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Semester abroad at Staffordshire



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Introduction

This is a report on how we, Moritz, Tanja and Timm (see picture above), experienced our semester abroad at the Staffordshire University. Even though we spend a lot of time together, each one of us made different experiences. We try to give you the best possible impression, but of course this short report is incomplete. Some of the following passages are the impressions of one alone, other activities we experienced together. First we will talk about how we choose to study at Staffordshire University, afterwards about the courses we took at Staffs Uni, next about what the life in Great Britain is like and last about trips we did.

Application Process

As a DHBW student, you are not very flexible in when to do your semester abroad, but nevertheless in where to do it. If you have a lot of free time to spend on finding a university, you can study anywhere where they offer the courses you would have to do in Germany (or at least courses accepted by the DHBW instead). But there are also a lot of universities the DHBW has cooperated with in the past, which makes the application easier. The Staffordshire University is probably the most uncomplicated one. Another thing you should look at are the nutrition fees and the cost of living.

Once you have decided on a University and checked if it is possible for you to go there (you also have to ask your company as a semester abroad is probably longer than at the DHBW, some companies have internal regulations for semesters abroad) you can fill out the application form, have it signed and hand it in.

My first choice for the semester abroad was the RMIT in Melbourne, which is very expensive. There was an option to get a place free of fees within a replace program, but there were too much applications, so they randomly picked someone. I haven't been that lucky, but it was no problem at all to choose another university instead, especially in case of the Staffordshire University.

At the first of September, we got a link to the application form of the Staffordshire University that we had to fill out. For accommodation, there is the possibility to stay in university organised accommodation on campus or within a host family.

Reasons for Staffs Uni

In case of university managed accommodation, we had to apply for the Stafford campus, as we had all our lectures there. This was somehow chaotic, as there were not enough rooms in Stafford because of the planned campus closure. Therefore, we firstly should stay in a private accommodation in Stafford near to the train station. But this failed as they increased their prices and couldn't guarantee rooms for all of us. So we have been told in the second week of December that we would stay at the Stoke campus and that we would have to travel to Stafford by bus every day.

So we got an accommodation offer for residence in Stoke. When accepting this offer, we had to directly pay the accommodation fee per credit card. Make sure your credit card limit is large enough. In my case, when I got redirected from the payment site (which is a third party site) to the one of the accommodation office, I got this nice result.



I wrote a mail to the accommodation office to ask if accepting the offer was successful but I never got an answer. However, it was, as I got my keys without any problem once I had arrived.

Reasons for Staffs Uni

For us there were a lot of different reasons why we choose Staffordshire University. For me it was most important that everything was organised from the beginning and there was (almost) nothing left to do. The courses are fixed from beginning and will definitely be hold. You will definitely get the credits you need for the fourth semester. Starting from this, there will also be no extra courses to take in the fifth semester when back in Germany. The cooperation is given between DHBW and Staffs Uni. Even though it may be chaotic at times, both sides know who to talk to.

Reasons for Staffs Uni

With Staffs Uni being in England, you are also able to improve your English during your stay. Furthermore, Stoke is nearly the geographical centre of England and therefore provides a good starting point for journeys to all major big cities. The trains connecting London to Birmingham, Manchester to Oxford and so forth all stop in Stoke. Because of this central position, flights to the mainland (ending in Manchester or Birmingham) are rather cheap. Often the train ticket from the airport to Stoke was more expensive. Regarding Great Britain's leave from the EU, I do not know what is exactly going to happen to visa regulations. But in a recent statement the Staffs Uni highlighted its determination to keep up its diversity in student nationalities. There was already a visa-service for students which home country is not in the EU. I assume this visa service will now also be offered to students coming from the EU.

The tuition fees are kept very low for foreign students. This is noticed when considering the fees for native students (around 9000 pounds a year) and the fees we had to pay (1,751 pounds).

Last but not least, the Staffs Union offers great activities, trips and events. You can always meet new people here and get in contact with students coming from Britain, other EU states or across the world.

Courses

Courses

Courses usually consisted out of tutorials and lectures. Lectures are mostly like a normal lesson at DHBW. There is a teacher holding a PowerPoint presentation and students taking notes. Different to DHBW, lectures are hold in an ascending room, known from University. Here is a little advice: Do not sit in the first row, you will not be able to see the PowerPoint very well. Second and third row are the best compromise between being able to see the PowerPoint reasonably and having the opportunity to talk to the lecturer. The other half of course time is made up from tutorials. During these, the theoretical concepts discussed in lectures are applied and revisioned. Usually the same person holds lectures and tutorials alike. Normally there is no or little time in between. Tutorials are also used to work on the assignments which are due in most courses.

Welcome Week

Before the start of the actual lectures a welcome week was offered for all students. This was organised by the staffs union, the student council of Staffordshire University. They presented themselves and the work they do and organise. Some tips were given on leisure activity, traveling and lectures. Also a guide to the town centre and around the campus was given. Best was, that the week was for all international students, and we got to know a lot of new peoples which were all in the same situation as we were.

Programming Techniques with LabVIEW

LabVIEW is the course we took instead of "Rechnerarchitekturen" in Germany. This was a mixed course with about 50% native English students and the other half German students. In total we were about 40 people. Dave held the lectures and tutorials. He is very enthusiastically about his subject and loves to tell private stories. We had a lot of fun during lectures and tutorials. The first lessons and tutorials were about learning what LabVIEW is, how it is used and which controls are available. In later lessons we learned about concepts which are used rarely and got tips on how to finish our assignment during tutorials. Our assignment was to program a heat detector system for a household in four areas. Deliverables were the program code itself, a documentation on how to set up the system (we were using sensors and LEDs) and a report about which other alternative sensors there are to be used. For me this was an easy course with enough time during tutorials for the assignment. In the beginning not everyone liked the language, but after you get used to it, it is heap fun programming. There

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are almost no limits and everything functions in real time. The language is really fast to process.



Moritz enjoyed LabVIEW so much, they programmed snake for fun. Dave really liked the game and even published it on a block and twitter (<https://twitter.com/StaffsUniCompSc/status/717387863420174337>). There are also some other posts from our course. Check one out here: <https://twitter.com/StaffsUniCompSc/status/709787589650333696> Small hint: “some students” means Moritz. Timm and I enjoyed lessons as well: <https://twitter.com/StaffsUniCompSc/status/707234283103121408>.

Probability Modelling

Probability Modelling was together with Programming Techniques with LabVIEW by far the easiest lecture we had. Especially Azad (the lecturer) was a really nice lecturer who always helped when there was need.

Probability modelling covered mostly teaching stuff we already learned in school such as normal distribution or random variables. For those students coming from technical high schools it was kinda boring, for students coming from general education there were still some challenges. Nevertheless, it is a lecture to get a good mark for.

During the semester we spent two lectures in the labs where we used a software for statistical calculations by IBM to go through some examples. The other lectures were hold in a regular class room.

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For the final mark two tests during the semester were taken. The first one after five weeks, and the second one before the last lecture. For both tests Azad prepared mock tests which were made available through Blackboard. These two mock tests had exactly the same structure than the actual tests, only the values were changed. Additionally to that Azad prepared cheat sheets, and upon request we were allowed to add own notes to them.

[Web Programming with Servlets and Java Server Pages](#)

Web is the course we took for Web-Engineering, half of choice module and half of Software engineering. Each lesson was directly followed by a tutorial with no clear separation in between. One good thing was, that we were allowed to go whenever we liked to do, but on the down side this was because there were no real lectures. Lectures were held in form of a YouTube video. The lecturer himself was deaf and not allowed to hold lectures. Even though he was deaf, you could speak normally to him and he would answer you normally. But sometimes there were some misunderstandings, which I am not quite sure are because he is deaf or because of the language difference. The lectures, or YouTube videos, were very dull and not a lot of fun to watch. In tutorials we programmed a different kind of websites compared to the assignment which took a lot of time. They usually started with a bug fixing task of a given application. It was often not possible to finish all tasks in the given time of lecture and tutorial and a lot of work had to be continued at home. Hardest of all was the assignment. Everyone could choose his or her own assignment topic. Requirement for it was to fit to the marking scheme we got beforehand and to be an idea that improves life. The assignment was split in two parts, first a document in which the to be developed system was described in extend and how it will be implemented with special focus on design patterns, especially MVC; second the program itself, a documentation on the development and a short presentation. The first part was meant to be around 20 pages, but the requirements made it impossible to stay within this limit. At the end my document was about 56 pages long. Timm's and Moritz's documents were not shorter. Afterwards the implementation started, which took up all my free time for three weeks. When one of us had a look in the requirements for the program, we noticed that the system was to be developed in Java Server Faces, a technology we had until then not discussed during lessons. This left the option to include the new technology and loose points for not following the design document or omitting the new technology and losing points for not using it. The problem was taken further, as the lecturer changed his job 3 weeks to submission and leaving us with changing lecturers for two weeks

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which also took our examination. Half of us saw the lecturer for the second time during examination, for the other half it was the first time. All in all, it was a bit chaotic.

Management of Database Systems

This was the course everyone was (well-reasoned) most worried about. It was targeting level 6 students (students doing the last semester of their bachelor degree) and therefore treating advanced topics like security and optimization of database systems.

For this lecture we had two lecturers, both with a deep background in database management. The lectures and the tutorials were split but only one of them was responsible for the examination and the assignment.

The topics we discussed were: Database Administration, Acquisition and Purchase; Backup and Recovery; Transaction Management and Concurrency; Entity Modelling; SQL Performance Tuning; Database Tuning; Database Configuration; Data Compression; Green Databases. To sum this up, we did a lot of different stuff, sometimes from a high level perspective and sometimes with greater detail. We figured out that man traps are a solid choice when deciding how to secure a database and that in general "no one should be allowed to do anything at any time". In the tutorials, we were doing SQL by one lecturer, which was quite helpful as we haven't done this before at the DHBW, while the other one seemed just to continue his lectures in the tutorial room (with split audience).

The exam was about applying the knowledge we gained on a case study. This should be done in bullet points, so a lot of things had to be written down. We got the exam questions from the last year for preparation. So this module was more comparable to the modules at the DHBW concerning the size of the script and our summary. In addition to the exam, we had to write a 2000 – 2500 word report to discuss a short term solution to improve the performance of the database system given by the case study (where basically everything possible had been done wrong). We should state all possible techniques in short and then discuss either schema tuning, query optimisation or memory and storage tuning in detail. Moreover, we had to develop a "proof of concept artefact" to show that we understand and are able to apply the chosen technique (basically a plagiarism test). The exam and the assignment were scheduled at the very end of the semester, therefore everything else was already finished what enabled us to concentrate solely on databases during the last time. However, as there was not much

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time to work on it while we were still working on other coursework. Therefore, most of us did the assignment in the last few days before its deadline.

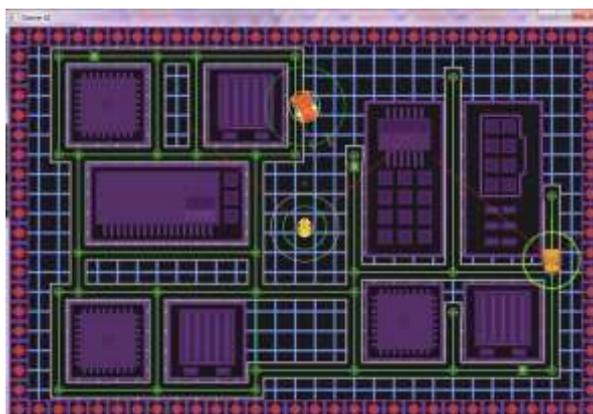
Artificial Intelligence for Games

The most scaring situation for a DHBW student would possibly be not to have more work to do then it seems to be possible within the available amount of time.

When preparing the Semester abroad, we got told that we could either only do 4 courses and have the elective course build up by two of those (as they give more Credit points as the German courses) or we could do an additional course for it. This would enable us to decide on which way we want it to have after we got our results, meaning we wouldn't have to have the additional course used if it would have been much worse than the other two.

However, doing an additional course results in additional tuition fees. It would have been 750 £ which let us to the decision on not doing the course official. But it was still possible to attend an additional course without getting the Credits for it. There was some unclearness in advance, but in the end we just had to ask the lecturer. There were several courses that sounded interesting, but not all of them were hold in that semester and there were some that had times overlapping with our other courses. Therefore, we decided to do Artificial Intelligence for Games, which was actually the best course we took part in.

The lecturer took some effort to enable us to fully participate although we couldn't access the lecture materials which were provided via blackboard (the dualis of Staffs which really was used!). The lecture was built upon a gamification approach. While the assignment was to program a tank that hat to fight those of the others in an arena at the end, we needed to collect "in game" points during the lectures in order to buy equipment like fuel, bullets and rockets for our tank in the final battel.



Life

A semester abroad is not only about studying. More important are the people you meet, the adventures you make and the experience you gain. The following passage will talk about these things. Some special adventures, but also normal everyday life.

Group learning

Even though I just stated not everything is about learning, I will first talk about our group learning sessions. They took place every Wednesday, the day in the week where we did not have any lessons. We met together in my kitchen and first started cooking together. This would usually be a recipe from chefkoch.de or something German like homemade Spätzle. While eating we watched some superhero film. Moritz collection and knowledge is just astounding. Timm and I have never really payed any attention to marvel or DC, making Moritz determined to close this knowledge gap. And I have to say, he was successful. As you might have noticed, it is already around 15:00 and we have not done any work for University at all yet. There is definitely no stress level at all in the first half of the semester. It is more like the other way around: A bit boring. That is the reason for us starting the Game AI course, which we programmed after the superhero movie for. Timm was the one of us to become familiar with C++ first, and did a lot of programming, but Moritz and I usually helped with strategies, ways on how something is best to implement, and bug fixing.

Additional to the Wednesday meet up for Game AI, the weekends were used in the later half, in which assignments and course work became more pressing. But it became never as stressful as it is in Germany before assignments. At the weekends we usually met in the library and worked on our own documents using the benefit of being able to ask for help quickly and sharing good references to use. Usually another German classmate, Simon, met up with us, whereas Moritz and Timm did not participate as often.

Indian People

We soon got to know a group of Indian people who also studied abroad at Staffs. We met up a few times exchanging stories and experiences, enjoying time together and showing each other the ways of our culture. We had two cooking evenings. The first was organised by the Indian group. They prepared spicy food in form of vegetable rice, scrambled eggs and chicken. Afterwards we organised a German meal with Spätzle, Schnitzel and salad. But we did not only

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cook for each other. We also went to a Bowling centre and a Chinese-Japanese-Vietnamese restaurant.

Accommodation

When staying at Stafford Campus there are two possibilities: either you live in student accommodation or in a host family. Host families were at our time only available in Stafford, but I assume they will find host families in Stoke as well. Moritz lived in a host family which consisted out of a host father, two dogs and later on another French student. He got along with his father well and loved the dogs.

The rest of us lived in student accommodation on Stafford and Stoke campus. Timm and I both stayed at Stoke campus in a shared flat with ten other boys/girls. There are also mixed flats, but we stayed in single sex flats. You are able to make a preference, when applying for them. For me I was the first person to move in my room. Everything was renovated, the furniture, kitchen and bathroom completely new. Timm first lived in older housing, but followed into a new flat as soon as the work was completed.



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Here is a small hint for you: If you want to save money, it is cheaper to live in housing not on but close to the campus. There are a lot of empty houses and student rooms. However, this way you miss living together with real British people and other internationals.

Campus

The Staffordshire University has (or at least had) four of those. In addition to Stoke and Stafford, there are Lichfield and Shrewsbury (where we never have been or had anything to do with, so just ignore them). The Stafford campus is going to be closed by the end of these year and the movement to Stoke was already in progress when we were there.



The campus in Stoke is much larger than the one in Stafford. It is actually divided in two sides, College Road and Leek Road, which are about three minutes walk from each other. You can find a map of the campus here: <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/about/campuses/stoke/index.jsp>. When you are visiting, there are actually multiple maps spread over the campus, which is very helpful at the beginning. The first building you have to go to when you arrive is Coalport Hall, as there is the resident office located where you can collect your keys. Of course this only applies if you stay in one of the Halls and not with a guest family or on your own.

The campus is quite nice, with sport fields, a gym and the Halls of residents in addition to the university buildings. There are also Student Union buildings like the Ember Lounge and the LRV.

Library

For studying, most students go to the library. There is/was one in Stoke and one in Stafford. We have mostly been in Stafford, spending our time between lectures there. The library is

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divided in different sections according to the quietness one requires for his studies. In the green group study areas one is allowed to talk freely. Occasional whispering is allowed in the orange silent areas and no talking at all is permitted in the red quiet areas. There are PCs at most working places and a few MACs as well. The Thomson library in Stafford was neat and not too big, containing mostly IT related stuff. For searching a book in the Cadmann Library in Stoke I would recommend to look up where to find it first. This can easily be done via the libguide (<http://libguides.staffs.ac.uk/libraryresources>). There are also lots of ebooks and articles available for online viewing. Literature work is quite important at the Staffordshire University. In the welcome week we were told that, as an undergraduate, no one cares about your own opinion. It is more about finding people which came up with the same idea as you, or said the same as you want to say, so that you are able to reference them. (Therefore it is the exact opposite of plagiarism which we all know to be quite a bad thing.)

Gym

One thing that was offered at the campus which we all frequently visited was the gym. I would definitely advise you to join membership there. Even if you are not that sporty (which I am definitely not), you still get to know a lot of people in the courses. Together with my roommate I frequently joined different fitness courses. Every week the same people would show up, and soon a personal bond formed. It was hard to talk during courses, but before was always a nice chat time. My favourites were Yoga, Zumba, Lady's Boot Camp and Abs Blast. But I enjoyed Zumba the most. The instructor was very enthusiastic while dancing, and let us choose for the last 15 minutes which songs we would like to dance. Lady's Boot Camp and Abs Blast were definitely the hardest, as they were followed directly after each other. The days afterwards were the one where everyone had sore muscles. But everyone felt the same and it was fun in the group in which we usually talked about how crazy the instructor is.

Student life

The Stoke campus offered a lot of after-Uni-activities. They were all organised by the student's union. The Ember was kind of a bar and pub in one. It offered food, non-alcoholic drinks like coke and hot chocolate but also beer and cocktails. On football-nights they showed the matches, Thursdays was karaoke and the rest of the week one was still able to play pool. Verve was similar but its interior looked like an American diner. There were not any football games and other activities. It was a quiet place to settle and enjoy a meal. Next to it was the LRV

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which is the disco on campus. Opened every Wednesday and Friday. As most students went home for the weekend, it was more crowded on Wednesday and one had to pay entry. Before each LRV night our flatmates had pre-drinks in the kitchen and invited us some times along even if we did not go to the LRV afterwards.

Standing aside from this are the events, clubs and societies offered. They do not have any building associated with them, but they are still a lot of fun. Timm joined the Christian Union, a club in which people believing in Christian religion meet up for worship and prayer but also to play games. Additionally, short talks were held by speakers from local churches or club members. I joined the badminton club, and went to play badminton on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. There were also one-time events like Chinese New Year and Glow-In-The-Dark offered. All activities required a small payment.

Campus Transformation

For us it was not the best time to visit Staffs Uni. They are currently transforming their campus from Stafford to Stoke which led to a lot of organising difficulties. Questions were often answered with the excuse that they are transforming their campus and cannot answer the question and do not know who can. The transformation was also noticeable during our everyday life, as some lived on Stafford campus in old housing and had a five minutes' walk to the lecture rooms, whereas people staying in Stoke travelled about 40 minutes per way but were the first people to live in their rooms. Also were just a few people actually on Stafford campus which were studying computing or nursing.

We recently got updates per Mail telling us how far the process currently is. For you, the next or following generation to go, this will not be a matter at all. You will be able to study in new lecture rooms, live in new accommodation and have everything more settled then. From the recent pictures I can tell you, that it really is going to be beautiful.

Stoke-on-Trent

In the area around the stoke campus there are mostly houses for student accommodation. Most students stay in university managed accommodation in the first year and take a nearby flat/house later. Most of them are shared between four persons.

Stoke is famous for potteries. The name of the accommodation halls are actually the names of pottery manufacturers. There are still lots of pottery manufactures there. You should

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definitely visit the Pottery Museum (<http://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/visit/pmag/>) in Hanley as the entry is free. It is not only about Pottery, but also about wildlife and history.

Hanley by the way is not the city centre, even though it might seem like. It is 20 –30 minutes to walk from the campus and a good place for going shopping or out for a party. There is a large shopping centre and several small shops and bars. There is a cinema as well and a bowling centre.

Another thing to mention is the Hanley Park, which is just a 5 minutes-walk away from the campus and where you can walk through to get to Hanley. (And I really recommend you to visit Park Church, which is directly at the park entrance)



There are plenty of supermarkets around but you will have to walk a bit. For the initial buying of crockery, etc. I would recommend to go to Tesco in Hanley, as it is really large and you get nearly everything there. However, as it some time to walk, the best is to take a taxi for the way back (if you do not have a car, of course. Taxis are quite cheap, especially if you share the cost with some others).

Supermarket	Distance (walking time)	Comment
Asda	12 min.	Similar to Penny
Lidl	15 min	Cheap to get essentials
Aldi	12 min	Cheap to get essentials
Sainsbury	15 min	Similar to Edeka

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Tesco	25 min	Large store where you can find nearly everything. Quite cheap. Similar to Real.
SPAR	5 min.	Very small, there is only some essential stuff available.
Union Shop	1 min.	They have just a few things like drinks, biscuits and snacks. You can buy university hoodies there and even power adapter.

Trips

Especially in the beginning there is a lot of free time. Why not use it and visit some cities? We organised some of these trips by ourselves, others were organised by the student union.

Organised by Staffordshire University

Some of the trips we took were organised by staffs union or another part of Staffordshire University. Staffs union really wanted us international students to learn about British live and customs. So they organised a lot of events, two of which were to visit places in England.

Leeds

The Leeds trip was organised by the university for international students. We met at the campus (no matter which one, but the Stafford guys had to get up earlier) to get on the bus. It took us two and a half hours to get to Leeds. We got an information sheet about Leeds and things to visit. We were free to explore the city as we wished and just had to be back in time for the bus departure. However, most of us agreed to meet earlier for having dinner together. Moritz and I went (nearly) straight to the Royal Armouries Museum and spend most of the time there. If you like weapons of any kind (especially medieval), this is a great place to visit. They don't have only English stuff, but items from different cultures all over the world, including Germany of course.



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In the evening, we met with the others at the central shopping centre for dinner, having a lot of fun with chopsticks. Afterwards we went, with a short bar visit in-between, back to the bus.

Lake District

The Lake district trip was at the last weekend of the Easter break and organized by Don't be a tourist. The trip included a visit at a farm shop, going to the top of a famous hill, spending some time in a little tourist town at a lake and a boots trip. The name of the lake district is a bit misleading as there is only one lake (however, there are several other wet things you might want to call so. It's just that others called them different). The lake district is the rainiest region in England and we had the "privilege" to fully experience that. While the weather was good during all the rest of the Easter break, we got really wet this day. The farm shop was great, selling a lot of self-made tasty stuff and as we were under the first who booked their place for the trip, we got a five pound voucher for the shop. Walking up the hill was a bit muddy (if you took the right and not the boring path) and the view was not the best due to the rain.



Afterwards we went to the lake and had some free time to explore the city. It was a bit disappointing that there was no good path to walk around the lake from there. We tried but ended up in another place of civilization and we would have to leave the lake and find some way back again. The boats trip was nice. It was a nice, but wet, trip altogether.

Self-organised

During our stay in Great Britain we organised some trips in our group of German students to get to know different cities. Especially at the beginning of our semester, we travelled a lot. We visited Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Chester as a group. The most beautiful city

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was Chester. This is agreed by all. Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool are all industrial cities. But Manchester offers the most culture of them (especially for soccer fans).

In the Easter holidays (2 weeks) everyone somehow did something on their own. I, Tanja, went together with three other German students for the first week to London. It was a great time there, visiting all the famous sightseeing. One tip: Do not buy the Oyster Card. We purchased it, but the included attractions are not that special. It is also possible to fill an entire week just visiting those attractions which are already free without missing anything. For the second week of the Easter holidays, I went to Scotland on my own, visiting castles and enjoying the landscape. It is really beautiful there.

Moritz and I (Timm now) spend the first week of the Easter break in Scotland because Moritz family came to visit him in the second one. We had a really good time starting from Edinburgh, we went on to Aberdeen and then to Inverness where we stayed some time while visiting Loch Ness and the Cairngorms National Park. Then we went on to Glasgow and with a break in Stirling back to Edinburgh. Scotland is really great and I really recommend visiting it if you can. If you want to visit some castles (eg. Edinburgh, Stirling, Urquhart) consider buying an Explorer pass (which you can do directly at the castles). This pass allows to visit a lot of places (77 different castles and historic buildings) and can be used on any three days within a five day period.



In the second week I visited Conwy (which is in Wales) and the peak district on my own. Conwy has a really nice castle.

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There are just the walls left but they are really high and impressive. The town is quite small but surrounded by a wall as well. There is also a nice little nature reservoir next to it and within a few minutes walking you can get to Llandudno Junction which some of the other Germans visited to spent some time at the beach. The peak district is great for hiking. I was in Edale, where the famous Pennine Way begins. I followed it some hundred meters, but left it then to get up on the hill. As the weather was great and quite warm I had a really good time there.



General advice

This section just gives you some guidance on what you should consider when spending a semester abroad in England.

The train system in Great Britain works differently to the one in Germany. There are multiple train companies which offer tickets to different prices and conditions. The best website to compare them is <https://www.thetrainline.com/>. Even though there are different railway companies, they have the same discount tickets and sell tickets together. There is an offer for students to pay only 2/3 on all tickets. It is called 16-25 railcard and can be purchased for 30 pounds online (on thetrainline) or directly at the station. When buying at the station you should bring a passport sized picture with you. The advantage of buying in station is that you are able to directly use your railcard and do not have to wait for it being send to you. Also some of us had some problems with the online service as our passport was not recognized.

Credit cards play a bigger payment role in England. They are normally used everywhere and in a lot of online shops they are the only mean to pay (for example student accommodation, you need a high limit for this!). Because they take some time to finally arrive with the mail, apply for one as soon as possible. Some of us had the problem of credit cards needing to be sent to England from Germany, which was no good option as some of them went missing. If your credit institute applies large fees, check out alternatives like DKB cash or number26 which offer feeless cash collection. You can just have them in addition as they are free of charge and transfer some money from your regular bank account to them. However, it can get complicated if you do not own an android or iOS device compatible with their apps.

Do a lot of trips! Experience as much as possible from Great Britain! As mentioned before, you are not only there to study. The opportunity to travel only 1.5 hours to most English major cities will not be given in Germany. And while you are traveling: Take a lot of photos. (Your mum gets happy, when she sees that you are well 😊)

Even if you are not into computer games: You will have a lot of time in Great Britain. So take a mouse with you and create a steam account before you leave. It is heaps fun.

If you plan to hold learning Wednesdays, take a DisplayPort to HDMI cable with you. The screens in the kitchen already have an HDMI cable, but if this is not supported from your laptop, a converter is needed.

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Amazon is available in Britain as well. If you forgot something (i.e. Spätzle Brett, computer mouse, DisplayPort to HDMI cable, ...) it is often cheaper to buy things new instead of sending a parcel from Germany. At the campus are two different Amazon lockers. They work like a *Packstation* in Germany, but are for Amazon parcels only. This is really convenient, as you can pick up your stuff at any time without the need to wait for the post office opening times.

The staffs website is not very reliable and information is often outdated. If you want to know something, ask Cheryl (C.M.Diamond@staffs.ac.uk). She will be happy to help and knows nearly everything or will research the facts quickly for you. And her information is usually accurate.

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This is the last part of our report (which somehow got out of hand and is now a bit longer than we expected). It is a personal statement from each of us how we feel about spending a semester abroad generally.

Moritz

Studying abroad is an experience you clearly don't want to miss if you are interested in other cultures, interested in living in a foreign country or simply curious about new challenges. If you play an instrument, join a band/orchestra, if you like sports, join a sports club, because there you really get in touch with English folks. For me, through sports and music I got to know most of my foreign friends in the UK, together with living in a host family. So this is something I really recommend if you plan to go abroad.

Compared to the studies at the DHBW in Germany there is plenty of time to spend on activities you usually wouldn't have the time for. Sports, music, travelling around and many more are things you can do here and so should you.

All in all the semester abroad was worth its effort, I had a really good time and I can't help but recommend it.

Tanja

For me the semester abroad was a great experience. My opinion, that a month spent in another country is a good month, has not changed due to my experiences I now encountered. I had heaps of fun in England, and would definitely advise you to do a semester abroad. If this needs to be Stafford, or another city, does in my opinion not matter. There are some

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advantages when going to Stafford (i.e. your credits are definitely recognised and there is a huge team always trying to find the best solution for you) but any other place can be as wonderful. Make your own experiences! Go abroad! And if it gets chaotic, remember: a solution will always be found.

Timm

Studying abroad is a unique experience and universities have a different approach to teaching compared to the DHBW. We had more time to do things together (even if it was just learning), for travelling and for the clubs and societies of the students union. It is a bit of a pity that you have your most free time in the beginning when you don't know much people yet, so you shouldn't wait too long to get engaged somewhere. And England has a beautiful landscape when you go out to find it. One of my personal highlights was visiting a blue bell forest when I was invited for lunch at a place about half an hour (by car) outside of Stoke.

