

TIME	SPEAKER	AUDIO
0:00:00.8	Male	Yes, hello. Welcome everybody to the jobs.ac.uk hangout about doing a PhD in Germany. We've got a very nice panel lined up to talk about how you move to Germany, how you should get registered, how you should enter a German research environment and get the best out of a PhD. We all know mobility is something that's for us that's
0:00:30.6		research policy sought-after; we like researchers to be mobile. It's very exciting to be mobile. It's very challenging to be mobile. I think that's not a secret to anybody, but we'll try to make it a little less challenging by preparing you to move to Germany, or think about moving to Germany, and answer some of the questions that you have. So without further ado I will just ask the panel to introduce themselves,
0:01:01.1		starting with Martin Vilt, please Martin.
0:01:05.7	Martin	Hi, everyone. My name is Martin Vilt. I'm an immunologist. I studied biology in Freiburg in Germany. I moved to Heidelberg to do my PhD at the German Cancer Research Center, and then also in Oxford, which was very helpful for me. And now I'm in Münster. I'm here at the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Biomedicine, and my major job is to coordinate a graduate programme of around a hundred PhD students.
0:01:34.9		Okay?
0:01:36.8	Male	Barbara. You're mute.
0:01:42.3	Barbara	I knew that! So hello. My name is Barbara Janssens and I originally come from Belgium. I'm a molecular biologist by training. I did my PhD in Belgium and a post-doc in Paris, and then came to Germany and that's now ten years ago. I actually then worked five years as an editor for a publishing house widely, and then came to the German Cancer Research Center, that's DKFZ in Heidelberg.
0:02:12.3		That's where I've been five years now as well,

		and I'm now a careers advisor, or PhD Career Manager as we call it. At our institute we have a Masters Programme; we have a PhD Programme, a Graduate School for about five hundred and fifty PhD students and about three hundred post-docs. So all these young scientists I support in their careers and also towards their futures, so I can not only talk a little bit about
0:02:42.3		how to come and join a graduate school in general in Germany, but also a bit about the careers perspectives: what you can do after a PhD.
0:02:53.6	Male	Thank you. Samira?
0:02:55.7	Samira	Hello, everyone. I'm Samira Parhizkar I'm originally from Sweden and then I did my undergraduate, which was an incorporated Master's degree, in the University of Nottingham doing neuroscience. I've just started my PhD. I'm in the beginning of my second year and I was introduced to this lab in Munich, Germany, through the Max Planck Research School Programme, which is hosted in Munich. Right now, I'm
0:03:25.3		doing my PhD, as I said, in the Centre of Stroke and Dementia Research. Compared to everyone else I've just started my career basically, so I've got lots more to learn!
0:03:37.7		Thank you. I'm Thomas Jørgensen. I work for the European University Association in Brussels. I do come from history and German studies, so I think I'll be the social science humanities person, although I haven't lived in Germany for a long time. I think I know a little bit about the country. So I'll just kick off the discussion by some of the questions that came in. I think the main question we're going to talk about, what are the
0:04:07.4		routes to getting a PhD in Germany? And while you answer that, it would be good also to see what are the routes to getting contact with the supervisor are because I can see people are interested in that, and it might be different from other systems. So please, who wants to start

		with that one?
0:04:30.8	Barbara	Yeah, so maybe I can say a brief word, although I think Martin you can also comment on this how to join your graduate school, but I think in general, there are now, like in recent years, many more graduate schools than there used to be in the past. Actually a good route into a PhD is actually to look for a graduate school and apply for a programme.
0:05:00.0		And then the other road is to find a research group and register for a PhD without a programme. That is a part for the graduate schools. I don't know, Martin, if you want to say something.
0:05:20.3	Martin	Maybe just something about advantages and disadvantages. If you apply to graduate school, you will be part of a programme with some extras that you will certainly profit from. But you will be one of many applicants. We, for example, get more than one thousand applications for around twenty positions. That's really extreme; maybe not that extreme in other places, but still you're just one of many. If you apply to an individual head of laboratory of the group, your chances might be
0:05:50.1		higher. So there are advantages and disadvantages. Both routes, I think, should be taken.
0:05:57.5	Samira	I completely agree. I would personally suggest trying to look for graduate schools, especially because there are so many programmes that are being started up every day really. Our institute has its own graduate school now, which was not started a month ago. I would say in terms of advantages and disadvantages, the advantages balance out more for me because first of all, as you said, Martin, you have this
0:06:27.2		extra-curricular programme. You get trained on different techniques and methods that you might not know. You can go to different seminars to get a more broad aspect of your PhD. You get to meet lots of people so it's an incredible opportunity for networking within your grad school programme. And also, if you

		do apply, it's very competitive. But if you don't get in then at least through the interview you might be able to get a PHD,
0:06:57.2		regardless of entering the grad school or not.
0:07:00.5	Martin	That's correct.
0:07:02.1	Thomas	Can I just ask you, because the German system in graduate school is not like the ones that you might find in Britain, for instance? So if you could maybe tell where do I find these grad schools? Maybe talk about... most of them are externally-funded by the DFG, how you do that. Maybe Barbara knows about that. Just to give an idea from the outside, you talk about the grad school
0:07:31.5		as an alternative, but an alternative what? What is the individual part, as it's known in Germany?
0:07:40.8	Barbara	Yes. So indeed there are many different forms of graduate schools and the main thing is that institutes can finance a graduate school with different means. The research landscape, which I can maybe briefly sketch here in the first place, is that in the German system you do have universities, but you also have universities of applied sciences, which are a little bit different.
0:08:10.3		They're called the 'Fachhochschulen' in German. There are a number of university research institutes; many of those are quite famous. Those are research institutes like Max Planck, which you have, Samira. There is the Helmholtz Association and of this association our institutes, the German Cancer Research Center is part of the Helmholtz Association. There is the Leibniz Association and there's Fraunhofer Association. And those are institutes
0:08:40.4		and they are financed in a different way. So in a way, these non-research and non-university institutes really support the creation of graduate schools, but also universities have more and more graduate schools. That is partially thank to the Excellence Initiative,

		which in Germany is actually a
0:09:10.3		way of financing, of evaluating excellence institutes, but there was a clear way of financing research of the creation of graduate schools. So if you then say like, "Well where can I then find graduate schools?" I think you really need to look at your area of interest, to look at the institutes you're interested in joining, and then you can find out whether this university also has graduate schools. Often they have several
0:09:40.1		programmes and take it over that path. So that would be my advice, to really look for the topic, the place and the institutes that you're interested in. And then see what programmes they offer.
0:09:57.9	Martin	Maybe I can add one thing. There is a webpage by DAAD and they have an excellent list of all sorts of links to graduate programmes and they cover a lot actually. Because otherwise you would have to go to individual universities and it makes it a bit more complicated. Bit above all, I'm a scientist, so I would definitely look for the laboratory I'm interested in, or the area,
0:10:27.6		and what exactly fits, who are the good people, and then look, like Barbara said, what is around there? Is there a greater programme than round there in the city that fits to this laboratory.
0:10:43.1	Thomas	Yeah. Maybe we can get the case study from Samira. How did you find where to go in Germany? You're in a very good place.
0:10:51.4	Samira	I fortunately am. So I did exactly what Martin said. Fortunately I knew what research area I was interested in, which is Alzheimer's disease for me. So I kept on actively looking throughout my Master's in case I was doing a PhD, because it was either a PhD or Med schools. I think a lot of students go through that experience, especially in science. So I was actively looking at the labs that were publishing well and were also doing

0:11:20.7		research in an area that I was interested in. Alzheimer's disease in itself is a very broad area. I also looked at findaphd.com as well as jobs.ac.uk. I actively looked for PhD advertisements and also went to... if I was interested in anywhere, and this is not only specific to Germany, but luckily a lot of universities in Germany are very well known for their research. Just go to
0:11:50.4		the university's webpage, look at the research group, look at the latest publications. Perhaps try to find out because sometimes they will also have contacts within the research groups, so I could also email PhD students there and say, "What is your experience? How did you get there?" That is what I would recommend. Try to get as personally involved with the lab groups or the group you're interested in working with.
0:12:20.1	Thomas	And then once you've done that, what is then the process? Now I've found out I'd love to go to Munich, I'd love to be in Samira's lab, what then do I do? Do I need to submit this application a certain time of year? What is the process?
0:12:20.1	Samira	The first thing I would do is find out who the boss is – where is the money coming from? Who's in charge of everything? Email that person. Most of the time that's not actually very hard to find. Email that person and
0:12:50.1		introduce yourself. I'm this and that student, I'm interested in this and that research, or doing whatever you're interested in doing. Are you looking for somebody? I think it's a very good way to also advertise yourself and definitely attach your CV already here. If they're interested then they can already have a look at what your past experience is, where you worked, whether you might be an asset to the lab.
0:13:19.6		This is what I would do. I would personally contact them basically.
0:13:25.2	Thomas	Martin and Barbara, what do you say? What

		other process?
0:13:28.3	Barbara	I definitely really agree. I think it's very clever what Samira is saying because that's the main interest. But of course the programmes are officially advertised. Most graduate schools will have at least once a year a selection round, as they often call it. For us it's twice a year. We are a little bit bigger. We take one hundred and twenty students every year in two rounds of sixty each. There the procedure in general
0:13:57.6		is always a bit the same. There will be an online application where you have to apply with your CV or the content of your CV with references, and a statement of interest or a motivation letter that will be evaluated, and then selected applicants will be invited on site. Often that's actually more than one day of different processes for us. This is part of it. There's presentations, there will be interviews, there will be what we call 'speed-dating'
0:14:27.0		where you can meet different labs and you will actually also meet with the PhD students who are here. They have a welcome team of current PhD students who go away from the selection process. The supervisors take you to town and show you around, so you get to really know the community. Then somewhere the selection is taking place. Then regardless of the fact of whether you get financing...
0:14:56.6		... there's financing available by stipends from the institute, and so the best applicants will get a stipend but actually everybody who passes and finds a lab and are matched with say a supervisor who wants the candidate, and a candidate who wants to join that group, that then leads to position. But in general, if you just start with a paper application where you haven't actually looked at particular groups and topic of interest,
0:15:26.6		your application might not be as good actually for one part, and as you say, it never harms to already contact supervisors before that; on the contrary. And if they have already seen your PhD, if you've already spoken to them or you've actually already identified, for example a

		conference, often that's a good place to start. When you go to a scientific conference by the end of your Masters studies and you actually know some interesting
0:15:56.1		scientists, potential supervisors will be there, that you do your research before that to identify these. You write to them and say that might be a chance of meeting you and talking to you. That will reflect what you write in your motivation letter and a reason why you applied for a programme. So that's probably the right way round to do it.
0:16:18.1	Martin	Maybe just as a side note, if you decide to apply to a graduate programme, make sure that there are some laboratories that are really interesting to you; not just that you think that's a great programme, I've heard of it from many people. If there are individual laboratories that fit to you, then you should apply. If there's nothing around, like we had people who had studied fishery, and this does not fit to biomedical stuff.
0:16:47.6		So really make sure that it fits and then, as Barbara said, you should really know what these laboratories are doing. And this is also the vital thing. If you go by the other route, you send an email to someone just like Samira, and you apply to one particular laboratory or group, you should know what they have been doing and you would also mention at least some of this in your cover letter or email.
0:17:14.7	Thomas	But just to know a little bit about the process, so Martin, in your lab how do you take on doctoral candidates? What is the process when you want to hire somebody?
0:17:29.2	Martin	So as I said, there are two routes. One is the graduate school. I'm running a graduate school and here it's very much like Barbara said. There's an interview in Belgium, as we call it, in our case it runs over four days. So we invite people from all over the world. We pay for everything but it's relatively tough because there are lots of interviews and I think most graduate schools will then allow the candidates to see regular students who are already there.

0:17:58.9		So this is one thing and then once you get an email you are selected, you will then be asked if you accept. Unfortunately there are always some people who say yes, and then two months later they say, "No, there's a nicer city. I want to go to Harvard actually. I never really considered going to your town." That's a nuisance but usually people accept that and then there's a long time of several months that people from
0:18:28.7		non-European countries need to get their visa. That's an important thing so that's also why usually the selection is far before we would actually start with the PhD, otherwise we would not get the people here. And if you have asked an individual professor, "Can I work with you, Professor?" once he has seen you... so it's always best if you go for interviews and you can see if you fit to each other, he or she would then say, "Okay, I've got enough
0:18:58.4		money" or not. And if not, you would then in a second step have to apply for a fellowship. This happened to me, for example, when I went to Britain for a post-doc. Suddenly I had to apply for a fellowship, which afterwards I thought was a really good idea because now I had this in my CV. And then you can start.
0:19:15.9	Thomas	So just to sum up on the procedure, it sounds like it is very decentral, it's very personal. Even if you hear you come from disciplines with big labs and big teams, it's still very personal. It's still about getting that contact to your supervisor and then the process gets rolling. That's probably how we can sum it up, if you agree on that.
0:19:44.8		So what about the money? How do you finance this? Where should you go if your lab does not have the money ready?
0:19:57.9	Martin	What happened to you, Samira?
0:19:59.9	Samira	So for me, I already... the Max Planck research grad school that I am with already offers part of it to fund my PhD. It's partly also funded by my supervisor. Although they do encourage in

		Germany, I think it's more common in the UK, that already in PhD you look for yourself, so you apply for funding yourself. Also later on, if you want to continue
0:20:29.0		your research and do a post-doc that looks excellent on your CV. The way the supervisor will encourage you to do this because it saves him or her money obviously, and there are loads of different ones that might... that your supervisor might be a chair or some kind of reviewer for a type of stipend. So they might be able to recommend some for you, or you can just ask around really. Look at DAD, for example. They
0:20:58.9		also do a few stipends. If you want to look, there is loads of information that you can find online. One of the biggest, and unfortunately one of the most competitive ones, is Boehringer Ingelheim, which is a very privileged funding for your PhD. Information like this can be very easily found by just talking to people in your lab.
0:20:58.9	Thomas	Yeah, I think the DAD came up a couple of times. That's the German Exchange Service and I'm sure that link can be found on the blog or otherwise. That is a central place to go. And can you come with your own funding? If you don't have money what happens then?
0:21:47.6	Samira	I think that just depends on your supervisor really. It's a very individual-based situation. It might be that you're an interesting candidate but they don't really want to fund a certain project that you might be interesting in working on at the moment, in which case they say sorry but come back later. But personally I haven't really come across a situation like that or know anyone that has come across the situation
0:22:17.4		like that.
0:22:20.3	Martin	Yeah, I think that is more common in the social science humanities. As I understand the system, you can actually come and open the door and say, "I don't have money but I really want to do it" and there you go. In that

		situation, now I'm asking because I've been out of this system for a long time, do you have any very fixed deals in terms of doing a part-time PhD or
0:22:50.0		are you... would you say it's very individual? You don't need that kind of structure in Germany.
0:22:58.0	Samira	I would personally say it's very individual. I don't know. What do you think?
0:23:04.1	Thomas	My feeling is that compared to Britain, where you're very... you would sign up for a part-time or a full-time, that's not how it works in Germany.
0:23:15.1	Samira	Sorry, it's definitely more common in the UK than in Germany, especially to do part-time PhDs. I've not heard of anyone who's done that so far.
0:23:24.8	Martin	I can only agree. In our graduate school we only have one person. She is a mathematician and she can afford actually, she's only working on the computer basically, to do a part-time job on the side. But apart from that, the question is do you really need a part-time job? If you get enough money, which usually most people do, you don't need another job.
0:23:49.4	Barbara	I also think in part that that situation sometimes of having a job on the side and financing a PhD, for us in the life sciences, is very uncommon. The experimental part... for PhD, there's a part of doing research and then there's the part of writing a thesis and publications and those parts that add up. In some disciplines you can split that. You can do your research part. You can do them on the side.
0:24:19.0		It could take ten years if you wanted. And in that case of course you need a job or a way of financing. There will not be stipends or anything to finance that kind of PhD. This is the whole process with not having structure to graduate schools. The main aim is also to reduce that time to say a PhD will be on average three to three and a half years. And that's of

		course different
0:24:49.0		from ten years. And then it will happen in very exceptional cases that there is still a phase when the experimental part can definitely be done in three years, but in the writing up part sometimes due to circumstances, there can be children. Doing your PhD, there can be a situation where you actually move to a different place and you weren't completely finished yet with writing up. It could be that you actually
0:25:19.0		find the job of your dreams and your PhD's not completely finished yet, and that I think is a different thing that can happen, that you actually start on a job and then finally still the write-up submit is deferred while you're still in the next position.
0:25:38.0	Martin	Actually I have to add that graduate programmes do often offer something like a safety net, especially in certain situations when the fellowship has run out and you're still not finished. The graduate programmes like ours tell the PIs you have to finance this student until she or he actually finishes with the PhD. That is actually something that often works and if you have an individual PI without a graduate school behind you,
0:26:07.8		then you should ask right when you start what happens at the end. Will there be enough money for me to finish the whole thing? If, for example, you look at a two year contract for the beginning only, how will it go on? Very often this is the case and the laboratories have enough money to finance you, but you should simply ask.
0:26:32.2	Thomas	Yeah, I think that that is some excellent advice, particularly in a system that is as individual as the German is. Before we move out of the application phase because we haven't entered the lab in Germany yet, one more link that can be useful, the European Commission has a link where they would like all research jobs, including PhDs, to be advertised. It's called 'Euro Access' and I think that will come under on the blog on the side as well there.

0:27:01.9		I think that will be useful as well. So we've done the process. We've found our professor, we've entered our lab the first day. And then the big question is here from the audience, what about the language? How do you manage with the language?
0:27:23.7	Samira	Personally I found it quite challenging. I think one of my tips to people that are looking for PhDs in Germany and are seriously considering doing a PhD in Germany, would be to learn German beforehand. You don't have to be fluent but use basic German. I think Munich is a special case in Germany where it's more conservative and people really do prefer to speak German over English. Although it obviously
0:27:53.6		depends on the environment. In the working environment it's not been a problem at all. Everyone speaks English. All of the scientific communication, presentations, writing, everything is done in English. But if you're going out for furniture shopping to looking for apartments or houses, that can be quite difficult if you don't speak basic German. It's what I felt.
0:28:20.6	Barbara	As a non-German person, when I came to Germany ten years ago I can also say that. In Germany you can get along without German. But from what I observe also, if you don't start with learning a little bit of German right in the beginning... it doesn't have to be before you come but if you're willing to catch up,
0:28:50.3		it definitely helps. And it definitely helps because you never know what happens. In science, if you continue in academia, you will be fine with English and your group will speak English and the programmes are international, and you will have a big group of international students. So you'll be fine without German. You can really survive. Also here we're in a very academic city, and actually scientists do get along.
0:29:20.0		They are fine without speaking German. But then you notice that if you haven't started yet to take maybe take a few people who speak

		<p>German with, or... it really becomes hard. After a year you don't start learning German anymore. You get your habits, you get around. And then the big question comes towards the end of the PhD where certain students say, "Well maybe I would like to stay in Germany. Maybe I would like to kind of find the position</p>
0:29:49.3		<p>still in Germany" and then suddenly it becomes like a really big argument. Then also employers will also ask, "How come you've spent three years in Germany and you still don't speak a word? How can that be?" And what I personally see with our students, what works really well is that they actually find a few people to practice their German on. It can be very limited but it's actually good to find some people. It can be</p>
0:30:18.9		<p>technicians in the group. It could be the local bakery, but you just find your habits of speaking and practicing German. Our PhD students also organise themselves an attendance system of exchanging languages, so they're actually happy. They've the Spanish-speaking students who come in and share their knowledge and you actually then practice German with the other partner. So there are many possibilities. There are courses. Most graduate schools actually also really offer courses</p>
0:30:48.5		<p>to learn German. I personally think that that's a really good thing but I think you learn more language by talking to people.</p>
0:30:59.6	Martin	<p>I've got one suggestion that is if you look for a laboratory where most people speak English, or all of them, just have a look at the composition. If it's international then you can be sure that it will be in English. If ninety percent is German then maybe not. You will easily find out. There are still a few laboratories around that always surprise and have the majority of German people, but this is a minority and it gets less and less.</p>
0:31:28.5		<p>But you can simply find out.</p>

0:31:30.9	Thomas	But you might say that you would want a laboratory with German people in order to learn German. I mean that will be the big thing that you carry away from it in Germany is that you actually know that language which is a very big language, and might I add a beautiful language as well? It would be a pity not to learn it if you ask me. So you can get by without German but it's highly recommended.
0:31:59.7		And shall we say it's not as difficult as it sounds at the beginning. Well Swedish and Flemish are pretty close. It's not impossible!
0:32:14.1	Samira	It's definitely not impossible and has been already mentioned before that, especially if you're in a grad school programme, or even if you aren't in a grad school programme, there are so many opportunities to learn the language. I would certainly say that if you're going to move here and live here for more than three or four years, then it's a good amount of time to learn a new language; it doesn't have to be instantly. You can obviously take it gradually and it would certainly be a shame to not learn the language
0:32:44.0		because again it's another skill to add onto your CV. So it can be quite... the German language is a bit difficult, I would say, grammatically, but it's not impossible.
0:32:44.0	Thomas	My personal experience is that Germans are actually incredibly tolerant to grammatical errors. It really doesn't matter. It's not something that will cut you off from conversations, that you didn't really get the genitive behind a proposition correct.
0:33:18.4	Barbara	One of the funny things is actually that the grammar, even between the different regions in Germany, you're in Bavaria or you're up in the North, the dialects actually happen to be quite different. If you think grammar is tough and you have to learn 'das' and whether that's a dative or accusative, those kinds of things, actually some of the dialects put it the other way around. So that's also a thing where it's not so

0:33:48.4		critical. You'll get along with the minimum and you don't really need to know so much of the theory behind it. I learn it with my children now. I speak German. I picked it up by talking to people and then you learn the school term at some point later.
0:34:09.4	Martin	As somebody who really doesn't like learning languages, you can definitely live without any other language but English. That is possible. Only if you stay for a long time like you, then you should definitely need some German for administrative reasons, for example. But you can, if you really desperately want to go to Germany without learning German, you can survive.
0:34:34.6	Thomas	That's an exception. I think that's a good conclusion and even if you get scared by this quite considerable grammar for a British speaker, once you're over, there's nothing to it. The rest is really easy and you don't even need to scary grammar bit. So I think that could maybe put people at peace on the
0:35:04.4		language issue. But what might be harder is the cultural shock. So once you actually learn the language and you know what goes on, will you be shocked by what these Germans are saying and doing?
0:35:19.4	Samira	Personally it's not cultural... I mean I've moved quite a bit already and I'm one of those persons that likes to move and experience different cultures. So personally for me it wasn't a shock. Also because Swedish and German culture are quite similar. I didn't find it, no.
0:35:44.6	Barbara	I think if I just think back on my time, when I came to Germany, it is a change. I have to admit I was a little bit afraid of the Germans. Their reputation is of being very direct. At the same time, compared to more southern, some of them came from France, but there is a certain distance
0:36:14.3		also. You don't talk about personal things so easily. You don't talk about personal, private things as easily as maybe other cultures would

		do. And that experience over time, there's nothing to be afraid of. The Germans are very nice and one can spend also an entire life here. There are real advantages to the directness.
0:36:43.4		You also know the Germans will just tell you. If something is not okay, they'll tell you. If they say nothing you can be really sure that everything is totally fine. There's not so much reading in between the lines. Germany I think is also a very welcoming culture. In general, Germans are really very open also to international people coming
0:37:13.2		and joining and living in their cities and things.
0:37:20.7	Thomas	Most of our audience today is British and we have a German who lived in the UK, so Martin, maybe seeing from the other side of the channel, what are the cultural differences between? What shocked you when you came to Britain?
0:37:38.6	Martin	Basically what shocked me was that they are so similar. I always liked the UK so I wanted to go there at some stage of my life. I came to Oxford and Oxford I thought anyway they are so different from anywhere in the world, maybe with the exception of Cambridge, and I found out they are so boringly similar to what I have been used to before. For example, Heidelberg. They are very similar. Maybe you can find
0:38:08.0		a few things but they would definitely not count. After half a year, you don't feel them anymore. That's, I think, the major message. So you should not concentrate on the little differences. The majority of people in Germany and the UK are extremely similar.
0:38:25.5	Thomas	I'd probably agree to that. I think what does shock people is the directness, which can be almost aggressive by British standards. And maybe the formality. You do speak in an email with most honoured Professor Vilt...
0:38:49.1	Martin	Actually not.
0:38:50.0	Thomas	Not anymore?

0:38:52.6	Martin	Yeah. That depends... we are now in the discussion of that. The formalities they have changed according to, I think, faculty, or what you're actually doing in science. In life sciences, definitely you would only address the beginning 'Dear Doctor Vilt' and then you would wait until this person would offer you to be called by first name. Maybe in the social sciences this is different. It definitely would be different
0:39:21.9		for example in medicine. Their big professors, the head of the clinic or something, they like their professorships. But apart from that, it's become very, I would say Americanised.
0:39:36.2	Thomas	Right.
0:39:37.9	Barbara	I definitely think it's also really an advantage then of doing the communication in English. I think if you address a German person in the English language, you can actually use the language of science and address the person. So there is... I would even say it's a no-go to translate the German way of saying. It's a total no-go
0:40:07.5		to translate that into English and write like that. And we've also seen that actually some letters can be awkward if an applicant will actually try to write it in the best German they could do and really do all that effort, because it might be it sounds wrong if you try to sound German or try to do something. It's not so formal. There is this difficult thing, I have to say, I
0:40:36.3		still struggle in the German language with the formality difference between 'you' and 'you'. 'You' is not 'you' if you say 'du' or 'ze', and this is a very complicated thing actually, to understand the social convenience. But hey, if you're not German you can make that mistake and you could be... in the German language you can learn to use the proper form, but 'you' is definitely the safest solution. If you're not sure whether you should
0:41:06.3		call a person 'ze' or 'du', you go with English form and say 'you'. And as you say, Martin, the

		best way is to first address a person with the doctor title and the last name, but it's not immediately seen as impolite to address a professor by the first name. You might still be on the respectful 'ze', even if you say a first name to a
0:41:36.0		person. But yeah, it's definitely okay. Just normal respect.
0:41:46.7	Thomas	So on the cultural side, I think we can say for the British audience at least that there are small differences. There are little things to be aware of, but there's plenty of space to be yourself. And nobody will be very angry with you for forgetting the professor title or saying 'you' in the wrong way. I can see actually from the questions coming in here that we've
0:42:16.3		got well-established into our labs and we're not afraid of the Germans anymore. But just to go a step backwards to the proposal phase, there are still some questions about what does make a good proposal. So once you made that personal contact and you charmed your future supervisor, what makes a good proposal? I can see someone asking about the size. How can you
0:42:45.0		make a good research proposal in four pages? It asks whether four pages is normal. I don't know, but what makes a good proposal?
0:42:56.8	Samira	In the beginning of my PhD there were quite a few funding bodies that you can apply to in the first year of your PhD and that is something that my supervisor encouraged. It wasn't an absolute must-do; it was if you would like to. So I went ahead and did that and I noticed that depending on who you're applying to, they will have a specific criteria. You should be looking at
0:43:26.1		exactly what they require. It can be four pages, it can be two, and sometimes it can be ten. But I think the main thing that I learned was make sure it is as clear as possible. If you're looking to apply for a research proposal, really make sure that you have stated how you came to this idea, what you want to do, a research plan year-

		to-year. You don't really need to state
0:43:55.8		things like how much things will cost in your PhD. That's more for post-doc, more advanced level. But really the main thing is that your idea comes across as clearly as possible. Another great thing to do is mention why you're doing this research. How will society benefit from it? And why is it important to do it in the first place? There's no need... I did a workshop as well and some of the things that I applied from this workshop my supervisor didn't really like because in the workshop
0:44:25.5		I learned that language, how you propose it to the audience is really important. I used such big, fancy words that essentially the meaning of science was kind of diffused in between that, which is not good to do. As long as the idea is as clear as possible, and the person who's reading it knows why you're doing it and why it's important, that's the best research proposal.
0:44:54.3	Thomas	So clarity. Do you agree to that, Martin and Barbara?
0:44:59.9	Martin	Barbara, can you comment?
0:45:03.2	Thomas	You have your mute on again.
0:45:04.9	Barbara	Yes. So on that level I would agree. My tip regarding that is always just imagine you're a few years down the road. You're a supervisor now and you have someone who wants to work with you. What would you really expect from this proposal? What would you expect a doctoral candidate to deliver to you? That's what you say, Samira. I have little time
0:45:34.3		so I want to be able to read it in a short time. I want to grab the ideas. I don't want someone who fakes ideas or who tries to pretend to make it more exciting. I really want to see that you know what you're talking about, that you have an idea or a starting idea. It doesn't need to be the full project. And what your reason is. Almost your reason to want to do this line of research. I think that that's
0:46:04.1		in a nutshell how a proposal will work. Best.

		Martin, you have...?
0:46:15.4	Martin	There's only one thing I would add. If you're applying for a PhD, to avoid a misunderstanding here, you would usually not need to submit a research proposal. That is only if you need funding and in most cases in Germany there is still enough money that you do not need extra funding. But only if you need extra funding from a funding organisation then you certainly need a research proposal. Some, however, some graduate programmes would like you to write a research proposal, maybe one or two pages only.
0:46:45.4		For them it's to get an impression that you are already some sort of scientist; that you can think in a scientific way and convince the people who would then hire you. Whether this research proposal then leads to a project that you can finally follow in a laboratory, that's a totally different story. That is down to what the laboratory can actually then offer.
0:47:13.5	Thomas	But I suppose that again is different from the stems, so the hard sciences and the humanities...
0:47:21.1	Martin	Definitely.
0:47:22.0	Thomas	... and social science, where you would need to come and show that you can do cutting edge research by yourself. But again, it's a very decentral and individualised system. What we all agreed was that it's good to know your research group and your future supervisor before you do anything else. Then there's the question about what actually happens within the programmes. What are the content of the programmes? You're going to stand at the bench or
0:47:51.7		you're going to be in the library most of the time, but in terms of content, what do you do in a German PhD programme?
0:48:01.5	Samira	Perhaps I can comment on that since I am in a programme myself. It's very well-rounded. Not only in terms of everyday work, coming to the lab, performing your experiments, and how you

		<p>imagine a scientist to work, but also we've got, as I briefly mentioned earlier, we've got seminars that are hosted by professors, research group leaders that are either affiliated with the</p>
0:48:30.9		<p>grad school programme or are part of the faculty. Or they will also have invited speakers. We recently had the Nobel Prize Winner for Chemistry here in Munich and I actually found out when he was here giving us a talk, so that was fantastic. Also there is method training, so since I started my PhD obviously I didn't know most of the techniques that I'm performing now for my PhD before I started it. So you can just...</p>
0:49:00.4		<p>there are training programmes where you can contact another lab that might have this special, cutting edge technology set up and you can say, "Can I please learn this and that?" and you can decide a time and just shadow someone. You learn it which is fantastic because obviously learning yourself with supervision can take ages. There are lots of different things really but I would think, for me, the things that are most beneficial are the seminars and the method trainings.</p>
0:49:30.0		<p>You can also set up collaborations as well but I think this is a very individual-based case so I won't cover it very much.</p>
0:49:42.1	Barbara	<p>Yeah, so I think in general a structured graduate school has, as I said, a structure. An important part of that is the Teacher's Advisory Committee, in short we say TUC, and this means this is the beginning of your PhD, of your doctoral studies we should say in Germany, is really to find out and also to establish this committee which you will do</p>
0:50:11.9		<p>together with your supervisor but you will find two external people who will guide you through the process of your PhD. You will have presentations to your Advisory Committee regularly. For us it's after six months the first time and then every year, and at the end these will be also the ones who give you some guidance in where you are. That will also be</p>

		very
0:50:40.9		helpful at times where questions occur. Is this project the right one to pursue etcetera. And as to all the offers, of course there are offers as you go to conferences as well. That's also part of the programme that you actually will also participate in international conferences. And that also the credit is given which I find personally very important to your extra-curricular
0:51:10.3		activities. So within the credit points, so to say that you get which is really not difficult to get together. If you just do a minimum of training and development you'll have enough at the end of the three years. But some importance is really given to, for example, science and society initiatives to organise a conference, to set up a journal club, to do things on your own initiative to maybe organise things for the students' community
0:51:40.3		etcetera. I think that's also part of your PhD.
0:51:46.7	Martin	I think the last point is very important. If you think of it in terms of employer or your future job, they are exactly looking for such abilities. Organising something, for them is much more important than your actual PhD work. What also comes with that is we actually concentrate a lot on career opportunities. Very often, PhD students are basically stuck in their books
0:52:16.0		or their research and don't know what is out there once they have finished their PhD. We try to give them the information by excursions, retreats and so on. I think most graduate schools do exactly that. One last thing to add is most graduate programmes in Germany and probably worldwide are research-oriented, which means
0:52:36.0		that you have most of your time for your research and just some time for mandatory things that you would have to do each week, otherwise not only PhD students but also the professors would start to complain.

0:52:51.3	Thomas	Okay. That's very good. So there are a lot of opportunities within the PhD programmes but I think it's a case of being individual. You have to look what is on offer. Now before we go to the closing round there's one question that we sort of left open; the practicalities of relocating. Are there any good tips for arriving in Germany? How do you relocate? What do you look for? Maybe also the cost of living. There's some interest in that as well.
0:53:19.2	Samira	When I moved here, as I said, for me it's a bit strange to explain this because I've moved so often. Every four or five years I tend to move, ever since I was a kid! I'm used to having everything in a bag. Moving specifically to Germany, one of the things to prepare, I would have loved if I'd spoken some basic German. But in terms of looking for apartments, it really helped being
0:53:48.9		part of the graduate school because the administration office helped me with all of the paperwork, which was obviously in German to start with, all of the contacts. Also as soon as you were in the email system, every week they would give out advertisements for housing so you knew where to look and whether any apartments from previous students were available or not. So that's how I currently found my housing
0:54:18.2		actually; the place I live in so far. So I think if I wasn't involved in a graduate school programme it would have been harder. The administration office really played a significant part in that.
0:54:34.3	Barbara	I also think that graduate schools give that support, at least in guiding what the experiences of the current PhD students. In any case, I will reach out to the local community of people. Often Facebook is not a bad place to start to look if there is a group, if there are places, and what happens here is that there is actually also a mailing list in the community. the students who leave also leave their rooms and you can take

0:55:04.0		it up from there. As to the cost of living, I think in Munich it's considered one of the most expensive places in Germany to live. There are substantial differences in the costs of living between different parts of Germany. That is a good question to also ask people who are there. How are you doing, Samira? You live in the most expensive city
0:55:34.0		of Germany!
0:55:37.8	Samira	In terms of apartments actually it's expensive, yes, but compared to London or Paris it's significantly cheaper for what you get. The quality is outstanding. It's not like living in... I remember being a student and being in student housing in the UK. As students, we know that student housings are terrible but that's not the case here. Yes it's expensive but as I said, compared to other big cities, it's actually not too
0:56:07.7		bad at all for what you get. With the salary you get doing a PhD in Germany, even for Munich, it's more than enough to survive. I would say it's nothing to worry about financially.
0:56:21.5	Thomas	Okay, that's great. I think because we're running short of time here, I'll just move to the final round with the additional information because there were some questions about that. Tuition fees in Germany are either non-existent or ridiculously low. I think they're non-existent now. They've been scrapped altogether, so that's not a worry. Okay, I think then we'll go to the final round of a short top tip from the panel members. I think we should just do it
0:56:51.5		at the beginning, starting with Martin, Barbara and Samira. What is the one top tip you have?
0:57:00.5	Martin	When I looked for my post-doc position, I actually looked for good labs, and I didn't really care if this was in the UK or France, which was also on my list. And then I visited those labs and then I only found out that this particular lab in the UK was my lab for the future. That is what you should do. Just choose your lab and visit it and have a personal impression.

0:57:24.2	Thomas	Yeah, Barbara. Personal impression.
0:57:27.6	Barbara	Yeah, so I totally agree with that great tip. I think personally, rather than going for programmes or deciding for Germany altogether, I would also say make up your personal opinions. What works for many foreign PhD students might not be the same for you, so I would say reach out to the community of yours and ask them for their experience
0:57:56.4		locally in the place where you would be interested to go.
0:58:03.9	Samira	I agree with both of you. One of the things that I would suggest if you're not sure whether you want to do a PhD or not, but you still generally like research or whatever you're studying at the moment, is it never harms to get some experience; do some internships. If you think this is a lab or a research group you would be interested in doing a PhD with, just ask whether you can volunteer for a month or two. This is a great way to get to know
0:58:32.7		your future supervisor, the group that you might be potentially working with. If you don't then sure at least you can say in your CV two months or however long, "I've worked in this place". You might be able to get a salary but that's not the most important thing. I think the most important thing is to know that you're going to be working in a good environment with people you might be getting along with for the future three to four years of your life. Be active. Email the supervisor. Don't be afraid.
0:59:02.7		Email the PhD students post-doc. Ask them about their first impressions, the people that have been working there for more than a year. Just don't be afraid to ask basically.
0:59:14.5	Thomas	I think that that's a good final top tip. Don't be afraid to ask. I think what we've heard is that it's a good system. It came in a side remark. There's enough money, which is true. It's decentral. It's about getting that personal contact. It's about being informed about what you want to do and where is best to do it. But

		once you've got that established, once you're informed and once you have your personal contact, then it sounds like
0:59:44.5		the doors to Germany are open; the money, the relocation, the language. It will solve itself. From my side, that's a very short summary of what we said today. So all that remains for me is to say there's more information to be found at the PhD portal www.jobsacuk/phd . There's a free E-book on the topic. You'll be able to
1:00:14.4		follow much more on the website and get more information about the sites and where to look for more information. So with those words I'd just like to thank the three of you on behalf of jobsacuk and thanks to the audience. I hope you gained something from it. I hope you would like to go to Germany and learn some German and get an experience. As you can hear, it all seems very possible.
1:00:42.7		So thank you and goodbye.
1:00:47.0	Barbara	Thank you.