

Exchange semester abroad at
DHBW Stuttgart, Germany
International Business and Culture
Bachelor studies
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1. Preparation of the stay

The process of going to exchange started already in December 2015, nine months before going abroad. That was the time to go through possible exchange destinations and start to choose the ones to apply to. For me it was quite clear that I wanted to go to Germany. After deciding the destination it was time to prepare all the necessary documents for the application. DHBW Stuttgart demanded many things, some of which we didn't even have in Finland but with the help of my exchange coordinator in Finland we got through this process.

I didn't know how to speak German before I decided to come to exchange here so I had time to study the basics back in Finland. That was really good decision so I felt like I know at least something when I come to Germany. All the matters with DHBW were dealt in English and that was good. With getting the apartment from the SWS in Stuttgart, it wasn't so easy with English but I got through it.

Since Finland and Germany are both in the European Union I got to do the exchange through Erasmus program. Traveling to Germany was easier as well as an European. Before getting here I was reading articles about the culture in Germany to get some kind of picture and not just the stereotypes that I had before. I was going through the news to see what has happened in Germany. All in all moving to another country was easier project than I thought, it just demanded a lot of time and finding out about things.

2. Study in the host country

I studied at DHBW Stuttgart. I'm studying for two semesters and this report is written about the first one, the second one has just started. DHBW studying system with regular students is different to my home university: students are working and studying. In Laurea we study and do two internships during our studies.

In the winter semester I took studies from the programme of Business and culture. I chose the following courses: Employability Skills, General Management Simulation Game, German Culture and Communication styles and Intercultural Negotiation Training. These courses were interesting and taught me a lot about Germany and culture in general. The beginning of the semester for me was filled with studies but in November I had much free time. Most of the studies I had were always in the evenings or during the weekends. In Laurea all of the studies

were always during the day. When spending time in a foreign country it would be nice to have a normal daily rhythm with having studies during the day and having the evenings for yourself, spending time with your new friends and going through the city.

The teachers were generally good. The difference between Laurea and DHBW Stuttgart was, that in Laurea only an educated teacher can give you grades. People who are not teachers can give you lectures, but they can evaluate you. I come from a country where the level of education is high, so it was interesting to come to see how the education is organized in another country.

3. Stay in the host country

Already in Finland we were warned about culture shock and to me it hit really hard when I was in Germany. The beginning was super nice and everything was great. After a month I started to notice differences and thinking which things are better in Finland. It was very hard to accept that there is another way to do things as well. For example people are given a huge pressure to be perfect from school and work and they are complaining about the Winter that to me is like Spring.

It was very interesting to get to know people from so many different cultures. The studies were organized in a way that the exchange students were studying together. I think this is the way in most of the universities but that makes it hard to get to know Germans. During 6 months I learned amazingly much about how different cultures people come from, how does the culture effect to their behaviour and values.

I was happy to come to Germany and to see that things here are really clearly organized and working on point. It made my stay here so much easier. You could always trust that things will work as said. This was true with general things and with DHBW.

I didn't have so much time to do extracurricular activities. I was always working and having hobbies in Finland besides school and in Germany I didn't have my safety things around me anymore. That lead to a phase where I had just time and I started to think through myself and my life. It was really learning moment even though it was very uncomfortable time. I'm happy that I had a person to support

me through it but I hope I would have been braver to get more support for that phase. I learned that I don't always have to go through things alone.

Since Germany is located in the middle of Europe, traveling to other countries is easy. I was mostly seeing the surroundings of Stuttgart and went for a weekend to Milan. Other exchange students were traveling a lot around the surrounding countries and went even further, all the way to Island. Especially for people coming outside of Europe this is a great opportunity.

4. Hands-on tips

- This is the time when you learn the most about yourself when you are really alone sometimes without your friends and family.
- Usually things go good and you will get to know people and get amazing friends from different cultures.
- Germany is punctual and works with paper and documents. That's how it is, you can't change it.
- Be brave to ask help if you need it, from your friends and from people who work in DHBW Stuttgart.
- Take things with you from your homecountry, you will miss them even you wouldn't think so.
- Get hobbies and get to know to people in your host country.
- Enjoy your time, it may be a once in a lifetime opportunity!

5. Personal evaluation

All in all I'm very happy with my stay at DHBW Stuttgart. I always felt welcome and that I belong into the group we had. You got always a really fast answer from the two biggest supports, Christina Pöhler and Andreas Wenseric, to every tiny problem you might have had. I feel like I have bigger opportunities for my future working life after spending time here. After six months and still living here, I feel like I adapted at least somehow to the culture and still have so much to learn more.