



Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Student Report

OCAD U Program: Digital Futures
Host University: BTK
Host Country: Germany
Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Communication Design
Semester: Summer
Date of Report: 30/07/18

1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

Poor Excellent
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Why did you choose this host institution? What key factors or issues influenced your decision?

I chose BTK because it was a fully English speaking University in Germany. It also allowed me to study something related but slightly different from my current program.

Please share a couple of your most positive experiences and a couple of the biggest challenges you faced.

The international office of BTK was incredibly helpful, they helped me integrate into Germany easily. The rest of the staff was often very kind and inviting.

2. PREPARATION

Please describe your preparation for the exchange, including banking, travel documents and student visa application. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

My personal preparation for moving to Berlin was fairly minimal. In retrospect I would've looked more thoroughly into what I needed. Things that would've been key is organizing banking and health insurance as soon as possible.

Are there any important items (e.g. art and design supplies, documents, specialty foods, health items) that a student should take to your host country?

No, it quiet easy to get supplies in Berlin.

3. ARRIVAL

Was anyone at the airport, train station, etc. to meet you? Did you experience any difficulties upon arrival?

I had family friends who met me at the airport, but both Berlin airports are fairly easy to navigate.

When should students plan to arrive at the host university? When did you arrive? Would you have benefited from arriving earlier?

I arrived a month before I started, which was great as I had time to explore the city and become aware of my surroundings. Housing is tricky to get in Berlin, so the earlier you can see or inspect where you're living the better.

Was there an orientation session offered at your host university? If yes, did you attend and what did you learn?

There was an orientation and I got both general knowledge about the school and Berlin, and began to meet with my classmates.

Is there a coordinating office for international students, including exchange students, at your host university? Is there a staff person you would recommend students approach with their questions?

Yes, Hannah Zoller is a great resource in the international office.

4. ACCOMMODATION

Where did you live during your exchange? Were you happy with your accommodation?

I lived in 3 different homes. I spent one month in Alt Treptow, two months in Schoenburg and a month and a half in Neukolln

Did you have any difficulties arranging accommodation? Did the host institution assist you?

The host tried their best, but affordable/near the city housing in Berlin is a struggle.

5. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION

To better understand the similarities and differences between academic studies at OCAD U and at your host university, please comment on the following:

Level of academic difficulty and challenge: 7/10

Time spent in class (# of hours per week) : 22

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week) : 10

Studio-based work: 0

Written assignments: 2

Interaction between students and professors: 3

6. SERVICES

Were there any extracurricular activities/events scheduled for exchange/international students at your host university (cultural visits, trips, workshops, etc.)? Which ones would you recommend?

There were, but I didn't really attend.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

Small library, lots of Macs.

7. COST OF LIVING

How did you prepare yourself financially for your exchange? Did you pay for the experience entirely out of your own savings? Did you receive loans and/or financial awards (scholarships or bursaries)? Did you have help from family?

I received a bursary, help from family and worked before I left

In general, was the cost of living in your host country higher, lower, or similar to that in Canada? Please explain.

Berlin is overall cheaper. Rent is lower than Toronto generally, food and entertainment are also cheaper. Transit is expensive.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 1.61

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): March 2018 - August 2018

Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution? Spent more

Please complete the following budget to give other students an idea of what they can expect to spend in the host country.

Basic Expenses in Canadian Dollars:

1. Tuition and general fees (paid to OCAD U): \$	7,000
2. School supplies: \$	100
3. Rent or university residence: \$ /month = \$	532/month
4. Rent-related expenses:	N/A
A) Electricity/Water: \$ /month	
B) Telephone: \$ /month	
C) Cable: \$ /month	
D) Other (specify) \$ /month	
5. Groceries or Meal Plan: \$ /month = \$	114/month
6. Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.): \$ /month = \$	5/month
8. Laundry: \$ /month = \$	N/A
7. Transportation: \$ /month = \$	N/A
9. Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.): \$	182/month
10. Travel health insurance: \$	60/month
11. Medical expenses in host country: \$	N/A
12. Round trip plane ticket: \$	900
13. Travel/trips during exchange: \$	500
14. Student visa: \$	60
15. Other expenses (please specify): \$	Cellphone 20/month
Estimated Total Expenses: \$	8,565 — one time + 731

9. ADAPTING TO YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Did you experience any “culture shock” during your exchange? How did you deal with it? Do you have any advice for students on how to adapt to life in your host country?

Berlin is very welcoming and very livable as an English speaker. It's varied population means you'll meet a lot of people who speak English quite well. While it may not be representative of the rest of Germany, Berlin culture was very free.

Was there a lot of interaction between local students and exchange/international students? What is the best way to develop friendships with students from your host institution?

Half of BTK's students are international students. The school and classes are small enough however that if you'd like to befriend a local student, you can approach and introduce yourself. Most people are very friendly.

Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected?

No, not really

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Berlin is a lovely city to spend time in as a young person. I would more the recommend it.

Please email your report to International Student Services at international@ocadu.ca.