

Student Exchange Questionnaire

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Massey Degree: Bachelor of Design with Honours (Visual Communication Design)

Host university: Munich University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule München)

Semester and year of exchange: Full Year 2015

- **Why did you choose this particular university and/or country for exchange?**

I choose to study at Hochschule München because I thought it would be interesting to experience a completely new culture and learn what it was like to live in a country that didn't speak English as a first language. I also chose a German university because of my German heritage. It has always been a goal of mine to live in Germany and immerse myself in the German culture and this was a great way to be a real part of the community rather than just a tourist.



- **Did it meet your expectations?**

Overall the exchange was much better than my original expectations, I feel that I became used to the different culture very quickly and this made it easier to enjoy my time in Germany. However it was a big shock when I arrived at the university to find out that there was only one paper a year in the Design department that was in English, this meant that with my very basic German skills I had to take all but 6 off my credits in a German class.

- **What papers did you study while on exchange? Would you recommend them?**

In my first semester at Hochschule München I studied:

- Zurectkommen with Ben Santo
- Ideation and Improvement of an App Design with Alexis Brion (English Class)
- Basic German Language

In my second semester at Hochschule München I studied:

- Real Project, a matching economy with Ebru Turgut-Dao
- Baren Gehen with Sussane Straßer
- Intro to Typography with Xuyen Dam
- Free Project with Xuyen Dam
- Negotiation, Communication and Public Relations with Paul Sudnik (English Paper)

I would recommend all the classes that I participated in while at Hochschule München. Although it was difficult taking the class in German and I do feel like I may have missed some of the learning that my classmates received, I still feel like I gained a lot of new skills and perspective and I feel like my teachers were very accommodating in helping me at the end of classes and through email communications.

I would recommend taking any 'Real Project' while at the university as they are projects that you do in collaboration with other departments at Hochschule München, other universities from around the world and/or companies.

- **Were there differences in the teaching methods and academic environment at your host university, compared to Massey University? If so, what kind of differences?**

From Semester 3 at Hochschule München the students participate mostly in whole semester projects, which is 15 weeks in Germany. I found that the class attendance was a lot more free in Germany, with most students only turning up to 50% of classes or less. Most students, after receiving the brief, use mostly email communication to keep up to date with class information until their designs are quite developed and then in the last month of the semester every one begins coming to class again to receive feedback to help fine tune there designs.



- **Did you stay on-campus or off-campus? What was the accommodation like?**
Hochschule München did not have on-campus design however they do have a relationship with StudentenWerk which houses students across the city, however I found my own accommodation. When I first arrived in Munich I spent a month living in an AirBnB studio apartment before I moved into an apartment in Schwabing-West, near the major U-bahn station of Munchner Frieheet. I was lucky as this is a very social and busy area, with supermarkets, restaurants and shops being all only a few minutes walk from my apartment.

I lived in a 3 bedroom apartment with a young professional from Germany and a young Japanese girl who was on a working holiday in Germany. The apartment was fully furnished including bedding, and all kitchen equipment which meant that I didn't have to buy anything.

- **How did living expenses compare to in New Zealand?**
There were many things including rent and food and especially meat, which I found to be very expensive in Munich, however there were also many things including cosmetics, clothing and public transport which I found to be a lot cheaper than in New Zealand.

I think that overall my general living costs were only slightly more than what I paid in New Zealand however I definatley spent a lot more than I would in New Zealand because I was often travelling around Europe and also socialising more in Munich.

- **What extra-curricular activities did you participate in at the host university?**
While in Germany I participated in the Exchange student groups get togethers and trips, as well as this I was also published in the Hochschule München magazine with an article that I had written for one of my first semester projects.
- **What's one thing you learnt about your host country or culture?**

Germans love beer, so you need to love beer too. I know this seems like an obvious, but drinking beer is so much more common than you would think. In Germany drinking is allowed anywhere, public transport, university, parks it is always allowed. Before I moved to Germany I never drank beer but after only two days in Germany I realised that saying the phrase "I don't like beer" was a forbidden phrase and before long I was drinking 500ml bottles of beer on my university lunch breaks like it was a glass of water.



- **What were some of the highlights of your exchange experience?**

The best part of my exchange was meeting people from all over the world and creating such great friendships with everyone. I was able to travel to their countries in the summer break and visit them in their home and be immersed in their cultures also. I didn't just learn about the German culture but also the culture of many other European countries.

- **What did you find challenging?**

The most challenging part of the exchange experience was obviously the language barrier. Although I had been learning some basic German before I went to Germany it was nowhere near enough and even the German I had learnt was difficult for me to remember when I was under pressure.

I definitely got by throughout the year and my understanding of the language grew but I would recommend that students going take a language course before going to Germany and aim to be able to have simple conversations before going so that they are able to communicate with everyone.

- **What do you feel you have learnt or gained from going on exchange?**

This exchange has really made me rethink a lot of aspects in my life. I have become friends with people from so many different countries and cultures and realised how much our 'normal' isn't always normal for everyone. My thinking is no longer black and white but instead I see the greys in between. I think that this new way of thinking will be really important in my future career as a designer because I understand the thinking of more than just my culture and the ways that things New Zealanders may find appropriate aren't seen the same way to others.

- **Do you have any tips for future students intending to travel to the same country or university?**

Pack lightly – Most things are cheaper to buy in Germany
Save what you think is enough money and then save some more – I thought I had saved so much money before I left but I had spent my entire savings before I started my second semester.

Learn German – At least know how to order food and drinks because not always do they know English.



Make German friends – It is so easy to just be friends with other exchange students, and I do recommend you make friends with them also, but remember you are in Germany to experience the German way of life and the best way to do this is to make some German friends to show you how to do it.

- **Do you have any comments on the support provided to you by Massey University and/or by the host university before/during/after your exchange?**

There was a miscommunication that led us to believe our classes would all be in English which meant that we were surprised when we were told they would be in German. However we know this wasn't anyone's fault.

Hochschule München was really welcoming and accommodating when we arrived, with a 'buddy' meeting us when we arrived in Munich and helping us with any questions we had. They also took us out to meet other Germans and made sure that we were making connections within the university students.

Craig Lyons and Gray Hodgkinson were really great at replying to my messages and helping me to ensure that I was taking the right papers to start my fourth year with honours this year.

