

Personal Report

Country: Denmark

Home University: Copenhagen School of Design and Technology

Field of study at DHBW: Business Administration

Degree intended (KEA): Business Economics and IT

Duration: 1st September to 21st December 2023 (1 semester)

I declare that I give my consent for this feedback report to be shared with students or published on the DHBW website.

How I prepared for my stay

The application process for the DHBW was relatively straightforward, thanks to the ample guidance provided by our university coordinators in Denmark. While selecting the appropriate courses posed a slight challenge, ensuring they totaled the required 30 ECTS points mandated by our home university, the overall experience was relatively smooth.

There were some formalities also which could seem a bit overwhelming, but we got help for everything and got answers to all questions.

The application process for accommodation was right after applying for Erasmus. Here we got presented with a list of different addresses of places we could live, we marked out three places we would rather have. I had to fill out a list of documents, which was a bit annoying but manageable.

I learned some German during my time in Danish high school and having a basic understanding of a few words has been quite helpful. Therefore, I recommend familiarizing yourself with some German. However, if you are not acquainted with the language at all, there's no need to be nervous. The DHBW offers a German course, and you will learn as you go, obviously. I also tried to listen to more German music and watching German videos on my phone which made the language sound less strange by the time I got there.

Before departing, I ensured that everything was in order. I checked that my passport and EU health insurance card were up to date. Additionally, I took out travel insurance to cover my time abroad.

While I didn't specifically prepare for a culture shock, I found that Denmark and Germany share many similarities, so I wasn't met with any significant cultural surprises.

The transition has been smooth, allowing me to focus more on other things instead of spending more time adapting to a totally different culture.

The application process for DHBW was well-guided, and despite some initial challenges, the overall experience was smooth. Language preparation, especially in German, proved beneficial, and cultural similarities between Denmark and Germany eased the transition. Ensuring documentation and insurance were in order to have a worry-free departure.

Study in host University

The university comprised various buildings with different locations, which can be a bit confusing in the beginning. With time we mostly were in one main building, but you should be prepared that it might not always be the same place. Though, all locations are not that far from each other, especially with the U Bahn. So, navigating around won't be a problem, and the university will let you know about the locations beforehand.

A notable aspect of the academic structure, and how its different from what I'm used to, is the school hours. During the mandatory German course, the school hours are the same, but when the other courses start, there will be a variety. Some days can be short, and some can be long, of course depending on which courses you have chosen. For instance, I experienced some days where I had class for around 12 hours (luckily it was only a few).

The flexibility in scheduling, while offering diverse learning opportunities, could be challenging for those accustomed to a more consistent timetable. This adaptability demanded a level of preparedness for both long and short days, emphasizing the importance of time management and organizational skills for a successful academic experience.

Another noteworthy aspect of the university system, specifically regarding lectures, was the absence of provided books—an experience contrasting with the norm at my home university. Instead, all course materials were presented through PowerPoint slides or accessible on various online platforms. While this digital approach had its advantages, I found myself missing the tangible presence of formal literature. Having a textbook provides a more in-depth understanding, especially when preparing for exams, as opposed to navigating through numerous PowerPoint slides, each spanning 250 pages on a single topic.

The examination format at the host university also brought about notable differences compared to my home institution. Unlike the electronic exams I was accustomed to, written exams were conducted on paper—a shift that required some acclimatization. On a positive note, some of the

written exams incorporated a multiple-choice format, introducing an element of diversity that I found beneficial.

However, a significant challenge emerged during the last week of my exchange. I found myself facing a series of exams within a short time frame, a scenario I had not encountered previously and, consequently, was not adequately prepared for. Again, it helped that the exams were multiple choice or case, but I would have wanted to have it spread out a bit more evenly.

Germany as a host country

Staying in Stuttgart for my study abroad experience was a generally positive and enriching, and I actually ended up loving Stuttgart.

On a personal level, adapting to life in Stuttgart was a noteworthy experience. While not without its challenges, the welcoming nature of the locals and the city's diverse cultural offerings made the adjustment smoother. The daily interactions, whether at local markets, cafes, or community events, allowed me to appreciate the distinct character of the city. Generally people were nice and helpful, but they are even friendlier if you try to speak some German.

Engaging in extracurricular activities added depth to my overall experience. While Stuttgart may not have been a bustling metropolis, it offered a range of events and festivals that showcased the local culture. From exploring the lush parks to attending smaller-scale cultural gatherings, these activities provided valuable insights into the community's dynamics.

The public transportation system was a key facilitator of my exploration beyond Stuttgart. It was cheap. The Deutsche Ticket is 50 euro, and you can take any bus, U bahn, S bahn or other regional trains all over Germany. This made it much cheaper to see other cities in Germany.

While not every day was an extraordinary adventure, the steady rhythm of life in Stuttgart was comforting. The city's ability to seamlessly blend tradition with modernity offered a stable and pleasant environment for academic pursuits and personal growth. In essence, my time in Stuttgart, though not without its nuances, was a valuable and well-rounded experience that left a positive imprint on my study abroad journey.

Tips

I would say that learning some German phrases and words before coming would help you a lot, also listen to some German music or anything like that. It makes German easier to learn. The ability to communicate in German, even at a basic level, can enhance your overall experience and make daily activities way more enjoyable.

Visit other cities in Germany, obviously. Personally, I really enjoyed Munich, Cologne, and Berlin. Take advantage of the Deutsche Ticket and see other cities around Stuttgart also. For instance, Strasbourg is super close. Try looking at Flixbus to Swiss also. The long-distance trains, ICE for example, are almost always late or cancelled, be aware of that when travelling.

Participate in local events, festivals, for example the October fest, and cultural activities to immerse yourself in the German way of life. Stuttgart offers a range of cultural events throughout the year. Also check out other festivals in different cities, I went to the festival in Cologne which was nice. Germans are really good at those things.

Germany is known for its cost-effective lifestyle, but it's still crucial to budget wisely. Take advantage of student discounts, cook at home occasionally, and explore affordable entertainment options. I recommend doing grocery in Rewe, it's a bit more expensive but way better. Also, Aldi or Lidl for cheaper solutions.

Studying in German was one of the best experiences ever and I do not regret a bit of it. Especially the friends that I made, you really end up making life-time friendships. Every single person in Erasmus was so nice, and we all ended up being so good friends. Also try to make friends outside of Erasmus, meet some locals, they know all the good places and hidden gems.

Have fun and enjoy every piece of it!!!