

----- MANNHEIM UNIVERSITY, GERMANY -----



My exchange semester at Mannheim University, during Fall 2016, was a positive experience overall, but there were definitely differences in comparison to the university system in Sweden.

HOUSING SITUATION

The university does have student rooms, but these are reserved for students outside of Europe. I found my accommodation by searching on the following website, similar to Blocket: <http://www.wg-gesucht.de>. The website is available in English, but most descriptions are written in German.

The myUniMA website, which you will have access to after acceptance, also has a link where you can view room/apartment offers by Mannheim students needing to rent out their place while studying abroad themselves: <http://zimmer.uni-mannheim.de>

Please note that a lot of Germans use WhatsApp and prefer to communicate that way, which is quite advantageous prior to having a German mobile number / SIM card. I noticed this on multiple websites when searching for housing, and used the app to communicate with potential landlords.

WELCOME WEEK / SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The university offered a handful of programs during the welcome week in order to get orientated with the university, how things work, and it also provided the opportunity to meet international students.

There are numerous activities offered for students at the university. Even the professors encouraged participating in the parties on weekday nights. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, larger dance parties take place. There is also a weekly Stammtisch at a local bar, organized by the “buddy program”. The international department had multiple outings during the semester, for example wine tasting at a regional vineyard and a group excursion to a Christmas market in a city outside of Mannheim.

OVERVIEW OF TEACHING AND COURSES

I found the courses and professors to be of high quality. However, it was very common for fellow students to have conversations among themselves during the larger lectures. At times this became so distracting that it was difficult to focus. Some professors would stop and ask the class to quiet down, but usually they said nothing. If a professor did say something or single someone out, this usually resulted in more talking and giggling among the students, so it was never effective. Attendance is not mandatory in these courses, so I found it a bit rude that students behaved in this way.

During my time there, the business department offered a number of “intensive / block seminars”. These courses were held between 2 to 4 days within one week, usually for a period of 6 - 8 hours, but with breaks of course. Then about 3 weeks later, there was either a written exam or paper to submit. This is an option to consider if you want to travel during your stay in Mannheim, or to complete some classes / ECTS credits earlier in the semester, and thus have a reduced workload at the end.

On the topic of exams, most courses have an exam that lasts 1.5 hours, or at least in the business department. I found this to be difficult because the points of each question corresponded to the time it should take to answer it: example 5 points = 5 minutes. Unlike exams at Stockholm University, you will likely not have time to review your answers, if you even have the time to answer all completely.

The international department offers culture and language courses. I took 3 of these courses and enjoyed them, but they have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that they are fairly easy – in each of these courses we simply had to show up, participate, and do a presentation (either individually or in a group). The disadvantage is that you are only allowed to miss 2 class meetings, so this is not ideal for someone who wants to travel. In order to take these courses, you must pay 15 Euro for each course, and space is very limited, up to 20 students per course.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Semester Ticket – If your exchange period is one semester (not two), you will NOT receive the public transportation card “Semesterticket” free of charge. If you find accommodation in the city center, then you can easily walk to the university, but outside of this area it is necessary to purchase. Unlike SL, the Semesterticket is purchased one time for a period of 6 months and costs 160 Euro. If you plan on visiting neighboring cities, it actually pays for itself quickly – you can take the regional trains to cities such as Heidelberg, and you can even travel as far as the French border, which was really cool.

Libraries – ... are weird. You are not allowed to bring in your backpack, nor wear a heavier jacket, meaning you must unpack everything you have in your bag (laptop, chargers, books, notebooks, pens/pencils, water bottle, etc.) and carry these items in your arms. A few weeks before finals it is impossible to get a seat, unless you line up before the libraries open in the morning.

I hope these details are helpful to anyone considering studying at Mannheim during their exchange semester. I am more than happy to answer any specific questions you may have about Mannheim and my experience there - please feel free to email me at: jencasey85@gmail.com