



Exchange Report

UNIVERSITY OF MANNHEIM

Donna Yong | Finance major | Spring 2018

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Monthly Activity Log

Feb

It was my first month in Mannheim, full of anxiety and excitement. Anxiety resulted from a large number of procedures that need to be done, and lots of necessities that need to be purchased. The exciting feeling was because of coming to a new place. Everything and every place in the city gave me a new experience.

Mar

After the thrill of the first month, I started to get bored with this city. Honestly, Mannheim is a small city, and comparing with other European cities, there is lack of magnificent architectures nor famous attractions in Mannheim, so it is very easy to get bored when you stay there for long. But fortunately, the location of Mannheim is extraordinary so that I could travel to lots of place in Europe within my long Easter break.

Apr

Although Mannheim was still boring as usual, I met some friends here. It is good to have some friends with you to drink beer together.

May

Having my last month in Mannheim and Germany, I decided to travel in some famous cities in Germany, such as Berlin and Hamburg. After a few trips, I needed to go back to Mannheim and start preparing my final examinations.

Jun

Feeling relieved after finishing my exams, I picked my luggage and prepared to go home.

General Exchange Information

1) VISA PROCEDURES

It is strongly recommended to start your visa application process once you have received the letter of admission from your exchange university. The application process would take at least 4 weeks, and it is very likely to take longer time. After you receive the letter of admission, you should immediately make an online appointment on the website of Germany Consulate. You should bring some documents on the day you go to the Consulate, such as:

- Passport;
- Passport photos;
- Visa application forms;
- Letter of Admission;
- CV;
- Transcript;
- Financial proof;
- Health insurance;
- Letter from HKUST that you are taking part in an exchange programme and you will return and continue your study;

You can find the detailed list on the Consulate's website. For the financial proof, if the financial proof that you provided could not match the requirements of the Consulate, the Consulate may require you to set up a blocked account which would take you another 3-4 weeks, so it would be wise for you to go to the Consulate with all required documents as soon as possible and let them to assess your situation in advance.

2) ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES

There would be a number of orientation activities in the first week, most of them is about the important things that you should know to study and live in Mannheim, so it is very important that you do not miss those orientation sessions. After the orientation sessions, there would be some snacks and beverages provided for you so that you could meet other exchange students while enjoying your food.

3) INTERNATIONAL SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

There are lots of parties for exchange students to join. If you really like parties, you would have lots of chances to join parties.

4) ACCOMMODATION

University of Mannheim provides a limited amount of accommodation for exchange students. It would send an email informing you the time and instructions for application of student housing. You can have a look on the housing information before you make the decision. There is accommodation in different locations, which are all off-campus. B5 is the one closest to the campus and only takes 10 minutes walking to the school. Hafenstraße, which was where I lived, has the best view as it is on the riverside and you may be able to enjoy the view of river every day. Ulmenweg is the far away from the campus, but if you are a party animal, you may love that place as there are all kinds of parties all over the year. There are different types of accommodation, which includes single room with shared kitchen and bathroom, single room with shared bathroom and single apartment, ranging from €290-€350. You should pay extra attention to the time for online application as the competition is fierce and you may not be able to apply for student housing even after a few minutes.

5) COURSE REGISTRATION

This is the one of the worse practices of the university. The course catalogue for exchange students changed a lot just before the spring term started, which makes students have not enough time to do the assessments on the credit transfer. Also, there are only a few choices of courses for exchange students.

6) TEACHING & ASSESSMENT METHODS ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES

For exchange students who don't have any knowledge in German, there are lectures taught in English. Most of the courses for exchange students only have one final exam for assessment.

7) FINANCE & BANKING (INCLUDING CURRENCY / EXPENSES)

For some of the exchange students, the German Consulate may require them to open a blocked account as their financial proof. The German Consulate may ask the applicants to set up an account in a German bank such as Deutsche Bank with a large amount of money

upfront, where the applicants are only allowed to withdraw not more than 720 euros per month after the applicants arrived at Germany. The set-up of the blocked account takes both time and money, so you should consult with the Consulate as soon as possible to see whether you need the blocked account as your financial proof.

After you arrive at Mannheim, you will need to go to the government office to apply for a residence permit. Then you can go to any local bank to open a bank account. If you applied the student accommodation, you will need the account to transfer the rent.

Just like most countries in Europe, the currency used in Germany is euro. I would suggest bringing some euros instead of trying to exchange the currency in Germany as it is not that easy to exchange the money if you don't know any German.

8) HEALTH & SAFETY

On the registration day, there will be some staff from the insurance company to check the health insurance you bought is valid or not. They will suggest you to buy the health insurance from them. But actually the insurance provided by ust should be enough for students within their exchange period, so it is not necessary to buy the insurance from the local insurance company. But of course, if you want to have better guarantee, you can consider buying it.

Mannheim is relatively safe place comparing to other European cities. There is no much to worry about your safety.

9) FOOD

Since there is a lot of Turkey people in Mannheim, lots of Turkish restaurants is located in the Main Street. You can easily grab a kebab for €5. If you choose to have a meal in a diner, it may cost you around €10-€15. A much cheaper choice would be the canteen of the university, which only costs you €3-€5 for lunch. However, the taste is not guaranteed, and the canteen only opens during breakfast time and lunch time..

10) TRANSPORTATION

I strongly recommend students to buy a semester ticket, which allows you to use any public transportation in Mannheim during the whole semester. You can also travel to nearby cities such as Heidelberg for free using the semester ticket.

There is no international airport in Mannheim. If you want to travel to other countries, the best way is taking train from Deutsche Bann to Frankfurt airport. It is also suggested

to download the DB app so that you can buy the tickets via the app as the waiting time for buying a ticket in the ticket office is quite long.

11) CLIMATE

The winter of Mannheim is around 5 °C. Although it seems very cold for students grew up in Hong Kong like me, it is not that insufferable as there is heater in most of the rooms.

For the summer in Mannheim, since I only stayed in Mannheim until the early June, the hottest temperature I had experienced is around 28 °C. However, as there is no air conditioner in the accommodation, it is actually quite hot.

12) COMMUNICATION

The lectures for exchange students are taught in English, but the communication in daily life is mainly in German. You may encounter some troubles if you don't know any German as there is no English instructions or signs in places like train station, and people may not be able to speak fluent English.

ITEMS TO BRING

1. Passport (with your student visa on it) & copies of passport
2. Passport photos
3. Letter of admission
4. Transcript
5. Health insurance proof
6. Receipt of payment for student accommodation (if applicable)
7. Router (for student housing)
8. Plug adapters
9. Rice cooker (quite important for me)

USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

1. Visa information

<http://www.germany-visa.org/student-visa/student-visa-visum-zu-studienzwecken/>

2. Information about blocked account

<http://www.germany-visa.org/blocked-account-for-foreign-students-in-germany/>