



Baden-Württemberg
STIPENDIUM

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG-STIPENDIUM

FOR STUDENTS

PERSONAL REPORT

Please upload your personal report to BWS-World, the online portal of the *Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM*, at the latest four weeks after your scholarship stay has ended. Note that the International Office of your university may request the report already earlier.

Please use the box labelled "personal report" in the documents section of your personal profile. You can upload the report in Word or PDF format. The file size should not exceed 4 MB.

If you have any questions, please contact the International Office of your university or write to studierende@bw-stipendium.de.

Name:	Malak Mahmoud Wageeh Rassem
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Home university:	German University in Cairo
Host university:	DHBW Stuttgart
Period of the exchange from - until:	01.03.2020 until 31.08.2020
Creation date:	07.07.2020

- I hereby agree to my report being published on the websites of the *Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM* (www.bw-stipendium.de) and of the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung (www.bwstiftung.de) as well as on BWS-World, the portal of the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM.

Notes on Writing the Personal Report

Feel free to be as creative as you like. We look especially forward to innovative and original forms of presentation (e.g. video, blog etc.).

Of course, you may also share your experiences with the scholarship by answering the key questions below.

As a general rule, your personal report should not exceed the length of 5 pages incl. cover sheet.

If you have an exceptional idea for your report, please coordinate with your international office or with the staff of the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM (studierende@bw-stipendium.de).

PREPARATIONS FOR THE STAY ABROAD

How did you find out about the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM?

My host university informed me by sending an email

Did you have contact with other scholarship holders of the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM before you left or abroad? Did you participate in an event (e.g. summer festival or annual meeting) of the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM before or during your stay?

Yes, however only those who were with me in my university and dorms. Due to the Corona virus there were barely any meetings. Sadly, the online meetings' timings were often not suitable due to studies.

STUDYING AT THE HOST UNIVERSITY

At which host university did you spend your semester abroad? Why did you choose this university in this country?

DHBW Stuttgart. I am writing my bachelor thesis and not taking classes and therefore my choice of the university was due to the fact the bachelor topic they were providing was by far the most interesting to me between other universities' topics.

Were there any major differences compared to your home university? What were they?

Unfortunately, due to the Corona virus we went to the campus only once, since after that, lockdown was imposed by the state. I stayed in contact with my professor via email and online meetings, but this does not really highlight differences between both universities.

How did you prepare for your stay abroad?

For my stay abroad specifically for studying I had to review the tools and materials that I would be using for my bachelor project here. The general preparation on the other hand was the visa and all the legal steps that had to be taken back in my home country in addition to looking for a place to stay in case there was no place in the dorms and looking for suitable flights. I thought I would be so lost the first week or so, that I brought non-perishable food with me in case I starved due to the fact I don't know where

supermarkets are or where to buy food or how to go there, funnily enough, these food items are still here, uneaten. 😊

Would you recommend the host university to other students? Why or why not?

Definitely. The international office's members are beyond helpful and friendly. Always making sure we know what we need to do and always providing us with help and the resources we need.

LIFE IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Was it difficult to find your way in the host country? What surprised you the most?

Surprisingly it was not difficult at all! The first day we had buddies assigned to us from our host university that showed us around and showed us how to use the transportation system and all the apps we need to find our way around. They also showed us where to buy sim cards and the post office to verify our identity. Not to mention how our host university helped us to do the Anmeldung. This made all the necessary steps already done.

What surprised me the most was how most things in Germany close by 8 pm. Back in my home country all pharmacies are open 24/7. Supermarkets close by 2 AM, many of them are open 24/7. Cafes and restaurants close by 12 AM. It took me a long time to adjust to this schedule, it always felt like the day ended so early. And of course, how everything on Sundays and national holidays are closed.

Another thing is: I come from a fairly warm country, my family told me that Germany would still be cold (to us, anyway) even in August. I believed them. I didn't take any light clothing at all. I only took jackets, pullovers and sweaters. Not one t-shirt. And during the first week, in March, it made sense. I was freezing. If I didn't wear gloves my fingers would feel like they have fallen off. But then suddenly. It was EXTREMELY warm. I hurried to get lighter clothes and then to my surprise the following week it was freezing again. The weather is quite unstable here compared to Egypt. It even rains here when it's warm too. This is quite unheard of in my home country. But you get used to it. It becomes normal to you. Thankfully, it is not as freezing as it was in March now that we are in July. The weather now is quite nice, although, still unpredictable.

There is a negative stereotype that Germans are very stiff people, they don't joke around and are not friendly but this FAR from the truth. All Germans I have met have been incredibly accommodating and super sweet and funny. I really wonder where this stereotype is coming from!

Which experience do you remember particularly well?

The day of the corona crisis announcement. Like other people, I heard people are now hoarding toilet paper. So, I went looking for toilet paper and found none. Shelves have been cleared from toilet paper for weeks. But then the next day, it was not allowed to buy more than one package. The immediate action that was taken was very surprising. In addition to that, how everyone was immediately being conscious, aware and not selfish by following rules, wearing masks, and maintaining Abstand of 2 meters made me regain my faith in humanity.

What advice would you give other scholarship holders coming to this host country?

Not to be scared. To go out and meet people with different cultures, views and opinions. An exchange semester is a very enriching experience that you cannot get it any other way.

And for people who become home-sick like me, bring memorabilia; photos or special things from back home, so you don't feel so lonely.

PERSONAL CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

What did you expect from studying abroad? Were these expectations met?

My German (although still pretty bad) have gotten a lot better than I expected! For the sole reason of immersion. One reads German signs and Ads every day, hears announcements in German in the UBahn and so on and so forth. I stopped thinking about the simple conversation and my brain automatically says German words!

I specifically like how things are organised here. Everything is in order.

I thought I would be able to tour around Europe but the borders were closed 😞 Hopefully I would have the time to do so (safely!) in the upcoming weeks.

In hindsight, what were the most important lessons learned for life during your stay abroad?

In Egypt, it is not common for people (specially girls) to leave their parents' house and live alone, even if they are adults, they only leave when they are married. So things like taxes, bills, doctor appointments, food shopping, laundry, cleaning, those "normal" adult things are usually done by our parents. So very minute, simple questions like which is a better detergent? How long to leave a chicken in the oven? Are questions that have never even crossed my mind back home. Thus, taking this independence step in the first place has been very eye-opening and has obviously fed my personal development and growth massively.

But very specifically. I learnt recycling. How environmentally conscious one should be. From day one I learnt there are no plastic bags for groceries and one should bring his own reusable bag with him and that one should separate the trash. A very simple act but helps our Earth a lot.

Would you recommend the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM?

Yes, for sure! The members have been very helpful whenever I had any questions.

Thank you very much for your openness and your time.

We wish you all the best for your future and hope that you will stay a part of the Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM network, e.g. in one of the national and international Regional Chapters.

Are you interested?

Then have a look at <https://www.bws-world.de/portal/spa#orgstr/my-groups/index> and <https://www.bw-stipendium.de/netzwerk/regional-chapter/>.