

2013-2014

University Attended: University of Mannheim

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

The orientation programme lasted for a week and in my opinion was quite useful regarding the academic life – there were a few presentations about the university, the modules we were advised to choose and about the city and the country itself – all of them were very well-structured, intended to help the new students get used to the new life faster and easier. Germany could be a frustrating experience at first because you are expected to deal with a lot of bureaucratic things on your own and nobody would send you a reminder more than once (if you are lucky enough to get even one in the first place). So, one needs to learn to be quite organised and to deal with some stress (at least at the beginning) but overall people are quite nice and are always there to help you!

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

My schedule was quite busy during the week – the lectures last for 90 minutes and there are exercise sessions for 90mins each and sometimes even tutorials either 90mins or 45mins additionally to each lecture. Some of the class sizes were huge, others not. The way of teaching was great in my opinion, very competent teachers, highly professional, who really attracted my interest into their subjects.

The grading system is completely different from the English one but students are given enough information on how to convert the grades and how much they need to gain in order to pass (50%, i.e. a grade of 4.0; 5.0 is a fail). In my opinion, exams could be quite hard – a lot is expected of the students and one really needs to properly understand what the material is about and to be honest, one is expected to very precisely quote a definition of a concept, etc, i.e. you need to perfectly understand everything and try to memorize the most important concepts (I was quite surprised because I always try to paraphrase, however, this is also appreciated by the teachers). There is a discussion board for most of the subject (ILIAS is similar portal to Black Board) and this is the easiest and fastest way to contact the tutors, as well as visiting them during office hours. What I found a bit strange was that they took much longer to respond to emails (in comparison with my home university lecturers, so students are advised to use the discussion boards).

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Available at all times, providing extremely helpful information and reminders, quick responsiveness to enquiries – great communication in general, great help and support.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

I strongly advise all of the future students to attend all of the meeting because any kind of relevant information, basically everything you need to know is explained in a great detail during those meetings. Also, you have a chance to speak to students who have previously attended the institution of your choice and gain a better understanding if this is the right place for you or not.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

The International office is opened Monday-Friday but there are specific Office hours during which students are allowed to speak to coordinators, etc. This was the only downside, because in case of an important issue you have to wait a few days to get some help. Apart from this, the employees at the International office were very helpful and ready to answer any questions.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance i.e. costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy.

As a EU national I am in possession of the European Health Insurance Card and this is the reason I decided not to purchase any additional health insurance but I would strongly advise anybody who does not have this card to register with an insurance company for the time in Germany because I heard only getting some doctors' advice could be crazy expensive.

<http://www.slowtravelberlin.com/guide-health-insurance-germany/>

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

There were no additional fees I was charged at university – what is not mentioned is the semester contribution which is €66.5 per semester.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

After receiving the access to the university portal I was able to apply for university halls of residence. I would advise future students to do so as soon as possible since the places at the dorms are highly limited. I decided to go for a private shared apartment (WG), which turned out to be the best choice for me – convenient location, affordable rent price, great flatmates. It is really a matter of luck to a certain extent of finding a great place to stay (or a place to stay into at all) because I heard (after arriving in Mannheim) that some people were staying at hotels for a few weeks until their accommodation was sorted. Quite frustrating, in my opinion, especially for exchange students who are unfamiliar with the surroundings.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Mannheim is not a huge city – I was lucky enough to live in the very heart of the city, therefore I did not have to use any public transport on a daily basis.

Usually, people who stay in Mannheim for two semesters can benefit from one semester ticket for free (usually, it is approximately €150 per semester). The best way to get from point A to point B is using the tram within the city and a train if you want to get to a distant place. Usually trains are quite expensive in Germany (personal opinion) but one does get different discounts (by purchasing a train card whatsoever; by travelling in a group of people at the weekends and not only, etc.) Buses are not a common transportation way, in fact, they have only been introduced quite recently – of course they are much cheaper at the expense of the time you spend to get to a certain location.

Furthermore, a quite popular way of transport is the shared ride which young people use mostly – it is very cheap and usually it is a good way to meet nice German people and practice your language.

There are numerous different parties and social events organized throughout the academic year and it is quite easy to meet other exchange or home students. What I found particularly amazing is that one is able to meet a lot of people from their field of study (most specifically Business and Economics) simply because the Business school and the School of Law and Economics is the best and largest one. I got to know a lot of people doing Business, sharing my interests and even career aspirations.

When it comes to the integration with the local students – I would say that it would have been much easier for me to get to know them better at the very beginning if I spoke the language. Despite this, I was sharing an apartment with German people (all local students here are fluent in English, so no communication problems) and I was easily integrated in their lifestyle. I did make a lot of German friends which I am particularly happy about, because this is how I improved my language skills and got to know their culture a bit better. I have to admit that I really have been spending a great time in Mannheim and I learned a lot about the country and different traditions – German people are very interesting and quite intelligent, so you cannot be bored in Germany ever.

Most of the societies or career fairs, workshops etc. are in German, but there are enough of them provided in English, depends on the demand. The one that I wanted to join was unfortunately in German.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

This is one of the greatest years of my life, full of amazing new experiences, new acquaintances and great memories that I will remember forever.