

Exchange experience report University of Würzburg, Germany, Autumn 2019

Your study programme

Würzburg had a great selection of courses in the law faculty. In general the university offers a lot of freedom in respect to course selection. Every course is individually organized by a professor, so it mostly depends on them if you can participate or not. They are not too generous with their ECTS, as they depend on contact hours. The Uni also has a wide variety of legal courses in languages such as Spanish, French, English and I believe even Italian. These ECTS for these courses usually ranges between 5 and 2 ECTS. In order to get higher ECTS you need to choose larger and heavier domestic legal subjects. For example BGB (civil law), Strafrecht (criminal Law), or öffentliches Recht (public law). These subjects are only taught in German, and are difficult to follow if you do not have an academic understanding of German. Furthermore, lecture halls are particularly crowded in these subjects, as they are mandatory for the students following the German law track. If you are intending in participating in these courses I would also recommend to start with the first courses, and not jump straight into more specific knowledge. I took the following subjects:

- BGB 1: with prof. Buchwitz
- Kartellrecht: with prof. Bien
- Introduction to Latin-American Law with dr. Murillo-Goebles
- Civil process in Spain and Latin America: with dr. Murillo-Goebles

Teachers are generally all very willing to help, and offer oral exams, so that ERASMUS students do not have to learn the Gutachtestil.

Language

German is indeed the first language of instruction, but you may be able to scrape enough ECTS if you decide to not take any classes in German. There is an intensive language course offered before every semester (in September for the WS, and March for the SS). It is free for exchange students, but you need to register on time, and take part in an examination in order to determine your level of the language. If you score a C+ they will offer a preparation course for the DSH as well as the test if you decide to sign up for it (the DSH is a language test required to enroll as a full time international student at any university in Germany).

In General Würzburg is a very international city and the chose destination of many ERASMUS students. People often speak English in the city, but the people may respond better if you talk to them in German

Finance and other conditions

Finances depend highly on your lifestyle. There is a one-time semester fee of 137.90 EU, which includes public transport for all of the semester. Housing is definitely cheaper and easier than in Groningen if you prepare on time there are some government facilitated dorms which are very nice, and range in between 280-330 EU a month with all services included. The cost of food is very similar to those of Groningen but they also have some cafeterias (called MENSA) which serve nice food at a very reasonable price (in between 3-6 EU per plate).

One unexpected payment that came up, was the Rundfunkbeitrag. This is a fee that is to be paid per household, and corresponds to the radio and television services. As far as I understood, you have to pay them even if you do not own a radio and/or TV. It was fairly expensive as for approx 5 months it is about 100-200 EU. I was unsure if there is an exception for exchange students, but I paid for it.

Preparation and contacts with the faculty abroad

This is the only area where had some difficulties. Sometimes it can be confusing to figure out who to ask your questions, since they have two international offices (the international office of the Uni and the international office of the faculty). Moreover, the course catalogue for the semester usually gets published very late in relation to when the subjects must be submitted for approval at the board of examiners. As result, some of the classes you see on the catalogue (which may also vary from WS to SS) may or may not be available during your stay abroad I would recommend to go through the older course catalogues, and particularly those that correspond to the semester you are planning on taking.

The application process and the enrollment course may difficult to follow but if you are not clear on something they usually respond emails within a week. Sometimes they send big blocks of forms, information and instructions very early in the year, which should not/cannot be done until a couple of months afterwards.

Once you arrive there the communication becomes slightly smoother, as most contact is with the office within the faculty, but they have limited office hours so it is good to keep them in mind.

Housing

The housing situation seems to be better than in Groningen, if you act in time. There are some university dorms (studentenwohnheim), as well as some privately owned rooms for rent.

The prices at the studentenwohnheim were very reasonable, in between 260-330 EU a month. I had a furnished studio at a newly constructed building (Zuernstrasse 2) with my own kitchen and bath, and only paid 280 Eu a month. They guarantee rooms for ERASMUS students if you send the application on time. They also expect a security deposit to be given in advance, which would be returned if the room is left in good condition.

The only thing I would recommend to keep in mind is that most of these rooms do not provide WIFI but they do have, what they call WLAN.

Guidance / reception at host university

The university was amazing at the reception, and due to the high numbers of ERASMUS students it became very easy to be oriented.

Every faculty organized their own welcoming events, and at the law faculty the organized a tour of the building and even a session to become familiar with the library.

There also is a student association called WIN which is organized by German students but specifically targets exchange students. They organize trips, hikes and bar evenings.

Culture, free time and travelling

Wurzburg is a very beautiful city with tons to do, in addition to being well located to travel around. The city has two castles, and is situated in a wine producing area, that allows for beautiful scenery and walks.

The state of Bavaria also offers the "Bayer ticket" which allows for large groups of people (in between 4-12 people) to travel at a reduced train fare within Bayern. Frankfurt is also close by at approx 1-2 hours depending if you chose the speed train (ICE) of the bus. Moreover, Wurzburg has a vibrant night life with many clubs and bars.

Other

Wurzburg is an amazing city with everything a student could want and I strongly recommend it if you are looking for a medium sized city.