

Erfahrungsbericht: Experience report for the Erasmus

Preparations

Those who want to spend one semester at Southampton University would get enough time for the preparation. After several conversations with the Erasmus Coordinator in my home university, I received an email from the guest university about the application form. There was the information about the everything I needed to know for the mobility including Visas, accommodation options and key dates. I was an exchanged student for 2018/ 2019 winter semester had this email around the middle of the February and the application should be done by 15th of the March. After that, there was a period of waiting for their announcement of confirmation of the offer. This should take about 6 months. I had to write them an email because I didn't receive any emails from them until June. With the confirmation, I could subscribe to the University and open my university email account. Since then it was important to check the new email daily because the university informed me some important things such as some papers need to be worked by me and dates and location of induction for newcomers.

The welcome induction from the faculty took place just a few days before the semester begins. There, I could get my student cards, reschedule my study plan since there were some time crashes and one module was not available at the moment, tour the campus and get to know my Erasmus coordinators.

Visa

As a South Korean studying in a German university, I needed to get a short term student visa (STSV 6) to study less than 6 months. I'm not sure if this is the same case with the German natives so I advise to look for the university website, as they offer plenty of information. For the visa I had to prepare 1) Valid Passport, 2) Confirmation of Study from the guest university, 3) Information of accommodation 4) Means of funding and 5) Evidence of return trip in a paper form and present them at the borderlines, in my case at the airport. The printed version of the bank account detail was enough for the means of funding.

For further visa things and city registration, the University has contacted me when I moved into Southampton and set an appointment. As an Erasmus student, I just had to bring my passport that day and the university did the rest of the job.

Accommodation

There are plenty of accommodation options. In favor of the cost, I chose to live in the student accommodation from Southampton University, Glen Eyre, which is about 10-minute walk from the Highfield campus. It costs 15.51 pounds per night which is approximately 536 euros per month, which was for me quite expensive. One kitchen and three bathrooms were shared by 7 people including myself. The room was, to be honest, not in the best condition. Radiator went off during the night. The lamp and the drainage system made strange noises whenever I or the guy who lived upper floor turned them on respectively. Another problem I faced was that I didn't know that the Faculty of Ocean and Earth science is located on another campus, the Waterfront campus, which takes 40 minutes with bus to get there. If someone is going to study marine biology, I recommend looking for accommodation other than those from the Glen Eyre. The good thing was that the accommodation service gave me a one-year free bus ticket when I moved in.

The application takes place in the university accommodation website. There was plenty of time before the deadline (1st Aug.) but since the accommodation for the Erasmus student is not guaranteed, it was better for me to apply for it as early as possible. A room contract is basically a one-year contract, in which I move in September and leave in July. I was able to depart earlier (26th Jan.) since my exchanged semester ended at the end of January. All I had to do was letting the accommodation service confirm my study dates.

About the University of Southampton

This part is mainly about the Waterfront campus. The campus is located in the National Oceanography Centre. So it is quite safe to say that the professors there are the frontiers of these fields. One could easily gain some practical experiences and future insights or even maybe find a job opportunity. They say there is also a boat practical course for the students. Sadly I couldn't find whether it is possible for exchanged students and when it is available.

There is a small library in the NOC. Although it is not comparable to the giant Library in Highfield, it still had everything that I needed. The Canteen was also great. Hot foods were good unlike typical British food stereotype but expensive (approx. 5 pounds per meal). I could see the view of the harbor while I was eating.

Courses

I was able to choose 4 courses from the faculty of the ocean and earth science with 7.5 ECTS per course. Alternatively, as a biology student, I could have one course from 'normal biology faculty' instead of the course from the ocean and earth sciences. The faculty provided a wide spectrum of courses from marine biology to oceanography. Some of the modules from master's degree were also possible to take- Though, there was some difference in marking criteria and assignments between Bachelor students and Master students. The chosen courses can be changed within the 2 weeks from the beginning of the semester. At the day of the welcoming induction, I had to reset all of my plans and courses. There were some courses like field course in other institutes that was unable to take at the moment because they had already begun by the time I have arrived at Southampton, and some courses had a time clash (course schedule wasn't announced when I was initially selecting my courses before the mobility).

Lectures were given in English. All the lectures were recorded and can be later reviewed at the school's Blackboard website. Still, it is important to attend all lectures because the recordings were sloppy. Some lectures were missing and the sound quality was not often optimal. The blackboard was one of the most important websites during the semester since they offer recorded sessions, lecture files, important announcements, lists of publications and textbooks that are recommended to read and some feedbacks and examinations of past few years.

Reviewing the lecture is important but I advise primarily to read the publications and textbooks given by the professors since the lecture is made of those materials. Publications give some detailed information and ideas and styles of writing which can be later used in assignments and examinations.

Assignments were mainly write-ups. There were some writings about discussing the results of the experiment done on practical courses, review about the field course, discussing and calculating using computer models and integrating the information from the publications and

discussing it. One important thing to keep in mind is that the deadlines were kept very seriously. Unless one gets permission for the late submission, several percentages of the final markings were taken away for the late-submitted works.

Tests

All the tests were done within the two weeks of examination period in January. Exam revisions are made just before those weeks. There I could gain some hints about the exams and ask the professors anything that I couldn't understand. They also upload feedbacks and examinations from former semesters on their website, which was very helpful during the exam preparation. The form of the exams is writing long text. There were two sections of questions (A and B) and examinee must answer one question from each section. There were some questions about calculating or explanation using drawings depending on the courses. The one aspect that the University put an emphasis on is the detail. It is surely possible to get an adequate marking by studying the lecture materials but for a perfect grade, they expect us to show the details- Details gained from reading textbooks and publications. One professor of mine told me to give a specific example such as specific numbers, the specific name of the species and the name of the author who wrote the publication.

Summarizing it up, I do recommend to gain some skills of scientific writings before the mobility, and read at least one paper related to the lecture given that day, as these two things would help someone a lot, who is willing to get some good markings during their mobility.

After the mobility

The transcript was announced at 21st Feb. The important thing is that I had to order the transcript from their online store website, to get an official one signed by the university.