

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS, Sociology
Host University	Universität Stuttgart
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY16/17 Semester 2

2. Study at Host University

Please provide information on the academics at your host university:

- Studying or learning culture at your host university. How were classes conducted?
- What did you like most or dislike most about the academics at your host University?
- Advice on module registration and module mapping

I applied for a month-long Intensive German Course where I would round out my language skills, and this cost €250. This took place before the actual start of the semester, and I was glad for it as it eased me into a foreign environment and familiarised me with how Germany worked. One element of the class that stood out was one class where we talked about cultural differences, and we discussed contrasts between how people spoke and interpreted body language in Mexican, Italian, Taiwanese cultures etc.

During the language course, there were a lot of official administrative things to complete that involved a lot of running around to places like the *Ausländerbehörde*, the bank, the insurance office, and the *Studiensekretariat*.

The classes at the university took a while to get used to, not least because of the language difference. Since there were very limited Sociology courses, I took two Master's classes, which were chiefly oriented towards Political Science, a new field for me. It was challenging as the classes involved not so much the lecturers teaching, but rather them encouraging discussion. Which is not too surprising, considering that they were of a more advanced level. But one Bachelor's class was also heavily based on student presentations and class discussions.

I admired the local students as they seemed to have equal mastery of both German and English. My professors were really accommodating and friendly, so I would suggest that you talk to them if you have any worries such as expectations and exam formats. Generally, they're pretty flexible with these things. Also, do read their research as they are probably active scholars.

Do note about the process of obtaining your classes at Universität Stuttgart. We were told that overseas students only had to turn up on the first day of class and let the lecturer know we wanted to take that class. Apparently we didn't have to sign up for class through C@MPUS, the online portal. However, I lost the opportunity to participate in one class because it turned out that the class was full when I showed up on the day itself. Make sure to apply for access to your course material through ILIAS when applicable. Access to email is through the Microsoft Outlook OWA portal.

Please list the courses that you took during SEP. (Please take note that the list of modules available to exchange students at the host university are subject to change. This table merely serves as reference.)

SEP Report

Host University			NUS Equivalent		
Module code	Course title	ECTS Credit	Module code	Course title	Modular credit
SOWI 301170 180	Mediensoziologie - Grundfragen und Forschungsfelder	6	SC3747	Department Exchange Module	4
SOWI 241171 070	Democratization	6	SC3747	Department Exchange Module	4
SOWI 241172 030	Globale Demokratie	6	SC3842	Department Exchange Module	4
SQ 511000 180	Präsentationstechniken im Studium für ausländische Studierende (B2/C1-Niveau)	3	LAG473 2	Department Exchange Module	3 (in total for the 2 modules)
SQ 511000 550	Übungen zur Phonetik und mündlichen Kommunikation für ausländische Studierende (B2- Niveau)	3	LAG473 2	Department Exchange Module	

2. Accommodation

What kind of accommodation did you stay in during your exchange (eg. on campus / off campus)?

Would you recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students?

Do you have any other suggestions?

Accommodation was allocated to me by the Studierendenwerk. I stayed at the Vaihingen campus so I had to commute to lessons in the Stadtmitte campus, where language courses, architecture and arts and social sciences classes are held. There were students from the Ukraine, New Zealand, Vietnam, and Bulgaria at my dorm, to name a few. Shared facilities, especially the kitchen, can be pretty grimy, but the rent around €300 per month it's considered on the affordable side. Everything else is self-sustained, from toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and pots/pans/dishes. I do not recommend buying the package of bedding from the Hausmeister on the day you move in because you can get cheaper alternatives on your own from a department store or IKEA. Alternatively, bring an old set over that you can throw away at the end of your stay.

There is a €400 deposit (*Kaution*) for accommodation that can only be collected on the day of moving out (*Auszug*) after you have returned your keys. This involves making an appointment with a person-in-charge in town and getting it from them there, if you want the money back in person. I recommend this method as it's quicker compared to a bank transfer, which takes from 6 to 8 weeks to your Singapore (overseas) account and involves a disadvantageous handling fee. I had no idea this was the deposit collection procedure and did not have time before my flight to collect the money in person on the day itself.

I definitely still recommend going with the allocated accommodation, as the rent will be among the cheapest you can find and you get to meet young people from different countries, and have

SEP Report

opportunities to cook together. You might want to opt for an apartment-style room instead of a single room if you want a better chance of being in closer proximity to German students to practise your language. At the end of your stay, please consider donating your bedding and excess clothes/things instead of just throwing them away. There is a donation bin at Büchsenstraße 34 that takes such things.

3. Activities during SEP

Were there any activities organized by school/student group/external organizations at your host university which you would like to recommend to other students?

Sign up for a buddy prior to arriving at your partner university. This email will be sent to you a few weeks before your arrival. Your local buddy will be willing to meet you and tell you what and where to go to complete administrative things like activating your blocked account at Deutsche Bank, where to register for health insurance, and how to do enrolment. Don't expect them to be all-knowing, though, and make sure to check the procedures for yourself. Mostly your buddy will know about leisure activities and the city, so ask them what to do while you're there.

The AEGEE will organise a short orientation and few other activities during the semester like outings to festivals and a pub crawl. The university will also organise excursions that are really cost-effective such as water sports and trips to other cities. These will be emailed to you. Make sure to check out Hochschulsport for extra-curriculars that are affordable and diverse. Many university events/parties will have publicity posters splashed on the walls during the semester.

4. Cost of Living

Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?

Please list travel expenses separately.

Blocked account opening (not including actual amount to deposit, which is specified in visa application):
~€150

PU Semester fee: ~€110

Health insurance (compulsory): €90/mnth

Rent: €275/mnth

Internet: €7/mnth

StudiTicket (for all city transport, Apr to Sep): €203 [if not, €62 for monthly student ticket]

Food: ~€200/mnth

5. Challenges

SEP Report

Did you face any challenging issues during your SEP stint? How did you overcome it/them?

6. Overall SEP Experience

Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience and attach some photos that represent your exchange experience.

I was blessed enough to travel, and a lot of my free time was used up to that purpose. London was wonderful in its diversity and fabled locations like Borough Market, Trafalgar Square, and the Thames. Its Chinatown also gave me a good dose of nostalgia, with a type of bread that I could never find in Germany but are ubiquitous in neighbourhoods back home. Prague was a beautifully historic city, albeit full of tourists, and the Prague Castle and Petřín Hill made the most beautiful silhouettes from across the Vltava River. Morocco was by far the most exotic location I was able to travel to, as well as one of the cheapest due to the exchange rate. The intense historic quarter of Fez is packed full of humanity, leather goods, and carpets vying for one's attention. The load-carrying donkeys are also a fast fixture of the activity there.

I feel extremely privileged to have had a semester abroad. I feel somewhat amazed at the realisation that I have attended classes in the German language, and become somewhat coherent in it – although any bit of Swabisch will take me up on my word. The diversity of culture among the international students that I was able to encounter in my time on exchange took place chiefly in English, but it is motivating to find so many friends fluent in many languages besides their mother tongue and German. Just at my dorm, there were students from the Ukraine, New Zealand, Vietnam, and Bulgaria who had very respectable fluency, and I practised small talk with them. I was able to try authentic African, Korean, German, French, and Italian food during this time, to name a few, and savour the beauty of hiking through the *Schwarzwald*, feel rain in the Sahara Desert, and watch many stunning sunsets from my dormitory that painted the sky and buildings in unbelievably brilliant colours. I could not for the world place a rating on the entirety of my time abroad, as each experience therein would be hard to compare with the next. It has left me with a new appreciation for academic independence, as well as a hunger for learning in the new semester at my home university to prepare myself for the wider world, which I have so gained perhaps a slightly better understanding of.