

SCIENCE – TECHNOLOGY – EDUCATION INFORMATION

Opportunity to study abroad in Taiwan with a major in Traditional Medicine

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ABSTRACT

The growing trend of pursuing advanced education, particularly within the medical field, reflects a global shift towards higher academic and research aspirations. Taiwan stands out as a premier destination for international students, especially those from Asia, due to its robust economy, high-ranking educational institutions, and cultural affinity with neighboring countries. Taiwan's universities, particularly those focusing on Traditional Medicine, are recognized for their integration of modern and traditional medical practices, offering a unique research environment. China Medical University (CMU), a leading institution in this domain, provides comprehensive programs in Traditional Chinese Medicine, supported by competitive government and university scholarships. These scholarships facilitate access to cutting-edge research opportunities, primarily in fundamental medical sciences. However, the application process is rigorous, reflecting the high demand for these programs. For prospective students, a thorough understanding of Taiwan's cultural and academic landscape is essential for navigating the challenges and maximizing the opportunities presented by this rich educational environment.

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Not only do students from educational institutions beyond the health sector express a desire for professional advancement after completing a six-year bachelor's degree, but this aspiration is also shared by medical students. Following their academic tenure, some opt to reenter hospital settings to enhance their qualifications. In the realm of clinical practice, the inclination towards pursuing higher education along the research pathway is noteworthy. While certain individuals choose domestic educational options for reasons of convenience, others decide to pursue international studies to experience a transformative learning environment. However, this decision inevitably entails complexities in selecting a suitable country and educational institution, accompanied by considerations of associated study expenses.

Within the Asian region, Taiwan emerges as a fitting choice for prospective students. Boasting Asia's 12th-ranked developed economy, with a GDP positioning it among the 20 wealthiest nations globally (as reported by the financial website Insider Monkey) [1], Taiwan also excels in advanced education. It holds the 14th position globally in 2022 by the World Population Review [2]. This academic standing has magnetized a significant number of international students, particularly from Vietnam. According to Taiwan's Ministry of Education projections, there were 18,755 Vietnamese students at universities and colleges in Taiwan by

the end of 2022 [3]. Factors such as geographical proximity and shared cultural and lifestyle similarities further contribute to the attractiveness of Taiwan as a preferred destination for Vietnamese students pursuing academic endeavors and research activities.

The economic and technical sectors are not the sole areas of interest; health universities in Taiwan are also highly esteemed for their contributions to the country's development and advancements in the field of medicine. Particularly for enthusiasts of Traditional Medicine, Taiwan presents an advantageous environment for scholarly pursuits and research endeavors. Traditional Medicine holds significant cultural relevance in the lives of the Taiwanese populace, fostering trust and a prevalent inclination to utilize its treatment methodologies and products, thus establishing a sophisticated parallel with modern medicine [4]. This developmental trajectory of Traditional Medicine is attributed to a robust integration of both Modern Medicine and Traditional Medicine.

In the contemporary landscape of medical research, the specialization in Traditional Medicine aligns with prevailing trends. Research paradigms extend beyond patient-focused investigations to encompass animal models and cellular-level inquiries. International students pursuing advanced degrees in Traditional Medicine, particularly at the Master's or Ph.D. levels, often engage in research centered on animal models or cellular structures to explore mechanisms and effects at the molecular level comprehensively. Clinical research, though available, is less frequently chosen by international students due to the intricate process of obtaining permissions for patient engagement and data utilization. Notably, the research focus in Taiwan predominantly centers on fundamental medical research, affording students ample access to disciplines such as biology and chemistry. This multidisciplinary approach equips students with the tools necessary to address the underlying molecular and cellular intricacies of medical issues.

Currently, many schools in Taiwan provide medical training, including post-graduate training in Traditional Medicine such as National Yang-Ming University; Chang Gung University; Chung Shan Medical University; Tzu Chi University [5], and one of the pioneering schools in that combination, China Medical University, Taiwan is among the top universities in Taiwan in the top 300 in the world and ranked 33rd in Asia in 2023 (according to Times Higher Education) [6].

China Medical University was founded in 1958 as China Medical College. In 2002, the name was changed to China Medical University. Currently, there are 18 training programs, faculties, and departments [7]. College of Traditional Chinese Medicine is one of the university's major colleges and is the spearhead for training medical staff in the field of Traditional Medicine [8]. The college was established in 2003. Currently, the School of Traditional Chinese Medicine includes the Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral courses, formerly The Chinese Institute of Medical Sciences was merged into the Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the 1998 academic year), the Department of Post-Baccalaureate Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Master's Class of the Institute of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, and the Master's Class of the Institute of Acupuncture and Moxibustion [8]. They are responsible for the cultivation of traditional Chinese medicine education, Chinese medicine research talents, and teacher training.

When opting for international education, the primary challenges encountered revolve around tuition and living expenses. Presently, within the study abroad program in Taiwan, two principal categories of scholarships prevail the Taiwan Government Scholarships, administered by the Ministry of Education, and scholarships bestowed by the University. Noteworthy government scholarships include the MOE Taiwan Scholarship [9], MOFA Taiwan Scholarship [10], and TaiwanICDF International Higher Education Scholarship [11], among others. It is pertinent to mention that, due to specific fields and major requirements, scholarships are not universally applicable, notably within the health sector.

China Medical University (CMU) is receptive to Government MOE Scholarships across Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. program levels. Under the MOE scholarship, the duration for Master's programs spans two years, while Ph.D. programs extend over four years. Each semester, the government covers tuition expenses up to 1,290 USD, with any excess being assumed by CMU [12]. Conversely, ancillary costs such as books, documents, and internet usage fees are the financial responsibility of the students. Additionally, the Ministry of Education provides a monthly stipend of 670 USD for living expenses for both Master's and Ph.D. students [12]. Given the highly appealing nature of this governmental scholarship, the competition for it is notably intense.

Furthermore, an opportunity of interest is the NSTC International Internship Pilot Program, which offers a short-term scholarship lasting 1-3 months across all academic disciplines. This program provides a platform for students to immerse themselves in the research environment in Taiwan, facilitating the exploration of new opportunities and experiences [13].

In addition to scholarships facilitated by the Ministry of Education (MOE), additional scholarship avenues are offered by the academic departments and China Medical University (CMU). CMU extends commendable scholarship opportunities for prospective students applying to various programs. Within the Master's Program, the first year's tuition is exempted, and living expenses are subsidized by the assigned instructor, approximately 335 USD per month (though variable, contingent on the individual instructor's discretion). In the program of Ph.D. Program, tuition is waived for four years, coupled with a 670 USD monthly living expense stipend in the initial year [14]. Commencing from the second year onward, financial support from the instructor is contingent on the student's demonstrated capabilities, with the instructor exercising discretion in determining the level of support. Eligibility for CMU scholarships necessitates adherence to specified admission criteria. Moreover, as students engage in study and research activities, the academic departments offer diverse scholarships to those exhibiting outstanding academic and research achievements. Examples include the Whetstone Scholarship, featuring a monthly stipend of 355 USD for one year, and the Outstanding Scholarship, providing a monthly stipend of 1300 USD over four years. Furthermore, various faculties, sponsors, and companies contribute scholarships to incentivize exemplary students. CMU's enrollment period encompasses two semesters: the Spring semester, with admissions occurring around March, and the Fall semester, where admissions are scheduled for September [14].

In electing Taiwan as your prospective academic trajectory, given its innovative and synergistic learning and research environment, it is imperative to meticulously prepare yourself.

This entails a thorough understanding of the unique cultural attributes and the local populace. Acquiring in-depth knowledge about the educational institution to which you will be affiliated is equally crucial, ensuring that you cultivate the confidence essential for conquering challenges and attaining heightened success in the future.

Conclusion: This article highlights Taiwan's welcoming, open, and internationally oriented learning environment, combined with its state-of-the-art facilities, as an ideal setting for medical students, particularly those specializing in Traditional Medicine, who seek to advance their studies and research.

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