

“When a Chinese PhD Student Meets a German Supervisor – Tips for PhD Beginners” is the second volume in the book series “University from the Inside.” In a brief and concise manner, this book details essential issues and challenges that Chinese PhD beginners and their German supervisors may encounter. This book is written for several target groups, for whom it can provide different benefits.

Chinese PhD students

This book can help Chinese PhD students to reflect on their own behavior and to adapt to the new environment in a short time.

German supervisors

This book can help German supervisors better understand Chinese PhD students, in order to promote cooperation between German supervisors and Chinese PhD students.

International office of the university

Those who work in the international office of the university may benefit from this book by getting to know the communication style and cultural backgrounds of Chinese PhD students from their own perspective.

People interested in Chinese culture

This book gives insights into Chinese communication and working norms by contrasting them with expectations and norms in German culture.

Examples of the content:

- PhD scholarship, the funding system in China
- Typical problems that Chinese PhD students meet, including financial problems
- Tips for Chinese PhD students, such as the concept of “business is business”
- Tips for German supervisors, explaining Chinese norms about being a “Yes” person

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[2]

Tips for PhD Beginners

When a Chinese PhD Student Meets a German Supervisor

Keshun Zhang & Shuang Song

When a Chinese PhD Student Meets a German Supervisor

Tips for PhD Beginners

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中国博士生遇到德国导师：给博士新生的建议

张克顺 & 宋爽

University from the Inside

Job Profiles, Career Paths, Personnel Development

[2]
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Introduction to the Book Series:

**University from the Inside –
Job Profiles, Career Paths, Personnel Development**

Career paths and job profiles at universities are diverse and appealing – but often also convoluted and unclear. In the volumes of the book series “University from the Inside,” insights will be given in different academic positions’ professional activities as well as their everyday professional life. These insights are given by addressing concrete challenges and providing suggestions on how to adequately and effectively deal with them. The book series is intended to promote the transfer of knowledge and personal practical experiences of experts in each specific academic professional field. The authors in each case combine their know-how with reports and small anecdotes from their everyday university life. They give various tips to their colleagues and those who would like to become such: always from the inside, knowledgeable, and sometimes even with a wink. Thus, the volumes of the book series are intended for people who are already working in the professional area, who aim to work there, or who simply want to know which challenges one might face in this field. We hope you find the volumes of the book series „University from the Inside“ both enjoyable and insightful.

Bettina Duval & Thomas Götz

Editors of the Book Series:

Dr. Bettina Duval is the head of Academic Staff Development (ASD) at the University of Konstanz (Germany). The ASD is the central institution for human resources/ personnel and career development in academia at the University. Her focuses of work are coaching and training as well as consulting academic institutions concerning questions of personnel development.

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2nd Volume in the Book Series

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Edited by Bettina Duval and Thomas Götz

**When a Chinese PhD Student Meets a German Supervisor
Tips for PhD Beginners**

Keshun Zhang & Shuang Song

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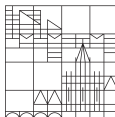
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Preface

A rapidly increasing number of Chinese students have chosen to pursue their PhD degrees in Germany in recent years, providing a large number of German supervisors with the experience of supervising Chinese PhD students. However, there is always a cultural gap that may hinder the cooperation and communication between them, because of differences between the two countries in communication style, working manners, philosophy, and culture. This book is based on the first author's personal experiences at the University of Konstanz. This contribution describes problems and misunderstandings that Chinese PhD beginners and German supervisors frequently encounter, accessible explanations for these problems, and useful advice as well.

Four chapters are included in this book, which follows a character, Ming, as an exemplar of a Chinese doctoral student in Germany. Chapter 1 explains why Chinese students love to come to Germany and how they acquire funds (e.g., the funding system in China). Chapter 2 focuses on typical problems that students may encounter when they begin their studies in Germany. The following chapter offers tips for students to solve these problems and to help familiarize them with the German way of life and work. In order to help supervisors better understand their Chinese PhD students, tips based on Chinese culture and philosophy are provided for German supervisors in Chapter 4.

前言

近年来，越来越多的中国学生来到德国攻读博士学位，于是越来越多的德国导师有了指导中国博士生的经历。然而，由于交流方式、工作方法和文化背景方面的差异，德国导师和中国学生之间像是总隔着一道鸿沟。这本书基于作者留学德国的个人经历，描述并解释了刚开始读博士的中国留学生和他们的德国导师可能会遇到的问题，并且给出了建议。

本书一共四章。第一章解释了为什么中国学生热衷于来德国留学，以及他们如何取得科研经费；第二章重点说明了刚来德国的中国留学生可能会遇到的典型问题；第三章就第二章提到的问题给出了建议，并帮助中国学生熟悉德国的工作和生活方式；第四章基于中国文化和中国式思维方式给德国导师提出了建议，帮助他们更好地了解中国学生。

Chapter 1

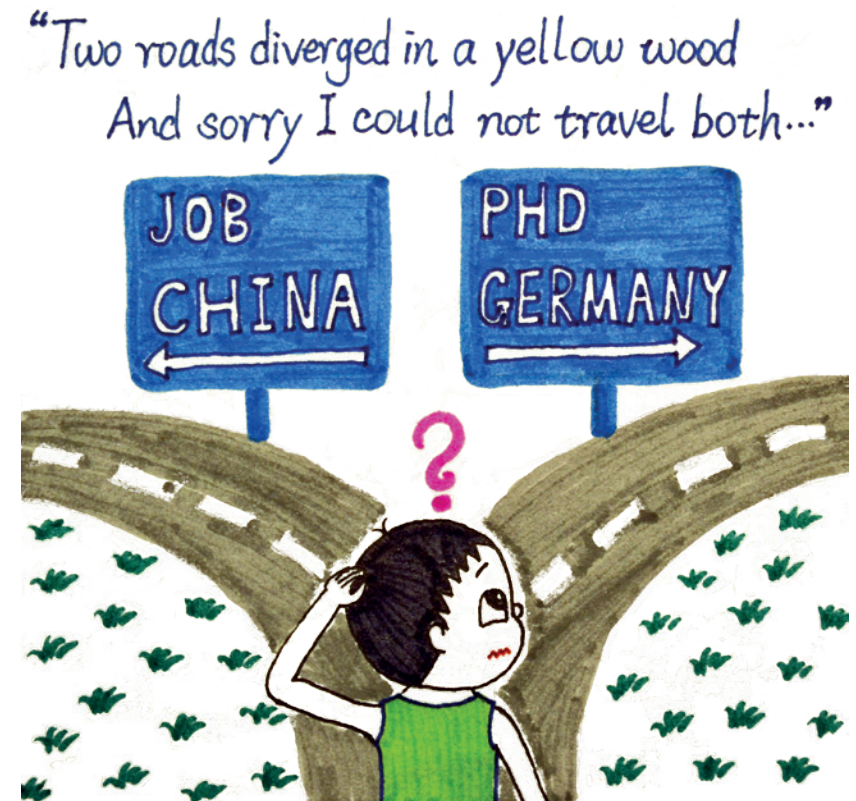
How Did Ming Get to Germany

1.1 Opportunity

Ming's original career plan after he received a master's degree in psychology was to find a job rather than study abroad. Ming was not confident in his ability to do research because of his carelessness and impatience, which are obvious weaknesses when it comes to research. Furthermore he had no income to pay for the living expenses abroad and his parents had already spent all of their savings on his studies at university. In Ming's case, studying abroad would place a great burden on his family, while finding a job would support them.

However, while in his master's program, Ming's mind began to change. Ming's supervisor in China worked on a joint cross-cultural research project with a German professor about risk decision-making, which gave Ming the opportunity to join this research in 2010. As the project went on, Ming got acquainted with the research field and the interests of this German professor, and Ming's interest in doing research increased. When the joint project was successfully accomplished due to Ming's proactive efforts, his supervisor in China asked him if he would like to go to Germany to do a PhD as soon as he was done conducting the project. He said that if Ming wanted to go, he would recommend him to his colleague in Germany. Ming had not yet decided whether or not he would like to study abroad, because he was fully aware that studying abroad would be a great opportunity but would also be costly. Therefore, he told his supervisor that he was interested in going abroad but had not made his final decision yet.

When it came to the last semester of his master's program, Ming had to make an important decision: should he find a job or go to Germany? It took Ming half of a year to consider these two choices and to make a decision. But then it was time to give an answer to both supervisors. His optimistic and risk-seeking personality led him to choose an unknown direction: he finally decided to go to Germany, even though he knew this might be a path full of difficulties.



第一章

小明是如何来到德国的

1.1 机会

按照原来的职业规划，小明打算研究生毕业后直接就业，而不是出国读博。原因有两个：一是他对自己继续做科研并没有多少信心，因为他觉得自己缺乏做研究所需的耐心，同时又比较粗心。他清楚，这是从事科研工作的致命弱点。二是他的经济条件不允许，父母都是一辈子没有走出大山的农民，供他念完大学和研究生已经耗尽了他们一辈子的积蓄。若是继续攻读博士学位，势必额外增加家庭负担。他觉得受教育到这个程度就够了，应该找一份工作为家庭出一份力了。

2010年，缘于小明的德国导师与中国导师有一项有关风险决策方面的跨文化合作项目，小明主动参与其中，承担起研究助理的任务。他与德国导师时常交流，并逐步了解了导师的研究领域。由于小明的积极主动和努力付出，使得合作项目顺利完成，中国导师在项目结束前问起他对未来有何打算，是否有意愿去德国念博士。如果有这个意愿的话，中国导师说 he 可以向德国导师推荐，让德国导师对小明有进一步的了解。小明心里清楚，这是个绝好的机会，要知道周围有多少学生想尽办法出国留学，又有多少父母殚精竭虑地支持他们的孩子走出去。同时小明也明白，如果要出国的话，花费肯定是一个大数目。所以他告诉他导师，他只是有出去的意愿，但没有完全做出决定。

到了研究生学习的最后一个学期，是直接就业还是去德国深造，此时需要小明给他自己、也需要给两位导师一个明确的答案。

小明本性乐观爱冒险，他倾向于选择一条未知的路，在犹豫彷徨了大半年后，在不断地权衡利弊中，他最终仍然选择了出国，即使他明知出国的这条路困难重重。

1.2 Loans

For Chinese students who want to pursue a PhD in Germany, there are at least three ways to obtain financial support. The most popular way is to apply for a scholarship from the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC). There is also the option to apply for a scholarship or a research position in Germany (e.g., DAAD) or Europe (e.g., ERASMUS) and the third way is self-financing.

In recent years, the Education Ministry of the Chinese government has sent about 6000 Chinese students abroad for PhD studies each year, with a scholarship of 1200 Euro/month per person, which is 200 Euro a month more than a DAAD scholarship for PhD students. Moreover, the competition for applying for a CSC scholarship is not as fierce as that for a DAAD scholarship, because the CSC scholarship applies a quota system, so that most of the scholarship opportunities are distributed to applicants from key universities (e.g., “211” and “985” universities in China) who have received excellent scores at their universities. In contrast, one type of DAAD scholarship selects researchers from developing countries to go to Germany for further studies, and every year no more than 100 applicants from China can be successful with their applications. Since the amount of money and the number of successful applications for a CSC scholarship exceed those for a DAAD scholarship, many Chinese students with a CSC scholarship come to Germany. For example, the number of successful applicants for a CSC scholarship in a key university (e.g., Peking University) could be more than that of all of the DAAD scholarships in China.

Another difference between the CSC scholarship and the DAAD scholarship is that the recipients of the DAAD scholarship have to go back to China after getting their PhD degree to work in China for at least two years. This might be a limitation for students who want to develop their research career abroad.

Self-financing one's education is a much more difficult option compared with receiving a scholarship. Ming did not realize until he came to Germany that German students tend to only consider doing a PhD when they are sponsored or have

scholarships, as it is almost impossible for them to be self-financed. In China, on the other hand, self-financing is quite common as many students go abroad for further study with their parents' money, although not every family can afford such a large sum.

In Germany, the basic yearly living expense is about 100,000 RMB. As students could apply to only one of either a CSC or a DAAD scholarship in 2011, Ming chose the CSC scholarship, but his application was unsuccessful, due to the fact that his university was not a key university in China. Therefore, Ming had to raise the money himself to finance his overseas studies. In order to raise enough money for the first year, which had to amount to at least 100,000 RMB, Ming called his father one night.

Ming: Dad, I got the chance to go to Germany for further studies, but it takes about 100,000 RMB.

Dad: 100,000... (This was an amount of money that his father had never thought about in his life.)

Ming: Yes.

Dad: I need to think about that.

Their conversation lasted for no more than half a minute, but it caused Ming's father a lot of anxiety.

At 2 o'clock in the morning, Ming's father, who could not fall asleep, called Ming for the first time in his life and said, "I do not have so much money... You have to give up the chance..."

Hearing his father's choked and anxious voice, Ming felt extremely guilty. He immediately consoled his father by saying, "Don't worry, Dad. I will figure it out." Actually, Ming felt really anxious and helpless. He felt so worried that he could not fall asleep either that night. So he got up, turned on his laptop, and wrote about the

problem and his feelings in great detail on his blog. To his surprise, he received numerous phone calls from his relatives and friends the next morning. After reading his blog they were all touched by his experience and willing to help him as much as they could. Finally, with their help, Ming successfully raised the 100,000 RMB for going abroad.



1.2 借钱

从中国来德国读博士一般至少有三种途径解决经费问题：最盛行的一种是获得中国国家留学奖学金（CSC）；第二种是获得德国的（如DAAD）或者欧洲的（如ERASMUS）奖学金或研究职位；第三种是自筹经费。

中国国家教育部近几年每年派出6000名留学生到世界各国攻读博士学位，每位留学生可获得的36–48个月的奖学金，金额是1200欧/月，这种奖学金称为国家留学奖学金（CSC）。每年有一大批留学生获得CSC奖学金来到德国。从经费额度数来说，相对于1000欧/月的DAAD博士奖学金，CSC高出200欧/月；而从奖学金的竞争性来看，CSC也低于DAAD，因为CSC施行的是指标制度，一个学生能否获得CSC奖学金很大程度上取决于学生所在的院校是否是重点大学（如中国的“211”、“985”院校），所以，CSC奖学金的指标主要分配给了中国的重点大学。当然要从这些重点大学成功申请到奖学金，自身也必须是足够优秀。反观DAAD，它的宗旨是在众多发展中国家选拔优秀人才赴德国深造。一直以来中国每年只有不超过百人成功申请到DAAD。而CSC 给予一个重点大学（如北京大学）的人数指标甚至能超过DAAD在中国选拔的总数。

相对于DAAD奖学金，CSC奖学金也有其劣势。根据CSC奖学金的规定，留学生博士毕业后必须回国服务至少两年，这一强制性要求限制了一些希望长期留在国外发展的留学生。

相对于前两种奖学金，自筹经费较为特殊，因为这意味着博士期间所有的开销都得自己准备。小明来到德国以后才知道，德国人只有获得职位或者奖学金前提下才会考虑读博士，让他们自己掏钱念博士几乎是不可能的。而在中国情况却大有不同，每年都有一大批留学生自筹经费去国外留学。在德国仅生活费每年就得十来万人民币，而且生活还得十分节俭的。这样的消费不是一般的家庭能承担得起的。在出国前，小明虽然申请了CSC，却受限于硕士毕业院校是非重点大学，于是申请也失败了。而根据2011年CSC和DAAD的政策，中国留学生只能选择申请其中一种，所以小明不能申请DAAD，于是出国前小明无缘于这两项重要的奖学金，只能自筹经费。

为了筹集至少10万的出国经费，经过再三考虑，一天晚上，小明鼓足勇气给他父亲打电话：

小明： 爸，我有去德国留学的机会，需要大概10万元

爸爸： 10万…（这个数目的钱是他父亲一辈子从没想过的金额）

小明： 是的

爸爸： 我再考虑一下

这个电话持续不到半分钟，然而恰恰是这半分钟的谈话让他父亲陷入深深的焦虑之中。

凌晨两点多，辗转反侧无心睡眠的父亲生平第一次给他打来电话。

“实在没那么多钱，别去了吧！”

听到老父亲哽咽的话语，小明深深自责，他立马积极的宽慰他父亲：

“爸，不用操心，我会想办法解决。”

当夜小明也无法入眠，现实将他置于自责、焦虑、无助却心有不甘的状态中。半夜他起床打开电脑，把此时此刻的心情以及事情的详细经过以日志的形式记录在他的博客里。让小明惊讶不已的是，从第二天清晨他就开始接到一个个来自亲戚朋友的电话，亲戚朋友们看了他的博客都为他的经历而感动并愿意为他提供力所能及的帮助。最终在大家的帮助下，小明筹齐了出国需要的10万元经费。

1.3 Arrival in Germany

Ming boarded the plane for Germany in October 2011. In the roughly 10 hours since he had boarded the plane, not only had time and space changed, but also Ming's mindset. At times he felt worried and scared, but he also felt excited and was looking forward to his trip. Ming's thoughts and moods were going up and down like the plane. What was waiting for him was an unfamiliar and novel country.

Ming had a lot of questions going through his mind. "Will I manage to find the university? How should I contact the superintendent of my apartment? Will Germans be able to understand my English?" He did not expect that his new research group was well prepared for his arrival and had even planned a few surprises. The first surprise was that a research assistant picked Ming up at the Zurich Airport by car. Therefore Ming arrived in Konstanz successfully and easily. He only found out how lucky he had been when he later talked about it with his Chinese friends who went through a lot of twists and turns before they finally arrived at the university on their own. On his way to Konstanz, Ming enjoyed the views from the car window with great interest. He was touched by this thoughtful arrangement from his chair and the beautiful scenery on the way to Konstanz made him forget his fatigue.

The second surprise was that two colleagues of his chair had already arranged his accommodation and everything was ready for him. They had picked up the keys for his dorm, and brought him a quilt and even some food and gifts from the research group, so that Ming would feel neither hungry nor cold. Afterwards, his colleagues showed him around and he got to know the supermarkets nearby.

The third surprise was that on the same day Ming arrived in Konstanz, the research group threw a welcome party for him and all the group members showed up. At that party, Ming got to know everybody. Besides, there was a discussion about picking

a German name for Ming. Based on the group members' opinions and Ming's agreement, he was finally named Felix, which indicates optimism and therefore matches his character. From then on, he has had a German name. The thoughtful and warm welcome from his research group touched Ming and he was looking forward to the cooperation with his research group.



1.3 初到德国

小明于2011年10月份开启留德生活。从登上飞机那一刻起，历经十来个小时，小明体会到的不仅仅是时间和空间上的跨越，更是心灵上的飞越。为了这一次旅程，他曾经彷徨过、痛苦过，也曾激动盼望过。而随着飞机的起飞与降落，等待他的是一个陌生而新奇的国度。

“我能顺利地找到学校吗？我如何联系我的宿舍？德国人听得懂我讲的英语吗？”当小明为这些问题踌躇时，研究组为小明的到来做各种精心的准备，让小明惊喜不已。

惊喜之一，研究组安排了一个研究助理前往苏黎世机场迎接，行李众多的小明很顺利地到达了目的地康斯坦茨。后来他跟周围的中国朋友说起这一经历时，才发现只有他是这么幸运的，其他人都是自己从机场坐火车经过各种辗转才达到了学校所在地。在前往康斯坦茨的路途中，小明饶有兴致地欣赏着风景。他被来自研究组的关怀感动着，被一路的风景包围着，他忘却了旅途的疲惫。

惊喜之二，研究组两位同事已经在小明到来之前安排好了他的住宿，帮他领取了宿舍钥匙，并带来了一床被子，同时研究组还为他准备了一些食物和小礼品，这让他到达康斯坦茨的第一夜既没饿着也没冻着。同事们还带领他去熟悉周围的各大超市，以便他日后生活之需。

惊喜之三，小明来到康斯坦茨的当天晚上，研究组安排了一场迎接晚宴，组里的全体成员都参加了。席间小明熟悉了组里的所有成员，大家还重点讨论了是否应该给小明取一个德语名字。经过研究组成员群策群力，在征得小明自己的同意后，小明的德语名字定为Felix。Felix在德语里有乐观积极之意，这和小明的性格颇为吻合，从那之后小明也有了自己的德语名字。

研究组的周到和热情让小明无比感动，也让他对将来与研究组的合作有了更多的憧憬。

Chapter 2

Lost

2.1 Conflicts

Ming's study, work, and life were all settled after he had been in Germany for half a year. However, due to the differences in culture and habits, he was often involved in conflicts.

Conflict 1: "Foreigner"

Ming was used to the hustle and bustle in China and various activities in college. However, he was a "foreigner" among foreigners now. Without Chinese or English as primary languages in Germany, he felt like he had lost control over his life. When most of the other people enjoyed their conversations in German, he could not understand what they were talking about. Even when he was able to understand a few German words, he was still not sure if he got it right. When Ming mentioned to his colleagues that he did not understand what they were talking about, they sometimes tried to explain it to him in English, but he was concerned about burdening them. After a lot of hesitation, Ming chose to merely nod to show his friendliness even when he was not able follow the conversation completely. The previously cheerful and optimistic Ming became silent and careful, because he was afraid of saying or doing something wrong. He would rather huddle up in his small world like a snail and only rarely stretch his feelers to probe the outside.

Conflict 2: To ask for help from colleagues or not

Ming and other members of the research group met every week to talk about their work, to chat, and to have lunch. His colleagues cared about him very much. They asked about his work and his life regularly and Ming usually told them that everything was going well, although that was not the truth. Especially in his first

few months in Germany, most of the time when he was confronted with problems at work, he did not know with whom he could discuss them or whom he could ask for help. Ming was afraid that if he told his colleagues about his problems, they would think he liked to complain and might even see him as a burden.

In the research group, Ming was responsible for a research project and at one point he had a problem with statistics. He had to solve it in a limited amount of time, although he had never dealt with this kind of problem before and his knowledge in this field was quite limited. Ming wanted to ask for help from the postdoctoral researcher, with whom he shared an office and could probably give him some suggestions, but he hesitated, as he feared that this might lead to additional work for his colleague. So he began to study basic knowledge relevant to his question. After a week, he still had not found a solution. Eventually he still had to ask his colleague. It only took the postdoctoral researcher 10 minutes to suggest a possible solution, and this help enabled Ming to solve the problem successfully. This experience prompted Ming to reconsider his independent working style. If he kept trying to find solutions for problems on his own, everything would be too difficult and the whole project might get hindered. But if he talked to his colleagues and asked for suggestions and help, his work would be more effective. Most colleagues have had relevant experiences and might be able to give suggestions. Of course, the preconditions for asking for help from colleagues is that beforehand he has to make an effort to solve the problems on his own. If possible, this kind of help could be developed into a formal cooperation that benefits both parties, e.g., working together in writing a paper, instead of staying at the stage of asking for and offering help.

第二章

迷途

2.1 矛盾

小明来德已经半年，学习、工作和生活等各方面基本稳定下来了，然而由于文化和生活习俗的差异，他时常处于矛盾之中。

矛盾一：“老外”

在生活方面，小明习惯了在国内热闹的集体生活，习惯了朋友同学你来我往的各种活动，而现在他却成为了老外眼中的“老外”。每天穿梭在形形色色的人群中，当中文和英语不再是主导语言时，他隐隐感觉对自己的生活失去了控制。周围的人们的眉飞色舞地交谈着，而他常常听不懂别人在说什么。有时同事们用德语交谈，即使小明偶尔听懂几个德语单词，他也不敢确定大家是不是在谈这个话题。但如果他表示没听懂，同事肯定会专门用英语给他解释，小明觉得这样会增加同事的负担，因此，哪怕没有完全听懂，小明也会选择附和式地点头，以表示自己的友好。原本开朗活泼的他变得沉默寡言、小心翼翼，生怕自己说错了什么或者做错了什么。于是他宁愿蜷缩在仅靠自己一个人的世界里，小心翼翼地丈量着周围，像一只缓慢爬行的蜗牛，只伸出两只触角试探着周围的一切。

矛盾二：该不该向同事求助？

小明与研究组的同事每周都会见面，讨论工作、聊天、吃饭。同事们都对他特别关心，经常问起他的工作和生活状况，他往往告诉大家一切都很好，然而事实并非如此，尤其是刚来德国的几个月。很多时候他在工作中遇到问题而不知该和谁讨论、该向谁寻求帮助，因为他不确定是否可以把工作中的问题告诉同事。如果告诉同事的话，他不仅担心自己会给同事留下爱抱怨的印象，还怕自己成为同事们的负担。

一次，小明在他负责的一个项目中遇到一个统计问题，需要及时找到解决办法，然而他以前从未处理过类似的问题，对这方面的认识也很有限。与他共处一间办公室的博士后或许可以提供这方面的建议。他原打算直接去问博士后，却犹豫不决，因为这可能会给博士后增加额外的工作负担。为了解决这个问题，他开始学习与之相关的一些基础知识，然而一个星期后，他仍然没有找到可行的方法。最后他还是不得不去询问博士后，博士后用了十分钟的时间向他解释可行的方法，之后小明顺利地解决了这个统计问题。这样一次经历让小明不得不去思考工作方法的问题，如果一味地依靠自己去解决遇到的难题，有可能难以找到有效的方法而且会耽误整个项目的进展，而适时地寻求同事的建议和帮助，往往会事半功倍。当然求助于同事的前提是自己已经尽力去解决难题而受阻，且同事又正好有这方面的经验和建议。更重要的是，如果有可能的话可以将这种帮助发展为一种正式的合作，如论文合作，这样双方都能受益于这种工作交流。



2.2 Confusion

Before Ming came to Germany, he had heard that the way of doing a PhD at a German university is significantly different from how it is done in China. In Germany, a PhD student is responsible for his or her own project and the supervisor does not get involved much. In contrast, in China, the supervisor will tell a PhD student what research should be conducted, and sometimes even give instructions for the process of the whole project in detail.

Originally, Ming thought that he could plan an excellent research project on his own, so he plunged into reading all kinds of papers and analyzing data. His satisfaction came from his pursuit of knowledge and the fun originated from the generation of research ideas. However, his satisfaction diminished in the following months, because he lacked an aim and could not see the big picture of his different research interests. He felt there was no progress in his work. In fact, he even felt the opposite, because as he read more and more papers without an aim, his research idea became messier and messier.

At that time, Ming badly needed a guide who could lead him out of the mire. The first person that came to his mind was his supervisor, with whom he met every two weeks to discuss his research. During these discussions, Ming occasionally mentioned minor problems with his work to his supervisor, but he seldom talked about general problems with his research ideas or his overall research approach. Ming often dwelled on the question of whether he should tell his supervisor about his confusion surrounding his research ideas or not. If he told him, would the supervisor doubt his research abilities or see him as incapable? After a long internal struggle, he chose to avoid these potential problems and not tell his supervisor.

During this time of unease, Ming frequently made small mistakes in his work. Furthermore, he experienced misunderstandings with his supervisor. For example, when Ming did not understand the work assigned to him, he did not ask his supervisor for clarification, which led to problems. When his supervisor realized the predicament Ming was in, he asked Ming what really happened.

Finally Ming told him about his confusion. After everything was adequately explained, Ming felt immensely relieved. His supervisor offered some suggestions concerning his questions about his overall research plan and finally said, "It is my duty to give you instructions. So when you are confronted with problems in research, just tell me instead of worrying about what I will think about you." With tremendous relief, Ming said, "Thank you for your suggestions. If I had told you about my confusion earlier, I would not have been struggling for such a long time."



2.2 困惑

在来德国之前，小明就已经了解到，德国大学培养博士的方式跟中国有明显差别：在德国，完成博士项目完全靠自己，导师不会过多参与其中；而国内的导师一般会对整个项目的进展甚至各个细节进行指导。

小明原本以为来到德国以后可以展开拳脚好好地做一番研究，开辟一片天地，于是他一头扎进各种论文阅读和实验数据分析。在开始的几个月里，纵使生活中有诸多的不如意，小明却在工作中获得了一种难得的满足感和乐趣。这种满足源于对新知识的追求，而乐趣伴随着自己点点滴滴的各种研究想法的产生。然而几个月下来他的这种满足感消失殆尽，因为他对自己的研究缺乏整体的方向感，头脑中也没有大致的研究框架，所以小明的工作并没有实质性进展；而且由于他阅读文献的时候缺乏目的性，所以读的文献越多，他的研究思路反而越发混乱。

那段时间他其实极其需要一位研究道路上的领路人指导他走出那一团泥沼。他首先想到的是导师，平均每两周他会跟导师讨论一次研究上的事情。但在这样的工作讨论中，他偶尔会向导师提起工作中遇到的一些小问题，然而关于研究方式和研究方向的问题却鲜有提及。小明经常在心里权衡该不该把自己对未来研究方向的困惑告诉导师。如果告诉了，导师会不会怀疑他的研究能力，觉得他能力太差而责备他？如果真是如此，这将是他的最不希望得到的结果。犹豫再三，他选择了回避这些问题。

在这段心神不宁的日子里，他经常在工作中犯各种小错误。同时导师对小明的工作表现也有不解之处，如小明对导师交待的某件工作存在疑问却不提前向导师询问清楚，导致结果很糟糕。导师见小明如此被动，再三追问，小明才把他内心那种纠结的状态表达出来。导师给了小明针对性的指导，最后说道：“给予你指导，是我的职责所在，当你遇到研究上的问题时，请不要去担心我会怎么看待你，而应该直接表达出来。”至此，小明如释重负：“感谢您的意见，若我能早把这种困惑告诉您，就不至于一个人苦苦挣扎这么长时间”。

2.3 Financial Problems

Both of Ming's applications for a scholarship in China and a scholarship or working contract in Germany failed, therefore he had to raise the money by himself. But the money he had was only enough for one year. Only a few months after Ming arrived in Germany, he realized the severity of the problem, because he realized how difficult it is to apply for scholarships and obtain working opportunities once in Germany. Even if he would like to get a part-time job, his lack of proficiency in the German language was a major limitation. Besides, part-time jobs demanded time and energy, which would definitely slow down his research.

Half a year after coming to Germany, the financial problem became a thorn in Ming's mind. If he could not find any sort of sponsorship, he could not extend his visa when it expired, which meant that he would be unable to continue his studies and would have to go back to China. This would be unbearable for him. The anxiety resulting from this situation affected his work, because he worried about it every single day.

After two more months, when all his efforts had been in vain, Ming realized that he was not able to solve his financial problem by himself. So he told his colleagues and supervisor about his situation and asked for his colleagues' suggestions and for his supervisor's support. His colleagues provided him with various possible solutions. His supervisor, gradually getting to know what Ming was confronted with, put forward two solutions: The first was that the research group could offer him an emergent contract to meet his need for visa extension; the long-term solution was to apply for a scholarship from the German Universities Excellence Initiative. In the end, Ming got a three-month work contract to satisfy his visa requirements. Afterwards, with the recommendation of his supervisor, Ming applied for a scholarship from the German Universities Excellence Initiative and succeeded. He finally did not have to worry about financial issues anymore.

Having gone through all of this, Ming would like to share the following lessons he's learned with those who plan to come to Germany for further studies:

- If there is a chance for a scholarship or job before you come to Germany, seize it; then you will have the solid financial backing which, to a large extent, ensures your research progress.
- If you are self-financed, prepare an amount of money that is enough for you to finish your PhD studies, or get ready to face the fact that you will have to search for all kinds of opportunities, like scholarships or jobs, to finance your studies. There is the risk that you might not be able to continue your studies if you run out of money.
- When you face a big financial problem, you should ask for support from your colleagues and your supervisor as long as it is still possible. Giving a clear explanation about your current situation is very helpful in the process of solving your problem.



2.3 经费问题

留学德国，小明并未获得国内奖学金，也没有获得德国的奖学金或者工作合同，所以他只能自筹经费，而他在来德之前所筹集的经费只够满足一年的生活所需。来到德国几个月后，他意识到经费问题的严重性，因为在德国申请奖学金和获得工作合同都非易事；即使他自己愿意去寻找兼职工作，也受限于自身的德语水平，另外，做兼职难免会影响研究进展。

来到德国半年后，他开始为经费问题焦虑不安。如果不能寻找到经费来源，他的签证到期后将无法续签，到时他将不得不中断博士学习回国，这样的结果对于他来说实在难以承受。为经费发愁的情绪越来越影响到他的日常工作，因为他每天都不得不思考这个问题。

整整两个月，小明苦苦寻找解决方法而不得，只好硬着头皮试着寻求同事的建议。同事给他提供了各种可能的办法，导师也逐渐了解到他所面临的问题，并提出以下解决问题的方案：一是由研究组提供一份紧急工作合同以解决居留许可的问题；二是抓住康斯坦茨大学被评为德国精英大学的机遇申请德国精英大学奖学金。最终小明获得了一份三个月的过渡工作合同。之后经过导师推荐，小明申请了德国精英大学奖学金，结果小明很幸运，凭着自己的实力成功申请到了一份难得的三年奖学金合同。小明的学业终于没有了后顾之忧。在解决了自己的经费问题之后，小明觉得以下几点经验值得打算留德读博士的同学们注意：

- 若在赴德之前有奖学金机会或者工作职位，哪怕是短短几个月的经费机会，也应尽早尽最大努力申请，这样能给自己一定的经济保障，也能在很大程度上保障科研进程。
- 如果只能通过自筹经费留德，需要准备好充足的经费以支撑你完成博士学业，若经费不充足，就要做好心理准备面对你可能没法继续学业的境遇。
- 遇到重大的经费问题时，应当尽快寻求同事尤其是导师的支持，把自己的情况解释清楚，这样才有利于尽快解决问题。

2.4 Isolation and Homesickness

Isolation is a feeling that most overseas students have to face, especially when they have been abroad for months and the novelty of it has worn off. Travelling between the university and his apartment each day and going to supermarkets only on the weekends to buy food for next week, Ming became acutely aware of his isolation. Ming enjoyed feeling the temporary bustle in supermarkets, but on his way back to the apartment, he was alone again. He watched the flow of people, but he felt like they had nothing to do with him. Sometimes he listened to the people around him, trying to get some information relevant to him. When there were Chinese people around, he longed for a sense of belonging.

Along with isolation came homesickness. Thinking about his family, friends, and the life in his homeland became a great solace to Ming. Ming loves chili peppers, so he brought a packet of pepper powder from China. This was the only specialty of his hometown that Ming brought to Germany, so he put a little of it into his dishes every day, but not much, because he really cherished it. The taste reminded him of the laughter at his family dinners and made him feel at home.

Every weekend, Ming would call his family via Skype. Although the topics in these calls were more or less the same, these conversations, seemingly boring, always cheered him up and he would be delighted with them for days. When talking to his family, hearing their voices was more important to him than what they talked about.

After having gone through a long phase of loneliness, Ming gradually learned how to deal with it and how to make his life colorful again. On weekends, he, along with some Chinese friends, played football with German friends, joined a choir organized by his German colleagues, and occasionally went to bars with friends. Perhaps it was the isolation and homesickness that encouraged him to actively get to know his colleagues, to make friends and to blend in with his environment. He started rebuilding a social network step by step and thereby regained his optimism.



2.4 孤独与思乡

孤独是大多数留学生都会面对的状态，尤其是出国四五个个月之后，刚到异国他乡时的那股新鲜劲儿逐渐消失，取而代之的是形单影只的孤独。小明也深深地体会过这种孤独，他每天穿行于学校与宿舍之间，只有周末去一趟超市买足一周的食物。在超市小明会感受到一时的热闹，然后孤零零地返回住处，周复一周地循环着。在从超市回去的路上他时不时地观望流动的人群，这来来往往的人和周围发生的一切似乎都与他无关。他有时很努力地倾听着人群中的言语，总是希望获得一点与自己相关的信息，尤其是周围有中国人的时候，他更会尽力接近，以获得他日夜渴望的归属感。

伴随着孤独而来的是越来越强烈的思乡之情、对亲人朋友的挂念以及对国内生活的回忆。小明喜欢吃辣椒，他特意从家里带了一小包辣椒粉过来，每天炒菜都放一点，但不舍得多放。每天的这么一点点辣椒都弥足珍贵，因为这一小包辣椒粉是他唯一带到德国的家乡特产，这种味道让他想到了和家人在一起吃饭时的情景，想到了亲人的欢声笑语，这种味道让他倍感亲切。

每到周末小明都会通过网络与家人联系一次，虽然每次谈论的话题无外乎今天吃了什么、最近工作忙不忙、最近身体好不好、最近家里怎么样，但正是这些看似单调无聊的话题却常常让他高兴半天，因为听到的是亲人的声音，满足的是对亲情的感觉，至于谈论的内容倒无关紧要。

或许正是初期这种孤独和对家人的思念促使小明开始积极地认识同事，结交朋友，主动融入德国的生活。周末他和几个中国朋友一起参加德国朋友的足球队，参加德国同事组织的合唱队。业余时间，小明偶尔也和朋友去酒吧聊天狂欢。而当他逐步构建起自己的小小社交圈时，他的生活恢复了在国内时的丰富多彩，他也开始慢慢恢复了以往的开朗与乐观。

Chapter 3

How Is Ming Doing: Tips for Beginning PhD

3.1 Business Is Business

- Professor:** Why did you not make an appointment with me to discuss the problems with your project in advance?
- Ming:** I thought you were so busy the last two weeks and I did not want to bother you.
- Professor:** But it is my job to supervise you, and of course to give you feedback on your work.
- Ming:** Then what do you think about my work?
- Professor:** It differs. Sometimes it is of high quality, but other times it is not.
- Ming:** Personally, are you disappointed in me when I do not do my job quite well?
- Professor:** Oh, no, you misunderstood me. Business is business. My feedback is just upon your work, and it has nothing to do with your personality or abilities. It is quite normal that I give you critical feedback, because I think it will help you more.

The text above is one example of a conversation between Ming and his supervisor.

Ming's understanding of communication comes from China, where feedback from one's supervisor is always not only about the student's work but also the supervisor's attitude towards him or her. In China, when a student receives negative feedback from his or her supervisor, the student may take it as an overall comment on him or

her, concerning not only the work, but his or her personality as well. When Ming was told by his supervisor for the first time that business is business, he was slightly shocked and his previous perception of communication with supervisors was reversed. It took him at least half a year to accept and get used to this form of feedback.

Now Ming is able to take feedback from his supervisor objectively, even though this feedback is sometimes very critical. He understands that the comments only concern his work and not his personality, therefore he reacts accordingly to them. First Ming will analyze the problem and think about whether the feedback from his supervisor is suitable or not. Then he will try his best to solve the problem. Compared with before, Ming is relieved to some extent of a psychological burden as he does not need to worry about whether his supervisor negatively comments on him personally or not.



第三章

小明进展如何：给博士初期的建议

3.1 就事论事

教授： 你为什么不跟我预约个时间，提前一些讨论你项目中的问题？

小明： 我觉得您前两周太忙而不想打扰您。

教授： 但指导你的项目是我的本职工作，我也必须对你的工作给予反馈。

小明： 您觉得我的工作怎么样？

教授： 总体来说，在一段时期内你的工作是高质量的，但可能在接下来一段时间的质量却不高。

小明： 就个人而言，当我的工作质量低的时候您是不是会对我感到失望么？

教授： 哦，不，你误会了。我只会就事论事。我给你的反馈仅针对于你的工作，而我的评价也与你的个性无关。给你批判性的反馈是很正常的，因为我觉得这样可以更好地帮助你。

以上是小明跟导师之间的一次交谈。

小明已经习惯了在中国形成的沟通观念——导师的反馈不仅针对学生的工作，也能反映导师对这个学生的整体态度。如果一个学生从导师那里得到的是消极反馈，学生基本可以把这个反馈当成导师对他的整体评价，既是对工作也是对人品。所以第一次从导师那听到“就事论事”这四个字时，小明感到有些惊讶。经过一年多次类似地交流后，小明才逐步接受并习惯这一新观念。

现今每当导师对小明的工作给出指导意见时，哪怕得到了非常批判性的反馈，他都能客观的去面对，因为他清楚导师的意见仅仅针对的是工作中问题。他首先会做的是分析清楚所面对的问题以及导师的意见是否可行，再次是尽自己最大努力去解决遇到的问题。相对于以前，小明少了一份心理负担，不再去担心导师是否对自己产生消极的评价。

3.2 Be Professional

PhD students in Germany are not just students, they often are also researchers and employees at universities. On the one hand, they need to finish their scientific projects independently; on the other hand, they have to teach courses that are assigned by the university or their research groups and they have to do daily organizational work as well. All these tasks require professional qualities. In each research group, every member performs his or her duties according to their contracts. The performance of each member primarily affects his or her own reputation and then also the reputation of the whole research group.

Professional performance is above all demonstrated with capacity for work. Excellent working capacities not only include a solid professional foundation, which is the basis of their research, but also include strong learning motivation and learning abilities. When conducting research, there are constantly new problems that demand continuous learning about theories and methods to solve these problems. The repetitive process of “finding problem – solving problem” is a test of learning motivation and learning ability. The level of motivation and learning ability both influence the process of learning new knowledge.

One's professionalism in terms of one's demeanor and one's fit into the workplace culture is also important, although this is sometimes neglected. Whether the work is finished on time or not, whether the form is normative or not, and whether communication with one's supervisor is appropriate or not, and so on, can directly influence the quality of the work.

At the beginning of his PhD, Ming had no plan or agenda at all when he talked to his supervisor, which resulted in aimless and inefficient discussions. After being reminded by the supervisor, Ming began to write agendas for their discussions, but they were always extensive instead of being brief, which made it a laborious task for the supervisor to read. Then the supervisor taught Ming to use bullet points, i.e., to list every question or issue that needs to be discussed with a word or a short phrase.

From then on, Ming's discussions with his supervisor finally became clear and focused. During this progress, Ming gradually realized the importance of the form of his work, so he began to keep remind himself to be professional, precise, and to avoid mistakes in expression and format, especially when he deals with important documents or applications.



3.2 表现要专业

博士生在德国已经不是纯粹的学生，而是大学里的重要研究者和工作者。一方面他们需要独立完成自己的科研任务，另一方面他们需要承担学校或研究组的部分课程的教学以及日常组织工作，而完成这两方面的工作都需要博士生具备良好的专业素质。在每个研究组里，成员们根据自己的工作合同各司其职。每个人的工作水平如何，首先关乎自己的名誉，同时也关系到整个研究组的名誉。

专业的表现首先体现在工作能力上。良好的工作能力不仅需要扎实的专业基础知识；而面对科研过程中不断出现的新问题，还需要较强的学习动机和学习能力以获取解决这些问题必须的新理论和新方法。“发现问题——解决问题”循环反复的过程往往是对学习动机和学习能力的考验，学习动机和能力的高低会直接影响到新知识的学习。

工作形式上的专业表现同样重要，但往往容易被忽略。任务是否按时完成，完成的形式是否规范，与导师沟通的方式是否恰当等等，都直接影响到工作的质量。

小明刚开始与导师进行工作讨论时，经常没有计划，这导致讨论的目标性差，讨论的效果欠佳。经导师提醒后，小明开始写讨论计划，但一开始总是长篇大论，表达得不够简单明了，使得导师阅读起来很费劲。后来导师让小明学着使用要点法，把需要讨论的每一个问题用一个短语而不是句子表达，并用标签标识出来，把所有需要讨论的问题以条理的形式罗列出来。从此，小明每次与导师的讨论都井井有条，重点突出。在与导师讨论的过程中，小明也逐渐认识到工作中形式的重要性，他时常提醒自己要时刻保持专业性，在提交重要的文件或申请时，他都尽量做到内容确切、表达和格式规范无误。

3.3 Obey or Argue

Ming has always been a “good student” who listened to his teachers in middle school as well as in college. In his opinion, teachers are always right, so he obeyed them even when he did not fully agree with them or when he had other ideas.

In Germany, Ming has weekly meetings with his supervisor for academic discussions, which usually take one hour. During this time, Ming has to give a brief report on his recent work, and then he and his supervisor focus on the problems that he has encountered.

When someone is doing a research project during a PhD, he or she knows this project best and therefore should take the leading role and ultimate responsibility. As the research goes on, it is possible that the supervisor can no longer fully understand all the details and can therefore not make informed decisions. In the first semester of Ming's PhD program, he always agreed with his supervisor in their discussions, instead of arguing over academic issues, which resulted in his frequent doubt and rejection of his own ideas. Even worse, Ming began to lose confidence, which resulted in his research not going well. Therefore, Ming began to change his approach to discussions with his supervisor. Before their meetings, he would read various publications to support his ideas, so that when he had different opinions than his supervisor, he could make his own points and give evidence in support of his ideas. In this way, problems were usually solved after several discussions. Even if the problems could not be solved, Ming and his supervisor could usually define them and figure out a way to approach them. Through constant discussions, Ming gradually learned when he should obey his supervisor and when he should argue. Ming's supervisor was very happy when he noticed that the way Ming approached his work had changed and therefore said, “German universities train PhD students to think independently and critically.”



3.3 顺从还是辩论

从小学到大学，小明一直就是听老师话的“好学生”，在他的眼中，老师的观点和方法都是对的，哪怕小明不完全赞同老师的观点，或者明明知道自己有更好的想法。

在每周的工作中，小明时常会与导师预约好时间进行学术讨论，一般是一小时左右。在这一个小时中，小明需要把一段时间以来所做的工作向导师做简短的汇报，然后大部分时间用于针对遇到的问题进行讨论。

一个具体的博士生的研究项目，最了解该项目情况的是博士生自己，所以起主导作用以及负主要责任的也是自己。随着项目的深入，有可能导师也没法完全理解项目的具体内容。在博士项目刚开始的半年里，小明在与导师讨论的时候会顺从于导师的观点，而不敢与导师在一些研究问题上进行辩论，这导致他时常怀疑并否定自己的想法。这不仅打击了他的研究信心，也使得研究进展并不顺利。于是，小明开始转变与导师讨论的方式，在见导师之前他会查阅各种文献来支撑自己的观点，当他与导师就一些项目中的具体问题有不同意见时，当自己的观点和导师的观点相左时，他不再羞于开口辩论，而是会提出自己的观点以及支撑自己观点的证据。在经过几次辩论后，研究问题一般会得到解决；即使一时得不到解决，那他也会清楚问题到底在哪，应该如何解决。

在不断讨论的过程中，小明逐渐学会了在什么情况下该选择顺从什么情况下该选择辩论。导师看到小明的工作方式渐渐变得成熟而很高兴，他说：

“德国大学培养的是有独立思考能力且有批判精神的博士。”

3.4 Reporting Bad News

It seems to be a norm for Chinese students to “report only the good news but not the bad news” when they talk to their supervisors, as reporting bad news could be seen as complaining. In Germany, reporting bad news is as important as reporting good ones. Reporting bad news is not seen as complaining, but as frankly telling others about the problems in life and work. At first, Ming seldom gave his opinion frankly and usually only reported good news, especially in the discussions with his supervisor. This manner built a barrier between him, his colleagues, and his supervisor as they did not know when Ming was faced with problems, so they could not understand what he was going through, let alone help him.

When Ming had to face his financial problems and ran the risk of not being able to continue his residence at the end of his first year, he only approached his colleagues and supervisor when the situation was already very urgent. Although in the end all problems were solved satisfactorily, Ming was merely lucky. His supervisor asked Ming many times why he did not talk about his problems earlier. If he had known Ming's difficulties earlier, there might have been a better solution.

When one studies and works in Germany, it is necessary not only to report good news but also to learn to report bad news. When you face major problems that can not be solved by yourself, efficient communication with colleagues, especially supervisors, will be of great help.

3.4 报忧

“报喜不报忧”是中国人跟上级沟通交流时的一个规则，因为报忧会被理解为抱怨。在德国，报忧不是一般生活中所谓的抱怨，而是把现实工作和生活中的问题告知对方，毫无保留地把问题呈现出来。小明来到德国后，在与同事和导师交流中时常保留自己的观点，尤其是在跟导师的工作讨论中，小明总是报喜不报忧，这使得同事和导师觉得他们与小明的沟通存在一定的隔阂。而当小明真正遇到难题时，导师和同事就因为不能及时获知这些信息而无法有效地帮助他。

就像小明在博士项目第一年快要结束时遇到的因经费不足而无法延签的问题，他也是到了最后关头才想到向同事和导师求助。最终问题在短时间内得以解决，只能说明他足够幸运。那之后导师不止一次问过小明为什么不早些告诉他这些问题。如果能尽早知道他的难处，至少导师不会这么被动和仓促，也可能有更好的办法解决这些问题。

在德国学习和工作，不仅需要学会报喜，更得学会报忧。当工作和生活中遇到重大问题而自己又无力独自解决时，往往需要与同事尤其是导师进行真诚沟通并获得他们的帮助。



3.5 Learning German

Learning German is inevitable for all Chinese students in Germany, because the German language is everywhere. It's present in everyday life, study, and work. If you do not speak the language, you will be held back from communication, the enjoyment of experiencing German life and culture, and integration into German society.

Ming did not learn any German before he came to Germany, so at first he did not speak any German at all. In his first year in Germany, he took German language courses at the university, which took three hours each week. Still Ming's German language competence was limited to very simple dialogue and he could not see any improvement, so he gave up these language courses and chose self-study. At first, he spent 20 minutes every day on German language learning, however, after a few weeks, his study became irregular. Even now, Ming has been in Germany for four years and he is still a beginner when it comes to the German language. His colleagues often tell each other jokes in German, and everybody laughs, except Ming. Ming realized that he has missed out on a lot due to linguistic constraints. For example, sometimes there are workshops or symposia in Germany that are conducted in German. In these contexts, most of people speak German while Ming, just like an outsider, can only understand the main points but no details. Most of the time, he can only keep silent and look at his colleagues discussing important issues. This is actually torture for him.

Learning German is not easy, and it takes time. Therefore, it would be best to learn German as early as possible. In Germany, the language of instruction in German language courses is usually German, so starting to learn German from scratch can be so frustrating that many students give up mid-way. Therefore, learning German before coming to Germany would be helpful for a student's further study of this language. If a student has some knowledge of German, the language shock would

not be that big when he or she arrives in Germany and this basic knowledge could make it easier for him or her to adapt to the environment. Moreover, some people say that the passion to learn German dramatically decreases after being in Germany for a year or two, and thus it might be more difficult to restart learning German after giving up mid-way.



3.5 学习德语

学习德语是每个留学德国的中国人都无法回避的事情，每天在德国生活、学习、工作，无时无刻不受到德语的影响。如果掌握不了这门语言，就不能与周围的德国同事、朋友进行更广泛更深入的交流，也不能更好地感受德国的生活和文化，不能更好地融入到这个社会群体中。

小明在来德国之前德语是零基础。到德国的第一年，他参加了两个学期学校开设的德语课程，每个星期上3个小时的课，但他的水平仍然局限于非常简单的德语对话。因为看不到自己的德语水平有显著提高，之后小明几乎放弃了学校的德语课，选择了自学。他计划每天学习德语20分钟，坚持了几周之后却进入三天打鱼两天晒网的状态。时至今日已经来德第四年了，小明的德语水平仍然停留在最初级的阶段。时常同事们讲一个笑话，大家都笑哈哈，而小明却只能傻傻地附和着。

受德语水平的制约，小明失去了很多。比如，在德国的一些工作坊或者研讨会上大家主要使用德语交流，小明只能像一个局外人一样，因为他只能听个大概，而不知其细节，很多时候他只能沉默，左顾右盼地看着周围同事在讨论，这个过程实际上是一种煎熬。

在小明看来，学习德语并非易事，也非一朝一夕就能奏效。所以他觉得学习德语要趁早。由于德国的德语课程一般都是全德语授课，所以要在德国从零开始学习德语会跟读天书一样异常艰难，也容易导致学习受挫而中途放弃。如果能有机会在留德之前在国内学习德语的话，那会对之后的德语学习至少起到一个助跑的作用。再者，学习德语要一鼓作气，由于日常工作中使用的是英语，因此一旦中途放弃德语学习，之前学过的单词和语法会因为缺乏复习巩固而被遗忘，再想重新开始，那将是一个艰难的过程。

3.6 When in Germany, Do as the Germans Do

In Germany, there are some conventions and norms to be followed. If you disobey the rules, even small ones, you will be “judged” by the local people. But if you obey the rules, it will be much easier for you to integrate into the local society.

Appointments

Living in Germany, the first rule that must to be observed is to make an appointment for almost everything. For example, Ming sometimes visits his supervisor at home for scheduled meetings. When his phone rings, the supervisor keeps talking to Ming instead of answering the phone. Surprise visits are also impolite in Germany, since they might disrupt someone's plans. When calling supervisors and colleagues, one has to keep in mind that a phone call might interrupt their work. In China, students can always walk into their supervisors' offices or call them at anytime to tell them what they want. This does not work in Germany because usually your supervisor will tell you that he/she has an appointment at the moment and will ask you to make an appointment to come back later.

Emails

In Germany, ringing phones are not often heard. The number of ringing phones that Ming hears in a year in Germany are no more than the number he hears in a single day in China. In China, phone calls are preferred over emails since they are more direct and efficient. However, in Germany, emails are usually preferable, unless a phone call is the only possible way to communicate. German people think that there are three major advantages of emails. First, emails are more precise, which leads to fewer misunderstandings. Secondly, emails can be saved and retrieved if there is a problem. Lastly, emails are not abrupt, so they allow people to reasonably arrange their work instead of being interrupted and exhausted with phone calls.

Queuing

“First come, first served” is a rule in Germany. Visible queues are everywhere: at a bus stop, in a supermarket, at a bank, etc. If there is enough space, it is best to keep some distance from the people queuing in front of you. Jumping the queue is intolerable. There are also invisible queues which include appointments and emails.

Garbage separation

Garbage separation is really strict in Germany and it efficiently protects the environment. All people new to Germany have to learn how to separate garbage as it is compulsory. If a mistake is made in separating garbage, roommates and neighbours might complain and you could even get a fine from the garbage company.

Ming has learned and obeyed various rules in his work and life in Germany. He does not regard these rules as rigid, but as an integral part of the real German life as these rules regulate the German society.



3.6 入乡随俗

生活在德国，有些约定俗成的规则和习惯需要去遵守，若你的行为违背了这些规则，哪怕是非常细微的规则，也会招致当地人的“教育”。而遵守这些规则和习俗则会让你更容易融入这个社会。

预约：

在德国生活学习需要习惯的第一件事就是预约，几乎办任何事情都需要预约的。一次小明应约到他导师家拜访，突然导师家里的电话响了，但导师选择不接电话而是继续和小明聊天。在导师看来，当天小明是他家的客人，他应该首先招待客人而不是去接听电话。突然的造访在德国也不礼貌，因为你的出现打乱或者打扰了对方已有的任务计划。对于导师或者同事来说，你的一个电话或许会完全打乱对方的研究工作状态。在国内我们往往可以突然跑到对方办公室或者一个电话打过去告诉对方要办什么事情，而这样的方式在德国难以行得通，因为对方通常会告诉你“我此时此刻已经有了安排，请你某时某刻再来办理你的业务吧”。

邮件沟通：

在德国，很少听到电话铃响，小明一年听到的电话铃声可能还不如他在中国一天听到的多。我们在国内习惯直接电话沟通，告知对方我们想办什么事情，觉得这样会更直接有效。而在德国，遇到事情除非非打电话不可，否则写邮件往往是首选。他们认为，邮件的好处有三：一是邮件能让你把事情写得清晰明了以免产生误解；二是邮件沟通让双方都留有存档，这样即使以后出现什么问题，也能发现问题到底出在什么地方、责任在谁；三是邮件不会很唐突，对方可以选择方便的时间回复邮件，而不是时刻都处于忙着接电话的状态。

排队：

德国人办任何事情都讲究先来后到。有形的排队随处可见，如在公交车站排队等公交，在超市排队结账，在银行排队办业务等等，而且如果空间够大，最好与前一个人保持一定的距离。大家都不能容忍任何人恣意插队。预约和邮件沟通实际上是一种无形的排队办业务的形式。

垃圾分类：

德国的垃圾分类方式非常严格，这种严格的分类方式维护着德国的环境卫生。初到德国第一天就会面临如何对垃圾进行分类的问题，这也就成了生活中的必修课。如果垃圾没有分类或者分错了，往往会受到室友或者邻居的“指点”或者“教育”，甚至收到垃圾公司的罚单。

小明在工作和生活中，不断地学习并认真遵守着这许许多多的规则，他不觉得这些规则很古板，因为这就是现实的德国生活，井然有序的德国社会就是靠这些规则维系的。

3.7 Keeping a Balance between Chinese and German Friends

Ming's first semester in Germany was filled with loneliness. Although he met a lot of people every day, most of them were strangers to him. But having friends is like being a migratory bird in a flock, as it ensures the safety of the journey. At that time in his life, Ming felt like a lonely bird that desperately needed to join a group that could give him a sense of belonging. He realized the great value of a friend in a foreign land – friends are not only the ones you can contact for help when you are in trouble, but also those that make you part of a group and give you a sense of cultural identification. The identification with your original group of friends and culture and your identification with a new group and culture are not in conflict. When you are with your new Chinese friends abroad, the familiar language, culture, and behavior create a feeling of closeness which will help you to deal with your homesickness. As the time passed, Ming started to feel at home when he was with Chinese friends in Germany. Whenever he told them good news or his difficulties, he received consolation from them.

However, in Germany, Ming could not limit his social life to merely Chinese friends; it was a foreign country after all. It was a new world that had to be explored and there were new people that had to be met. A cup of coffee with German friends and colleagues or a beer during his leisure time always supports Ming's understanding of German life and culture, which can not be obtained from books alone. His German friends were born and raised in Germany and therefore know more about the German way of life and work, as well as how to solve problems efficiently. They gave Ming, someone who was new in Germany, a lot of very useful suggestions. Even when Ming did not tell them about all his issues, he could still benefit from them by merely listening when they talked about their work and life.

Ming still keeps in touch with his Chinese friends and shares his feelings with them, which helps him to battle his loneliness. At the same time, Ming now also has German friends and he tries to keep an open mind for new experiences. Both groups of friends are important to Ming, and his circle of friends keeps growing proportionally to the fun he is having.

3.7 保持中国朋友与德国朋友间的平衡

初到德国的半年，小明是在孤独和寂寞中度过的，每天穿梭于形形色色却似乎与自己毫无关联的人群中。跨越崇山峻岭的候鸟只有置身于群鸟中才能更安全更顺利地到达目的地。而此时的小明就如一只落了单的候鸟，他迫切需要加入到能让他有归属感的群体之中。此时他意识到了“朋友”这个词在异国他乡所承载的独特意义，并开始认识到朋友不仅仅是人在遇到困难时寻求帮助的对象，更是对一个群体和一种文化的认同。

这种认同可以是对自己原有的群体和文化的认同，也可以是对新的群体和新文化的认同，而同时认同两个群体和两种文化并不一定相互矛盾。置身于中国朋友之中，熟悉的语言，熟悉的文化和举止，会让人有一种倍感亲切的感觉，至少能缓解大家对家和朋友的思念。久而久之，小明跟身边的中国朋友之间也渐渐有了家人的感觉。每当自己把喜讯或者困难诉说与朋友时，总能获得身心的慰藉。

然而在德国生活就不能仅仅局限于中国朋友圈子，外面的世界需要我们去了解，周围的人也需要去结识。时常跟德国朋友或者同事喝上一杯咖啡，或者某个闲暇的晚上一起去泡个吧，总能让小明对德国的生活和文化多一份理解，而这种理解是无法从书本中获得的。同时，由于德国朋友生于斯长于斯，清楚德国的生活方式和工作方式，了解遇到事情该以怎样的程序处理，所以他们给了初来乍到的小明很多十分有用的建议，有时哪怕小明没有跟他们聊自己的事情，只是静静地听他们谈论自己的工作和生活，也能从中受益匪浅。

保持与中国朋友的联系，让小明和朋友毫无障碍地分享彼此之间的喜怒哀乐，不感到孤独。保持与德国朋友之间的沟通，让小明保持着对未知世界的探索心态，积极接纳和获知新鲜事物。两个朋友圈小明都用心维系和经营着，他的朋友越来越多，他的乐趣也越来越多。



3.8 Training Metacognition

Metacognition is the knowledge about the process of how people see themselves and the ability to adjust this process. The essence of this ability is self-awareness and self-regulation of cognitive activities; for example, before one conducts an experiment, he or she needs to know how to do it and how to adjust the experimental procedure and one's own behavior when there is a problem. It is not easy to start a new work and life in an unfamiliar country, since the environment might be totally different from one's experiences and expectations. Therefore we need to train our metacognitive skills.

In his first few months in Germany, Ming felt like an observer, looking at his colleagues and friends who were always busy with an amount of work that seemed to never end, while he did not know what to do or how to learn. Over time, he started to panic. When his supervisor and colleagues asked him how his research was going, he usually nodded and replied, "It's OK." But actually he did not even know if his research idea was good or if his experimental design was appropriate. Without any clue, he started reading papers and analyzing his messy data, hoping to cover up his panic by keeping himself busy.

After half a year of chaotic work, Ming looked back and saw that he had achieved nothing. It took him some time to think about why he didn't get anywhere with his research in those days, and he gradually realized that he had taken a wrong path at the very beginning. The first thing he should have done was to clarify the questions he wanted to investigate and how he wanted to do it, no matter if it was an experiment, data analysis, or thesis writing. If the basic questions were not clear, the investments made for the experiment and data analysis would go down the drain. This behavior showed a lack of self-regulation in his approach to his academic work.

Half a year later, Ming tried to regulate his work and improve his metacognitive skills in the following ways:

Communicating with his supervisor and receiving guidance

Ming frequently communicated with his supervisor, telling him about his previous work and his plans for the next stages. Each time he talked to his supervisor, he put forward the problems that he had failed to solve on his own, as well as any confusion he had concerning research. In this way, Ming did not only make it clear to himself what he had done and what problems he was confronted with, but also his supervisor got to know more about his research status and was able to give him more suggestions as well.

Communicating with his research group and receiving feedback from colleagues

Ming tried to report his research plan and his achievements to his research group every semester. Every time he had a new research idea, he did not rush into starting this project, but briefly told his research group about it and asked for his colleagues' feedback and suggestions. When an experiment was done, he often discussed the results with his colleagues and friends or attended academic conferences to present his findings in order to obtain as much feedback as possible.

Making a research plan to ensure working quality and quantity

Moreover, Ming made short-term work plans for one week, one month, and several months. These plans suited his situation and habits as it could be either brief or detailed. Before he made a new plan, he would review his previous work to see whether the workload and the quality of work had met his expectations and whether his approach was working; he then used this information to plan what to do next.

For a Chinese PhD student who is new in Germany, the most important thing to learn is to be responsible for one's own research project. Students should be prepared for the fact that in many projects, nobody will tell them what to study or how, instead, they need to explore their options on their own.



3.8 训练元认知能力

元认知是关于个人对自己认知过程的认识和调节这些过程的能力，实质是对认知活动的自我意识和自我调节。如：在我们做实验之前，首先得清楚如何做实验以及当实验出现问题时该如何调节实验程序。

来到一个全新的国度，在一个陌生的环境中开启新的工作学习之旅，我们会很容易体会到不适，因为这个环境与我们已有的经验可能完全不一样，与我们的预期也可能相左。此时我们需要使用并不断训练我们的元认知。

在刚开始的几个里，小明如同一个看客，观看着周围的同事朋友忙忙碌碌，他们似乎都有忙不完的活，而他却手足无措，不知道该干什么，学些什么。久而久之，他慌神了，导师和同事问他的研究进展如何，他常常点点头说还不错，实际上他不清楚自己现在的研究思路对不对，实验设计是否正确。他一头扎进这些工作中，如阅读堆积成山的论文，分析毫无头绪的数据等等，觉得只有这样才能让自己忙碌起来，才能掩饰自己的慌乱。

然而半年的杂乱无章的工作后，他总结回顾，却发现研究上一无所获。他逐渐学会反思，慢慢意识到这是因为他从一开始就走了弯路。无论是做实验、分析数据还是写论文，最开始的工作都应该是分析清楚自己到底想研究什么问题、怎么研究问题。在没有分析清楚这些问题之前就匆匆投入到后续的实验测量和数据分析中去，往往会迷失方向，这也就是对工作中出现的问题缺乏自我认识。

半年后，小明慢慢尝试了用以下方法来调整自己的工作并有意识地培养自己的元认知：

保持与导师的沟通，得到导师的针对性指导

小明经常与导师沟通，向导师简要阐释自己前一阶段的工作以及下一阶段的工作安排。每次讨论时提出自己未能解决的问题或者研究上的困惑之处。这样既能让自己清楚自己到底做了哪些工作，工作中出现了什么问题，也能让导师更清楚他的状况并给予指导意见。

保持与研究组的沟通，将同事的反馈用于完善自己的研究

小明争取每个学期都能在研究组中汇报自己的研究计划或者工作成果。有了自己的研究想法后，他不急于开始这个研究，而是向研究组简单汇报自己的想法，看同事们有什么反馈或者建议能让自己的研究想法或实验方法更完善。若一个实验已经完成，可以经常跟周围同事朋友讨论，或者参加各种学术会议展示自己的研究结果，尽可能得到各种反馈，以完善自己的实验成果。

制定工作计划，保证工作质和量

小明自己制定阶段性的工作计划，这种工作计划可以针对一周内的工作，也可以针对一个月内或者几个月内的工作，根据自己的实际情况和习惯而定，计划的内容可简单可详细。在做计划之前需要反思自己前一阶段的工作，如工作量和 work 质量是否达到预期目标，工作方法是否可取等，据此，对下一步的工作做出合理的安排。

对于刚来到德国的中国博士生而言，尤其需要适应的是学会对自己的项目完全负责，因为没有人会直接告诉你应该研究什么或者怎样研究，而是需要你自己去发现和探索。

Chapter 4

How Can a German Supervisor Understand a Chinese PhD Student?

4.1 Using a Clear Standard

When a German supervisor decides to accept a Chinese PhD student, he or she has to keep in mind that this student comes from a cultural and educational background that is distinct from the German one. Compared with supervising PhD students from Germany or other European countries, the supervisor has to expect that a Chinese student is used to a different way of supervising and has had different experiences, which may lead to different working styles and communication methods, especially in his or her first year.

The supervisor has to consider how to evaluate the Chinese PhD student's work – can a German supervisor use the same standard applied to German PhD students or a different one? Ming and his Chinese friends frequently talked about how their supervisors evaluated their work and they were often confused about how to meet supervisors' blurry standards. Although Chinese PhD students should eventually be able to live up to the standards of other German PhD students by observing them and learning from them, this is a slow process because the German standards are not clearly laid out for new students.

In the end, regardless of whether the supervisor uses the same standard or not, the student's ultimate goal is to finish the doctoral program. During this process, it is extremely important that supervisors set detailed standards for their Chinese students, especially in the first year, because this prevents them from getting lost at the very beginning.

From the second year on, the supervisor might only need to give general objectives and allow the student to finish the work independently. It is notable that Chinese PhD students are usually expecting a clear standard at each stage of their research, whether it is about a research project as a whole or about a minor detail; this saves them from wasting time on trying to guess what the supervisor expects from them.



第四章

如何理解一个中国博士

4.1 给予一个清晰的标准

当德国导师在决定录用一个中国博士生之前，应该考虑到他有着不同的文化及教育背景。相对于指导德国本土或者来自欧洲其它国家的博士生，指导中国博士生，无论在工作方式还是交流方式上，都将会是一段不一样的指导经历，尤其在这位博士生的第一年。

此时导师会面临以什么样的标准来衡量这个中国博士生工作水平的问题。是一视同仁地使用指导德国本土博士生的标准，还是使用不同的标准？而小明与他的中国朋友也时常谈及各自的导师以何种标准来衡量自己的工作，他们也困惑于该怎样才能弄清楚这些模糊的标准。通常情况下中国博士生会向周围的德国博士生看齐，默默地观察和学习他们以什么样的标准工作。然而这一过程很漫长而且收效甚微，因为有些标准难以捉摸，而且不可能完全模仿。

实际上无论是一个衡量标准还是两个稍有差异的标准，最终都是为了完成博士项目。中国博士生来到德国后需要完成一个过渡，从习惯于听从导师的工作指导安排到自己对工作做出合理安排。在这一过程中，尤其在第一年，导师给予中国博士生具体的标准尤为重要，因为这样让中国博士生不至于在一开始就迷失了方向。同时也要注意，在任何一个阶段，中国博士生都期望获得一个清晰的标准，无论是对整体工作还是某项具体的工作，因为这能让他们不至于花太多时间去揣度导师对工作的要求。

4.2 Business Is Not Just Business

In Ming's first year, there were many times when the supervisor gave him negative feedback and Ming replied, "Sorry. I am very sorry. I did not do it well. Probably I am stupid."

The first time the supervisor heard him say this, he was surprised, because he could not understand why a discussion about work would lead to a student's self-evaluation in this manner. It was even more surprising to the supervisor that every time he gave negative feedback, the student always answered him in the same way or made similar attributions, which was embarrassing to the supervisor. Critical feedback from supervisors tends to be a heavy burden for Chinese students as they feel like they are not living up to their supervisors' expectations, which prohibits them from focusing on how to solve problems in the first place.

The embarrassment arises from the fact that Chinese PhD students do not realize that the supervisor's feedback is just about their work, and not about their general abilities or even their personalities. On the other hand, the supervisor does not know that Chinese PhD students typically take their supervisors' judgments and criticisms as allusions to something else, because in Chinese culture, business is not just business.

4.2 不只是就事论事

小明读博的第一年，好多次当导师对小明的某项工作给出负面评价时，他都会听到这样的解释：“抱歉！非常抱歉！我没做好这项工作，估计是我太笨了…”

第一次听到这样的话时，导师有些惊讶，因为他无法理解为什么一次纯粹的工作讨论就能使学生得出这样的自我评价。然而更让导师惊讶的是每次给出这样的评价后，学生可能都会给出类似的回答或者做出类似的归因，这反而让导师感到尴尬。让导师无法预料的是，导师的负面评价，会让中国留学生产生额外的心理负担，导致学生无法全心关注该如何很好地解决问题。

出现这样的尴尬，是因为中国博士生还没认识到导师的评价仅仅针对工作，而不是针对他的个人能力甚至人格。而导师并不知道，中国学生往往会把导师对他工作的评价映射为对他这个人的整体评价，因为在中国，大多数导师的评价肯定还有其它方面的内涵，不可能仅仅就事论事。



4.3 A “Yes” Person

In Ming's original conception of social norms and manners, it is very impolite to disagree with the opinions of a supervisor or colleagues or to reject work arrangements that a supervisor has made. In his first few months in Germany, Ming was always passive when discussing work with his supervisor or colleagues. No matter what opinion they put forward, Ming would always nod and agree, although sometimes he did not entirely agree. He did not know that he could disagree with others' proposals or even reject them. His supervisor could not understand why Ming always accepted and obeyed others' suggestions instead of responding with his own opinions.

Besides, Ming had been accepting all of his supervisor's arrangements for work, although sometimes he might not have had an interest in the assigned work or could not finish it in time. Ming wanted to prove his abilities by finishing the work that his supervisor assigned to him, however, the situation turned out to be just the opposite of his wish and there were negative consequences; for example, he was sometimes not able to finish the work in time or the quality of the work suffered. Ming was trapped in this vicious circle for more than half a year and his psychological burden accumulated accordingly. In the meantime, his supervisor became increasingly confused and wondered why Ming had not thought about whether he could finish each task or not before accepting it, and why he had not declined to take a job or asked for an extension if he was not able to finish it in time.

Half a year later, Ming finally learned to discuss reasonable arrangements for his work with his supervisor and he eventually understood that, with a good reason, he could disagree with his supervisor's arrangements. In the meantime, Ming's supervisor encouraged him to express his viewpoint instead of merely accepting and obeying, which helped Ming to think independently and to get better at selectively choosing and fulfilling his research tasks.

4.3 一个总说“是的”的人

在小明原有的意识中，当面拒绝或否定导师或同事的观点以及不接受导师的工作安排都是非常不礼貌的。在博士前期几个月，小明在跟导师或同事讨论问题时，一直处于被动状态。无论对方提出什么观点，他基本都会点头同意，哪怕心里并不十分赞同或支持。他并不知道其实是可以反驳或者拒绝对方的，而导师也无法理解为什么每次讨论小明都不发表自己的观点，而只是一味的接受和顺从。

其实，导师布置的有些任务暂时不是小明的兴趣所在，或者小明短期内明明无法完成这些任务却仍然接受了导师的安排。小明原本是想通过完成导师布置的任务来证明自己的工作态度和能力，结果却适得其反——由于他无法高质量地完成工作，反而造成了一些不良后果。这种恶性循环持续了大半年，小明的心理压力随之剧增。而导师也非常想知道小明在决定接受自己的任务安排之前，为什么不先考虑清楚能否完成：如果不能高质量地完成，他为什么不拒绝这些任务安排或者要求延期完成。

半年后，小明才开始学会与导师讨论如何合理安排任务，也明白如果有正当的理由，自己完全可以拒绝导师的安排。同时导师也鼓励小明多表达自己的观点和想法，而不是一味地顺从和接受别人。这让小明逐渐能够独立思考并完成自己的科研任务。

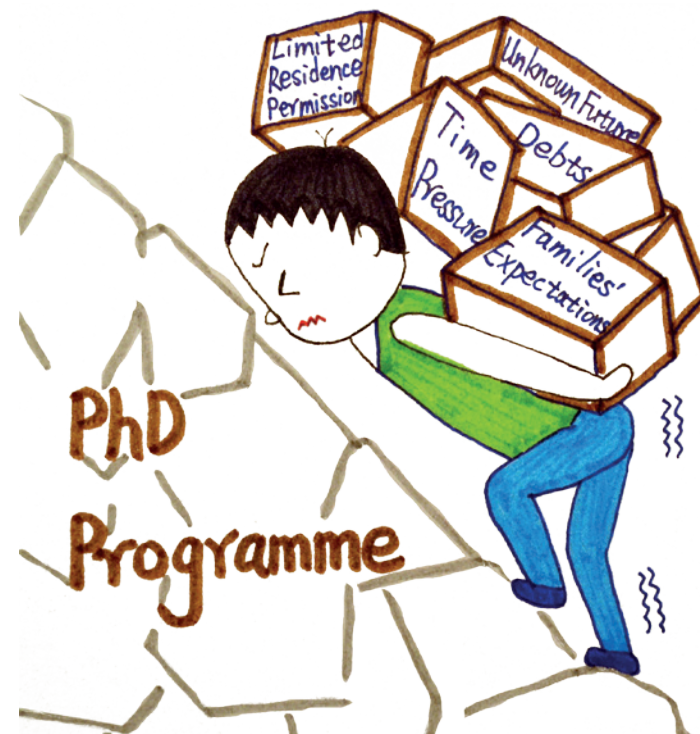


4.4 A Heavier Load than Expected

One of Ming's colleagues decided to quit the PhD program one year after he had started. Even though his supervisor earnestly asked him to reconsider this choice, he insisted on quitting because he did not like his research topic and wanted to study art which he had always loved. Ming was astonished and admired his colleague's courage and determination. He asked himself whether he would have the courage to give up if he was in the same position. However, the result of his careful consideration was that he could never give up, because he had already invested too much. The first thing he sacrificed in order to be able to come to Germany for further studies was a number of job opportunities in China. Furthermore, he borrowed money to cover his living expenses of about 10,000 Euro for his first year. Moreover, the time investment, compared with the monetary investment, was even more striking, since it takes 3 to 5 years on average to finish a PhD program (as it depends on the discipline, e.g., Psychology vs. Biology).

Besides, a Chinese PhD student shoulders the high expectations of his family, and even his extended family. This can be a positive motivation, but it often is a source of tremendous pressure as well.

All of these factors made it impossible for Ming to make a decision merely based on his own interests as his colleague did. Although he envied the colleague for his freedom and decisiveness, he himself could not give up, because he had more responsibilities and obligations.



4.4 承担比你预期的更重的负担

小明的一个德国同事读博一年后决定放弃，导师劝说良久，但他的态度仍然很坚决，理由是现在研究的课题不是自己喜欢的，他想开始学习自己钟情的艺术专业。小明听闻后很是惊讶，内心十分佩服同事的魄力与果断。他默默地问自己，如果处于类似的境况，自己是否有这份勇气说放弃。扪心自问良久，最终他更加清楚了：自己无论如何都不可能放弃，因为他已经投入了太多，他所需要承担的也太多。

当年由于小明决定留学德国，他首先放弃了在中国的各种工作机会，然后四处筹措了约1万欧元用作第一年的生活费，这都是最显而易见的投入。另外一项重大投入是时间，在德国完成博士学位大概需要3.5–4.5年，这笔巨大的时间投入与金钱投入相比更加珍贵。

再者，一个中国留学生往往会承担一个家庭甚至整个家族的期望——他是带着家人的期望出来留学的，这些期望可以成为他继续坚持的动力，也可能成为困扰他的压力。

所有这些因素都会让小明不可能像德国同事那样仅仅基于自己的兴趣来做选择。他羡慕同事的洒脱和果断，但他自己不可能就这么放弃，因为他需要承担自己应该承担的。

4.5 The “Boss” Is the Most Important

Compared with German PhD students, Chinese PhD students face greater pressure and higher risks, especially in their first year when they are transitioning to a new environment. Therefore, they need support from others, in particular from their supervisors. They usually regard their supervisors as the most important people during their studies abroad.

Why would Ming regard his supervisor as the most important person concerning his studies? One reason is that his supervisor is the direct overseer of his research and it is Ming's major objective to finish the PhD program, a task that is impossible to complete without his supervisor's help. Another reason is that his supervisor is his real “boss” and thus his source of income and support in both research and life.

If these two reasons alone were the only reasons his supervisor means so much to Ming, his attitude towards his supervisor would be the same as the German PhD students. However, there is a traditional saying in China, “a teacher for one day is a father of a lifetime”, which reflects the importance of the teacher for students. Ming, who is used to the way of life in China, respects his supervisor as a senior in his studies and life. Ming cherishes every chance to communicate with his supervisor and he particularly cares about the supervisor's expectations and feedback.

4.5 “老板”最重要

相对于德国博士生，中国留德博士生面临的压力和风险可能更大，尤其在博士开始的第一年，他们处于过渡和适应阶段，在这个阶段他们需要别人的支持，特别是来自导师的支持，而他们往往也会把导师当作留学生活中最重要的那个人之一。

对于小明来说，之所以他的导师重要，一是因为导师是他科研工作上的直接指导者，在接下来的几年留学生活中，完成博士科研任务是他的最主要目标，而完成这一目标肯定离不开导师的指导；二是因为导师是真正意义上的“老板”，是小明的经济来源，导师在经济上支撑着他的科研项目和生活。

如果仅仅是以上两个原因，那小明对待导师的态度估计就和德国博士生一样了。然而，中国人称老师为“师父”，同时也有“一日为师，终生为父”的说法，足可见老师在中国学生心目中的分量。因此小明不仅仅把导师当成老师，更把他当成学术和生活上的长者来敬重，这份敬重不仅体现在工作中，也体现在生活中。小明很珍惜每一次跟导师交流的机会，也很在乎导师对他提出的要求，更在意导师对他的评价。



4.6 Always Busy

If there is a Chinese PhD student in your research group, you will find he or she is always busy, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and from Monday to Sunday. This Chinese student will seldom take vacations and it seems that his or her work is never done. You might not understand why he or she is always too busy to take a rest. Here are some possible reasons:

Continuity of knowledge

Compared to the workload in China, the one in Germany multiplies. Coming to Germany for a PhD degree, Chinese PhD students usually have to work twice as hard as German students, because what they have learned in China might not be the exact knowledge they need for the work in Germany, whereas the knowledge German students have usually matches the requirements. Therefore, Chinese PhD students probably need to learn more relevant knowledge from the very beginning before they can fulfill a task. If this happens frequently in research, his or her workload multiplies.

Difference in study habits

From primary school to college, studying is the most important task for Chinese students. As a long-term result, studying equals life and life equals studying for most Chinese students. For German students, however, studying is just studying and life is, after all, life. Therefore, Chinese students, who combine studying and life, are always busy.

Difference in lifestyles

In China, people's lives are made colorful by the presence of their many friends in their free time. However, in Germany, people are more independent. Everybody has his or her own life and makes arrangements for their own leisure time. But for new arrivals in Germany, this is not easy to do. Even if they have vacations, they do not know where and with whom they could go. If a vacation is like this, they prefer working in the office.



4.6 一直忙

如果你的研究组里有一个中国博士生，你会发现他一直处于忙碌状态，从早八点到晚八点、从周一到周日都是如此，他甚至很少休假，看似有永远有做不完的事情。德国同事可能无法理解，为什么中国博士生总是忙忙碌碌而不适时休息一下。导致中国博士生一直处于忙碌状态的因素可能有这几个：

知识的衔接

从中国过渡到德国，工作量倍增：从中国来到德国学取博士学位，中国留学生往往需要付出双倍甚至多倍于德国本土学生的努力，因为他本科和硕士期间在中国学得的知识与在德国工作所需要的知识可能脱节，而德国本土学生所学得的知识和技术却是连贯的。因此中国博士生很有可能需要从头开始学习一门知识，才能去完成一项任务。如果多数科研任务所需的知识和技能这位博士生都需要从头开始学习，那他的工作量自然就会倍增。

学习习惯的差异

从小学到研究生，学习一直是中国学生绝对的主要任务，长此以往，大部分中国学生早已形成了“学习即生活，生活即学习”的习惯。而对于德国学生来说，学习只是学习，生活就是生活。生活学习于一体，让中国留学生看起来永远很忙。

生活习惯的差异

在中国，生活方式和娱乐方式丰富多彩，周围朋友也多，工作之余大家聚一聚，吃个饭、唱个歌，或者一起去旅游。而在德国，人们的生活方式较为独立，每个人都有自己的生活和假期安排，对于一个初到德国的人来说，即使他有假期，他也并不知道该跟谁一块度假以及去哪儿度假。如果假期是这样，那他就更倾向于不休假，而是待在办公室工作、学习。

4.7 Work Relationships and Personal Friendships

Among colleagues in Germany, there are work relationships. It takes a long time to develop work relationships into personal relationships. In other words, among colleagues, a good work relationship is the precondition for a personal relationship.

In China, people are used to maintaining relationships at multiple levels, both at a work level and a personal level. Personal relationships are preferred over working relationships, because keeping in touch in one's private life makes relationships closer.

One year later, Ming gradually realized that in Germany, there are mainly working relationships between a PhD student and his supervisor and colleagues. German people are cautious with personal relationships, so the establishment and development of personal relationships is slower than in China.

Having realized these differences, Ming learned to adapt to the new environment. He tried to maintain positive work relationships with his colleagues, and his colleagues gradually got to know and accept him. Besides, Ming often met up with his colleagues for coffee or movies and occasionally invited his supervisor and colleagues for Chinese food at his home. All of these activities facilitated their communication and understanding.

It is a good first step for a Chinese PhD student to try to have contact outside of work with his supervisor and colleagues. But a personal friendship, instead of being utilitarian, should come naturally.



4.7 工作关系和私人友谊

同事之间一开始建立的是工作关系，经过长时间的接触和认识，工作关系才可能朝着私人关系的方向发展。只有保持好同事关系，才有发展私人关系的可能。

在中国，人们习惯了同时维系各种各样的关系，无论是工作上的还是私人层面的。相对于工作上的关系，人们更倾向于保持一定的私人关系，只有保持一定的私下交流和沟通，工作关系才是亲近的、融洽的。

小明到德国一年多以后，他才逐渐认识到，在德国，博士生跟导师和同事之间主要是工作关系，同事之间难以在短时间内构建良好的私人关系。德国同事对于经营私人关系比较谨慎，所以在德国私人关系的形成和发展可能会慢于中国。

小明认识到这些差别后，慢慢地学着去适应这种新氛围，他努力保持好同事关系，让同事们逐渐认识他，接纳他。工作之外，小明时常和同事一起喝个咖啡、看部电影，偶尔也邀请导师和同事来家里尝一尝中国菜，这些都促进了他们彼此之间的沟通和了解。

一个中国博士生开始尝试与导师和同事保持一定的私下接触，至少是个不错的开始。当然，这种私人关系应该是顺其自然的，而非功利的。

Epilogue

Higher education in Germany is famous for its rigorous research, endless innovations, advancing globalization, and the government's vigorous support, which attracts hundreds of Chinese students to come each year in pursuit of their academic dreams. The soaring number of Chinese students has brought cultural collision, communication, cultivation, and fusion.

Based on the authors' and their friends' study experiences in Germany, this book summarizes the possible difficulties that Chinese PhD students may be confronted with when they arrive in Germany, with a focus on the problems that the German supervisors and Chinese PhD students may have at the initial stages of their collaboration. By focusing on the different communication styles and work habits, as well as cultural backgrounds, this book gives suggestions to German supervisors to help them better understand Chinese PhD students, in order to promote their cooperation; meanwhile, this book serves as a reference for Chinese students who have newly come to Germany, hoping to help them to adapt to the new environment and integrate in a short time.

[结语](#)

德国的高等教育一直以来以严谨的科研、层出不穷的创新、不断推进的国际化以及政府对尖端研究的大力扶持著称。这些独一无二的教育特色,每年都吸引着成百上千的中国留学生前来追求他们的学术梦想。高速增长的中国留学生群体带来的是东方文化与西方文化的碰撞、交流、砥砺与融合。

本书根据作者自身以及周围朋友的留学经历撰写而成,总结了中国博士生初到德国的学习和生活上可能会遇到的问题,重点描述了德国导师在与中国博士生合作初期可能会出现的一些问题,并从交流方式、工作方法和文化背景的差异等方面入手,为德国导师提供了一些建议,希望能够帮助导师更深入地了解中国博士生,以促进彼此之间的合作;也给刚来德国的中国留学生提供一些经验和借鉴,希望能够帮助他们尽快适应德国学习生活、融入德国学习生活。