

My semester abroad @ DHBW Stuttgart:

I came up with the decision to study a semester abroad by chance even though my study program has a mandatory semester abroad as a fixed part of the study schedule. Originally, I study in the **Netherlands** at the Fontys University of Applied Science in Venlo even though I live in Germany close nearby the boarder.

Due to my internship in Stuttgart, I got the opportunity to keep working as a working student in Stuttgart. I saw this opportunity as a great way to shape my CV and gain some extra working experience while studying “abroad” for one semester. Not thinking for a long time, I decided to extend my stay to another six months and continued to live in Stuttgart.

In my case the preparation phase was a bit easier compared to other students. Since I already lived in Germany and the past time even in Stuttgart, I did not need to take care of most of the bureaucratic steps such as the registration process or taking care of dorm leasing. During my internship I lived in a furnished rental apartment and just extended my rental contract over there. In general, I noticed that the housing market in Stuttgart seems to be quite difficult with an over-average price level. I can therefore fully recommend the dorm / housing options which are offered by the DHBW. The international office team will take care of the organization and help you out wherever questions occur – do not hesitate to ask. What I noticed from my classmates is that the registration process was explained really good during the welcome week. For the most students it was therefore easy to achieve the registration paperwork in the first two weeks of the stay.

Comparing my studies from Fontys with the ones at DHBW, I can see different approaches to the courses. At my home university in the Netherlands, the courses are taught during the entire lesson period of the semester. Therefore, the content is spread over a longer timeframe. The advantage is that you are repeating some of the content over the weeks again and can interact with the professors more often. Of course, there is also a disadvantage when having courses during the entire semester. You need to repeat the context and learning outcomes over a long time and cannot finish the classes earlier. In general, I would rate the size of both universities as same. While the DHBW is located at several locations in the city (as international student you only have

lessons in 2-3 locations with a distance of 1km and easily achievable by public transport), Fontys is centralized as you can see on the following picture:



Since I only studied at the DHBW for one semester, I cannot rate the general study system. What I heard from the buddies is that the study program is always offered as a dual system means you can gain a lot of working experience besides the study life. In my home university I only visit the courses without working besides the studies. Since the complete Bachelor program is a 240 ECTS program, I got the opportunity to do two mandatory internships ranging from 3.5 to 6 months.

At DHBW, all courses were taught in blocks. Most lesson days counting from 8:00/9:00am to 4:30/6:00 pm. This lesson flow has the advantage that I was able to learn a lot in a short amount of time. Whenever receiving input, I liked the group tasks or practical examples which have been carried out during the courses. Sometimes I needed to motivate myself after a longer period of lessons. In these cases, I appreciated that the teachers noticed that there is a lag of motivation during the classes and did some breaks in between or conducted practical games to refresh the brain activity. Being able to finish a course after a short amount of time is also beneficial in terms of semester planning. The schedule was set at the beginning of the semester. Therefore, I was able to plan some traveling and also my working plans at an early stage.

Courses and facilities:

The DHBW offers great and modern facilities which you can use besides classes for studying with your classmates. You receive a “feel-at-home-feeling” at the locations really fast, especially in their student lounges which offer a great chill space for breaks and studying.

The selection of modules has been really outstanding. Especially in the field of economics, management, leadership and negotiation, I received important knowledge which I have not learned at my home university yet. All of these skills are relevant for the job market of the 21st century so I appreciate to gain knowledge in the relevant fields of the future.

One of the modules was really great since I was able to conduct my own little data analytics experiment inside an international group. The case study was about autonomous driving. In one of the lessons the participants of our experiment took a seat in an ultra-modern driving simulator to receive a feeling of how being driven by an autonomous vehicle feels like. After that they answered a survey while having several hardware features such as brain-tracking and eye-tracking attached. The data was the foundation for our final presentation. It has been interesting to see how people from different cultures react regarding moral decisions.



Furthermore, the negotiation class was really helpful. In life you receive what you negotiate. The knowledge in this class was really valuable, and I learned some advanced skills for negotiating in the international business environment.

Traveling:

Stuttgart is a really great starting point for traveling throughout Europe. For me, traveling was not the main aspect during my semester abroad since I focused on my career a lot but of course, I also traveled some places that I have not visited before.

Paris for instance is only 3 hours away whenever you decide to go by train which I can highly recommend. Preferably plan at least a weekend over there since there is a lot to discover.

Munich is definitely worth a visit as well. The beautiful city is only 2 hours away from Stuttgart and has numerous opportunities for every time of the year. Even when the weather is bad any rainy, which can happen some days in the Bavarian region, you have a lot of museums, shopping malls or other options to visit. Whenever you have

good weather, there are numerous outdoor activities. For sport interested people I can recommend visiting the Allianz-Arena, famous stadium by Bayern Munich, the Olympia stadium as well as the Olympic tower. You can find one of the most iconic photo spots in front of the Olympic stadium. On top of the Olympic tower, you have a fantastic view over the entire city even until the alps.



General Advice for a semester abroad at DHBW:

I can give some advice for the study time at DHBW whenever taking part in the international study program. Before the stay the buddies will already contact you and be available for questions which occur before, during and even after the actual stay. I enjoyed this connection since I got the opportunity to get insights in the study life from their point of view. I highly recommend staying in touch with them to receive your desired information upfront or get help whenever you arrive earlier.

Another great and helpful activity was the first day. I learned a lot from Asita and Sarina who have always been present for questions or any circumstances which occurred during the studies. At the first day it is important to be present and listen to the instructions regarding registration at the local authorities. As native German that was not important for me although it was interesting to see the different reactions by the international students regarding bureaucratic processes. I noticed that as German person I am used to how processes work and saw that it's more uncommon for the fellow peoples.

The welcome week has been a great opportunity to connect with the other international and become friends easily. The buddies themselves organized several activities such as a dinner, sightseeing in the city and a visit of the TV Tower in Stuttgart. This tower is the highest point of view and offers a spectacular view over the entire city and is definitely worth a visit even if it is not a part of the first week.

Traveling in Stuttgart is really easy since the public transportation system is top-notch. Of course, there are some delays sometimes, but you can get everywhere in the city in a short amount of time.

In general, this intercultural experience has been one of the best experiences in my life. Not only I learned a lot of new and valuable knowledge, I was also able to connect and make friends with people from all over the world.