to identify whether this is because it is not relevant for them or whether they are aware of the service but have simply not used it (yet). However, the most revealing information is obtained when respondents say that they find the service relevant but are unsure how to access it. If for instance 36% of international students in the German ISB benchmark do not know how to access the careers services, more needs to be done to ensure that international students are aware of the service and learn how to make use of it.

Understanding why some higher education institutions do better than others is always noteworthy, so we asked the University of Jena to share their good practice with respect to the use of careers centre services with us. Dr Britta Salheiser from the International Office at the University of Jena comments: “Students positively evaluated the career options provided by a degree earned in Jena. We have done much to enhance this by establishing a Career Point that offers guidance, advice, diverse workshops and visits to local companies and job fairs, as well as internship opportunities. Students can earn a ‘Career Planning’ certificate by attending workshops and Career Point events such as intercultural training, and by engaging in extracurricular activities and internships.”

In a conversation with Dr Uwe Muuß, Director of the International Office, and Dr Philipp Jeserich, Head of the Incoming Office from Göttingen International at the University of Göttingen, the overall international approach is instantly apparent. As Dr Philipp Jeserich says: “In Göttingen, the International Office combines student administration with support services that address all non-academic needs of our international students, from application and admission to labour market integration. The International Office also functions as an infor-

mation hub for all other units and facilities working with international students and academics. We thereby not only support our current international students directly, but also allow our academic departments to focus on providing excellent teaching and informed guidance. We are delighted to see in the International Student Barometer 2022 that this approach is paying off.”

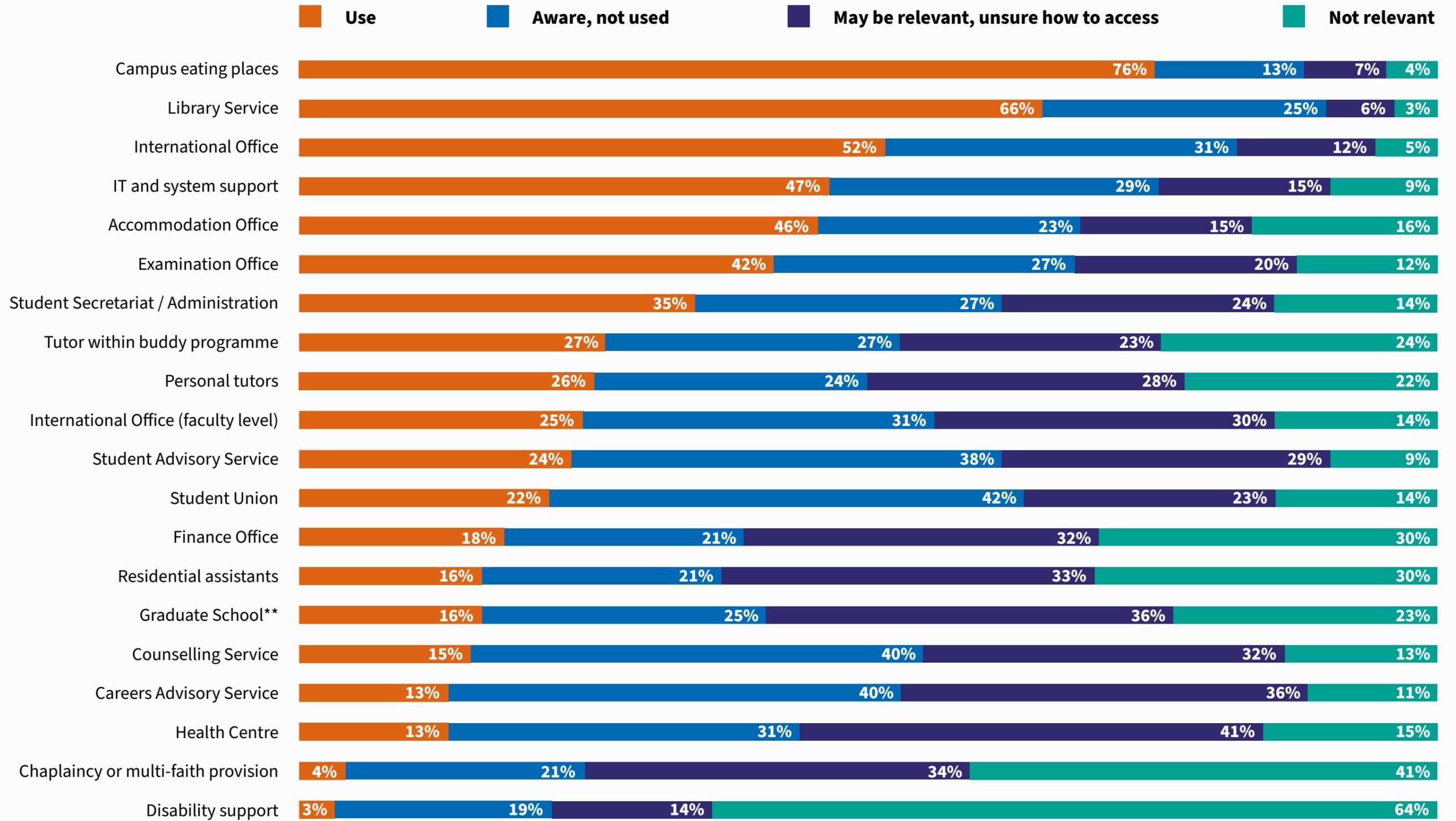
### Benchmarking support

■ below ■ above

	Germany	Benchmark and deviance Global ISB		Benchmark and deviance Europe ISB	
<b>SUPPORT AVERAGE</b>	89%	91%		88%	
<b>SUPPORT OVERALL</b>	82%	86%		84%	
Graduate School*	94%	94%		93%	
Clubs / societies	94%	94%		94%	
Library Service	93%	96%		95%	
Welcome Centre	93%	93%		93%	
Personal tutors	93%	94%		91%	
IT and system support	92%	93%		92%	
Health Centre	92%	91%		84%	
International Office (faculty level)	92%	91%		91%	
Student secretariat / Administration	92%	92%		92%	
International Office	91%	91%		91%	
Student Union	90%	94%		93%	
Examination Office	89%	89%		89%	
Student Advisory Service	89%	92%		89%	
Residential assistants	88%	91%		85%	
Disability support	88%	92%		86%	
Campus eating places	87%	88%		85%	
Tutor within buddy programme	87%	87%		87%	
Finance Office	87%	88%		82%	
Careers Advisory Service	84%	90%		87%	
Counselling Service	83%	89%		83%	
Chaplaincy or multi-faith provision	82%	94%		91%	
Accommodation Office	75%	81%		72%	

\*Postgraduate students only

### Support usage



\*\* Postgraduate students only

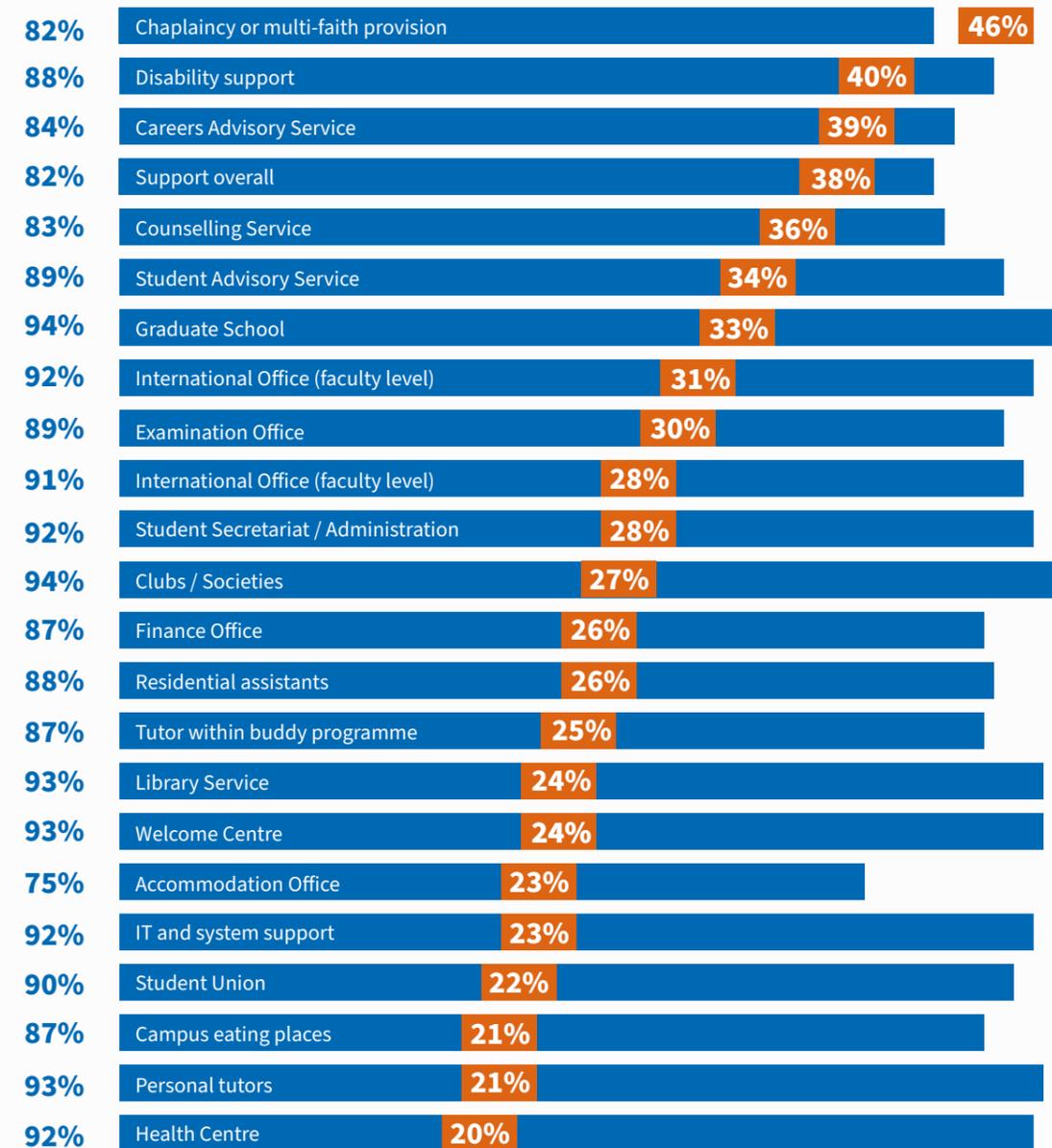
Overall satisfaction with support services is 4% lower in Germany than in the Global ISB. For most German universities, there are two main areas with room for improvement by global standards. The first is the accommodation office. The way accommodation and accommodation support are organised is differently structured in Germany compared to most other countries, with the ‘Studierendenwerk’ being responsible for housing. Various European institutions have chosen to intensify cooperation between their higher education institution and the accommodation service, leading to good results. The second area of concern is the careers services; among the support services, this is the third most important aspect when it comes to recommending the student experience in Germany to prospective international students (see figure ‘Derived importance – Support’).

As highlighted in the previous chapters, students nowadays attach considerable and apparently growing importance to employability and the return on investment of their studies. Higher education institutions therefore need to better integrate careers counselling into the standard services they offer. If Europe is compared with other parts of the world, however, Germany appears to lag significantly behind in terms of the careers support it provides. This is particularly evident in the realm of careers support for international students, who often require more extensive guidance to navigate the job market in their host country or seek information to facilitate their return to their home country. Careers centres at German higher education institutions are therefore an area of concern, scoring 6% lower (84% satisfaction) than the Global ISB benchmark (90% satisfaction). Besides asking them about their general satisfaction with the careers service, we wanted to know how satisfied international students were with various careers support elements. From providing information and job-hunting workshops to opportunities to meet employers at careers fairs, German institutions score considerably lower than the Global ISB (see table below on ‘Careers support satisfaction’). Considering the crucial role employability plays in influencing international students’ satisfaction with an institution, the likelihood of their recommending the institution and their decision to opt for a particular institution, careers support is vital in higher education nowadays. It is worth noting that satisfaction with careers services improved by 24% in Germany from 2009 to 2018, which is a tremendous achievement. This growth did not continue in 2022, however; while other institutions may have continued to work on their careers services support, German institutions are now seeing lower rates of satisfaction in the global comparison. Though

### Derived importance – Support

#### Correlation (recommendation)

See chapter 1, page 12 for an explanation of derived importance.



## Chapter 6

### Support services: How to best support the international student experience in Germany?

the data cannot directly explain why international students in Germany are less satisfied with the careers services on offer compared with other countries, the open comments left by students in the survey do give a good indication. International students want more support and for this support to be more focused to help them navigate the German host country job market, and they want more information and assistance with regard to job hunting in their home markets. Students who are looking for work in a market they are not familiar with need careers guidance on the basics: how to write a CV and what to expect in a job interview. This kind of careers advice covering various markets does not require a higher education institution to have a specialised careers officer for each job market. Well-presented, up-to-date online information that also provides references to further sources may well be equally efficient given that it is available 24/7 and can therefore be accessed also by those students who would not necessarily wish to visit a careers centre and ask for help.

### Careers support satisfaction (2022)

excludes first-year students

Careers support elements	Global ISB	Germany ISB
Information	77%	61%
Career fairs / networking opportunities	72%	57%
Advice	73%	53%
Training	72%	51%
Support	74%	50%
Opportunity to network with alumni	66%	45%
Placement	63%	43%
Employment	59%	40%
Representation	65%	38%



*“I think there is room for improvement in terms of making certain courses more industry relevant. And better guidance in terms of choice of subjects / modules. Career guidance. But there are ample opportunities to do it on our own. Which is a big plus.”*

(Nationality: India, study level: master’s)



*“Impossible to get an appointment at the psychological service, didn’t get any help from the International Office or my buddy except for links to pages on the XXX’s website I had already read.”*

(Nationality: Ukraine, study level: master’s)



*“I wanted to get more information about psychological support and access to it. When I tried to reach out, there was no opportunity to get an appointment (unless it was an emergency). This was a problem, especially during the examination period when the level of stress is extremely high.”*

(Nationality: other, study level: master’s)



*“I have moments when I feel very alone here in xxx, as connecting with other people in a place and with a language I don’t know at all seems to be too much for me. The same applies to my studies.”*

(Nationality: Italy, Study level: master’s)

## Chapter 6

### Support services: How to best support the international student experience in Germany?

We spoke to Kerstin Frodl, Director of the Center for International Students at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, and it became apparent why conducting the ISB survey on a regular basis helps institutions to improve those areas where they may be lagging behind or would like to excel and exceed the benchmark. During our conversation it became clear which changes had been implemented in response to a previous ISB survey and what the results of this were for the institution. “The success of our international students is a priority at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences. In order to support them according to their needs, we established the Center for International Students in 2016. The Center is available to international students during the entire student life cycle: from study decisions to finding their first employment after graduation. The ISB 2016 helped us shape this structure by providing relevant data regarding the specific needs of our international students. The ISB 2022 shows us that our students appreciate our support, which is a wonderful result for us!”

To summarise, the majority of international students surveyed are satisfied with the support services provided by German institutions. Compared to the benchmarks, however, there is room for improvement in a number of specific categories. For example, satisfaction with the accommodation offices in Germany scores lower than the global benchmark. Higher education institutions in Germany could address this together with the ‘Studierendenwerk’. They could consider offering more guidance on the housing market, even if this is related only to housing upon arrival. The other area with room for improvement concerns the careers services. Although many German institutions are working on this area, understanding the varying needs of international students and the cultural biases around asking for (careers guidance) support are critical elements to consider.

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to take a look at the video featuring Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences.



## 7 Employability: The next step after graduation

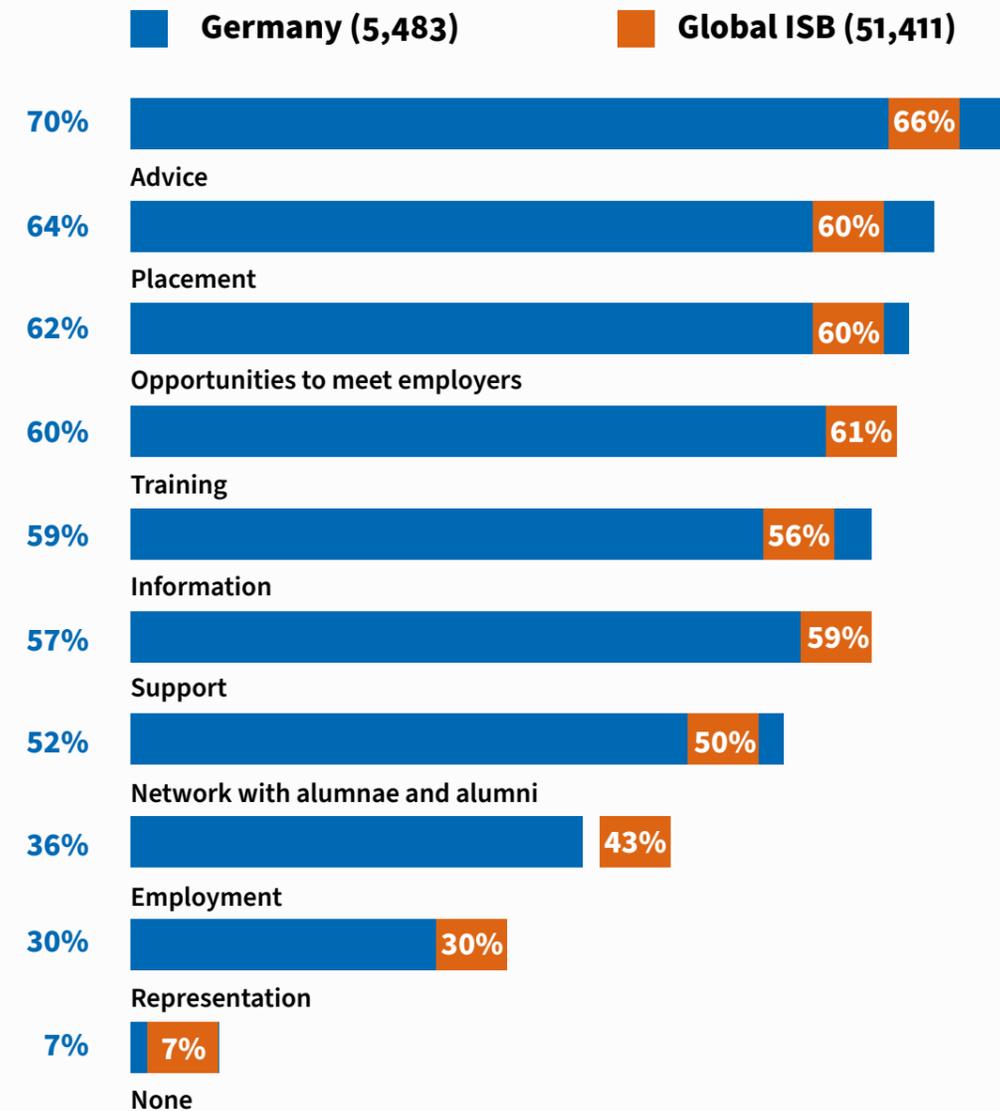
Given that employability plays an increasingly important role when students select or recommend an institution of higher education, the key question in this category is ‘How well has your institution experience prepared you for achieving your career goals?’ This question was only put to final-year students. Across the globe, 71% of international students surveyed say they feel prepared; in Germany, 77% of international students say they feel ready for their career goals. Given that the top three reasons cited by international students for choosing Germany as their study destination are ‘Future career impact’, ‘Specific course title’ and ‘Research quality’, Germany delivers upon the promise: scoring 6% higher than the Global ISB benchmark for career preparedness is exactly what international students hoped for when they opted for an international study experience in Germany.

Based on the open comments left in the ISB by international students studying in Germany, it is clear that most students believe their German degree will improve their career prospects. They think their study experience in Germany will be viewed positively by employers, also in their home country. However, some concerns were raised by students regarding their ability to find employment in Germany after graduation. Students mentioned that in order to feel more confident about finding a job in Germany, they would need better German language skills and more opportunities to gain practical work experience during their studies.

To address these concerns, institutions in Germany should focus on providing students with more opportunities for practical work experience and career development, such as internships, networking events and career fairs. Integrating employability skills into curricula is the key in this respect, as it takes more than a job-hunting workshop towards the end of a course to fulfil students’ career needs. Additionally, as mentioned in the chapter about support services, institutions should provide students with support and resources for job search strategies. Career guidance such as CV and cover letter writing, interview skills and networking strategies is extremely important for young people navigating an unfamiliar job market. By addressing these concerns and providing students with the tools and resources they need to succeed in the employment market, both in Germany and their home countries, institutions could help international students achieve their career goals.

### Careers support – Expectation

What employment / careers support do you expect from this institution?  
(Excludes exchange students)





*“More university involvement in assisting with CV, motivation letter and alumni talks about part-time and full-time job opportunities in Germany.”*

(Nationality: India, study level: master’s)

The numbers at the top of the table on ‘Future plans and career prospects’ relate to final-year and short-course students only and indicate that, at the time of the survey (at the beginning of the academic year), 49% of international students in Germany were planning to enter the German labour market, 24% were planning on doing further study, while another 26% had not yet made up their mind or were thinking about going travelling after graduation. 72% of all international students surveyed in Germany expressed satisfaction, saying that their programme would help them get a good job, versus 81% in the Global ISB (and 74% in the European ISB benchmark). 67% are satisfied with ‘making good contacts for the future’ versus 78% in the global benchmark (and 74% in the European ISB), while 63% are satisfied with the careers advice given by academic staff versus 76% in the Global ISB (and 64% in the European ISB benchmark).

### Future plans and career prospects



When attempting to understand the good practices followed by institutions, it helps to hear what different institutions are doing in the employability category and why they score notably higher than others. Hence, we spoke to Tatjana Erlewein-Paulsen, Project Coordinator Internationalisation 2.0 from the International Office of Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences. “Our lecturers often have a practical background and work for local companies. As we have small groups and follow modern teaching methods with many discussions, our international students are involved and integrated into the classes from the beginning of their studies until the end. Lecturers connect with the students via their expertise, advice and networks and even support them in finding mandatory internship placements.” She continues: “As a small University of Applied Sciences, we have built up and maintained very close ties to local entrepreneurship and industry. Besides intercultural training and language classes offered by our career and language centre, our professor-student ratio is the secret to providing perfect advice and guidance on long-term job opportunities and careers advice from our academic staff. Some of the professors in charge of international issues are passionate about coaching the students. Additionally, new professors are now required to prove their English skills before being appointed.”

In short, it is important for the current generation of (international) students to have good prospects of obtaining a job upon graduation and to feel prepared for their future career, making employability a key component of the (international) student experience. Employability is one of the factors they consider when deciding whether to study in Germany. It also affects the likelihood of their recommending the student experience to prospective students, however. Of the final-year international students surveyed in Germany, 77% indicate that they feel prepared for their future career goals, against a Global ISB benchmark of 71%. Germany is doing well in creating a ‘line of sight’ towards future career prospects. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of strengthening the connection between curricula and employability and when it comes to the actual careers services. Institutions could improve this by making it clearer that the career counselling services they offer are also aimed at international students. Moreover, acknowledging and addressing possible cultural barriers may affect students’ willingness to seek careers support. And finally, they could offer more opportunities for international students to network with employers and international alumnae and alumni.

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to take a look at the video featuring Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences.



## 8 Conclusions and recommendations: What makes (or breaks) the international study experience in Germany?

What makes or breaks the international student experience in Germany? In higher education marketing it is important to understand which factors most influence prospective international students when they are choosing ‘where’ and ‘what’ to study abroad. Understanding what drives these decisions is just the first step, however. The key is to ensure that students end up recommending their actual study experience to others and that a higher education institution is able to ‘deliver upon the promise’ that originally attracted the students when they chose the institution.

When we analyse the data collected for the German ISB 2022 survey, one positive aspect that stands out is that Germany outperforms the Global ISB by 8% on the ISB question, ‘to what extent do you feel that your current course is good value for money’. The low cost of living and student accommodation in combination with the very low (and often non-existent) tuition fees plays a major role here. Though Germany and the German higher education institutions should use the low costs associated with studying to their advantage, they should keep their focus on the ultimate benefits of a German higher education: namely a high-quality academic degree. There is significant scope for improvement in all phases of the student-cycle to ensure that Germany continues to be regarded as a study destination of choice, however.

### Likelihood of a recommendation has declined over time

The fact that German institutions saw the likelihood of a student recommending their study experience to others decline by 4% in the 2022 ISB dataset in comparison with the 2018 ISB data for Germany is very revealing. It is interesting to note that the lower the level of education, the more negative international students are, i.e. 75% of international bachelor’s students would recommend the experience in Germany, against 81% of international PhD candidates. Despite the decline in the likelihood of a recommendation, however, most international students in Germany (94%) would not discourage others from applying.

It is important to understand that there are also significant differences between the German institutions, the percentage of international students willing to recommend the study experience at their institution ranging from 53% to 90%.

### Likelihood of a student recommendation

How likely is it that you would recommend this institution to family or a friend?

Germany (5,932)	2022 vs 2018	Global ISB (93,294)	Europe ISB (22,871)	MA (3,561)	BA (1,627)	PhD (581)
I would actively encourage people to apply						
30%	-3%	31%	30%	32%	26%	32%
If asked, I would encourage people to apply						
47%	-1%	45%	49%	46%	49%	49%
I would neither encourage nor discourage people to apply						
17%	2%	18%	16%	17%	18%	14%
If asked, I would discourage people from applying						
4%	1%	4%	4%	3%	4%	2%
I would actively discourage people from applying						
2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%



*“Extremely good environment regarding teaching and learning. I have the best memories of this city and the university. I would definitely recommend, and have already done so. A few of my juniors from the bachelor’s course are already here because of our recommendations.”*

(Nationality: Nepal, study level: master’s)

### Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a strong starting position

The affordability of accommodation and the low cost of living, combined with the relatively high level of expertise of lecturers, puts German higher education in a strong starting position for the internationalisation process, resulting in a higher Net Promoter Score of 13 than the Net Promoter Score of 11 in the Global ISB benchmark (see figure ‘Net Promoter Score’). The Net Promoter Score is calculated on the basis of the scores students give the institution: those that give an institution a 6 or below are known as ‘Detractors’, students that give a score of 7 or 8 are called ‘Passives’ and those students that give a 9 or 10 are the so-called ‘Promoters’. To calculate the Net Promoter Score, we deduct the percentage of ‘Detractors’ from the percentage of ‘Promoters’. However, deciphering the reasons behind the decrease in the likelihood of a recommendation is important.

### The arrival process is about clarity and managing expectations

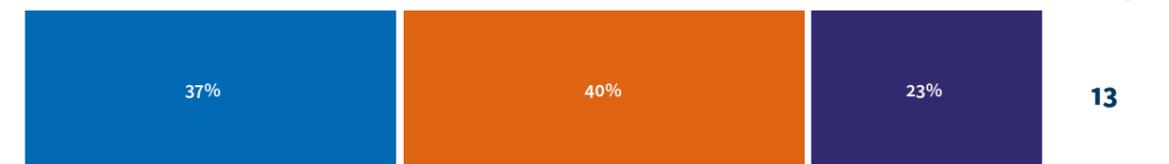
Let’s begin with the arrival process. Despite improving its score for the welcome (i.e. the welcome / pickup at airport, railway, coach station) in comparison to the ISB 2018 data, Germany still scores 2% lower than the Global ISB for overall satisfaction during the arrival phase. The main areas with room for improvement are as follows: the actual welcome of students at airports and train / bus stations, which scores 16% below the global average; getting to the first night of stay (-14%); accommodation and living orientation (-14%); the accommodation office (-13%) and meeting domestic students (-13%). In addition, Germany scores considerably lower than other countries for its social activities (-6%).

A smoothly functioning arrival phase helps students to feel welcome and happy to explore their new academic and social environment. Although the pre-arrival information has improved over time, only 63% of international

### Net Promoter Score (NPS)

How likely is it that you would recommend this institution to family or a friend?

#### Germany (8,100)



#### Global ISB (120,272)



■ Promoters ■ Passives ■ Detractors

students said it was easy to navigate the transition into their new study environment. During the ISB feedback presentations, the discussion about ‘spoon-feeding’ is always a recurring theme. Managing student expectations matters as it helps to ensure that students know from the outset what to expect and how best to prepare. Whether an institution picks up students from the airport or train / bus station is their choice, but providing ample guidance to support students in their arrival process is highly recommended.

### Learning is not just about academic knowledge

The learning experience in Germany is of good quality, with 2% higher overall satisfaction than the Global ISB, though several areas show clear room for improvement:

- the need for more learning support (-6%)
- explanation of marking criteria (-6%)
- employability (-9%)
- more opportunities for work experience (-9%)
- careers advice from academics (-13%).

Given the importance of employability for this current generation of students, creating that ‘line of sight’ between academic learning and the use of that knowledge in the world of work is essential. To truly support the employability of your students, ‘a career workshop’ at the end of the course will not be sufficient. Employability skills need to be integrated into curricula, allowing students to think about their future careers and supporting them towards their next step into the global world of work.

The attraction of international students to a particular higher education institution is based on the potential for future career impact. During their studies, international students’ satisfaction comes from their perception of their future employability and career-related elements that support their integration into academic life abroad. The key component determining whether they will recommend the institution in question is their feeling that they are employable and ready for the next steps after graduation. Prospective students are keen to learn from the institution’s alumnae and alumni how they enjoyed their studies and how the degree they obtained has contributed to their career success and job satisfaction. In other words, it is a positive recruitment circle of happy students, employed alumnae and alumni and prospective (international) students.

### **Improving the social integration of international students**

Although the cost of accommodation and of living in general compare very favourably with those in other countries, there are areas where German institutions can improve. Making friends with domestic students is an area where many institutions around the world struggle; however, it would appear that most German institutions struggle particularly in this respect, given that the German ISB scores 16% below the Global ISB. The integration of international students often hinges on making domestic students understand the value of an international classroom. Addressing the social aspects of the international student experience is a key component to help students integrate better. As international students attach such importance to the world of work, the fact that making good contacts for the future scores 11% below the global benchmark is worrying, particularly given that this element has the greatest impact on recommendation in the living category. Institutions therefore need to work on providing opportunities for their students to connect for instance with international alumnae and alumni.

As the arrival data already indicated, the social aspect of an international study experience could be improved in Germany. Organised social activities

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusions and recommendations: What makes (or breaks) the international study experience in Germany?**

(-9%) and social facilities (-13%) score considerably lower than the Global ISB benchmark. Furthermore, the campus buildings are not seen as excellent (-7%). Based on these international findings, German higher education institutions should think about what actions to take to make the campus feel more like a social community hub. With relatively small investments, parts of campuses could be made more suitable for a young international student population; this is something we have seen in Finland for example, where several institutions have created social spaces for students to gather outside their studies. When organising social activities, the recommendation is to cater for a wide variety of people.

### **Excellent support services require marketing and user guidance**

Higher satisfaction scores in the support services category depend to a large extent on (cooperation with) the ‘Studierendenwerk’. German higher education institutions score low by international standards, especially with regard to the accommodation office (-6%). Providing more guidance about the housing market upon arrival and about the temporary options available upon arrival could help address this.

Given that the pandemic has heightened the importance of mental health for this generation of students, counselling is an important part of support services. Germany lags behind the Global ISB in this category by 6%. Careers services are heavily underused, with only 13% of international students taking advantage of them. Besides providing more guidance for users, it therefore seems appropriate to increase the marketing of this service. Since not all students of all nationalities will readily seek careers advice, we suggest thinking about alternative options: digital 24/7 or gamified careers advice might be a better option than simply having more staff in the careers office.

### **Recommendation and the importance of peer-to-peer influence**

Peer-to-peer influence is now considered to be one of the top factors influencing prospective students who are thinking about studying abroad. In our analysis we looked at the correlation between students who agreed that their institution had prepared them well for their career and those who agreed that they had received value for money at that institution. Those students were also statistically more likely to recommend the institution to other students. The derived importance slides (see chapter 1, page 12 for an explanation of derived importance) in the ISB feedback presentations and in this report

highlight the elements that seem to matter most to students; in those cases where their experience falls a long way below the European and global benchmarks, this indicates a need for improvement. Failing to improve scores in these areas will likely result in declining recommendation scores and, ultimately, lower enrolments.

More than ever before, the decision-making process for international students is heavily influenced by career prospects and future career opportunities. The ISB survey conducted in 2022 found that while 96% of first-year international students in Germany said that they chose where to study based on future career impact, only 77% of final-year students said they felt well prepared for their career. The good news for Germany is that the German ISB benchmark outperforms the Global ISB benchmark by 6% in this key indicator. Institutions that increase student satisfaction with this indicator will therefore gain a competitive edge.

To answer the question we posed at the start of this chapter, namely about what makes or breaks an international study experience, international students in Germany want a high-quality academic degree with a clear path to a future career. We hope this report on the International Student Barometer (ISB) 2022 data will help define some goals for improvement.

## 9 Overview of previous ISB surveys conducted in cooperation with GATE-Germany

The International Student Barometer (ISB) was previously (in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2016 and 2018) conducted in cooperation with GATE-Germany. The information below mainly relates to the survey we conducted in the academic year 2018 (2019) and draws comparisons between this previous ISB survey and the current ISB survey, conducted in the academic year 2022 (2023).

Who took part in the 2018 survey?

- Over 195,000 international students from 212 higher education institutions across 21 countries worldwide took part.
- This included over 14,000 international students studying at 17 German institutions.
- Those studying at German institutions came from a variety of countries, including China (12%) and India (11%).
- The survey was open to all international and EU students in all years and at all levels of study, including study abroad and exchange students.

### Arrival (2018)

A student's arrival experience is one of the first they have at the institution. Institutions must understand that the experience begins before classes commence; gathering information, enrolment, the visa process, and arrival in the country of study all add to the international student's experience.

In the 2018 survey, 66% of students were satisfied and 18% were very satisfied with the arrival experience at their German institution. These results were close to the Global ISB benchmark, the respective figures being 64% and 25%. There was still room for improvement in 2018, but many international offices in Germany have worked hard to provide a good arrival experience and implemented positive improvements. The 2022 ISB data shows a significant increase, with 60% of students being satisfied and 27% very satisfied with the arrival experience at their German institution. Most individual elements show an improvement over time and better results in 2022 than in 2018, with the exception of 'host friends' (65% in 2018 vs 60% in 2022), 'social activities' (83% in 2018 vs 78% in 2022) and 'home friends' (85% in 2018 vs 79% in 2022). The

## Chapter 9

### Overview of previous ISB surveys conducted in cooperation with GATE-Germany

aftermath of the pandemic may certainly have had an impact on the social aspects of the arrival process, but overall, arrival remains an area with room for continuous improvement in the German higher education sector.

### Learning (2018)

It was already evident in the 2018 survey that Germany provides a first-class education and that its learning facilities are ranked highly. In 2018, German institutions performed very similarly to the global benchmark: 84% of students in Germany were either satisfied or very satisfied, with only a difference of less than one percentage point between the German ISB and the Global ISB benchmark. Online facilities and connections to the job market fell short, however, which was one of the areas where German institutions needed to pay attention given that future career prospects are a significant reason why international students select Germany as a study destination. The 2022 ISB dataset points to a growing importance of future career prospects. The good news is that 'advice and guidance on long-term job opportunities and careers from academic staff' improved by 6% from 2009 to 2018. This element scored a 62% satisfaction rate in 2018, rising to 63% satisfaction in 2022.

### Living (2018)

The ISB asks a series of questions about what it describes as the 'living category'. Germany outperforms the global benchmark by a considerable margin with regard to living costs and accommodation costs. In 2018, 85% of students in Germany were satisfied with the cost of living, compared to the international benchmark of 68%. In the 2022 ISB, this percentage of satisfaction dropped to 70% in the German ISB and 63% in the Global ISB benchmark, indicating that young people across the globe are struggling to make ends meet.

Campus buildings and social facilities ranked ninth in the global comparison. How does living in Germany compare to 2018 overall? 84% of international students in the German ISB benchmark were satisfied, compared to 87% in the Global ISB benchmark. Overall satisfaction with living decreased in 2022 compared to 2018: only 81% said they were satisfied, 20% of these international students being very satisfied and 61% being merely satisfied.

### Support services (2018)

It is not easy anywhere in the world to provide services that will excite students. Support in the ISB encompasses services ranging from the dining hall /

cafeteria and accommodation office to careers services. Nonetheless, it can be very damaging to an international study experience and to an institution's reputation if students feel they need more support. Most students in Germany were satisfied (83%) in 2018, against a global benchmark of 89%. This decreased slightly in 2022, with 82% of international students being satisfied in the German ISB benchmark, against a Global ISB benchmark of 86%.

### **Main conclusion (2018)**

In 2018 it was found that positive changes had been made with respect to the international student experience in Germany over the years. All the same, global competition was strong and there was room for improvement compared to the global student experience. This is still the case in 2022; Germany provides a good quality education at a good price, but improvements in the arrival phase and a focus on the employability of its international students are essential if the country is to remain a key study destination for international students.

In 2018, Germany ranked particularly well in terms of living and accommodation costs, coupled with no (or very low) tuition fees. We therefore concluded that international students being able to receive a highly regarded academic qualification at a relatively low cost was a significant selling point in a world dominated by high fees. This remains true of the 2022 ISB, with one important addition, namely the need to focus on the next step after graduation, as this has become increasingly important across the globe. Germany has a 63% satisfaction rate when it comes to career advice from academic staff. However, the Global ISB scores a very significant 13% higher than the German benchmark for this key element. Despite this, the German ISB benchmark scores are higher, namely 77%, with respect to the question 'how well has your institution experience prepared you for your career goals'. By contrast, 71% of international students in the Global ISB say that they feel well prepared, so integrating employability skills into curricula is essential. As employability is important to international students when choosing a higher education institution, this should be a core area of focus for the German higher education sector.

## Overview of participating institutions worldwide

### International Student Barometer 2022

1. Aalto University / Aalto Yliopisto	22. De Montfort University	43. Iowa State University
2. Algonquin College	23. Deakin University	44. James Cook University
3. Anglia Ruskin University	24. DePaul University	45. James Cook University (Singapore)
4. Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU)	25. Dublin City University	46. James Cook University Brisbane
5. Auckland University of Technology	26. Durham University	47. Kaplan Business School, Adelaide
6. Australian Catholic University	27. Edith Cowan University	48. Kaplan Business School, Brisbane
7. Australian National University	28. Erasmus University Rotterdam	49. Kaplan Business School, Melbourne
8. Bangor University	29. Fanshawe College	50. Kaplan Business School, Perth
9. Birmingham City University	30. Freie Universität Berlin	51. Kaplan Business School, Sydney
10. Bond University	31. Friedrich Schiller University Jena	52. Keele University
11. Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU) Cottbus-Senftenberg	32. University of Göttingen	53. Lincoln University
12. Centennial College	33. Glasgow Caledonian University	54. Liverpool John Moores University
13. Charles Darwin University	34. Griffith University	55. Mahidol University
14. Charles Sturt University	35. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences	56. Maynooth University
15. Kiel University	36. HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education	57. Melbourne Institute of Technology (MIT) – Melbourne
16. Colorado State University	37. Fulda University of Applied Sciences	58. Melbourne Institute of Technology (MIT) – Sydney
17. Coventry University	38. Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences	59. Murdoch University
18. CQUniversity Australia	39. Hochschule Neubrandenburg	60. University of Galway
19. Curtin Singapore	40. Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences	61. Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia
20. Curtin University	41. Hong Kong Community College (HKCC) / School of Professional Education and Executive Development (SPEED)	62. Norquest College
21. Curtin University, Malaysia	42. International Medical University	63. North Metropolitan TAFE

### Overview of participating institutions worldwide

64. Nova Scotia Community College	92. The University of Adelaide	120. University of Leicester
65. PSB Academy	93. The University of Hull	121. University of Limerick
66. Queen Margaret University	94. The University of New England	122. University of Malaya
67. Queen's University Belfast	95. The University of Nottingham – China	123. University of Nottingham
68. Queensland University of Technology	96. The University of Nottingham – Malaysia	124. University of Otago
69. University of Bonn	97. The University of Queensland	125. University of Oulu
70. RMIT University	98. The University of Sydney	126. University of Oxford
71. Robert Gordon University	99. The University of Texas at Austin	127. University of Pittsburgh
72. Royal Northern College of Music	100. Trinity College Dublin	128. University of Reading
73. Royal Veterinary College	101. Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore	129. University of Saskatchewan
74. Ruhr University Bochum	102. University of Bayreuth	130. University of South Australia
75. RWTH Aachen University	103. Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS	131. University of Southampton
76. SIM Global Education (SIM GE)	104. University College Birmingham	132. University of Southern Queensland
77. South Metropolitan TAFE	105. University College Cork	133. University of Stirling
78. Southern Cross University	106. University College Dublin	134. University of Tasmania
79. SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences	107. The University of Adelaide College	135. University of Technology Sydney
80. SRH University Heidelberg	108. University of Amsterdam	136. University of Twente
81. Stockholm University	109. University of Auckland	137. University of Waikato
82. Sunway University (Sunway Education Group)	110. University of Bradford	138. University of Western Ontario
83. Swinburne University of Technology	111. University of Canberra	139. University of Westminster
84. Swinburne University of Technology (Sarawak Campus)	112. University of Chester	140. University of Wollongong
85. TAFE Queensland	113. University of Delaware	141. University of York
86. Tampere University	114. University of Dundee	142. Utrecht University
87. Technical University of Denmark	115. University of East London	143. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
88. Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences	116. University of Gloucestershire	144. Wageningen University
89. University of Kaiserslautern-Landau	117. University of Helsinki	145. Wrexham Glyndŵr University
90. Teesside University	118. University of Huddersfield	146. York St John University
91. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	119. University of Leeds	