

Home University	University of Western Ontario
Academic Program at Home University	Electrical Engineering
Degree studying for	Bachelor of Electrical Engineering
The exchange period was carried out in my	4th year of study
Exchange period	from (mm/yy) 09/07 until (mm/yy) 08/08
Academic Program at Ulm University	Communications Technology

<b>PASSING OVER MY NAME AND EMAIL-ADDRESS / PUBLICATION OF MY EXCHANGE REPORT</b>		
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
The International Office of Ulm University may pass my name and email-address to future exchange students from my home university	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This report may be published on the website of the International Office of Ulm University ...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... anonymized	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scholarship Holders (DAAD / Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM): This report may be published on the website of the scholarship organization ...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... anonymized	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **EXCHANGE REPORT**

*Ontario - Baden-Wuerttemberg Exchange Student  
Uni Ulm*

### **Preparation for study abroad:**

My exchange began in Canada. The application procedure had many different stages. In the beginning it was necessary to write up my reasons for wanting to go on exchange as well as why I would be a good choice for the exchange group to send. This included personal reasons as well as academic related goals. To accomplish the academic goal section, I researched the courses offered by different universities to find out which one would be a good fit.

After submitting these items, I moved onto the interview stage. During this stage, I met with an Ontario/Baden-Wuerttemberg Exchange (OBW) coordinator at my home university who assessed my level of German comprehension. The coordinator approved me for the exchange program and recommended that I practice my German as much as possible before travelling abroad.

Upon approval, I was required to complete a number of different forms and tasks. This included finding adequate health insurance during my stay in Germany, what specific courses I intended to take, and attending a mandatory workshop in Toronto with other OBW exchange students. For course approval, I was required to find courses as well as their descriptions, which were mostly in German, and present them to my home university's professors. Not all of the courses were approved.

An item that proved particularly challenging was satisfying my home university's requirement for health insurance. All students travelling to another country on

exchange must present proof of health insurance coverage, such as account numbers, from the new insurance company. At first, I did not think this would be a problem. However, after contacting a few German health insurance companies, I quickly realized that not having a German bank account would make things difficult. This challenge was overcome by attaining temporary travel health insurance and a few papers faxed from a German health insurance agency claiming that there would be no problems for me to gain coverage once I was registered in Germany.

To enhance my knowledge of the German language before going on exchange, I took a few German courses, one at a local college and another at a local high school. I also purchased software for learning German. Ultimately, I learned a great deal about German grammar and vocabulary before going to Germany, but my ability to communicate verbally was limited.

Packing for a year was fun. After filling up my suitcase, I decided I wanted to bring more clothes than could fit with the other things I had packed out of necessity. This was achieved by wearing three layers of winter worth cloths as well as my thick leather jacket during summer weather.

### **Travelling to Ulm:**

Travelling to Ulm was quite the experience. I was determined to do so as cheaply as possible. My trip to Germany began with a not well known Canadian airline named Hamilton International, which would take me as far as Glasgow, Scotland. From Glasgow I travelled by train to the airport in Glasgow-Prestwich. I waited in this airport for 13 hours until my flight to Germany was ready to depart. My next flight was to Frankfurt-Hahn via Ryanair. I arrived in Frankfurt-Hahn at 23:30 and my bus to the train station in Heidelberg was scheduled to leave at 5:00 the following day. I spent my first night in Germany trying to sleep on an airport floor.

At 5:00 I left by bus from Frankfurt-Hahn and went to Heidelberg. Completely jet-lagged and tired, I learned how to use the train system by inspection and made my way to Ulm. Unfortunately, my train was delayed and I missed my appointment with my STEPS Tutor. An internet café was my next stop. Fortunately, my STEPS Tutor anticipated this and I was able to get some well earned sleep without much difficulty.

### **Organization of Study Abroad Period in Ulm**

When I arrived in Ulm, it seemed as though there was an endless supply of documents for me to fill out. Luckily, my STEPS Tutor was very organized. With his help the tasks were quickly finished. Within a week I had my student-VISA, German bank account, cell-phone, no more documents to fill out and enough knowledge of the city to live comfortably.

The exchange group at the University of Ulm was very diverse. There were students from all over the globe and together we formed a team prepared to travel Germany. The International Office at the university was very helpful, knowledgeable and quite friendly. If I had questions, the International Office was quick to respond and provide assistance.

The International Office also arranged trips for exchange students. These trips took us to touristy places such as Schloss Neuschwanstein or Rothenburg ob der

Tauber, as well as lesser known destinations such as Sigmaringen. As I had never been to Germany before, it was pleasant having local experts willing to show me parts of Germany that a foreigner was likely to miss.

My accommodations in Ulm were very good. I stayed at Wohnheim Frauensteige in a suite-style room. I shared a kitchen and bathroom with one other roommate. The room was well cleaned before my arrival and the Hausmeister was easy to approach. The room itself was well-heated, and the residence was located close to a supermarket as well as near a bus route that went directly to the university.

### **Study Experience at the University of Ulm**

The University of Ulm offered the chance for me to take part in courses not offered at my home university. These include Advanced Optoelectric Communications, Dialogue Systems, Satellite Communications, and many courses that gave me the chance to learn more about the German language.

It was difficult for me to adjust to the flexible nature used by German universities with respect to course registration. Normally, I would have registered for all of my courses months in advance. In fact, it was still necessary for me to do so. Before going on exchange, I needed to have my intended courses approved by my home university's professors. Most of the courses that I selected were not offered during my year in Ulm. I did not know this until the courses were posted on the bulletin board during the first semester. Luckily my home university did not make me repeat the course approval process. At that point I chose my courses from the bulletin board.

In the end, the courses that I took part in were not applicable to my undergraduate degree. Specifically, I participated in courses from a master's program in Communication Technology while my major was in power systems and at the undergraduate level. Although this was not my original plan, it was a welcome chance from which I learned a great deal of information.

Until my time at the University of Ulm, all of my courses had only written midterms and finals, which were primarily based on mathematical formulae and models. Nearly all of my courses in Ulm had oral examinations that were worth 100%. These examinations required me to be well versed in theory as well as how components fit together as a whole.

A pleasant surprise for me was the examination period itself. In Canada, we are normally permitted two weeks, during which we must complete all examinations without the possibility of scheduling the examination dates ourselves. The two month examination period in Germany gave me the chance to schedule my own exam times, which made it possible for me to have nearly a month and a half to travel throughout Europe. This freedom was one of my favourite parts of my exchange.

During my courses at the University of Ulm, I was required worked in groups for some of my courses. These groups were generally very diverse in background and led to very interesting developments for presentations and problem solving.

I did not send an official transcript to my home university. The courses that I took were from a German graduate program. As I was still an undergraduate student, these courses were not applicable to my degree. Instead, I brought home my

Scheine and provided notarized copies to the appropriate individuals and all of my exchange courses were counted as extra courses.

### **Personal Experience in Ulm Germany**

From arrival to finish, I could not get enough of travelling through Germany and finding new things. My arrival left me with an empty fridge and a hungry stomach. It was this attitude that I tried to employ on all of my activities. I tried to keep an open mind with a hunger for knowledge. In the beginning this led to the exploration of various restaurants in the Fischerviertel, but by the end it finding and climbing castles in foreign lands.

During my exchange in Germany, I was able to meet many people and see places that I may not have otherwise been able to see in my lifetime. My examination periods gave me time enough able to travel to places such as Schleswig-Holstein where a large portion of the German side of my family lives. It was great meeting them and seeing where my family originated.

I was able to find many of the things that I was looking for on my exchange. These included going to concerts, attending festivals such as Oktoberfest, and a chance to from some of the world's best swing dancers. For swing dancing, I attended a 4-day camp in Landsberg am Lech where the champion Lindy Hop dancers from Sweden taught me moves beyond the scope offered at my home university. Also, at this camp I made a lot of friends who were spread throughout Europe with some in Holland, France, Italy, and Sweden. These friends were very accommodating and gave me the chance to have guided tours of various parts in Europe.

### **Personal judgment on study abroad experience**

My exchange in Ulm, Germany was amazing. I find myself constantly remembering my experiences with friends, colleagues, and professors who I met there. Although it took a significant amount of adjustments in my day-to-day activities, I was happy to learn how to adapt to a different culture.

Ultimately, this exchange was not light on my bank accounts. It was wonderful having the opportunity to travel and meet family, friends, and foreign cities. Without the help of the Baden-Württemberg SCHOLARSHIP, I would have not had such a rewarding exchange experience and for that I will always be very grateful.