

Mainhattan

General Information

During block 1 and 2 of this academic year I went to Frankfurt am Main in Germany. I studied at the well known Goethe University Frankfurt. The wintersemester in Germany starts way later than our first block. The wintersemester officially started at the 17th of October but I already went to Frankfurt at the 1st of October so I could acclimatize. I would recommend people to go there even earlier, the university offers a free German course starting around the 10th of September. If you go earlier you can already meet people and get used to Frankfurt am Main before the semester starts. The wintersemester is officially until the end of February but I had to go back to Rotterdam on the 1st of January because block 3 started on the 2nd of January. The professors were really understanding for the exchange students and they let us do an earlier exam (Only the exchange students that had to go home earlier). I ended up doing all my exams the week before Christmas. For one course this wasn't possible, the earliest I could do exam in that course was the end of January. Fortunately, I was following that course as an extra course so I didn't need the ECTS. The overlapping of the study programs shouldn't be an obstacle to go to Frankfurt am Main since the professors are really understanding about it. Even if they won't let you do earlier exam you can still choose another course since you don't have to subscribe for the courses (except for the seminars) but only for the exams. The earlier exams can be either written or oral, depending on the amount of exchange students that will take the exam.

Preparation

When going on exchange, there is quite a lot of preparation to be done. First of all, you need to start looking for accommodation. Since the rent prices in Frankfurt are really high I would recommend to apply for the accommodation through the university. They offer really cheap accommodation which is decent. This also saves a lot of time in looking for an apartment/student room. The university sends you an email in May and it's first comes, first serves. So it would be the best to check your mail regularly during that period. Furthermore, you need to get your paperwork in order. The Goethe University will send you a letter of admission in August which you have to bring with you. Additionally, you need to fill in the papers of you Erasmus+ Grant and get a signature from both your home and host university several times. My advice would be to do this on time since it takes a few weeks after uploading the documents to get the Erasmus+ Grant. In order to get this grant you also have to make a language test before you go on exchange and after. Finally, you need to think about a way to move your stuff from Rotterdam to Frankfurt. My mother took all my stuff with the car at the beginning of my exchange and she picked up my stuff at the end of my exchange.

There is no need to worry about anything before going to Frankfurt, the SSIX Buddy Program will connect you with two Buddies who can help you if you have any questions. They're German students from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration.

Arrival

In the beginning of October I went to Frankfurt with the ICE (highspeed train) from Utrecht Centraal. This only costs 30 euros if you book really far in advance. My mother took my stuff with the car a few days later. The problem about Germany is the opening hours of offices. If you get a room through the University, you will have to go to the Studentwerk office which is only open until 12 in the afternoon. This means you have to go to Frankfurt early. In the case you don't have accommodation before arrival, you will have to sleep in a hostel. I could recommend Five Elements hostel near the central station. On the 5th of October, the exchange students had to go to the university to apply for the Goethe card. It's important that you pay the semester fee before the 5th of October since you can travel with the public transport within the province Hessen for free with the Goethe card. The international office will only be open 4 hours a weeks for matters concerning the Goethe card and the public transport itself is pretty expensive. During the first weeks of October there are a lot of activities organized by the ESN, my advice would be to participate in a lot of activities so you can meet a lot of people.

Courses

The faculty of Economics and Business Administration had a broad selection of courses to offer, most of them were in German though. But there were still enough courses to follow in English, I followed the following courses:

- Pricing (5 ECTS): This course was about one of the most important marketing tools, the pricing of goods and services. The thing I liked about this course was the fact that the focus was on solving real business problems instead of just learning the theories about pricing. The professor was really friendly and good. The course consisted of 1 lecture a week and bi weekly a tutorial or guest lecture. The professor let me do an earlier oral exam for this course.
- Business Cycle Theory and Policy (5 ECTS): This was by far my favourite course, the course was about the Real Business Cycle theory and the New Keynesian theory. It was also a really hard course, it's supposed to be at master level but they teach it at a slow pace so it's doable (if you go to all the lectures and tutorials) The course consisted of 1 lecture a week and there was a tutorial bi weekly.
- Macroeconomics 2 (6 ECTS): This was also a really interesting course. The course is basically a sequel of Macroeconomics given in the first year at the ESE. It was given by the same teacher as the course above, he was really good. He was really understanding towards the exchange students and let us do an earlier exam in both Macroeconomics 2 and Business Cycle Theory and Policy. This course consisted of a weekly lecture and a bi weekly tutorial.
- Game Theory (5 ECTS): This course was about understanding and applying the concept Game Theory. The course was interesting but the professor didn't let me do the exam in the end of December. The latest he would let me do the exam was the end of January which wasn't possible for me. So I only followed this course for a few weeks and then I dropped it

My advice would be to follow a lot of courses in the first week/two weeks to see what courses you like the most, you only have to apply for the exams anyways.

Finances

Frankfurt am Main is a pretty expensive city but if you manage to get student accommodation through the university you save a lot of money. The average rent for a student room/shared flat is 500-600 euros if you want to live close to the city centre. I paid only 240 euros a month for my room and I shared my apartment with 3 girls. The accommodation wasn't that good but I was happy to have a relatively cheap room. The supermarket prices are a little bit higher compared to the Netherlands. But the cafeteria's at the university were really cheap, they serve warm dishes until 5 P.M.. Going out was pretty expensive in Frankfurt, a small beer usually costs 3 euros. The sport facilities of the university were really cheap, you only paid 10 euros for every sport course for the whole semester. I can really recommend you to try out a new sport since it's really cheap. The ESN also organizes a sport event every week, those events are usually free. For your mobile phone I would recommend you to buy an Aldi-talk SIM card. The card itself only costs 10 euros, I only spent 20 euros for the charging of my SIM card in three months. Public transport is free with the Goethe card but you have to pay a semester fee of 300 euros. With the Goethe card you can also do other activities for free, like museums. The only problem is that it takes 2 weeks to get your Goethe card after enrolling at the university so you have to pay for the public transport in the first weeks. As for unforeseen costs, I lost my keys once and I had to pay 170 euros because they had to replace the locks.

Daily life

There's not a lot of sightseeing to do in Frankfurt im Main but I would surely recommend to visit the Main Tower. It's a view point on the 57th floor of a building in the middle of the financial district. There are a lot of organized trips to cities nearby and a lot of exchange students go on these trips. The nightlife in Frankfurt is really nice, with a big variety of clubs.