

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE....



Hello, my name is Daniela González I am Colombian, and I was on exchange for six months at HS Offenburg, and here I will share with you how my exchange with *Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM* went.

This experience began when my professor Dr.- Ing Carlos Forero told me about the new relationship that get my home institute (Jorge Tadeo Lozano University) between with the Hochschule Offenburg and he also sent me the call I was doing HS Offenburg to support the exchange between universities with the support of *Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM*.

I decided to apply and sent the required documents to Lidija Rottenecker, who works at the International office in HS Offenburg, between February and March 2017, after which I uploaded the relevant documents to the portal BSW and the university web site.

On April 24,2017, I received an e-mail from Lidija telling me that I had been selected for the Baden-Württemberg scholarship by the committee of the University of Offenburg, this day I was very excited and happy because it was a surprise for me, with this I spoke with my academic coordinator and the international office of my home institution to find out what documents I had to bring so that they could validate my exchange, I gave everything and they supported me in order to do this by giving me letters that the German embassy requested where the exchange was accepted.

The following months, HS Offenburg assigned me a tutor who helped me days before my arrival and during my semester in Offenburg, also Lidija sent me the checklist and important information that my accommodation and fitting were better.

I arrived in Offenburg in September because I took a German Intensive Course with HS Offenburg, the course was very good, and I received 6 hours of language lessons each day, as I was a scholarship holder the course had a discount and the book was given. The course includes an excursion and the cultural activities as socialize with German culture through the Senior Service, trips to various places in the state of Baden-Württemberg such as

Heidelberg, Gengenbach, Ortenberg all these were incredible and rewarding because I met new people, new cultures, new cities, new things and new ways of thinking, the best decision was to take the German course before the official classes started because it was the best thing for my adaptation and simulation with the German education.

On October, I began official classes and during this semester I took six subjects as Thermal Power Plants, Thermal Energy Systems, Wind and Hydro Power Plants, Energy Economics, Scientific Skills and German class, most of the classes were theoretical but the professors showed real situations and, in the exercises, we used data obtained in research or equipment from host university

The adaptation was good but starting I noticed different changes with respect to Colombian education, first with the class time here is an hour and half, in Colombia is two hours; later, here you have a little break (15 min) between a class block and this is an advantage because you can speak with the classmates or eat something on the other hand in my home institute you have blocks in row and you can not eat anything for long hours then, the other difference is here you have only an exam for all semester in Colombia we have three exams and the grades is the average that the 3 exams results, also here you can choose what class take or you can go to any classes and the end you registered the exams that you feel is fine and in my home institution from the beginning you select the classes and the exams you can cancelled any class within the next two weeks of starting the semester. Other aspect different is the preparation and exams time here you have one month for this at my home university, however, I can take 3 exams or final tasks for the same day or week and even hours of classes. Maybe, the last difference is grading systems because here used the specific grades with 0.7 or 0.3 and the best grade is 1.0 in Colombia by contrast the best grade is 5.0 and we used all decimal numbers.

The similitudes between my home institute and the host institute is amount persons each master class (max. 25) also, the professors have a high level of knowledge and PhD and the communication between the master's office (secretaries and professor) and the students.

On the other hand, during the semester I took the salsa classes in HS Offenburg and enjoyed activities with the student organization (ASTA), the most important cultures activities were thrilling because for example we had the international evening where all the foreign students showed a little bit of our countries, the cultures exhibitions were dance, music, concerts, and food; all the people from Offenburg were welcome, other activities was the introduction weekend where I traveled with the my classmates of master to Schwäbicsh Hall for a pre-integration and coexistence with some professors, there we visited the city and a very important brewery also, with the others holders scholarships to Europa Park in winter season. At Christmas we were with the Senior Service in Gengenbach to see the Christmas calendar and spend some time together. Finally, by the end of the semester we went to Oberstdorf for the winter excursion and this was the best experience in my life because it was my first time with snow sports.

My life outside the university was full of emotion and adventures because I met some very nice, friendly, cheerful, and gentle people who made me feel at home, with them I tasted new food and visited new places that I never thought I ever met.

In November I participated in the main event Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM in Freiburg, I went with my friends who also have the scholarship, we had the opportunity to meet new people from the same cities and talk about how it was our process to get here, because for example I was the only exchange student from Colombia at HS Offenburg here I realized that there were many more Colombians here I realized that there were many more Colombians and I contacted them at this time to expand the network in Colombia of Baden-Württemberg-STIPENDIUM scholarship holders and to encourage Colombian students to apply for this type of scholarship, also, I took the with sustainability and development course with this knowledge of different ways of thinking from people of different ages and studies, I learned new topics and expressed my way of thinking about this topic.

Finally, for the future scholarship holders I can say that they enjoy the experiences, don't live only in their world, interact with other people, have an open mind because here you will have friends from all over the world, be a friendly companion and help you to have friends for life as it happened to me. As tips I can say for the important subjects or themes how the accommodation, daily life and student life the international office in the host university will always help and support you in whatever they can. I recommend you visit most cities in the state Baden-Württemberg because the people are so gentle, and all time have a smile for you.

At the end I would like to thank the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, HS Offenburg, Jorge Tadeo University and especially Lidija Rottenecker, for giving me the opportunity to let myself be part of this exchange for the financial and academic support they have given me because what I have learned in this exchange will serve me for all my professional, personal and social life because I will develop new skills and knowledge that I will never forget.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!





