

SEMESTER EXCHANGE REPORT

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HOME UNIVERSITY: Somaiya Vidyavihar
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HOST UNIVERSITY: Duale Hochschule Baden
Württemberg University, Stuttgart, Germany.

FIELD OF STUDY: Business studies

INTENDED: Bachelors of Business
Administration (Human Resources)

NUMBER OF SEMESTERS: 1

TIME PERIOD: September, 2023 to February,
2024

Introduction

I am Vidhi Runwal, a student of S.K. Somaiya College, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai, India. I am pursuing my Bachelors in Business Administration with Human Resources as specialisation subject. I got the opportunity of semester exchange for my 5th semester. I personally chose DHBW for my semester exchange because of the vast diversity offered in the subjects. The freedom of choosing the subjects which would help me enhance my skills and knowledge was something that made my decision easier.

Preparation for the Exchange

After I was informed about the acceptance from the host university, I was definitely excited and overjoyed but I had to keep in mind that there is a long procedure before I step in Germany. From various documentation to patiently waiting for approvals; it was a long journey. Starting from providing necessary documentation to the host university, this included documents confirming my enrolment at home university, language proficiency, personal identification, etc. With this it was also important to gather all the necessary documents for visa application and approval. A few documents definitely tested my patience but it was definitely worth the wait.

There was a constant touch with the host university, guiding and assisting me throughout the whole process and to make sure that I have a comfortable stay in Germany when I arrive. Soon I was also informed that I have been assigned a buddy who will be helping me understand the key points that I need to note while planning my stay in Stuttgart. She helped me with understanding the weather conditions and how should I pack and be prepared for it. She was not only easy to approach but very helpful, even during my stay in Stuttgart. She made me understand a few important and necessary tips for arrival and also made me feel like home when I arrived. She made sure that I was comfortable enough and guided me through all the necessary processes throughout. I am really thankful to the university for this as I not only had no problems settling in but also made a friend.

I already had an idea that I might face some issues regarding food options in Europe and so I learned to cook and make sure that it won't be a major problem once I arrive in Germany. The DHBW university and administration made sure that they conduct meetings and webinars to help us provide useful and important information like, health insurance, city registration, accommodation details, etc. Even when I couldn't attend the welcome days of the exchange due to late arrival, the international office at DHBW made sure that they sit one-on-one with me to explain me the initiating processes like city registration.

Study in host country

I had taken 7 courses for my semester and each of them was an addition to my existing course. Studying each of them helped me develop a deeper understanding of the working of business in the real world. It gave an overview of all the dynamics involved in running a business. The way of teaching was unique and different, which made it easy for me to understand the concepts and gave me practical knowledge regarding the day-to-day working of any company. We also understood the case studies which gave us an insight into the company and how they functioned in various situations. German language intensive course was one of the courses in my list which I had studied in the very beginning. It helped me converse with people, read boards, ingredients of food, public transport announcements, etc. which basically helped me and made my stay easier. Other courses were also very interesting and unique in their way, especially courses like Intercultural Negotiation Training helped me learn some negotiation skills and how to negotiate with people from all over the world. It gave an insight into the traditions and customs of different countries and taught me how to negotiate with them. The course, like Business Simulation Game, was remarkably interesting and had a different approach. It was very practical in concept and offered a unique way of learning them. All the other courses were interesting too and helped us gain knowledge in their respective fields.

The unique methods and techniques of the faculty and the mix of students from different cultures enhanced this experience and made me learn the work culture from all over the world. This helped me broaden my opinions and learn varying approaches to the same situations. This not only gave me a new perspective on certain things but also made me realise that it is important to look at a certain situation from various perspectives as it can be more efficient and optimum.

These learnings have definitely helped me change my ideology towards work culture and business ethics.

Stuttgart

When I got to know that I will be staying in Stuttgart, I didn't know much but just that it's the origin house of Porsche and is known for its cars. Well, I wasn't wrong; I got to see a lot of amazing cars while my stay in Stuttgart and I also got an opportunity to visit the Porsche Museum.

The transportation and commutation was absolutely amazing in Stuttgart. It was very easy for me travel from Stuttgart even when I planned on visiting different countries. The maintenance and cleanliness across the city was spectacular. I was lucky enough to visit the most iconic beer festival, 'Oktoberfest' during my stay. It was really interesting and fun to see everyone enjoy to their fullest. Seeing everyone laugh and dance was a peculiar sight. I also got the opportunity to visit the beautiful Christmas markets in Stuttgart and around in Germany. I also saw some of the most scenic views during my stay. I also got to visit the central library of Stuttgart.

Overall, I really loved Stuttgart and would definitely want to visit again.

Stay in host country

I had the opportunity to stay in a student wg (dormitory). I shared the apartment with 4 more people out of which 1 was Indian too. Initially it was really awkward and difficult to mix up but within the first week we really became good friends. Not only my flatmates but a lot of other people from the neighbouring flats did help me to settle in and soon we became really good friends. We made many beautiful and unforgettable memories and I can never forget the way they helped me and assisted me throughout. I not only made a lot of connections but also friends for life and will always be thankful to them to help me whenever I was in need. I also met new people as some of my flatmates did sublet their rooms for a couple of months.

The dorm was just 10 minutes away from the main station which made it very easy for me to commute. Grocery stores and medicals were just around the corner and so it was very convenient and comfortable. There was a mall nearby too which gave easy access to clothing, electronic and general stores.

Travel

I got the opportunity to travel to many countries from Stuttgart. Countries like Austria, Switzerland and France are very close to Stuttgart and have easy commutation from Stuttgart. I travelled to almost 10 countries while exchange program and each of them taught me something new. In some places, I travelled alone whereas in some places I travelled with my friends. This taught me many things such as planning, making new friends, managing time, adjusting, and much more. Travelling to different countries helped me gain a new perspective and enriched my experience. I not only experienced their culture, but also felt like one of them. I was really overwhelmed and thankful for those amazing experiences. This also gave me the opportunity to admire the scenic views across different countries and learn the heritage and historical value of most of them. Places like Luxembourg, Bratislava and Rome have become some of my favourite places across Europe.

The international office of DHBW also organised a day trip to Neuschwanstein castle, which is said to be the inspiration for Disney. It was one of the most beautiful places that I have visited throughout. It was an amazing experience to hike to the castle with all my friends and classmates. It indeed help me create a stronger bond with them. It was a beautiful experience.

Personal Evaluation of Host University and Host Country

Here I got the opportunity to meet new people from all over the world and interacting with them was not only limited to my university. Talking about Stuttgart specifically, it is one of the international hubs for students and I got to come across a variety of nationalities, be it my flatmates or people I met at public events. I personally met a lot of people from different nationalities which helped me develop a new array of vision and opened a new horizon for me. I would like to thank S.K Somaiya College, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, and Duale Hochschule Baden Württemberg (DHBW) University for providing me with this fantastic opportunity which not only helped me learn a lot of new things but also gave me great exposure. I would also like to thank Ms. Asita Rostam and Ms. Sarina Mollenhauer from the international office for constantly helping me and solving my queries. I would like to extend my thanks to all the professors for guiding me throughout the course.