

## **PraxisPro**

### **Internationalization of Teacher Education Programs at TU Darmstadt**

Open-minded attitudes and international approaches to studies, teaching and research are of paramount importance to the TU Darmstadt.

Students in teacher education programs have not been addressed specifically so far by the university's internationalization efforts and there are only very few offers to date that are geared to meet their specific needs. As a consequence, not many students training to be teachers are considering studying abroad. At the same time, schools are becoming increasingly diverse and teachers are expected to be well-equipped to meet the challenges that come with teaching in classrooms that are characterized by cultural diversity and a multitude of individual educational needs.

The project PraxisPro seeks to close this gap by creating structured and institutionalized study abroad opportunities for students in teacher education programs that are tailored to their particular needs. To that end, the project offers opportunities for physical mobility as well as digital formats for joint learning/teaching experiences. These are accompanied by lectures and workshops on issues around the topic of diversity in the classroom (beginning with a lecture series in the summer term 2022, co-organized with the universities of Marburg and Gießen).

Further, an international network of partner universities and schools is established that allows for combined studying and internship stays abroad. This network will be further expanded beyond the project's duration. Exposing students to practical teaching as well as studying at a university abroad, they get an insight into different teaching and learning cultures. They experience the feeling of being foreign themselves and, as a consequence, gain both cross-cultural competence and technical knowledge while experiencing multilingualism and sociocultural diversity. The project primarily (but not exclusively) addresses students of the STEM subjects who often do not find cross-cultural topics in their curriculum like students of the humanities and social sciences would.

The project mostly seeks partnerships in the US and Austria. The Austrian partners (TU Graz, PH Steiermark) are especially attractive for students without extensive foreign language skills, or who cannot consider a longer/more distant stay abroad because of family or work obligations.

With the partners in the US (University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, University of Rhode Island (URI)), cooperations have already been established through joint projects:

URI: In cooperation with the German Department at the University of Rhode Island, students have been able to work (digitally) as Teaching Assistants and tutors and receive credit for their practical training requirements.

St. Thomas: Starting with the Fall Term 2022/23, one student will spend two semesters at the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota and will work as Teaching Assistant.

UTSA: In a joint seminar, students of TU Darmstadt and UTSA were learning together with two lecturers cooperating to develop the concept for the seminar. This seminar has taken place twice already (Summer semester 2021 and Winter semester 2021/22) and the evaluations proved its success.

The project PraxisPro is funded by the DAAD through 2024. This funding entails several scholarships for students and visiting lecturers. The work within the project is meant to lay the foundation for long-term sustainable partnerships and exchange opportunities in teacher education that last well beyond the duration of the project.

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