



Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg  
*Hamburg University of Applied Sciences*

# My Study Experiences in Hamburg

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My experience at The Hamburg University of Applied Sciences was a new, challenging and great experience. I love to travel and visiting every country during my life is one of my goals so studying abroad seemed like a great opportunity. In addition, the more research I did the more I wanted to go. After going to the study abroad orientation at my home university and seeing Ingrid Weatherall's presentation, I made the decision to study here at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. It was a great decision and I will have memories that will last a lifetime and valuable experience that I will further my career goals.

When I first made the decision to study abroad, I was not sure when I wanted to go or when I wanted to do it. I had taken one semester of German in high school and enjoyed it but had pretty much forgotten all that I had learned. I have a friend that had just studied abroad in Heidelberg, Germany. I went to visit him during his studies and really enjoyed my visit. The country was beautiful and the people were great. That is when I made the decision to focus my research on study abroad programs in Germany. While attending a study abroad workshop at my home university, San Diego State University, Ingrid Weatherall did a

presentation on Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. After her presentation and speaking with my study abroad coordinator, I made the decision to apply. I will admit that the scholarship that was offered by Hamburg University of Applied Sciences has a large influence on my decision. I had been looking at a few universities in Germany and they all looked great and had a lot to offer. This scholarship definitely differentiated HAW from the rest. I am so glad that this scholarship was offered because not only did it make it financially possible to come to Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, after my stay at HAW, I realized that HAW was truly the best choice that I could have made.

Before I even arrived in Hamburg, there was a very good communication between myself and those at HAW. Ingrid Weatherall also arranged for my accommodations, language school, buddy, and answers to any questions I had. HAW provided me with a buddy who helped me immensely. My buddy's name was Hannah Neumann. She first contacted me before I arrived via email and made arrangements to pick me up at the airport. She even sent a photo so this I would know what she looked like so I would recognize her in the airport. After a long flight with multiple connections, Hannah met me at the airport and helped me find the hotel that I stayed at for the first few nights because I arrived a few days before my room at GRH was available. She also met me at my hotel a few days later to help me get to GRH where I lived during my stay in Hamburg. She was always available to help me out with advice or the occasional translation. Another concern that I had how was I going to deal with the language barrier.

Going to a non-English speaking country such as Germany was an issue because I did not speak any other language except for English. After speaking with Ingrid Weatherall, she told me about an intensive German language course offered at Colon Language Center. She also assured me that many Germans speak English and I would be able to communicate with most people in Hamburg. After

my visit, I found this to be true. The two-week intensive language course at Colon Language Center was very helpful and I am glad that I went. During my stay, there were a few instances where I found myself in a situation where I could not communicate with another person due to a language barrier. Using my mobile phone, I was able to call my buddy and have her translate for me over the phone.

While attending HAW health insurance is required and is one of the best things. As a student in the USA who cannot afford health insurance. I cannot see the doctor even if I am really sick and if something major were to happen in the USA, I would most likely be paying for it for years since a surgery can cost tens of thousands of dollars. However, with the German health insurance, everything is covered and I was able to see the doctor any time I wanted. Unfortunately, I got sick a few times while I was there. Normally in the USA, you have to make an appointment and wait a long time to see the doctor. In Hamburg, I was able to go to any doctor I wanted, wait only a very short while with no appointment and see a doctor whenever I wanted and this included specialists. This was the most amazing thing to me.

I opened up a German bank account at Deutsche Bank. They spoke really good English and were always friendly and willing to help. The great thing about Deutsche Bank it they have a partnership with a few other banks so that one can take money out for no charge at those participating banks. This also made it nice for traveling outside of Germany because the network of cooperating banks that I could withdraw money free was international.

HAW also had arranged for all of the exchange students to get together for various excursions. This was one of the best parts of the program. This allowed us to meet each other and get to know everyone. From this, I met many friends that I still talk to and this made the semester much more enjoyable. Hamburg is

such a beautiful city with a lot to offer. Hamburg has almost everything you could want but it does not feel like a big city. When I first arrived, it was a bit cold and rainy but as the weeks progressed, it warmed and dried up. There was the occasional rainy day but overall it was very pleasant. There were many days that we went to the park to barbeque because it was so nice out. The Alster lake was a nice place to just go to relax.

Coming from San Diego, CA, we have a very poor mass transit system so everyone drives. If I want to get anywhere, I just get in my car and go, so I was worried about not having a car in Hamburg. The metro system in Hamburg is second to none. One can get anywhere pretty quickly using the metro and with the all night busses, one could get most places at any time. With the semester ticket from HAW, I could ride the metro anytime. Therefore, it was a great way to see the city.

Hamburg also has some great clubs along the Reeperbahn. There were many nights when friends and I would go for a night out the Reeperbahn. The clubs stay open until the late morning, some until 07:00! With the Hauptbahnhof (main train station) being so close, we were able to travel to different places fairly easily. There is a pass, which a group of five people can get and travel to various places in Germany for pretty cheap. Some friends and I use this to visit a few places around Germany and it was very inexpensive. One time we went to Bremen for the day and just walk around and had lunch and a few drinks at one of the beer gardens along the river. Hamburg is a great city and I also learned a lot in my classes.

When I got to HAW, I had a list of a few classes that I wanted to take and two classes that I had to take. The staff at HAW helped me immensely figure out what classes I could take that would work for my schedule. One of the problems that I faced was that one of the classes that I had to take was half in German due to a last minute change to the class structure and since I am not

proficient in German, I was worried. Because this was one of the two classes that I had to take for my major at my home university, I went to the professor teaching the class to ask him if there was anything, I could do. The professor was Stephan Boll. He was so helpful and willing to work with me and one other student with the same issue to accommodate the language issue. This was just one of the examples of the excellent professors and their willingness to work with students.

I really enjoyed all of my professors. The way that classes are structured in the German system is dramatically different from that of the USA. For this reason, the effort the professors made to accommodate the exchange students and make us always feel that we could come to them any time for help was great. I am a Finance major so I was excited to take the International Finance class with Christian Decker. He is one of the best teachers I have ever had. There were some topics covered in that class that I had already covered in previous classes. However, when Professor Decker explained them they were much clearer. He is gifted with the way he can break down a complicated topic and describe it in an easy to understand diagram. Other friends that had his class feel the same way about Professor Decker. One of the projects for Professor Decker's class, which was optional, was to create a fictitious company. This project really helped me tie the course material into the real world.

Another project I did was one with regards to managing diversity in Professor Meyer's class. This project, which consisted of a paper and a group presentation, really open my eyes with regards to diversity in the workplace and when I think back on past job experiences I can see why things did or did not work with regards to this subject. The interaction in all of the classes made for a very enjoyable learning experience. One of the great things about classes at HAW is that textbooks are not

required. In the USA, I normally spend a few hundred dollars on just textbooks each semester so this was a nice surprise.

The structure of the classes was definitely different than I am used to. In the USA, I am used to having homework and tests throughout the semester and a final at the end. The German system consists of a semester of lectures and an exam at the end. Some classes did have a project as well. The professor did not take attendance and there were some friends from the USA that rarely showed up to class. I did show up to almost all of my classes and it made it much easier. It was definitely a challenge for me at the end but I think if I had to take more classes in that same structure I could do even better.

The HAW campus itself is very well done. The Campus and the classrooms were almost brand new and offered the latest technologies. Most of my classes required presentations using PowerPoint. Considering that most business students will be required to do some sort of presentations at a future job, this was a great experience. There are many people who have a fear of speaking in front of others but both the professors and the students provide a supportive atmosphere for those giving their presentations. The professors are always there to provide guidance with regards to the presentations so that I was not just sitting there spinning my wheels.

There is a cafeteria at the campus called the Mensa. The Mensa offered good food for very cheap. Usually I ate a full meal for about €3 to €4. This is one thing that I wish my home university had. One thing that was nice is they provide multiple options usually five to six different meal options including vegetarian dishes. They also listed what was in the food for those with allergies. The campus also has a copy shop which I used a lot to print various things. I just brought them my USB memory stick with what I needed printed and for a euro or two, they took care of it.

Hamburg has many good places to eat. I am one that enjoys trying a lot of new places and there is no shortage of places to eat at in Hamburg. From traditional German to Chinese to Italian, there is a wide variety to choose from. »Döner« is found everywhere and every place claims to have the best. My favorite is the Döner box. This consists of Döner (chicken or beef), French fries and sauce. I prefer it with chicken, French fries, tsatsiki and chili sauce. Coca-Cola in the USA is made with high fructose corn syrup and there is an after taste to it. When I was in Germany, I noticed that the coke was so much better and did not have that after taste. After reading the label, I found that they use real sugar. In addition, after doing a bit of research I found that not only does real sugar taste better it is much better for you than the high fructose corn syrup. Another thing that I found to be so much better in Germany than in the USA is the bread. I love the fresh bread and pastries from the bakery in Germany. I am not sure if it is the ingredients themselves or the quality but it just tastes better in Germany.

The accommodations that were provided were pretty nice. I stayed in Gustav-Radbruch-Haus (GRH) and attended HAW Berliner Tor. It was only a ten-minute walk to school, there were a lot of stores, and restaurants at Berliner Tor and one stop away at the Hauptbahnhof so the location was really nice. The rooms and my flat were pretty small but my roommates were great. I had one roommate from Spain and one roommate from Mexico. It was a really fun experience because not only was I learning German, I was also learning a bit of Spanish too. Even after I returned to the USA, I still talk to my roommates from GRH. It was really nice that one of my roommates is the same major as me so we were able to take some of the same classes and help each other. The rooms all had high-speed internet. The internet had a usage limit so I decided to get my own.

I went to O2, which is a telecommunications company in Germany. When I went to sign up for DSL I was told that it would be installed in two weeks. It ended up taking about a month and a half. It turns out that if you sign up for DSL with any company, Telekom has to come out and hook up the line. The first time Telekom said they came out, they said they could not find the place even though I had put up signs with arrow leading to my place. They said they came out a second time with the same result. It took three times and on the third time, I had increased the number of signs leading to my flat to 25. Once it was hooked up, it worked great and I found that the internet was much faster for the price than compared to the USA.

Once I was in Germany, I found it was very cheap to travel to other parts of Europe. I was able to visit Italy, Ireland, and Greece along with many other cities in Germany during my semester at HAW. With so many great places to visit in such a close proximity and most classes only meeting one day a week there is definitely time to travel. My girlfriend came to visit me twice during my stay and while in Greece we were engaged. Therefore, you never know what might happen. There is so much history in Europe and it is so easy to see a lot of it. I chose to go to just a few places and stay for longer periods of time but other friends went to up to ten different countries for short periods of time. So whatever one wants to do they can do. I have also met people from many different countries here at HAW that I plan on visiting at some point in time in their home country.

Coming to Hamburg and studying at HAW was a great experience and I would definitely do it again. The faculty make HAW such a great place to study and are so helpful. The buddy program makes coming to Hamburg for the first time so much less stressful. I have learned so much and I believe have grown as a person. Hamburg is such a beautiful city with a lot to offer. The central location of Hamburg makes travelling so easy. The weather was so

nice during the summer. HAW is a great place to study with a helpful staff and a great learning environment. I will always consider Hamburg a second home.