

University of Cologne, Germany
2017 Semester One - April to September
BCom majoring Marketing



Like pretty much what everyone says in their reviews if you're reading these and thinking about applying for an exchange stop thinking and just do it! I put off applying for 2 years before I finally committed to going and I wish I had done it sooner so I could have gone for longer. All the following administrative stuff can make it sound daunting but there is help every step of the way, and it's so you know everything that needs to be done and there are no surprises!

Before arriving

Applying/Courses

The University of Cologne has a wonderful exchange office who get in contact and send you the updated course list for the semester. This can vary a lot from the previous semester so just wait till you get the list before you decide what to take. There was a good selection of papers for marketing, and I ended up taking a couple of masters papers as the level of the papers is easier than Otago as they are taught to the majority of students for which English is their second language. The cologne exchange office also offers a course guidance skype session, which was very helpful, and they helped me through registering for the courses I wanted online, which is done through their KLIPS website and they will give you access to this before you come.

Accommodation

A big thing to get onto early is accommodation. You can apply for this through the studentwerk website of cologne and the earlier the better. You can get an offer from them but if you turn it down then you don't get another one. Finding accommodation can be a bit of a challenge and people do end up going over and living backpackers and AirBnB's until they find somewhere. I was lucky enough to get an offer from a lovely couple that host 2 exchange students every semester at their house in Sürth, which was a 20minute tram ride from town. You can travel for free on your student ID card so it was no issue catching them everyday. All the friends I made lived all over cologne in different areas so don't worry if you get one that you think is further away, I was stressed about it before I got there and it was never an issue. A lot of the exchange students get into the student accommodation at Effern so if you get this area 100% take it! The prices also vary a lot depending on the accommodation and where it is. Anywhere between about 300-550euros a month, it is usually all inclusive of hot water, Internet, power etc.

Buddy

Before you arrive you will get the contact details of your assigned buddy, you can email them any questions you have or they are most likely to send you a message introducing themselves. They are there to help you with settling in and all the administrative tasks if you want them to come along.

Once there

Once you arrive in Cologne there are a few things that you need to do! Again the exchange office were super helpful and will also give you details on how to do them all. They have an arrival meeting and welcome days with lots of activities to meet every one. They also give you a booklet there that has heaps of information for all the following processes as well. I spoke no German and had no problems getting any of this done by myself, most people speak English but it is helpful to take your buddy or a German speaker.

Health insurance

Something that isn't really talked about though is that you need health insurance. If you have NZ travel insurance that covers you with health insurance as well then it's totally fine, you just have to go to a German insurance provider and get an exemption, which is free! Most NZ insurance places do cover the health insurance policies that they want. I just had the classic Southern Cross policy and this was fine. There is a little insurance place right in the center square of the university where we all went. If you don't then you will need to take out a German Health insurance policy when you are there which is very expensive so I would recommend getting a NZ one before you go.

Student ID card – Mensa

After you get the health insurance or exemption you can pick up your student ID card, this is the travel card and you can go on all the trams, buses and trains except the ICE ones for free during the semester. This is done in the student services centre, and uses the photo you will upload on to the KLIPS site. It also is how you eat at the Mensa, which is the student cafeteria and has super cheap, good meals. You load money on to it there.

Registering with the city

Within the first week of arriving you need to go to the local foreigners office and register with the city. No one monitors this though so don't stress if you take longer. You will be told what you need, if I remember correctly it was passport, acceptance letter, student ID, and proof of address (there is a special form your land lord will need to fill out for this as well it cant just be your rental lease). Your local office depends on where you are living and you are also given these details. It's better to go earlier in the day as the waiting times can get really long, you are able to look these up online before you go though to check, also they often have weird opening hours as well so be sure to check those.

Bank account

You then need to set up a bank account. I was told that I needed a blocked account to be able to get my resident permit, but had heard there were problems with them and didn't want to be restricted to only taking out 750euros a month. A few others and myself just got regular bank accounts and then had enough money in them to be more than 750euros per month for however many months we were there. I got it a month in and put 5000euros in so 1000euros per month. I got mine with Sparkasse and they were really helpful for setting it up and closing it, they also had a student account that had zero fees.

Resident permit

After all that the final step is to get your resident permit. When you enter Germany if you haven't been anywhere else in the Schengen Zone prior (look this up online if you

don't know) you are given 90 days before your visa runs out. So you have 90 days to go back to the foreigner's office and get the resident permit. For this you need a lot of things, they will be in the booklet as well.

- Passport + copy
- Biometric passport photo
- Registration with the city document + copy
- Rental contract + copy
- Health insurance/exemption and NZ policies so they can see coverage + copy
- University acceptance letter + copy
- Bank statement showing balance + copy
- Student ID + copy
- Cash – 50 euros was what it cost me but it says 110euros – I also had to bank transfer but take cash just be sure

This is then made on the spot and put in your passport. If you are staying longer than the semester that is outlined in your acceptance letter like I was, just take a copy of your flight home to show when you are leaving.

Money

Germany is a cash country; very few places will accept visa/mastercards or cash passports. So getting the local bank account is very handy as that is accepted in most places, however cash is the primary thing used, so be sure always have plenty. There were so many opportunities during the semester to go traveling as well with all the wonderful people I met. So make sure you have enough money to be able to afford this. I would spend around 50euros a week while there and going out 3-4 nights a week, the food and beer is very cheap. However I travelled to England, Scotland, Wales, Poland, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Ireland, Croatia, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Greece, Italy, Berlin and Munich, as well as going to Tomorrowland, Sziget festival and Oktoberfest. Travel costs around Europe were cheap with the buses, trains and Ryan air but it all adds up! I would have spent about \$20,000nz for absolutely everything and was away for 6 months total. However it could have been done for a lot cheaper as I did a lot of traveling, but if that's also your plan you want to be sure you have enough money so you don't have to worry.

Before you leave

All you need to do before you go is shut down your bank account and go back to the foreigner's office to deregister with the city, which is just taking your passport and city registration form from the beginning.

If you have any questions or anything feel free to get in contact with me. But if you are even just slightly interested in going, do it, it will be the best decision you've ever made! You meet so many wonderful people from all over the world and enjoy an OE at the same time!

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