

Exchange at DHBW Stuttgart

I'm Emil, a 32 year old Business Economy & IT student at Copenhagen Business Academy (KEA). I went to study a semester abroad at Duale Hochschule Baden Wurttemberg (DHBW) in Stuttgart. I took a summer semester starting from the beginning of March 2024 until the beginning of Juli 2024. Opposite to the project-based study method at KEA, a DHBW semester is comprised of a lot of different small courses, ranging from as little as 2 ECTS and up till 6 ECTS.

A German course (6 ECTS) is mandatory for studying in DHBW and was a very good introduction, both to German culture and their language. For me personally I wanted to become better at German, so it was a perfect fit. Your German level will be determined before arrival to put you in a class fitting of your level.

German Cultural training (3 ECTS) is mandatory as well. It is a course briefly introducing German norms and standards, both in terms as a student and professionally. It is great for helping people settle to the city and German culture. Coming from northern Europe not much is different but still an aspect of for example punctuality means a lot to the Germans.

Intercultural Negotiation Training (5 ECTS) is a negotiation and debating course with focus on the cultural differences there can be found around the world. Scenarios based on real-life negotiations (material from Harvard Business School) must be played out either in groups and/or individually. It is a very given course especially in an exchange group with so many different cultures and perspectives by default.

International Marketing (4 ECTS) focuses on how companies expand abroad with focus on marketing. Choosing markets outside of your domestic market, how to price your products, where and how to produce and eventually target your ideal customer.

Digital Marketing: Online Advertisement and Social Media marketing (4 ECTS) focuses on marketing through media enabled by the rise of the internet. Websites and smartphones are gateways into the consumers wallet. The ability to use marketing efficient on these “tools” is essential for a modern company. This course focuses on that.

International Management – Case Studies (3 ECTS) teaches what companies must do to internationalize successfully. Hofstede's six cultural dimensions and different internationalization

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strategies is in the curriculum at this course and ends with the student finishing a paper analysing a German company's internationalization strategy. I for example wrote a paper on how Adidas went from its humble beginnings to being a global company.

CSR and corporate Governance (3 ECTS) focuses on the ethical and legal requirements for companies in a modern world. Examples is presented through case studies and in-depth analysis of major business scandals with focus on bad conduct in organizations. A report is written as homework during the span of two months with focus on the Wirecard scandal in Germany.

Introduction to Data Analytics and Data Driven Decision Making (2 ECTS) is a brief course introducing the student to how data has developed from being descriptive and informative into being highly involved in modern decision making through the means of analytics and recently with the use of AI algorithms.

Academic Experience

1. How helpful was the *receiving school* in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

A document underlining the different courses was sent prior to the decision-making process. It gave a brief introduction to every course and showed the exam dates of the courses which was quite helpful when choosing courses and managing your potential travel plans.

2. What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

The intercultural negotiation training course was rewarding in so many ways. The course material was of high quality and up to date with the newest standard. Zeina Matar who taught the course was a perfect introduction not just to being abroad but also with gaining knowledge about different cultures and theories regarding the course. The combination of an exchange class with people from around the world and the practical and almost theatrical approach to learning in this course enabled the very high engagement from everyone involved.

International Management and the focus on Hofstede's six cultural dimensions in combination with the writing of a report about a German international business gave me a deep insight and interest in both the theory applied but also the company's history.

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Digital Marketing: Online Advertisement and Social Media marketing gave me an important introduction to the importance of the use of social media and online marketing in a modern business world. Knowledge I will use in the future.

German Language course was ideal for me because I wanted to learn German and become more proficient at the language. This course is mandatory for DHBW Stuttgart but also very situational for the student. For me it was a great opportunity to learn more German and get to settle in Stuttgart.

3. What classes/study experiences did you find least relevant or least valuable to you? Why?

International Marketing was very generic and like having a Business Strategy course in Denmark with similar theories applied but with different names. Could have done without.

CSR and Corporate Governance is all about law and regulations. Not the most engaging course for me. If you are into governance of any sort this is most definitely the course for you.

4. What classes would you advise other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I would recommend the courses that fits your career goals and profile the best. So read through my comments about the courses and chose what seems to fit you the best.

Practical Experience

1. How was the application process?

- a) What did KEA help you with?
- b) What help did you receive from your school abroad?

The application was painful. There is a lot of documentation that must go back and forth and losing track of it all is very easy. KEA is very good at helping with this though. Don't be afraid to ask your exchange coordinator for help when in doubt or when it is needed. The school abroad is not very helpful initially, and it can be very confusing when the school abroad needs something and when the Erasmus+ procedure needs information.

2. Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your destination?

- a) How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

Not really. It was fine and all. Everyone was very helpful. Especially the people at the dorm and the two Exchange coordinators at the location. They were basically available whenever you would need them when we arrived.

3. Where did you live?

- a) Was it difficult to find accommodation? b. Was it expensive?

I lived at Heilmanstrasse 4B. A student dorm located very centrally in Stuttgart just 3 minutes away from the subway. It was very easy to apply – just follow the instructions sent from the host organization. The dorm itself though is having serious issues with the laundry rooms at the moment of writing this. The laundry was expensive and rarely worked. The contract for renting a room must be for 6 months and I didn't personally find a sublet for the last two months. Even though I was trying for a very long time (3 months). This makes it quite expensive as I had to pay for two months I didn't use it. If possible, I would look for another place in Stuttgart, together with some other students.

4. What kind of expenses did you have in general?

- a) Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

Yeah, a lot of unforeseen expenses tends to come up. The dorm kitchen didn't have anything. You basically have to set up a new life for yourself abroad – on a budget. Not a very easy task.

5. What kind of income did you have during your exchange?

- a) Did you receive SU and/or Erasmus
b) Did you apply for any grants, and did you receive any?

I received SU and Erasmus + during my stay – it would not have been possible without it. I didn't apply for any grants. I would really recommend people doing this, and in good advance. The only person who applied got a grant – just do it.

Cultural/Personal Experience

1. What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?
 - a) How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

Not many. Germany is very similar to Denmark in many ways. The biggest and most annoying thing is that most grocery stores are closed on Sundays. This is very manageable though. You end up shopping every Saturday after 1-2 weeks of living in Germany.

2. What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

Living and travelling in southern Germany and meeting people from all over the world at the studies. The Euro 2024 Cup in football was running as well halfway through the studies which was just magical and perfect timing. The country you're travelling to, wherever it is, will have a lot to offer culturally. I spend a lot of time hiking and meeting local Germans all over. This was by far the greatest experience.

3. What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

Definitely go. The younger the better I would say as well. Perfect if you're a student between 20-25. The level of education is not better, but you will get an experience and obtain knowledge your home university and daily living would never be able to offer. It has more of a culturally enriching experience to go abroad than pure hard skills. Choose your location wisely. It can benefit you in many ways. A potential business partner in the future? A language you want to learn? A country or an area you want to explore further? Or something else?