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Table of Content

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg | 4 |
| Social and cultural experiences | 5 |
| Conclusion | 8 |

Introduction

I started thinking about a possibility of studying abroad in January 2017 when I started my top-up programme in Digital Concept Development at KEA. By that time I had already graduated from Multimedia Design and Communication Programme at KEA and I had heard from my fellow students about their experience of exchange study. Moreover, I did an Internship abroad while being a Multimedia Design and Communication student.

My decision to become an exchange student was based on both the focus on professional growth within digital concept development and my interest in communication studies. I have always been interested in learning about other cultures. The international environment in the class provided me with more practical knowledge and stimulated my interest in expanding my horizons and getting more experience within intercultural communication.

I chose Germany as my destination for several reasons:

- I had been there many times before and found it less stressful to do my 6 months exchange there than in a less familiar country;
- part of my family lives there, so I could feel safe and get support in case it was needed;
- financially vice, it is cheaper to live in Germany, and my SU and Erasmus grant could cover all my expenses.

DHBW was the university that did exchange for the Digital Concept Development students, so obviously, it was my choice.

Doing the exchange study during the second semester was the only option, since the whole top-up programme lasts only for 3 semesters. But due to the differences in a study year in German University and in KEA I could choose between 3 and 6 months study (the academic year in DHBW consists of 4 terms, each terms lasts 3 months). I chose 6 months to be sure I would have enough time to gain 30 credits.



Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg

Since DHBW did not have exactly the same study programme as in KEA I could choose courses from both Business Department and Multimedia Design. My focus was rather on business than design courses because my chosen specialisation at KEA was e-commerce and I had a bigger interest in Business, Marketing and Communication field. Anyway, I chose some design courses but majority of courses were from business department.

Closer to the end of my exchange I found out that there actually is a Digital Development department. I guess, they do not have courses in English, therefore I was not offered to study there.

The learning agreement between me, KEA and DHBW was changed a couple of times for several reasons. One of them was a time conflict between some courses, especially between Media Design and business ones. I also changed my mind after a deeper insight into the courses during the introduction meeting, and replaced some courses by others.

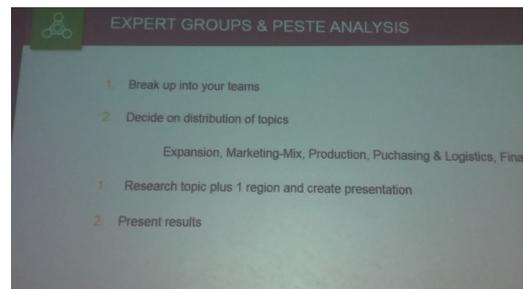
As it turned out pretty soon, all media design courses were taught in German, even though they were claimed to be in English. Sometimes, a teacher gave a short briefing in English for exchange students after the lecture, sometimes the German students helped to translate. Generally, it looked like neither the teachers nor the local students were prepared to have international students in the group. I only completed the copyright course from that department, which was interesting but could be even better if it was fully taught in English. I started the Design Concepts and Design Awards courses but had to give up, since there were other interesting courses from business department, that were fully taught in English.

Besides courses relevant to my study programme, I chose some extra ones like Tourism Management (had a personal interest), Cultural Specific Aspects of Germany (was nice to know since I was there) and German language (planned to learn it before, moreover, they were for free, when normally foreigners need to pay to language schools).

The lectures were given by both local and invited teachers, which created a real international environment. Normally, we had to make a presentation at the end of the courses as a final exam. Evaluation was based on both the general performance of a student during the class and a final presentation. Some courses were easy to pass, some required more time to prepare.

I liked Mr Rudolf's classes the most. He was teaching Business Case Studies and Cultural Aspects of Germany. The teacher was really committed and demanding, I learned much from his lectures. He was also giving a Management in logistics lectures, which I did not participate in.

Some classes were given only for international students, some for both Germans and internationals (mostly during the second term, from October until December). The classes with Germans required bigger concentration and participation. For a "real" study I would recommend those ones.



Social and cultural experiences

During the exchange I met many nice people from all over the world. More international students arrived in October. Surprisingly, a few students could not speak English and obviously had difficulties with learning. Another surprise was that we all had totally different study programmes at home universities, but we were offered the same courses. For example, there was a student who studied Gastronomy and felt lost among all the finance and marketing lectures. Nevertheless, we had a great team and participated in different social activities, sometimes together with German students. Some activities were the "official" ones, organised by school, some were organised by the students themselves. There were for example, the introduction event, Ravensburg excursion, excursions to a waterfall in Switzerland and to Dachau concentration camp, international dinner. Some students also took trips to Constance and Freiburg as a part of marketing courses. One more reason to take those courses for new students who consider learning marketing!

I was lucky to get a seat in the bus for a 3 countries excursion (Switzerland, Austria, Lichtenstein) and another one for the Beer mugs museum that were

offered by another university. They had some seats left and offered to DHBW with a “first come first book” principle.

The location in combination with a local support and good transportation makes it possible to travel pretty much. Students from outside of Europe traveled even more, using budget services as BlaBlacar, Flixbus and low cost carriers. The municipality offered us free students cards for nearly all types of transportation within Bodo region, which allowed us to see the whole place and visit some nice towns like Friedrichshafen, Lindau, Meersburg, Uberlingen, etc even more than once.

The region is very beautiful, especially in summer, with palm trees and promenades near the Lake Constance. There is another Lake, Flappach, close to Ravensburg, but they charge an entrance fee of above 2€. There is different, but not less beautiful environment in winter, especially during Christmas time. Possibilities to go out are a lot: museums, cathedrals, Monkey mountain, Mainau Island, thermal spas, forest, waterfalls, and so on.

In July there is a big local tradition festival in Ravensburg with lots of fun and beer. In October there is Oktoberfest in Munich, Christmas markets everywhere in December and lots of local music, film and other events. Definitely, it is never boring there!

It is easy and not expensive to go to Switzerland, Austria, Lichtenstein or France.

Traditional German cuisine is widely presented in the region. There are many cafes and restaurants everywhere around, including Ravensburg. The only problem is that mostly all of them are located in the centre, it took us around 15 minutes to get there from our residence. Besides German dishes, one can choose among a big variety of different types of meal.

The cost of living is lower than in Denmark. It is affordable to go out, go shopping, travel and eat outdoors. While doing all the mentioned things it is easy to socialise and meet different people.



As for the accommodation, one can reside in one out of 5 student residences (may be more, I know only 5). It is normally decided by the International office, in which residence one would stay. I stayed at Saumweg, the furthest location from the centre.

My expectations were that I would stay alone in a small student apartment like in most Danish dorms, but it turned out students live in shared apartments for 4-5 students, seldom 2. The rent varied from 280 to 320€. In one residence students even shared a room! I shared an apartment with my fellow student from KEA, who did the same exchange study. The principle is to group students according to their nationality, and then according to the study field (business or design).

The overall condition of accommodation is poor, way below the standard, especially the hygiene standard. The biggest problem is silverfish. They are everywhere, really disgusting. The cleanliness depends pretty much on the previous students and in which condition they leave the place. In addition to that, the 2 ladies responsible for that are highly incompetent in what they do. Due to the lack of communication skills and the ability to set priorities, they could not maintain the place and be really helpful. The only answer we got from them when complained about the insects (there were other insects than silverfish, because we lived on the ground floor in summer), was a link to the German website where it was explained how to get rid of them!

We were told we would be provided with bed linen. We were, indeed, but after we had payed the administrative fee of 50€, it turned out that it was washed bed linen left after the previous students.

We had serious problems with Internet and could not do the assignments and work from home, therefore after 3 complaints we were offered another apartment. It was for 4 people, had to be shared with 2 guys, had one bathroom for all (some apartments have 2). We desperately needed the Internet, and agreed to change the apartment. By the time we had to move, the responsible people had forgot what our issue was and left us without Internet for another 3 or 4 weeks. There were more problems with connection later on, so there was no need to change the apartment.

There is a nice yard with a grill in summer time and a laundry room with 2-3 washing machines and a tumble dryer. Some rooms have balconies.

When it comes to study or organisational questions, it is recommendable to ask Páivi, a very nice person, who can help with everything. She is like an octopus,

dealing with all the issues and knowing whom to address with your problem. A head of department Thomas is a very positive and helpful man, too.



Conclusion

I am very happy about my decision to study at DHBW. It gave me a chance to learn from other teachers with different methods, to gain new knowledge and do projects on a different market. This experience helped to broaden my cultural horizon and gave me bigger opportunities on a job market.

I have enriched my cultural experience and gained more friends, shared my knowledge with others and learnt from them, started to learn another language. I would definitely recommend to become an exchange student in Ravensburg to those students who think they can catch up with study at home university due to some differences in programmes, but to look for an accomodation on a private market.

