

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

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Year and semester for exchange

Winter 2023/2024

Exchange university

Technical University of Munich

Degree programme

Computer Science, Software Engineering

Munich, an enjoyable exchange to the heart of Europe

Before departure

I applied for exchange studies because I thought it could be a fun and educational experience that perhaps also would look good on the CV. My initial thought was that I should find the location and culture as interesting as possible, which in my personal case drew my attention towards Asia and Japan, but when I saw that TUM had a few slots left, which had been ranked as the best university in Germany and top 50 in the world, my interest peaked. To get a chance to study at the best university in Germany, a country at the forefront of the technological revolution, sounded like the opportunity of a lifetime.

I did not have to do much preparation in order to study in Germany. No vaccinations or visa applications, but I of course had to fill out many documents relating to the exchange and do a lot of research into the courses offered at the partner university. I had previously taken an A1 course in German, which of course was beneficial for my stay there, but in no way required as all my chosen courses were offered in English.

Upon arrival

I arrived a little over two weeks before the start of the semester. There were some open introductory meetings/lectures during the weeks before the courses started, but I had also signed up for a social experience called Party Animals. In Party Animals you were divided into teams of about 20 students. I was assigned to the Pink Penguins. Within these teams we then did a lot of activities together as well as played games and competed against the other teams. I definitely recommend signing up for something like this, especially if you are an outgoing person, but even if you are not it could be worth giving it a go. It is a great opportunity to meet some new people and make some friends that you can socialize with during your stay.

Financials

The cost of living was in my opinion about the same as in Sweden. Some groceries cost more and others less which was interesting to see. The big difference would probably be if you did not already live on your own and now suddenly had to pay for your accommodation. I was lucky enough to be able to rent out my apartment in Sweden which was hugely beneficial as it helped me cover my costs in Germany. Except for the cost of groceries and accommodation, I also had to pay for the means of travel as well as a fee to the university of 80 Euros per semester. With some paperwork the European medical insurance card was able to cover my health insurance in Germany as well with no additional costs. The university gave instructions on how to choose an insurance company in Germany and apply for this.

Accommodation

Finding accommodation was in my opinion quite stressful. I had to do a lot of applications and send a metric ton of messages on different websites. I also applied for accommodation offered by the university, which would have been amazing, but unfortunately did not receive that. Luckily after a lot of searching I was accepted into a WG (shared house/apartment) close to the campus with 4 other residents. I am very glad that I was able to find this as living with some other students was very nice. All of my housemates were extremely friendly and we did a lot of activities together. Unless it is your only option I would really not recommend living on your own somewhere, as that could become quite lonesome. My WG was just about 15 minutes by bike from the campus, so of course I managed to find a second hand bike on the German equivalent of Blocket which I purchased and rode to the university as often as the weather allowed. I paid about 470 Euros per month in rent for my room in the WG, which in my opinion was really good. I would not say that you should expect to pay that "little" as most listings on the accommodation sites were far above this.

University and studies

TUM is a very large university with many different faculties and departments. I studied at TUM Informatics. A large difference to the studies on KTH was that all of the courses lasted an entire semester, which is equivalent to two "perioder" here at KTH. This meant that I was reading five courses which had all their exams and presentations at the end of the semester all at once. This was quite stressful and requires a lot of planning and staying in phase with the courses as the semester progresses. At the end of the semester as the exams and presentations drew near, things started stacking up. This unfortunately caused me to have to skip one of my exams as the time I had set aside for studying that course was suddenly taken away by other courses with more urgent deadlines.

One of the courses I read was an intensive A2.2 + B1.1 German course. This was a lot of fun and I really recommend that you take at least one language course during your stay. The students at these courses are often exchange students or international students themselves, and may also be looking to make new friends which is great!

Like I mentioned earlier, all of my chosen courses were given in English, but when signing up I had to be careful as not all master level courses were offered in English. Some had German as the teaching language and I think they required a B2 level in order to be taken.

Courses

During my exchange I took a German language course as well as two exam courses and two project courses. The exam courses were called Network Security (IN2102) and Cloud-Based Data Processing (IN2386). Both of these courses were very technical and required a lot of studying and exam prepping. Apart from the lectures, the Network Security course included exercises throughout the course which were completed individually or with your friends and then walked through during some of the lectures. This was completely optional but was a great way to prepare yourself for the final exam. There were also hacking challenges where you had to complete a hacking task in order to obtain a flag that you submitted to the system as a proof that you completed the challenge. These were also optional, and their content was not really brought up on the exam. However, successful completions of them rewarded you with bonus points on the final exam that could be used to increase your grade as long as you received a passing grade on the exam. The project courses were called Practical Course Software Engineering for Business Information Systems (IN2129) and Advanced Concepts of Distributed Databases - Programming Database Web Applications (IN2140). Both of these courses were very enjoyable and I highly recommend taking at least some project courses in order to alleviate the exam pressure. In the IN2129 course multiple companies pitched their application ideas for all of the students, and the students could then vote for which projects they would like to work on. After being assigned to a group we developed the company's application while working closely together with the company representatives as well as our supervisor. This was very educational and it felt like it quite closely mimicked what working for or at a real company could look like. In the IN2140 course we also developed a minimal viable product of an application in a group, but this application was entirely designed by us and our ideas. Finally, the German course might have been the most enjoyable of them all. We had a very sweet and patient German lady as our instructor, and we met in the classroom twice per week quite long, around 3 hour sessions where we went over the chapters and did a lot of exercises and discussion together in German. Taking a language course like this is probably a great way of

meeting other people in similar situations as yourself and make some new friends during your exchange, so I highly recommend that.

City and country

I think the culture in Germany was quite similar to our culture in Sweden. A big difference was that outside of the university, most people were really bad at English. For example when you needed help in the supermarket, it was very likely that the employee would not understand what you were asking and would respond in German. Honestly though, I have not tried to speak English to the supermarket employees here in Sweden that much, so it could be quite similar in that regard as well, but from my understanding we speak English quite well here.

I wrote earlier that before traveling there I thought that Germany was at the forefront of the technological revolution. However, after staying there for a while my mind kind of changed. I say this mostly because you were not able to pay with a card everywhere, a lot of places accepted cash only, and when signing up for subscriptions online, you pretty much had to have a German bank account. You simply were not able to use a non German one. The biggest problem with this was actually that they did not state this when you signed up, so they allowed the sign up but when they tried to charge you, they could not. This resulted in a lot of delayment fees and struggles contacting these companies, trying to figure out what was going wrong. It was an enormous hassle. This happened to me both with the MVV (a public transport company) as well as with the gym I signed up for. In the end this actually caused both of these subscriptions to be terminated prematurely and I ended up riding the subway a few times without a ticket (oops) which was quite stressful as they were very strict with the fees for getting caught for that.

Leisure and social activities

There were a lot of things to do in Munich, and as a university student you had a great deal on a membership to a sports club which gave you access to renting tennis courts and other activities. There were also a lot of bars, restaurants and museums in Munich and I went to a few bowling alleys and pool clubs with some friends. There were also a lot of social events hosted by TUM such as language cafés that you could sign up for and attend.

Sustainability

It was of course possible to travel in a sustainable way to Germany. The best would probably be to take the train, but I went by plane as it felt a bit easier and less of a hassle to plan. They are also very serious about their garbage recycling in Germany, so all of my garbage was sorted and recycled throughout my stay (I already did this in Sweden though so it was nothing new). Physical textbooks were not required in all of the courses either, since most of the material was accessible online.

Other recommendations and observations

Overall I think going on exchange studies is a fantastic experience for anyone and I highly recommend that you do it at least once. As a wise man once said, in the end it is not what you did that you regret, but what you did not do.