



My name is Jessica Sanderson, and I am a recent mechanical engineering graduate from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. I am also pursuing a dual degree in World Languages where I am focusing on German and Spanish studies.

Working abroad has been a dream of mine for the longest time, but I found it difficult to find meaningful internship opportunities abroad with a Canadian citizenship. When I found the DAAD RISE Professional program last year through some online searches, I was excited to find out I would qualify. I emailed the RISE coordinator right away to verify if this was a possibility and I started working on my application in fall 2023. I will never forget the feeling of waking up to the acceptance emails in February 2024. This was such a great feeling to have the opportunity to work abroad in my field of study, just like I have dreamed.

I did a 3-month internship where I started in June 2024, and I finished in August. I travelled for a couple weeks before my start date and my goal was to travel somewhere new every weekend, even if the destination was only 30 minutes away. Some of my Canadian friends came to visit me in different cities. Over the summer, I travelled to 13 new countries and had so many amazing experiences.

During the weekdays after work, I took German lessons twice a week for a total of 3 hours a week. In addition, the DAAD paid a portion of the lesson fees. I got to practice my German as much as possible and delve into the German way of life.

As a RISE professional recent graduate intern, my contract at work was different than others. I was considered a salaried employee of the company because I was not a student, and I had to jump through a lot of bureaucratic hoops to start working. I got a working holiday visa from the German consulate in Toronto. This application was heavy but after I applied in person, I received my visa in the mail in less than a week. When I arrived in Germany, I had to go to the citizens' office in my city to register my address and get a Tax ID. Without this ID, I was taxed in the highest bracket. After this, I had to register to pay the German TV tax. Finally, I had to contribute to the German healthcare and pension system. I even received a German health card. For only three months of working, this was a lot of work, but it was worth it. I had to ask a lot of questions about what I was supposed to do because my contract was unique. My advice to recent graduate interns is to do your own research and ask questions. I would recommend discussing with a previous intern about what they did, while keeping in mind that it may be different for you, because I had to figure this out on my own and there was a lot of confusion.

My company had a residence we could stay in but before I knew about this, I tried searching for housing. Keep in mind there are a lot of scams online. Almost every response to my posting was a scam. Do not send money without seeing the place first. Some scams will even say they will have a lawyer draft up a contract to sound legitimate. Some people will use the excuse that they are out of the country, and this is why they cannot show you the place. Be extremely discerning and ask your employer for help to find housing. Airbnb is a good option while you search for something more long term.

I used WISE for my European bank account. The conversion rate is much better than my Canadian VISA card to convert to Euros and it provides you with an IBAN number which you will need to receive your stipend and do e-transfers. I highly recommend this card for Canadians.

The highlight of my internship was when I could see my project coming together as a final product and I was able to present this to my colleagues. My project was directly related to my field of study which was great because I could combine my mechanical engineering and German studies into one experience. I got to manage this project by myself and create a design from scratch. It felt good to know that I did this mostly by myself.

I highly recommend the RISE program. Do not miss out on this fantastic opportunity to travel and gain experience in your field of study. This was truly the best summer of my life, and all my dreams about working in Germany came true. Please find me on LinkedIn if you have any questions at all about my experience.

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