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## Studying Abroad Experience Report

- 1) **Are we allowed to publish your report anonymously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?**  
 Yes  No
- 2) **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**  
 Yes  No
- 3) **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord etc.)**  
 Yes  No – in this case your report won't be published
- 4) **Please be aware that all the published photos in this report have to be taken by you and are not the property of a third party. By sending this report you are giving us the legal right of use for your pictures (if we publish the report). The copyrights still belong to you after all.**  
 Yes, I confirm that all photos are mine.

We would appreciate it if you could include the following topics (the report should be at least two pages long, there is no maximum):

- **Preparation:** Recommendations about preparing to leave, for example (if applicable) Visa, insurance, travel? How was the application process at the university abroad? Were there any introduction events? Were they obligatory and when did they take place? Was there a Buddy program or tutors?
- **Accommodation:** How did you find your accommodation? Any tips about mistakes that should be avoided? Were there any special student accommodations? The cost of rent? Which area of living would you recommend?
- **Studying at the university abroad:** How was the day to day life on campus? Was the attendance mandatory? Which courses did you take? Were you allowed to take courses from different faculties? Please attach links to the course list if possible. How did the exams take place? Were there any language courses? What is your overall opinion of the university in general? How well did the university take care of international/exchange students?
- **Day to day life and free time:** How high are the costs of living in total? How much money should be accessible monthly? How much does the public transportation cost? What can an exchange student do in their free time? What did you do?
- **Conclusion:** worst and best experience
- **Suggestions/Feedback:** In your opinion, how can we improve our exchange program especially considering consulting, information, application process at the Viadrina? – This section is just for the department of international affairs of the Viadrina and will not be published.

### Preparation:

Since my Erasmus was virtual and online only from my home university in Germany, there was little to do beforehand. The application process at my home university was daunting but the staff were very helpful and answered questions by video call also. After the video call, I felt confident about the process so I wish I had the 1-1 conversation much earlier, rather than near to the application deadline.

### University:

At the university, there was a virtual introduction event for Erasmus participants 5 days before my courses started. Everyone had an opportunity to introduce themselves and almost all participants in the Teams call switched on their camera to introduce themselves. The introduction was helpful to understand the university online portals using the credentials that we had received. Since not all courses had complete information from the Professors, there were



some issues in enrolling into desired courses the weekend before they were to begin. Also, the course information page had outdated information, such as old codes for joining the Teams lectures. This was not a problem for me as the Professor had made access to the Teams group moments before the first lecture, but, during the first two lectures they mentioned that others had issues to join, so the first few lectures included waiting technical issues to be solved. Unfortunately, the virtual introduction meeting did not have breakout groups or introduction games, which was a common issue for all courses that I participated.

The virtual meetings and lectures were conducted on Teams and the materials were all uploaded there after each class concluded. Most lectures started between 15-30 minutes after the scheduled start time. Since it was a regular occurrence the start and end times felt often casual but near the end of the course some extra hours were added to complete the content. The university including the professors and staff were helpful and responsive to issues either by virtual class or by email. There was no attendance recorded and some professors established a system whereby the students have a choice to be attending or non-attending. For one course I was an attending student, which meant I participated in the live lectures and formed a team for group work. For the other course I was a non-attending student, which meant that I would watch the recorded lectures and instead of participating in group work, I chose to answer more questions in the written exam. The non-attending option was nice due to the flexibility, I could attend another course that had a conflict in schedule. Another good flexible option was that there were 3 or 4 dates available to students to register for exam dates. The registration end date for these different exam dates were also 4 days before the exam took place and allowed me to assess nearer the actual exam date how ready I was to complete the exam. One exam was oral, which was rather difficult as I did not spend much time talking about the content during the lectures (i.e., no breakout rooms) or outside of the lecture times. The professor did encourage more verbal communication, but it is not easy when lacking confidence or bravery. Another exam was a written test, and the professor scheduled a video call for the exam, but it started 40 minutes after the scheduled time. There was some indication during the wait that things were not going to plan but it was frustrating.

#### **Conclusion:**

The flexibility of the courses was a positive highlight. Both the option to re-watch lectures and to choose an exam date very close to the performance was ideal. A negative experience was that during a course, students were tasked with forming a team for group work and this was difficult to do without the aid of the professor. After I had formed a team, my colleagues had dropped out of the course and the work was too much to do individually near to the deadline.