

Erfahrungsbericht über einen Auslandsaufenthalt im Rahmen eines Austauschprogramms (Studium)

Gastland: Irland

Gastinstitution: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND MAYNOOTH

1. Für welches Austausch- oder Förderprogramm fertigen Sie diesen Erfahrungsbericht an?
Erasmus (Europa oder Übersee)

2. Vorbereitung (Planung, Organisation und Bewerbung bei der Gasteinrichtung)

Fau had a new partnership with Maynooth University(MU) in March 2022. Therefore MU was only available for students applying in the third round. Ireland is usually competitive when it comes to English speaking countries, as it is the only officially english speaking country in the Erasmus program(after Brexit). For my application, I had to submit the recent transcript of records, motivation letter and English level certificate(B2). I already had a TOEFL exam certificate which I needed for university applications. I just had to get this certificate recognized from the Language department. After receiving the offer from FAU, within a couple of weeks, I received an email from the host University to fill out the University application form. After a few weeks after filling the host university application form, we received an official letter of acceptance from Maynooth University with all the further details about course selection and Welcome week. In the course selection portal, you will have to select courses and submit your transcript of records to the host university and they will then approve the respective courses. I then had to send a separate email to the records office to register which exact courses we want to take. Simultaneously, I also had to search for similar courses at WISO for my modules from MU to be recognized at FAU. As an IES student, i had the option to recognize up to 20 ECTS as auslandsblock, so it was personally not a problöem, as I could choose modules from a wide range of modules. You will also need private long term travel health insurance(even if you are an EU citizen). The university would not issue your ID card unless you show the proof of a travel health Insurance

3. An- und Einreise (Visum, Flug/Bahn/Bus)

Ireland is a part of the European Union and EU students do not need a passport or a visa to travel to Ireland. But personally as a Non EU student, I had to apply for a Visa at the Irish Embassy in Berlin well before time. MU would also send you a reminder and an acceptance letter which you would have to send in with your visa application. The Visa process was pretty smooth and it took around 4 weeks for the whole process. I didn't have to travel to Berlin, I could send the documents by post and they also send the passport back by post once the process is done for an extra price. Maynooth University is very close to Dublin and there are cheap direct flights from Nürnberg to Dublin at least 3 times a week. Dublin airport is also well connected to the rest of the city and the country through public transport. There are also private airport shuttle buses which take you to Maynooth.

4. Unterkunft (Wohnheim/Privat)

Due to the housing crisis it could sometimes be challenging to find accommodation in Ireland. Unfortunately, due to high demands from other full time Students from Maynooth university, the Erasmus students couldn't apply for the on-campus accommodation. Therefore, we were asked to search for private rooms/ private student accommodation/ Host families. The MU has an online platform where the host families could put their ads for their room and we could then contact them privately. Most of the Erasmus students including me found our accommodation on this platform. Living with host families is a great way to get more integrated into Irish culture. There are also some frauds which one might come through, so its always important to look out for any possible fraud signs. Always make sure to speak to the host family personally through video/voice calls before transferring the money. Maynooth is a small university town. There were not enough accommodations there. Most of the students lived in nearby towns/villages or even in Dublin city. Travelling to Maynooth was not a problem at all. There are usually lots of buses/ trains going to Maynooth from neighbouring towns.

5. Fachlicher Aufenthalt an der Gasteinrichtung (Lehrveranstaltungen, Praktikumsinhalte und -aufgaben, Sprachkurse, Stundenplan, Prüfungen, Abschlussarbeit)

As the official language of the University is English, there were plenty of courses to choose from different departments. You are free to choose any courses from any department which you could recognize at WISO. Most of the modules are of 5 ECTS at Maynooth university. The concept of assignments are really common in Ireland compared to Germany. For some courses there were assignments every two weeks, which would then be counted to your final grade at the end. These assignments are a great way to improve your grade. As the exams usually take place in January for the winter semester, the Erasmus students who were only studying at MU for one semester, didn't have to come back after the Christmas break for the exams, instead for of the module the Erasmus students had to sit for the exam before the christmas break i.e. in the last week of the lecture period and for some of the modules had final assignments or were graded on the basis of mid term exam and biweekly assignments instead. There were also a number of language courses to choose from. There were also Support centres like Mathematics or economics support centres, where we could if we needed any kind of help for our studies.

6. Betreuung an der Gasteinrichtung (International Office, Fachbereich, Praktikumsbetreuung

The international office at MU was really helpful to all the international students if they had any kind of questions. There were also few introductory meetings held before the exchange semester for all the students to clear up any questions we had. In the welcome week, we were also provided with all the information needed for the whole stay. For non EU students, there was also a visa officer where we could register for our stay, which is more than 3 months. Different departments have support centres to help the students with any subject related questions.

7. Ausstattung der Gasteinrichtung (Bibliothek, Computerräume, Laboratorien, Unterrichts- und Arbeitsräume etc.)

MU has a modern library on the south campus, which is just adjacent to the north campus.. There were plenty of places to sit and study. There are also group study rooms in the library. These study rooms are equipped with modern projectors. Other than this there were also lots of seminar rooms and study places in different buildings all over the campus. There were also computer rooms and computers in the library to work. Other than that, you could also rent laptops for a day from the library for free. Different computer and science labs are also available on campus. There are also more than 100 clubs and societies(From kayaking to GAA, from tea society to dance society) at MU for students priced at around 3€ for one club/society membership. That is one of the best ways to get to know people and learn a complete new sport. The activities were usually held at least twice a week. There is also a gym on campus for students to use free of charge.

8. Alltag und Freizeit (Sehenswertes, Kulinarisches, Geld abheben, Handy, Jobs)

Ireland is a very beautiful country. There is a lot to do and a lot of places to visit. It is also easy to get to different places from Dublin by train or bus. As students it is really cheap to travel by public transport using the student/Young adult leap card (Which I recommend to order at the place, at least 3-4 days before travelling to Ireland). There are also various trips organised by Erasmus Student Network (ESN). There are beautiful places close to Dublin (Howth, Bray) where you can go for day hikes. I used to spend most of my free time during the week at clubs and societies. There is also a Student Unions' Pub on campus, where you can find the cheapest drinks every evening. There are different restaurants and cafes on campus. Meals here are comparatively expensive, that's why most of the students used to prefer to get their lunch packed from home and just use microwaves on campus. There are supermarkets close by, where you can also buy ready-made meals. There are many supermarkets in Ireland like Aldi and Lidl, which are open everyday including Sundays till late night. As Ireland is also in the EuroZone, you can use your local German EC-card without any extra charges. You can also use your German phone number in Ireland. Finding part time jobs for just 4 months could be a bit difficult as most of the jobs require a long term contract. Most of the Erasmus Students do not prefer to work for these months, so that they can explore the country during their free time and you will also be supported by the Erasmus grants. You usually would need travel insurance for these 4 months which covers all your medical costs, but if you want then there is also a doctor on campus for free of charge. Going to pubs in Ireland is definitely one of the best experiences I had almost every weekend or even during the week, especially for pub events like Pub quiz which are held every week in some pubs. There are some good pubs in Maynooth, which are always full with students during the week and at the weekend. There are many pubs and clubs in Dublin city. There is usually no need to worry about coming home late from Dublin to Maynooth or neighbouring areas, as there are buses running 24/7.

9. Finanzielles (Lebenshaltungskosten, Stipendien, finanzielle Unterstützung der Gasteinrichtung)

Living expenses in Ireland are usually higher than Germany. The accommodation in Ireland is very expensive but groceries in supermarkets are much cheaper or sometimes even similar to Germany. Alcohol is expensive in supermarkets as well as in pubs and restaurants. Eating at restaurants is also a bit on the higher side compared to Germany. Every student studying in Germany and applying to any universities through Erasmus+ program is entitled to receive the financial allowance. In addition to the normal financial allowance, students can also apply for extra financial assistance if you are a first academic in the family and so on. These financial assistance are really helpful.

10. Fazit (beste und schlechteste Erfahrung)

Spending one semester abroad at Maynooth was one of the best decisions of my life. It was also the best time I had. It helped me to take a break and experience a totally different culture. The best experience was meeting people from all around the world and being able to speak one common language that is English instead of learning a new language. The course selections were also pretty vast. And the best thing was the clubs and societies offered, where you could choose sports or meet like minded people and spend most of the time there. Searching for accommodation and the living expenses in Ireland could be the most difficult part. But if you are lucky enough, you can find an accommodation easily and also for a cheaper rate.

11. Wichtige Ansprechpartner und Links

For leap card(used for public transports for half the price):

<https://www.leapcard.ie/Home/index.html>For ESN membership (can be used to get ryanair Erasmus student offer): <https://esncard.org/>

12. Nur Erasmus-Aufenthalte: Für diejenigen Studierenden, die eine Sonderförderung erhalten haben: Bitte stellen Sie kurz dar, wie Sie Ihren Aufenthalt in dieser Hinsicht erlebt haben.

The special funding was a great help financially, especially in a expensive country like Ireland, where my total living expenses for almost 2x my expenses in Germany.