

## **EXCHANGE STUDY PERIOD AT DHBW STUTTGART**

Winter semester 2022/23

Home university: Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Host university: Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, Stuttgart (DHBW Stuttgart)

Field of study: International Business

Degree intended: Bachelor's degree in International Business

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# 1 LIVING IN STUTTGART

During the preparation seminars for exchange studies, the culture shock was talked about, but I did not take it all that seriously as I thought that Finland and Germany are similar enough so that living in Stuttgart would not be much of a shock. Still, at the beginning of the semester, I did experience culture shock for some time, but in a few weeks it went away.

The support from the international office helped a lot and the welcome week presented nice opportunities for getting to know the classmates. We did the city registration and other needed paperwork during the first week and the amount of paper documents and visits in the city office did feel like a bit of a hassle, and this is coming from a European student. I know that the initial process was a lot more complicated for people coming from outside of Europe.

Before the exchange, I expected daily interactions to be more difficult, but turns out that most people I encountered spoke English and were friendly, so there was no problem with that.

The city of Stuttgart is really nice. It is a relatively small city, but it still had a good number of things to do and see. It is also a great exchange destination, since from Stuttgart it is very easy to travel to other regions of Europe, because it is in a very central location.

I liked the subway and train system in Germany. It is convenient to move from place to place once you learn it.

Application process for the dorm was simple. There was a lot of information about the rooms and there were good instructions available for the process, such as how to fill the application form. In order to get a room in Stuttgart, I had to rent it for 6 months although I only stayed there for 4 and that was inconvenient, but I do also understand that the dorms have such high demand that they need to be rented out that way. The dorm location was very good. It was very close to two subway stations, and it was near the city center.

The dorm itself was surprisingly good. Sure, the building was quite old, and the rooms were very simple, but I still enjoyed my stay there. I had very friendly roommates who also were very helpful so that improved my stay even more.

The exchange study programme was different from my home University as it was tailored specifically to exchange students, so I do think that we were in a bit of a cultural bubble, since we were studying with pretty much only other exchange students and not that much with German people. This made it more difficult to get to know more Germans.

Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the fact that our class consisted of people coming from all around the world, because I got to make friends and get more familiar with a variety of cultures and values that drive human behavior.

## 2 STUDIES

I had good experiences with studying at DHBW Stuttgart. The teachers were nice and did their job well and so did the modern premises and classrooms. DHBW Stuttgart's international study programme offered a variety of business studies and I feel like I got to choose a wide array of courses that fit my needs. My course choices consisted of leadership, investments, online marketing, megatrends, market research and the mandatory German language and intercultural training. Many topics that all tie in closely to my studies.

The exchange studies started with an intensive course in the German language. It surely was intensive since we went through the A1.1 level German textbook in 3 weeks. Personally, the pacing was quite quick, but it still helped me to learn more. After the intensive German course, we started the professional studies.

A few highlights for me personally were the courses about market research and leadership. There was a course about applied market research where we got to do a survey and research about the consumer demand for autonomous driving. It was very new and interesting to me as it was a group project, and we used a variety of equipment for collecting data such as an eye tracker and a brain wave scanning -headpiece.

My second highlight, a leadership course that lasted for a week. We had an experienced lecturer who gave the class great insights from his work and cases from real life leadership situations, and I learned a lot from that.

There were some courses that only lasted for a week and then had the exam at the end of the program. That was interesting because I had not been on courses like that before, since they usually last for the whole semester in my home University. Also, the number of exams was something new to me as in my home University the courses are commonly finished with a group presentation and report, but at DHBW Stuttgart, we did exams for most courses during the final week.

All in all, the courses were interesting and also offered a great amount of free time for traveling and exploring Germany.

### **3 FINAL THOUGHTS AND EVALUATION**

In conclusion, I thoroughly enjoyed my exchange study period in Stuttgart, and it truly was a valuable experience that broadened my cultural understanding, increased my confidence, and of course, brought me useful learnings from the studies. It's always useful to take a look outside my cultural bubble and get out of the comfort zone and this study period was one of those experiences.

I recommend an exchange study period to everyone, and at that, I recommend DHBW Stuttgart for the host University as it's a great school and their international office supports exchange students very well during the stay.