

Advice and information for the Hamburg Exchange:

First steps:

- Prepare early! Fill out an OU Education Abroad advising application as soon as you've decided you're interested. This will lead to an appointment with the EA representative in charge of programs in Germany (Kristian Savic).
- Fill out the program application on the OU EA website. This can be rather time consuming, so do this as early as possible. It's due quite early in the fall semester before your trip.
- Talk to Dr. Petra Klein about your interest in studying in Hamburg. She is the advisor for the Hamburg program in the School of Meteorology. She'll have you write a short application paragraph.
- There are several scholarships available for funding your trip. The DAAD (<http://www.daad.org/?p=47220>) offers great scholarships, but their application is due almost a whole year before you go. Others available are the Gilman International Scholarship (<http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/Gilman-Scholarship-Program>) and the OU PITF (application on the EA website). These scholarship applications are due in October.
- Most importantly, make sure your passport is valid, or apply for one if you don't have one already! It's imperative that you do this early; while you can put a rush on receiving a passport, applying early will ensure that you have time to make corrections if a problem arises.

After you've been approved for the program:

- Make sure you keep up with the "application" items on the OU EA website.
- Prepare a budget. Keep the following things in mind when doing so: Housing will cost around €300 per month. The cost of food differs depending on what you like to eat; it is relatively more expensive to eat out there than in the US. Clothing is also more expensive. Transportation costs in the greater Hamburg area are relatively non-existent; you receive a pass for the city's excellent public transportation system when you arrive, and this costs nothing for you as a Uni Hamburg student. It allows you to use the transportation system free of charge 24 hours a day.
- Please be aware that when you arrive in Germany, the government will want proof that you have enough money to stay. They say this is around €7500. See the section below for more information.
- Fill out an application ("Immatrikulationsantrag") for the University of Hamburg. This will be provided to you by your contact in Germany, or can be found at <http://www.verwaltung.uni-hamburg.de/campuscenter/download/antraege-und-formulare/immatrikulationsantrag-stiftung-hochschulzulassung.pdf>
- * If you use the application at the link, please check to make sure that it is the most recently updated version.
- Write a Curriculum Vitae or résumé. This is for the people in Hamburg so they know a little bit about you. It is common in Germany to put a picture of yourself at the top of the page.
- Look out for emails from both Dr. Klein and your contact at UH. They include very important information and tasks for you to complete in preparation for your arrival there. Don't procrastinate on these!

Before you leave:

- Winter in Hamburg can be pretty dreary; while it may not snow very often, it rains

frequently, and temperatures hover just above freezing for a couple of months. Be prepared with some good cold-weather and rain gear. Comfortable boots and a warm (and perhaps waterproof) coat are essential.

- Prepare whatever proof you will show that you have enough money. The German government requires this for assurance that you will not depend on their welfare system while you are there; their recommended amount (for the duration of this program) is €7500. If your parents are helping to finance your trip, have them write an affidavit of support ("Verpflichtungserklärung") and print out a bank statement that shows that the money is there. If you are financing the trip on your own, a printed out bank statement and/or financial aid statement should be shown. This is part of the documentation needed for your residency application.

- Make sure you have printed the invitation letter from Uni Hamburg, and keep it with you on your flights. This is useful for gaining entry to Germany and is also necessary for your residency application.

- Education Abroad will issue health insurance documents to you via their website. Make sure you have printed out that account information.

- Make sure you have cash along (in EUROS) for the first few days; you'll need to pay for several things right away (listed below). Unlike in the US, most places in Germany only accept cash; very few accept Visa and MasterCard.

- Keep in mind that your bank may charge rather high fees for using their card at an international ATM. Typically, you will be charged the typical outside-bank ATM fees, plus another 3% for the currency conversion. If your bank is really greedy, they'll also charge another international ATM fee. Luckily, there's a way to get around this! Bank of America and Deutsche Bank have an agreement in which ATM fees are waived and transactional currency conversion fees are very low. So, if you don't have an account at BoA already, we recommend opening one before you leave. Do so at least 3 weeks before your departure so that you receive your debit card and all of the important documents in a timely manner.

- Be aware that the EA office is responsible for enrolling you in your INTL credits; check to make sure they've done this!

- If you are a financial aid recipient, make sure your program start date is correct and that your aid will disburse when it's supposed to (no earlier than ten days before the start of your program). Make the appropriate arrangements with the Financial Aid and Bursar's office before you depart Norman so that your funds are disbursed correctly. This is especially important for private loan recipients, since they have to sign for their loan check when it is disbursed. If this is the case for you, discuss with the Bursar office what you need to do.

Right when you arrive:

- Secure your rental contract; your dorm manager or landlord will have it. You need this for your residency application.

- Go to the Welcome Center to get proof of address; you will need this for a couple of things.

- Set up an account at a German Bank. We recommend Deutsche Bank because of its agreement with Bank of America (mentioned in the previous section), but there may be another bank that will better suit your needs. Ask around.

- Set up health insurance at either AOK or Techniker Krankenkasse. Both offer similar policies for around €70 per month. With AOK, you are billed the month after you begin coverage, and billing occurs each month following that for the duration of the semester.

- Take your passport, proof of address, proof of enrollment at Hamburg (student ID), passport photo (biometric--no smiling!) rental contract, proof of health insurance, UH invitation letter, financial support documents (as described above) and your departing flight itinerary (to show when you will leave Germany) to the Welcome Center for your residency application. The application is done by appointment only, so make sure that you've done all of the preceding steps before you have your appointment.
- Make copies of all of your important documents! Keep them somewhere safe or give them to your contact at Uni Hamburg to keep.

Other useful knowledge:

- *Transportation info:*

Public transportation schedules and routes: <http://www.hvv.de/en/>

Make sure you have your student ID and other ID (passport) along with you as you ride the bus/train/ferry. This is especially necessary on the bus after 9 PM on weekdays and on Sundays, as the driver will check for your student ID (which is your transit pass).

- *Cell phone:* several services have pay-as-you-go programs; Vodafone, O2 and T-mobile are well known among such services.
- *Food:* you are responsible for all of your own meals. There are myriad food choices in every neighborhood; bakeries are everywhere and offer a quick and relatively inexpensive breakfast. If you like to cook, there are usually a couple of markets on the main street in each neighborhood. The cheapest are Aldi and Lidl, which generally have a nice variety of choices. Edeka markets are a little more expensive and are in most neighborhoods; some are larger and offer quite a selection of groceries, while other smaller ones have rather basic offerings. Other supermarket brands abound: Rewe, Netto, Penny, Plus...the list goes on. Organic markets ("Bio-Markt") are very popular, but it's pretty easy to find organic and fair-trade foods in supermarkets as well.
- *Language:* You will be enrolled in a German language course from January to March. This is paid for by Uni Hamburg. Classes at the Uni will be in German, so it's in your best interest to absorb as much of the language as you can. However, all professors and many students speak English, and you're able to take tests in English. Textbooks and supplemental books can also be found in English. It's not imperative that you know German before you participate in this exchange.
- *Businesses, shops, etc:* Shops and other businesses are mandated by law to stay closed on Sundays; most do, save for a few cafés, restaurants and bakeries. Some business offices have differing hours depending on the day of the week, so it is best to plan ahead if you have pressing errands to take care of. Also, be aware that many businesses close for lunch. The typical business will close for the day before 5 or 6; many shops close by 6 or 7; most markets close at 8, with only a few supermarkets (in the busiest parts of town) staying open until 10. Restaurants generally make their own hours. Those with a bar tend to stay open quite late—especially on weekends—and some kitchens seem to stay open a little later than in the States (maybe at 10 or 11 on weekends, depending on the place).

Useful locations:

- The Meteorologisches Institut is located in a building called the Geomatikum, which is accessible by U-bahn trains U2 and U3 at Schlump station.
- The Welcome Center is accessible by trains U1 and U2 at Jungfernstieg station and by U3 at Rathaus station. It is located behind the Rathaus.
- Colón Language Center is located on Colonnaden and is accessible by U1 at Stephansplatz station or U2 at Gänsemarkt station.

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