

# PERSONAL REPORT

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**FIELD OF STUDY:** International Business

**HOME UNIVERSITY:** Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** DHBW Stuttgart

**DEGREE INTENDED:** Bachelor Student

**NUMBER OF SEMESTERS:** 1 Semester

**PERIOD OF TIME:** March 2020 – August 2020

## **Preparation of the stay**

To be honest, I never imagined I'd study in Germany. It was a dream I saw far away. I was afraid to fail as I had no knowledge of the language. But my home university offered me a unique opportunity and I knew that I had to take advantage of it since German education is known for its high level, besides that, Stuttgart is in an excellent geographical location for traveling. So, I set myself that challenge to practice my English and learn German.

The process began when my exchange application was approved by the DHBW, from there I had a first contact with the German bureaucracy. To get the study visa, I needed a lot of requirements and formalities. That's something I wasn't informed of before and I feel like there was a small lack of communication with my home university. After my appointment with the embassy I had to wait for my visa to be approved, which happened a few days before my flight left. The adventure was just beginning.

## **Study in the host country**

The Welcome Week was an unforgettable experience. Even though in that week we had to do all the paperwork like opening a bank account or registering in the city; in the afternoons it was pure fun. From museum visits to bus rides, it was the perfect opportunity to get to know the other international students and adapt to the city.

I study chemical engineering at my home university, and it was hard to find subjects that fit the content of my career. Finally, I ended up choosing management area subjects such as International Management or International Operation Management & Logistics II, which will be useful for my future jobs. I also chose German classes because learning the language was one of my main goals.

Our first class was precisely German Intensive Course, and from that moment I understood that I had to get used to many different things to my country. For example, here the classes are 4 hours in a row and are only graded at the end of the course. While in my country we have 3 reviews in the course. It was difficult to try to keep an eye on this new system, but when it seemed like

I was adapting, something totally unexpected happened: the COVID-19 pandemic was unleashed.

Luckily, the DHBW adapted very well and offered us online classes so our credits were not affected. This gave many international students the opportunity to return to their home countries and continue classes from there. For my part, I decided to stay in Stuttgart because I had a hard time getting here and I was trusting that things would get better.

I had never had online classes and it was a whole new way to learn. All teachers adapted and made available to us various ways of learning as videos or presentations on the school platform. For the exams there was not so much trouble, because we must do seminar papers and there was no need for face-to-face examination.

## **Stay in the host country**

When I said goodbye to my family at the airport in my country, I had not yet assimilated that I was about to travel to another continent, another country, another language and culture. It was the first time I traveled to a place so far and alone. Luckily, my buddy picked me up at the airport and took me to my apartment. He was my first friend in Germany and was always available to any of my doubts, just like the international office.

The first few days I felt like I was living in another world. Everything was different from my country, from language to efficient transport network. What I missed most about Mexico (apart from my family) was food. Here I could not find anything spicy, something very characteristic of Mexican food, but that made me end up falling in love with German food, especially the Black Forest cake. At first, I thought the language would be a big barrier but I soon discovered that most people in Stuttgart can speak English quite well, so if my German failed, I could try English.

As I mentioned earlier, the pandemic had a big influence on my exchange. Two weeks after my arrival we had to quarantine ourselves. That was terrible news that crushed all our plans and dreams we had for this exchange. Most of our international colleagues had already returned to their countries, and the few of us left could not be seen because of the restrictions of social contact

to control the pandemic. These were very dark moments where I felt depressed, powerless and very lonely. But that changed slowly, thanks to the support of my family and friends who motivated me. If there is one thing that characterizes Germany is its discipline, which was demonstrated in its excellent management against coronavirus. Gradually the restrictions were lifted and I was able to travel and know places that in their time saw impossible.

## **Hands-on tips**

\*Buy the semester ticket, it is the best investment you can make, you will save a lot of money.

\*Remember that on Sundays many shops are closed. So be cautious and buy everything you need a day before.

\*Whenever you have the opportunity, practice your German, either to order food or ask directions. Practice makes perfect.

\*Be patient. At first, German bureaucracy can be difficult. But once you adapt everything will be better.

\*Travel as much as you can, know places not everyone goes to. You might get some surprises.

\*Be open with other internationals, you will learn a lot about other cultures of the world.

\*Do not hesitate to ask the international office any questions you have. They will be your new family.

\*Always carry cash, as not everywhere will accept card payments.

## **Conclusion**

These strange times we're living will mark history, and they'll mark me too. After everything that's happened, I feel like a different, more positive and open person. I will never know what would have happened without the pandemic, but it doesn't matter, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel and I take great memories and unforgettable moments with the places and people I met. To anyone who doubts or is afraid to live abroad, I invite him to venture out.

Stuttgart and DHBW are an excellent choice to get to know yourself as you grow academically, as I have.

