

Exploring Deutschland, Traveling Europe and Studying Abroad

Exchange Report

WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, Winter 2017

INTRODUCTION

The WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management is a private German business university located in a small town called Vallendar. It also has another campus in Düsseldorf, Germany. It is regarded as one of the best universities in Germany.

I am extremely happy that I got my second choice which was WHU when applying to do an exchange semester. After spending many months, I have learnt many new things, developed new skills, built new networks, made many friends and even been presented with new opportunities. I have had a great time traveling abroad Europe to cities in Italy and in Spain. The town is small but very friendly to all. There are too many great things to say about my four months in Vallendar at WHU, but I hope the rest of this report will help convey that. In addition to receiving a world class education at one of the best Universities in Germany, I've made many great lifelong friends from all over the world who I am sure I will see again in the future!

ARRIVAL

I booked my ticket around November 11th, 2016 (1 month and a half before departure). You should get information emailed from WHU around that period to help you when to buy your ticket. The airport I arrived at was the Frankfurt International Airport on January 3rd, 2017. It is extremely easy to figure out walking around the airport as there are signs in English. The best way to get to the school from the airport and around Germany in general is the Deutsche Bahn (DB). It's Germany's train system. We would recommend going to the DB office which is located near the train station in the airport. There are no direct trains to Vallendar so you will have to change trains in Koblenz to take a train to Vallendar. I ended up taking a taxi from the Koblenz station to my residence which cost around 10 euros. All the residences are within walking distance from the station.

VISA PROCESS

As a Canadian citizen, with regards to going to Germany, I did not need a visa to enter and study in the country as other students did from different countries. The only thing I was required to get was a residence permit within a few weeks of my arrival in Vallendar.

Residence Permit:

All Non-EU citizens staying in Germany for more than 90 days must officially obtain a residence permit after entering Germany – except they already have a visa that covers their whole stay in Germany. When entering the country all you will have to do is let the border officer know when at the airport that you are going to be studying in Germany.

The International Relations Office (IRO) at WHU will help you throughout all these processes and tells you how to fill out all the forms. They provide an English translated version of the forms as the original forms are in German. The IRO will give you a “Survival Kit Handbook”

upon your arrival which clearly states all the dates/deadlines. The representative at IRO will set a deadline for people to hand in their documents and they will go get all your documents for you. Otherwise, you will be required to go to the neighboring city (Koblenz) to hand in and pay for your residence permit. You will need to apply for your student residence permit at the local alien office (Ausländerbehörde) in Koblenz after your arrival. The International Relations Office will assist you in this matter and will inform you in detail about the process during the orientation days

Registration in Vallendar:

You will have to register as a citizen in the town at the Rathausplatz in Vallendar first before applying for a residence permit. All exchange students must register with the local authorities, no later than Friday, January 13th. You must bring your passport with you to register.

- Rathausplatz 13, 56179, Vallendar, Germany

Residence Permit Required Documents:

It is recommended all Non-EU citizens who do not need a visa to enter Germany to apply for your residence permit only after your arrival in Germany. If you already apply for your residence permit you will have to apply again at the local alien office in Koblenz. This will result in additional costs. They kindly ask you and strongly suggest that you collect the required documents before you leave your home country. This will save you a lot of time and problems.

For your application for the residence permit, you need to prepare the following documents before leaving:

1. One biometric, passport-sized photo – you can find examples and guidelines for biometric passport-sized photos on the following website: <http://www.biometrisches-passbild.net/>
2. Valid passport photocopy just the page with your photo and personal data (and, if you have a visa, also a photocopy of your visa page)
3. Photocopy of WHU Acceptance Letter („Immatrikulationsbescheinigung“)
4. Photocopy (or print out) of recently-dated proof of sufficient funds in English or in German
 - At least 659 Euros per month. Your proof of funds must show the total amount (659 Euros multiplied by the number of months you stay in Germany).
 - This may be your bank statement, your account statement or a scholarship certificate.
 - The currency used on the statement can be in your country's currency.
 - If it is not Euro or Dollar please convert it and write the amount next to the amount shown.
 - If your parents are your sponsor, please include a letter of your parents and your parents' bank statement (in English or German).
 - The document(s) should not be older than 4 weeks at the point of time when applying for the residence permit; exception: blocked bank accounts with Deutsche Bank
5. Photocopy of proof of valid health insurance in English or German.
 - To be accepted by the authorities, your proof of health insurance MUST absolutely mention the following data:

- Insurance period (whole time you will spend in Germany / Europe; a specific start and end date must be mentioned)
- Region or country of coverage (Overseas, Europe and Germany have to be covered)
- Coverage for sickness, emergencies and all medical expenses
- Your own name (not just the name of a family member)

These documents were handed in at the IRO office after our arrival, around mid-January. They needed our passports for getting the residence permits end-January; at that time we were without our passport for about three days. Please keep this in mind in case you are already arranging travel plans (as you cannot travel without your passport)! Once we got our passports back, we had the residence permit printed inside.

Please note the following very important aspects regarding your German residence permit:

- You are allowed to stay in Germany (and the Schengen States) only until the last day of your residence permit. The date until which your residence permit is valid is the last day of your legal stay in Germany and the Schengen States. It means that you have to leave Germany and the Schengen States before or on that day. Please take this into account when booking your return ticket.
- The health insurance must cover you during your entire stay in Germany, this means until the last day that you (will) mention in your application for your residence permit. If your health insurance expires earlier, then the residence permit can also only be issued until the last day of your health insurance coverage.
- It is illegal to re-enter the country as a tourist within 3 months after your residence permit expired (even if you just want to take a flight back home from a German airport). When you leave Germany after staying for more than 3 months, you must spend 3 months out of the country and the Schengen States before you are allowed to re-enter Germany as a tourist. Please keep this in mind when planning your departure.

Internship in Germany:

Some exchange students want to work or do an internship during their time in Germany. For all non-EU citizens it is important that the internship is legally permitted.

Option 1 (spring semester only):

Students staying at WHU during the spring semester can do a full-time internship of up to 120 days within their residence permit (applied via WHU). The spring semester officially runs from early-January to end-August but classes already finish early-May giving you time to do an internship or travel afterwards until the end of August. No extra paperwork is required.

Option 2 (spring and fall semester):

Students joining WHU during the fall or spring semester have the opportunity to work up to 240 days part-time within the residence permit they applied through WHU. No extra paperwork is required.

Option 3:

Students joining us in either semester have the opportunity to do an internship which is required for their studies and relates to their field of study as student employment. You have to inform the foreign office about the extension of your stay. In some cases, the German Federal Employment Agency (ZAV) has to be involved.

Option 4:

In all other cases you have to apply for a work permit. Be sure to apply for your work permit as soon as you get the acceptance of the company! The application process may take up to six weeks. For additional information about the necessary steps, please contact the International Relations Office.

Working / doing an internship is normally not allowed within the scope of a visa – so in case you have a visa that already covers your whole stay in Germany AND you would like to work / do an internship during that period of time, you will probably have to apply for a residence permit (or work permit – please see different options above) in addition to the visa. Please contact the IRO (International Relations Office) at WHU if this is the case for you, as we can give you an update about the most recent options

INSURANCE

Prior to leaving, my parents purchased travel insurance for me that covered all the addressed requirements below and my entire stay in Germany.

All exchange students need health insurance during their stay in Germany, incl. EU citizens. Your health insurance must cover the following aspects in order to be accepted by the authorities:

- The insurance period: coverage of your whole stay in Germany (a specific start and end date must be mentioned)
- The region: Germany has to be covered and must be mentioned
- Emergencies have to be covered and must be mentioned
- All medical expenses have to be covered and must be mentioned

Proving health insurance as a Non-EU citizen

- a) International health insurance from an insurance company in your home country

If you have a health insurance for your time in Germany from a company in your home country, you need to bring a confirmation letter written in English or German from your insurance provider. This confirmation letter must include all the aspects mentioned above (insurance period, region, emergency coverage and coverage for all medical expenses) as well as your own name (i.e. the name of a parent or another family member is not sufficient). If any of these 5 aspects is not mentioned in your proof of health insurance, the authorities will not accept this proof.

You need to hand in a photocopy of this confirmation letter on your first day at WHU and you also need an additional photocopy to apply for your residence permit.

ACADEMICS

Registration Process:

The registration process is a little different than at the University of Ottawa. Instead of choosing courses a couple months/weeks beforehand, exchange and WHU students can only choose their a few days before. The registration opens a few days before the semester starts and students can take courses that overlap with each other. Therefore, it is important to find the schedules of courses that you meet the requirements and are interested in taking and then plan your studies offline (creating your own schedule that works, and then apply for those courses). The deregistration period comes fast (after a few weeks I believe), so it is important to successfully confirm your courses with uOttawa after registering. If there ever any issues, we could constantly email the lady in charge to finalize our courses at WHU.

Advice: The school will give you access to the course listings before you get there so make sure you take a look before going and plan out what you will take as this saved a lot of time while in Germany when picking courses.

Classroom:

All the undergraduate students and MBA students were in separate classes. There was a good mix of local and international students in most classes though there were a few that were mostly comprised of international students. Most professors at WHU do not allow the use of laptops, so notes will have to be taken by hand.

Teaching:

The teaching style is similar to uOttawa apart from the fact that there is no use of textbooks. Some courses do provide some recommendations, but students can easily access these textbooks from the campus library and are almost never required to purchase these books. All the information for assignments and exams are taken from the slides of the professor. These slides are posted online before class. Some classes have guest lectures, which are sometimes open for attendance from other students not enrolled in the class (you will get an email). The guest lecturers were all very big figures in businesses around Germany and around the world. They implemented the use of group projects, seminars, lectures and case studies.

Workload/Hours:

Considering the amount of ECTS needed and that the semesters are split in half, I took a total of 7 courses. A German language course counts as 5 ECTS (Exchange student credits) and the others count as 4.5 ECTS. One ECTS credit equals 25-30 hours of overall workload (ex. Contact hours, group work, cases, lectures and exam preparation). Each course has a total of 24 contact hours per semester. It does not matter if they are taught in one or two quarters.

German (5 ECTS) = 125 to 150 hours

Brand Management (4.5 ECTS) = 112.5 to 135 hours

Foundation of Sales (4.5 ECTS) = 112.5 to 135 hours

Intro to Bank Management (4.5 ECTS) = 112.5 to 135 hours
Venture Capital Organizations (4.5 ECTS) = 112.5 to 135 hours
Creating Social Value (4.5 ECTS) = 112.5 to 135 hours
Digital Marketing (4.5 ECTS) = 112.5 to 135 hours

Keep in mind that some courses have different hour lectures (ex. 1 and a half hours, 3 hours, 5 hours, and sometimes classes are all day for a few days and then have a final exam right after)

Grading:

WHU uses a different grading scale than uOttawa, so it may take some time getting used to. Most classes will help provide a percentage if you are interested.

WHU Grading System	
1.0 1.3	EXCELLENT
1.7 2.0	VERY GOOD
2.3 2.7	GOOD
3.0 3.3	SATISFACTORY
3.7 4.0	SUFFICIENT
5.0	FAIL

Language Courses:

There is a language course available for all exchange students for free and I recommend you take it! Being in such a small town where a lot of residents don't know English, having some working knowledge of German is always an asset. If you have a chance, you can always try to learn some of the language before coming on exchange though it's not necessary and they have an absolute beginner level available. The language course runs throughout the whole exchange term with an exam at the end of the term.

Other Courses

The semester is broken into two terms at WHU. In my first term (January to End of February/Beginning of March), I took the German language class, Brand Management, Foundation of Sales and Intro to Bank Management. In my second term (Beginning of March to Beginning of May), I took Venture Capital Organizations, Creating Social Value, and Digital Marketing. My German course was the only one that continued throughout both terms (four months). WHU also has courses (like Brand Management, and Foundation of Sales) which ended around February but its final exams are held at the end of the semester in May.

Therefore, it is important to prioritize your time when studying as you will also have to study for the exams from first term, while doing assignments and studying for exams from the second term.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OFFICE (IRO) SERVICES

The IRO at WHU is awesome and will be in touch with you before you arrive with lots of emails regarding everything to do and prepare before arriving. They are very friendly to talk to and you can always email them any time with any questions. There was an orientation week that was free for all international students and they helped familiarize us with Vallendar and the next major city; Koblenz. In addition, we had an academic orientation day where they also showed us everything we need to know about course and using our WHU email's and various other accounts. They have two main events where students are integrated with the WHU community so make sure you go to those events (free food and drinks!). At these events, you will be able to meet with some of the local students and local residents of Vallendar.

Social Events:

A Tauschie is the term they use to refer to an exchange student. Every Tuesday they have “Tauschie Tuesday” event where a specific group of Tauschies from a specific country will be given a budget from the elected Tauschie Government to purchase ingredients to make food from their country to sell to students and raise money at the local Café/Bar called Korova. The money will go towards hosting a party in the Vaulted Cellar of the school (with free beer) for all of the students at WHU. Throughout the term, each student year (1st year, 2nd, 3rd, Masters, Tauschies) will host a party in the cellar.

Campus Facilities:

WHU is a much smaller university than uOttawa. The biggest difference between uOttawa and WHU is that buildings and facilities (library, gym) are open 24 hours with access with your Student Card. This is awesome because you can print things at 2am, or get a workout in at midnight if needed. There are 2 basketball courts near campus that are only a walking distance away, as well, a soccer field just a short drive away. WHU students generally organize weekly intramurals for volleyball, basketball and soccer, so if you're interested, just message the designated individual and they'll generally have rides set up to the various locations. The library is quite small, but during exams, all classes are finished, so you can essentially study anywhere in the WHU campus. All these facilities are free. There are 3 health clinics near campus, but more details about the clinics will be provided to you when you land by the IRO team in the Welcome Package.

HOUSING

The university will contact you before arriving to select housing so make sure you email them right away as it is on a first come first serve basis on which housing you get. Prior to choosing my residence, I made sure to carefully choose the best residence for its price, location, etc. I stayed in the Höhrer Straße 34 residence in a single bed room which cost around 520€ per month. Students can also choose to live in a room with one other roommate, 3 others or with 4. The prices varies on the amount of bedrooms and the residence. I would say that I am happy with my decision as the residence was great and it was an easy way to make many friends. It is around

5-7 minutes walking to the WHU campus. All units are fully furnished with a completely equipped kitchenette and a separate bathroom. In addition, the apartment area has a laundry room with two washers and dryers. The retirement residence Humboldthöhe is said to be the farthest residence as it is up a big hill, and the other popular residences were CKK (Campus Krautkrämer) and Smart Flats. However, I have not heard of any problems from others living in other places. Most residences were for international and local students.

BUDGET

I paid for rent (4 months @ 520 euros, plus deposit) through PayPal prior to my arrival. I normally spent around 20-25 euros each time I went grocery shopping. However, you will notice that the cost for most products are fairly cheaper than it is in Canada, but with our low CDN dollar value it does not seem that much. Food and drinks are pretty cheap. If you need cheap clothes, highly recommend H&M and Deichmann at the Koblenz mall. However, given the bad exchange rate, the cost of clothing seems to balance out.

I arrived with around 1,000+ euros but I mainly used it towards topping up funds on my student card, traveling abroad, and paying at restaurants. For groceries and other purchases, I relied on my credit card. I decided against opening a bank account at the Sparkasse Bank in Vallendar, however if I needed more cash I would withdraw using my home credit/debit card (of course, incurring fees), but I did not do this often. I made sure to take out a significant amount at one time in order to reduce the transaction fees.

Rent and Deposit – 2,655 euros

Monthly groceries – 90 to 125 euros

Drinks outside (Korova bar) – around 2 to 3 euros

Restaurant food (Grill Time, Petrocelli...) – around 4 to 5 euros, around 7 to 9 euros

Cafeteria food – around 3 to 4 euros

Fill out the residence application immediately, some say to put CKK (Campus Krautkramer) as the first choice since it's the cheapest and there is a common room you can use. If you get CKK, you're looking at rent of 320 euros per month. There are no Textbooks. Depending on how much you eat out and cook, your costs will vary. Groceries are much cheaper than Toronto (especially meat and beer). Once you land, also make sure you get a Bahn 25 Card, it gets you 25% discount on all DB busses and trains. This card is only a nominal amount (60 euros for a year, but I got the trial promo card for like 20 euros for 3 months), and it pays itself off in like 2-5 trips. If you plan on traveling, you'll also be flying RyanAir a lot out of either Frankfurt Hahn or Koln/Bonn Airport. Make sure you familiarize yourself with their site, as their promotions and prices are random, but you'll save so much money on their fares [Pro Tip: They have crazy sales in February where some flights are only 1.99 euros, so keep your eyes peeled for that].

FOOD

In Vallendar, you have about 5 local restaurants to eat out at, so variety isn't too big. However, their food is really good, and you'll find favourites quite quickly. Eating out will cost you 5-10

euros on average, and the food is really high quality. The big grocery store (closest to campus) is REWE. This is your main grocery store, but is considered the priciest of the three options in Vallendar. Nonetheless, if you stick to their Ja Brand products, you will save a lot of money (this is the equivalent of a No Name Brand). Your other two options are Aldi and Lidl. They aren't too far away, but they are a bit of a walk, and unless you and your friends are down to trek there together, you likely will not be going there too often. I found that meat at Lidl was cheapest, so I went there once or twice a month, bought a lot of meat and stocked up my freezer.

TIMETABLE (AND DEADLINES)

- Official Welcome Meeting, Login Data for Course Registration (health insurance check, WHU Card pickup, IT agreement, Transcript Release), Info Session on German Language Classes & Placement Test – Thursday, January 5th
- Campus Tour, Info Session on Course Selection (undergraduate and masters), Info Session on Residence Permit, Info Session on Housing – Friday, January 6th
- Registered for Foundations of Sales Class – opened December 16th 12:00 am
- Registered for Intro to Bank Management Class – opened December 20th 12:00 am
- Registered for Brand Management Class – January 6th 9:00 am
- Registered for Digital Marketing Class – opened January 9th 12:00 am
- Registered for Venture Capital Organizations Class – opened January 9th 12:00 am
- Registered for Creating Social Value Class – opened January 9th 12:00 am
- Registered for German Class – opened January 9th 12:00 am
- Start of Semester 1 (Quarter 1)– January 9th
- Deregister for courses – depends on course, can range from two weeks to two months
- International Dinner (potluck from all Exchange students) – Wednesday, January 11th
- Register at the local authority in Vallendar – no later than Friday, January 13th
- Regional Tour – Saturday, January 14th
- Bring required documents for Residence Permit to IR – no later than Friday, January 20th
- Bring original passport and 50 Euros to IRO – until Friday, January 27th at noon
- Pickup passports with Residence Permit from IRO – from Tuesday, January 31st onwards
- End of Semester 1 (Quarter 1) – March 6th
- Start of Semester 1 (Quarter 2) – March 7th
- Last Exam – May 4th
- End of Semester 1 (Quarter 2) – May 5th
- Move out of Residence – May 5th

PHOTO



Few Exchange Students doing a trip to the Carnival Festival in Cologne, Germany