

Erasmus EO Report

Where?

I undertook my Erasmus placement at Charite, Berlin. Initially I had considered choosing Homburg as thought the small town environment might be more beneficial to getting the most out of the placements, both in regards to medicine and german. However, when it came down to it I couldn't resist lure of Berlin and am so glad I chose it!

What Placements did I do?

I did Derm, Paeds, Gynae and Innere Medizin.

1. Preparation before arriving

Placements

One thing that arranging the Erasmus trip has taught me, is never trust stereotypes of a nation. Germans have a reputation as being highly organised... this preconception was swiftly killed in the process of sorting out the placements. Initially we were asked to choose our placements, and then were told we had to arrange them all ourselves and then it changed again to them being organised for us! So it all ended up fine, but just involved a lot of emailing back and forth, and receiving a vast number of emails from various people with conflicting information. So hopefully, for those of you going next year, you will again have your placements organised for you before you arrive! If there is confusion, Angelika and Nikola are the go-to undergrad staff to email, as they are the ones you will actually see on arrival!

Fees

You will be asked to pay 240 euros before arriving for your 'semester ticket.' This seems like a lot of money for a student card, but gives you unlimited travel on S-Bahn, U-Bahn, trams and buses for the duration of your stay!

Accommodation

How you find accommodation really depends on what you are after! Myself and another student from German chose to live together. We found somewhere to live on air B'n'B- although it is mainly people renting flats for a week or so, there are actually a fair few places for longer term rents but short enough for a 16 week stay! Of course if you want to live in a house share with other German students then WG is the best site. I think

there are also student halls, but we didn't look into those so I can't offer much advice! Although I spoke less German living with a friend, it was actually perfect for what I personally wanted. We had an amazing flat in Neukölln complete with art on the walls and a balcony, which was lovely to come back to a chill out in. It was also nice to have an actual friend to come back to and just relax with, as sometimes it was a little overwhelming at the hospital! We both had various visitors coming over to stay, so again it was nice to have our own space to have guests!

Language

To be honest, after scraping through the C1 in May, I had pretty much buried my books in the bottom of my wardrobe and forgotten all about German! I'd had vague ideas that I would go over some things before arriving but really, finals pretty much took over and I literally didn't look at any German for around 8 months! So it was a little bit of a shock getting here, and I wish I had been stricter and even just watched a few videos on DW to get myself back into the swing of it.

2. Administration on arrival

There are a few things you need to do on arrival. Most importantly is the Anmeldung, as having your 'Anmeldung Bestätigung' is key to all administrative things in Germany! Our first attempt was not successful, as we did not have the correct information!

What you need: Your full address but also the full name and address of the landlord. It is not allowed to put the name of the subletter. They look up the address and name of landlord on a computer system to confirm it, so just make sure you have these things before you go!

Once you've angemeldet, you can open a bank account if you want one and also need to take the confirmation to Nikola or Angelika at medical school to give it to them, in order to receive your official 'semester ticket' that is sent in the post!

We arrived a whole week before we started, so had a great week of exploring, eating and drinking! Luckily all three of us from Manchester passed finals, so no-one had to fly home, which had been a nagging fear!

Placement 1: Derm

I was placed on the 'Tagestation' in Mitte. It wasn't the most happening ward ever, but the staff were generally very welcoming and my hours were pretty chilled, normally between 8am-3pm, with time for a long lunch break!

The day ward was an elective ward, where patients came from home daily for treatment of exacerbated skin conditions e.g. excema or psoriasis. There were also patients who were going to the OP for minor procedures such as mole removal. The doctors on the ward clerked new patients, conducted 2x daily 'Visite' to examine patients and performed small biopsies, set up infusions and took blood. The Oberarzt was lovely and would unofficially pop by a couple of times a day, and officially 2x a week for Visite and to see any new patients when they were clerked in. Chef Visite was on Friday mornings and was quite comical experience from an outsider's point of view, as we don't really have the same system in England! There would be great commotion at around 8.45, everyone would go and wait in the examination room early and generally tidy the room, slicking back hair, doing up the white coats to the top and standing up straight with hands behind their backs. The Chefartz/in would have the patients presented formally and be addressed as 'Herr Proffessor Cheftartz.' Every lunch time, at 1pm there would be the 'MiVI', which was a lunch time meeting where any interesting cases from the whole department would be presented (including the real live patient). A Chefartz would then pick on someone to come and examine the patient and describe their findings. I am not sure they ever would have chosen a Famulant to do this, but I felt the fear every lunch time!!

What did I do on the ward?

I spent much of the first week listening intently, as my brain rapidly had to get used to German! I went with the doctors to observe clerking, examination and watched biopsies.

In the later weeks, I did some clerking and examination, took bloods, helped with setting up infusions and was allowed to perform a biopsy alone. I also went to the OP to observe minor procedures. I found the history and examination quite easy to pick up, I quickly learnt the new vocab to ask all the questions I needed to but I found it very difficult to present the patients and there were a couple of times where I had embarrassingly misunderstood/missed some important information!

There were times when I felt very out of my depth and felt that my german was letting me down. I found the staff to be both very welcoming and interested that I was from England and doing a placement in Germany, but once it had been established I could speak some German and normally understood them, they did not always seem hugely understanding of the fact I would sometimes get lost or miss things. After one particularly trying day when I was told off for not listening to my Oberarzt, I almost burst into tears as had been listening my ears off trying to work out what they wanted me to do. But then just spoke to the lead doctor on the ward and explained I was really sorry for missing things and being slow and

that I really was trying hard! She then seemed surprised that I was apologising and said I was doing absolutely fine. They have a different manner here and I think that's why I had been feeling like I was being told off a lot. They are just very to the point and straight forward, so do not try and soften their words. But then do not begrudge you in the slightest and will happily chat to you about their dog, night out or weekend plans 2 minutes later!