



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:	Clark Thomas
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Home university:	University of Saskatchewan
Host university:	DHBW Stuttgart
Period of the exchange from - until:	Start of your scholarship until End of the scholarship
Creation date:	01.05.2023

- 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.

How I chose DHBW

For my semester abroad I chose to study at DHBW Stuttgart. The selection process for me was quite easy and stress free. Once I started looking into study abroad, I wanted to go to a country in which English was prevalent, that had a stable and well established economic and political state and was centralized to make travelling in my time off pain free. After I chose Germany, I got in contact with the study abroad office at my home University to see if they had any recommendations or co-existing relations with any German Universities. They recommended DHBW in Stuttgart and told me they had an upstanding international program and previous relations with the school. I did some of my own research and decided this was the school for me.

Preparations

Preparing to study abroad in Germany as an international student from Canada was a bit overwhelming, but after getting connected with the right information and resources, it was a smooth and enjoyable experience. I remember there being lots of meetings, applications and organizing to do that was required from both schools.

Once most of the applications and meetings were completed it was important that I researched the university and program I would be attending, as well as the city in which it is located. For example, Stuttgart is known for its strong economy and high standard of living, but rent can be quite expensive and hard to find accommodations. It was also important to research the culture and customs of Germany to better understand and integrate into the community. I did this by researching all I could on life in Stuttgart, mostly seeking out videos and blogs of Canadians who had made the move themselves.

Taking care of all necessary paperwork and documentation, such as obtaining a student visa and enrolling in health insurance was also an important process in preparing for my stay abroad. It was a very easy experience as the international office at DHBW had everything set up for us when we arrived to make the experience seamless. They also helped getting us in contact with the landlords who ran the student government funded housing which was a great option that I believe every international student took advantage of.

Differences in Universities

The educational system in Germany is quite different from what it is in Canada. Classes are often longer, and more lecture based. For example, my class schedule in Canada would have been anywhere from 3 to 5 classes a day for an hour each Monday to Friday. Repeat that schedule for about four months with each class having a final examination at the end of the term to end the course and that would be a typical semester.

At DHBW the class structure was much different. For example, I had German language class which was 8 hours a day Monday to Friday for 3 weeks straight. At the end of those 3 weeks, I wrote a final examination, and that class was finished. Now repeat this same structure with varying class lengths over the next few months and that would make up a semester. This structure was particularly helpful when it came to travelling. For a student like me who took a lighter load I would sometimes have a week or two in-between classes where I was able to travel. It is unheard of to have this kind of time off during the semester back at home and I was receiving endless messages from friends back home telling me how jealous they were.

Overall, I had an amazing experience and very glad I chose DHBW as my host school while studying abroad. They made the move to a new country very easy and stress free. I always knew if I had an issue with the logistics of setting up a new life in a different country, they would be there to help me. They offered relevant classes to my degree that allowed me to come home with credits towards my current program which was very important to me and many other international students. The class schedule is also something that would encourage me to recommend studying at DHBW. It enables students who want to get the most out of studying abroad by being able to experience new countries and cultures to do so.

Life in Germany

It was not overly difficult to find my way in Germany, but I would have to mostly credit this to the buddy program DHBW setup for the international students. Before arriving in Stuttgart, we were all matched with a local student at DHBW in Germany to help us with preparations while still in Canada and to also help us get our feet on the ground once we arrived in Germany. These students all offered such warm welcomes, and some ended up becoming lifelong friends. Without them it would have been much harder to do things like figure out train systems, make friends, get accustomed to cultural norms, and find your way.

One of the best experiences I won't forget while living in Germany was welcome week with our buddy program. This is where we met all the students in our program and all the German buddies. It was nice to have something organized where we could all meet up and socialize and get to hear the basics of life in Germany as a student from actual students. These events included things like pizza nights, rock climbing, pub-crawls, and dinner at a traditional German restaurant to get a real taste of German food.

Once I was situated in Germany, I made very close friends to all my roommates and many other students in the dorms. All the international students were in the same dorm complex and this made it easy to stay close to your friends and always have something to do. I couldn't imagine living on the other side of town as most of my friends. It would not have been as fun and made me feel more alone. Day to day life in Germany became more and more familiar. Making deeper and deeper relationships with the people around me and the city I lived in made it so hard to leave.

Conclusion

My advice to other scholarship holders coming to this country would be to not hold back, don't be shy and always be yourself. This is an opportunity that can at times make you feel overwhelmed and can require a bit of courage. But once you get there, fully experience it and enjoy every moment because you will not regret it.