

# **Erfahrungsbericht über einen Auslandsaufenthalt im Rahmen eines Austauschprogramms (Studium)**

Gastland: Vereinigtes Königreich  
Gastinstitution: Staffordshire University

## **1. Für welches Austausch- oder Förderprogramm fertigen Sie diesen**

### **Erfahrungsbericht an?**

Erasmus (Europa oder Übersee)

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

The administrative support at my host university was divided into different groups, which covered different areas and due to that, it was not easy to get any information about my courses before I went abroad. I spent a lot of time writing e-mails back and forth with the various departments, only to find out that they could not give me any more information or that they had to correspond with someone else to obtain it. It took a long time for me to fill out my Learning Agreement, and I was not able to get any signatures from the chairs at my home university, but instead had to use the "Auslandsblock" module in order to get my courses accredited. This is the module for classes for which there is limited information available.

Furthermore, it took until mid June for me to receive a letter of acceptance, during which I should have already started with my Learning Agreements, and added to the stress I was experiencing as a result of not knowing what courses to take, or where I would be able to live. The information regarding housing came late as well, the info session the university offered was held online and afterwards one could apply for accommodation on campus, which I did and ended up living in one of the houses that were on offer.

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

For travelling to the UK, one has to apply for an ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation), which costs 16 pounds and was very easy to acquire online. Because I was in the UK for less than six months, a visa was not necessary.

Since I spent my semester abroad in the UK, I had to travel by plane. I flew to Manchester and took the train from there to Stoke-on-Trent.

## **4. Unterkunft (Wohnheim/Privat)**

As mentioned before, I applied for an accommodation on campus. This process proved tedious as well, because at first I received the offer for my desired house, but for a time period which would not be sufficient for the duration of my stay, and I had to make multiple calls and write more emails until this problem was solved. In the end, I was able to move in on the 15th of September.

There was only a mattress in my room, I had to buy bedding on the same day. A "Welcome Package" was advertised in the online info session about housing, and was said to include pots and pans and other necessities. Upon my arrival, I went to ResLife, which is an office that deals with any issues you may face with your accommodation, and asked for such a package. At first, they responded by stating they had not heard of such an offer, but since I could show them that a "Welcome Package" was printed on my lease document, I was able to acquire some items, including pots, pans, bedding and towels for free.

Most of the issues with my house were solved quickly, there is the "Solve" platform, in which you can log any problem you have, and ResLife will send someone to your house to take a look and repair the damage. However, when I voiced my concerns about a hole underneath the bathroom sink and peeling foliage, which could lead to mould, it took three weeks for someone to come to my house and repair it.

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

Additionally to the two courses I gained a bit of information beforehand and included in the "Auslandsblock", I applied for a signature at a chair at my home university for a third course. Upon arriving at my host university, a coordinator of the business modules informed me about my options, and I decided to take this third course.

The courses consisted of different assignments, some required essays only, others group work, or were a written exam.

Classes were longer than at my home university, each one being four hours long. Attendance was mandatory, since we had to log in our attendance via the Staffordshire App, called "Beacon". Each lesson, we got a code from our professor, and had to type it into the app to prove our attendance.

The teaching style was less formal than at my home university, it felt more like a school lesson than a university lecture. In two of my courses we were only ten students, and the teachers encouraged us to participate and voice our opinion on various topics throughout the lesson.

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

The administrative support at my host university was friendly. Upon arrival, they instructed me on my courses and answered any queries I had.

Before my stay abroad, the communication was frustrating, since each department seemed to have little knowledge on the other departments, and when I wrote to them per e-mail about my various questions on my classes and accommodation, I was almost always redirected to another person who would be able to help me.

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

The University of Staffordshire has a small library for borrowing books, but it does not include a lot of desks or computers for studying. For this purpose, I would recommend the Catalyst building, that has multiple floors with many computers, and even separate rooms that you can book if you need more quiet or want to work on a project with other students.

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

The university has many different clubs and societies, and a gym on campus that is free to use for people who live on campus. The gym was very good, they had a lot of equipment and the opening hours were very convenient, because it was open every day of the week, and until ten p.m. from Monday to Friday.

There is also a swimming pool in the Fenton Manor Sports Complex, about 15 mins walking distance from the campus. You can swim there for free if you show your Student ID Card.

In my leisure time I went to the pool, the gym, and joined two of the societies: the Student Dance Society and the Psychology Society, which was a study society. I enjoyed my time with them a lot and it was a great way of meeting new people.

Stoke-on-Trent does not offer anything worth visiting in particular. It is a small town with only a pub restaurant and a fast food store if you want to eat out.

There is also the Ember Lounge, a venue for students which is similar to a pub, and the university hosts a karaoke session there very tuesday. There you can eat fast food and desserts.

The Catalyst further offers sandwiches, soup and a salad bar, as well as desserts. They also have a menu that changes every day, however that one mostly includes chips, and occasionally pasta or Asian food.

There are two big supermarket stores, Sainsbury's and Lidl, located directly next to each other, about 20 mins walking distance from the campus. The city centre of Stoke-on-Trent, Hanley, offers more restaurants and shops, however the area is very run-down and I did not feel comfortable walking there, so I did not go there often.

Barclay's bank is good for if you need to withdraw money, but I did that once in Nottingham, during one of my day trips. Otherwise, I only used my debit card, which works for almost any purchase.

For my phone, I did not buy a SIM card, but there is WIFI on the train, and I was content to use that when travelling throughout the UK.

In general, I highly recommed buying a Railcard for 16-25 year olds, because it makes travelling so much cheaper and you can book your train tickets in advance with the "Railboard" app. For me, having a new destination planned and exploring the UK, made my stay in Stoke-on-Trent so much better and I had something to look forward to.

## **9. Finanzielles (Lebenshaltungskosten, Stipendien, finanzielle Unterstützung der Gaststeinrichtung)**

Sainsbury's and Lidl are two supermarkets that are right next to each other, and offer a wide range of food. Sainsbury is more expensive than Lidl, but I went there more often, because the store is bigger and I was sure to find what I was looking for. If I knew what I had to buy and strictly adhered to my list, I went to Lidl, since it was easier to find my way around there. The Sainsbury store can be quite confusing with its many aisles, and if I did not have much time, Lidl was simply quicker.

There is an Aldi supermarket down a narrow field path, which is the same to get to the Fenton Manor Sports complex, and this store was also quite good.

The ERASMUS funding was great for covering my rent and some groceries, and I am very grateful that this funding exists to help support students studying abroad like me.

#### **10. Fazit (beste und schlechteste Erfahrung)**

My best experience has been travelling through the UK. With the Railcard, I was able to travel for a good price and the train station was only a four-minute walk from my house, which proved to be very convenient. Among the cities I've visited, with a friend I made here and alone, are: Nottingham, Bath, Liverpool, Manchester, London, York and Oxford. Travelling on my own was something I had not done before, but which I found gave me much joy and self-fulfillment.

After my last exam mid-January, some family members of mine and I went to Scotland, which I highly recommend. Edinburgh was, out of all the places I've been to, the most beautiful and certainly a city which I am going to visit again in the future.

The best decision I've made was to live in a student accommodation on campus, because I formed meaningful connections and friendships with my flatmates, and other German students who were staying abroad and lived on campus. Otherwise, it would have been really difficult to make friends, because the people in my classes seemed very distant and already had their friendgroups.

Especially with regards to my flatmates, having someone ask you how your day has been and chatting with them in the evening made my first time away from home less daunting and it is very important to have someone who checks-in on you when you are in a new environment, such as in a foreign country.

My worst experience was when I went on a solo-trip to a park in Biddulph, which is a short train and bus ride away from Stoke-on-Trent. The park was beautiful and the entry was free, and it offered nice long walks through the forest and next to a lake. I placed my phone on top of my backpack to take a picture of myself in front of the lake, and the backpack fell over, making my phone topple into a hole between two stone surfaces, which created a plateau. This hole, which I had not noticed before, was filled with water, and very deep. Despite my best efforts, and the aid of other visitors at the park, I was unable to retrieve my iPhone, and it is still lying there, at the bottom of this well.

Loosing my phone was one of my biggest fear when going abroad, and this situation was another big obstacle to overcome. The situation was solved by my mom, who I had to contact by E-Mail, and who sent me my old iPhone and an eSIM. I have been using this phone since, but during the time in which I had no phone, I could not even access my Staffordshire Uni account, since I had the Authenticator App necessary to access it on my phone. Therefore I could not verify my attendance in class with the Beacon App, or access course material. After putting my issue in "Solve" and explaining it thoroughly, someone was able to help me use the Authenticator App with my iPad.

This entire experience was unpleasant and if you intend to go hiking or simply taking a walk in the UK, I recommend you to be very careful with your phone, since there can be cracks or surfaces on the ground which could prove fatal for your phone, even if you don't notice them at first.

All in all, I am glad I studied in the UK. My courses were interesting and I learned new perspectives, seeing as we were taught the British views on certain topics, and had to give our own point of view, comparing the two. Travelling and spending time in my societies were a lot of fun.

The friends I made here are people I will always remember fondly and who gave me a sense of belonging in the UK, and I am very grateful to have met them and am sorry to leave them. These are

friendships which will stay with me well beyond my stay abroad.

### **11. Wichtige Ansprechpartner und Links**

Philippa Rowland, the Placement Officer, has been very friendly and was my main E-Mail contact prior to my stay. She was the one who gave me information on my courses and studying at Staffordshire University.

Karl McCormack is the coordinator of the Business department, and he helped me decide which courses to take, and gave me advise on which might be more suitable for me. He was also very enthusiastic and open to answering my questions.

### **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.**