

Exchange study period at DHBW Stuttgart

Winter semester 2023/2024

Home university: Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Host university: Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, Stuttgart (DHBW Stuttgart)

Field of study: Business Information Systems

Degree intended: Bachelor's degree in Business Information Systems

Time: September - December 2023

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Preparation:

In my case, I used close to no time in preparation before coming to Germany. Only preparations I did were in the first orientation week, but those were also basically guided by the coordinators or our buddy students. The whole time I felt really easy to go with the way of Germans and did not really experience almost any culture shock. Maybe it was my attitude towards the exchange or that Germany is not so different to Finland in the sense of social behavior.

Participation in different activities:

In Finland we have a lot of big student organizations in every school, so for me it was really important and normal to try to attend local student organization parties. One of the organizations I came across was AEGEE, AEGEE is an European student organization that makes all of the events for international students. This was a really good way to get to know other international students and have something social to do with new people.

Another thing I applied for was the exercise programs at the school. DHBW had a really good list of different activities you applied for that were free. It went so that every start of semester you got a list of activities and then you applied for the ones you found interesting, the activity was every week at the same time so the continuity was also good. Also if there came more spots for different activities you could change them during the semester.

Study and Stay

My courses included two classes of German language training, one class of intercultural studying and the rest four was about digital marketing and market research. The learning was really close to what I'm used to in OAMK, lots of case studies, group work and practical learning. Our class was only made out of our exchange students so that had a big impact in getting to know every one. Learning was easy, the classes had clear focus on the subject so it made it easier to balance studying - and free time.

The finding institution helped 100% with finding and settling down in the new country and apartment. I found the apartment by applying for one through the receiving institution. I live in a student dorm. In this building also lives all of the other incomings which eliminates feeling alone and makes making plans so fast and repetitive. The rent was under 400€ a month so it was not expensive either.

The best part of my exchange was that we all lived in the same building so we just visited each other constantly, went to school together and went to spend free time together. Also there was a lot of freetime so making traveling plans was really easy and cheap, and we did them constantly. There was not a single thing in my exchange that was hard or challenging. I would strongly recommend my receiving institution to others! Getting involved and making new friends is made so easy in here that already the second day we were making plans without our tutors/buddies.

In my opinion, exchange should be mandatory at least in the field of IT. You learn a lot about different opportunities, learn a lot of English which is mandatory in this field to succeed and most importantly learn to make new situations comfortable really easily, which comes handy if your work requires moving around countries.

Hands-on Tips:

One valuable piece of advice I can offer is not to hesitate in embarking on your exchange journey going alone to this institution. In this program it is so easy to get comfortable quickly in the new country due the similar faces will be around you really easily. It enhanced my experience by always having some people to go and explore the culture with.

However, it's equally rewarding to consider applying to the same exchange program with your friends. In my personal experience, I was fortunate to have four students I already knew from OAMK joining me during my time here, and contrary to expectations, it didn't create an isolating bubble around us. In fact, having familiar faces around not only provides a sense of comfort but also might enhance your overall exchange experience.

Summary:

In summary, my exchange study period in Stuttgart was a thoroughly enjoyable and enriching experience. For now it has been my most valuable experience. It has also expanded my cultural understanding, and provided me with valuable insights from my academic endeavors. Leaving my cultural bubble and stepping out of my comfort zone was an essential part of this journey, offering me a unique perspective on the world and different cultures.

I can recommend an exchange study period to everyone. It serves as a catalyst for personal and academic growth. In particular, I highly recommend DHBW Stuttgart as a host university. The institution's commitment to excellence in education, coupled with the outstanding support provided by their international coordinators, had a really positive impact on the overall experience during my stay.