

National Dong Hwa University, Hualien, Taiwan, WiSe 21-22

Report

Preparation

My exchange semester was from 15.09.2021 to 25.01.2022. Due to the corona situation, I wasn't sure until the last moment that I would be able to fly. I got an answer from both my university and NDHU quickly. However, we waited several months for permission from MOFA to apply for the visa. We only got permission two weeks before the begin of the semester. Nevertheless, it took us only a week to get the visa. At all stages of preparation, both universities supported us and answered all our questions. Especially from the side of the NDHU University, you could see that they tried very hard to prepare everything and worked even outside of office hours to organise our trip.

Travel and arrival

I flew via Istanbul with Turkish Airlines to Taipei. The flight was quite comfortable, and the plane was half empty. Because of the corona situation, we had to go through many different procedures and fill out many forms. The airport was full of staff who showed and told us where to go and what to do next. Many of them spoke English. We also had to buy immediately a Taiwanese number at the airport so that we could get daily notifications and phone calls when we will be in quarantine. I advise you to buy a card for the whole period of your exchange semester, because it is cheaper and easier than buying a card for one month, and then in the city to buy a new one or to extend old one every month. After we had filled out the paperwork, we had to take a taxi to Hualien, where the hotel for the quarantine was located. Only one person in the taxi was allowed to go, no matter if you arrived together or not. Before taking a taxi we had to do a corona test at the airport. It was for free. The taxi cost about 50 euros for a 3-4 hour trip.

We had to stay for 2 weeks in quarantine and 1 week to do a "self-management procedure". Everything was quite strict. The quarantine hotel was booked for us by the university. The room was in good conditions and in my case with two big beds. We got food 3 times a day (around 8am, 12 noon and 6pm) however if you have a good appetite, you should order some extra food from room service or stock up on food from home. Make sure you stock up on coffee if you are a coffee drinker. Of course, you weren't allowed to go out of the hotel, but I personally had a window from which I could see quite a lot and at least breathe in the fresh air. That helped a lot. Apart from food, the hotel provided all the hygiene products and drinking water we needed. We had to measure temperature 3 times a day and fill in a form on our phones. I don't remember exactly how much we paid, but in total we paid about 800 euros for 3 weeks. After two weeks of quarantine, we were not yet allowed to check into the dorm and go to campus, but we could already choose where we were staying the next week and we could leave the room.

Accommodation

After the quarantine we finally could move into the dorm. We got first a private room (where you live alone) in the dorm number 1. To be honest even though it is a big privilege to live alone the conditions in this dorm were not very good. That is why we asked international office to move us into the dorm 5, where you have to share the room with one person. The dorm number 5 is quite new and that's why has really good conditions. To be honest I don't regret at all moving out and living with someone even though at the begin I was scared because I wanted to have my private space. It turned out to be a great experience and I got one close friend. In the room you had all furniture you needed, your own bathroom and balcony. On every floor you have a kitchen however you don't have a stove there, only one small fridge and a microwave. Taiwanese people are not used to cook very often at home and more often go out to eat. That was a bit difficult because with the passage of times I really missed home food and wanted to cook something. But actually, it is possible to buy quite cheap cooker and still cook at least something in your room.

In general the whole campus area is extremely beautiful and has a lot of places where to sit, walk, jog eat and to do some sport.

Studying at the host university (courses, academic performance/credits, support, credit transfer)

I study at the university Oldenburg Neurocognitive Psychology. The university of NDHU has only major of Clinical Psychology. Unfortunately, I didn't have big choice of courses in English, only two and I took them. Besides I did also my practical project in the lab under supervision of a professor from NDHU. It was not the course from NDHU university but from Uni Oldenburg. With regards to courses I took, they were hold once a week, were for 3 hours and were one of the best courses I ever had in my life. They were extremely interesting and informative, and I would definitely recommend you taking them: "Advanced Physiological Psychology, CP_54300" and "Advanced Psychopathology Special Discourse: Classification and Diagnosis, CP__57100". To pass the courses we just had to do a presentation what was extremely easy in comparison to requirements in German university. With regards to my practical project I would say that I definitely had a lot of personal support from my supervisor. She was very caring and always asked me how my exchange semester is going and even gave me a warm blanket, because I told her that I am freezing at night. However, you have to be ready that Taiwanese professors require more independent work then German professors when it comes to study and learning new things. Like for example I had to learn completely by myself how to program my experiment and use the equipment and it was quite challenging since I even couldn't ask anyone if I am doing everything correct. But at least I learned a lot.

You can also take courses not from your department and I would highly recommend doing it. Unfortunately I found out about this too late, but I know that classes of art are very good where you will be doing lots of creative things, also there are classes where you can learn to work with wood, play some music instrument from scratch and even how to do jewellery.

I am not sure how it will work with the credit transfers because I still didn't get transcript of records. However, I assume there shouldn't be any difficulties with it. I got 3 CP for each of my courses, and it will be transferred to 6 ECTS in Germany.

Every day life and leisure time

The campus itself is far from the city centre Hualien, so if you want to go there, to do some shopping or some other activities you either have to take a bus, which goes every hour or to go there by scooter or by bike. For the bike it is quite far away and difficult, but I would recommend to buy a bike anyway to move on the campus because it is quite big and it might take around 15-30 minutes to walk from one place to another one.

In the place where the campus is, there is not much to do if you are a party person. There are any bars or cafes or other places for recreational activities. But Hualien is one of the most beautiful regions of Taiwan with incredibly beautiful nature. If you have a scooter, you will be able to be in 15-20 minutes in places which will just mesmerize you with its beauty. And even if you don't have a scooter you can go to some of them by bus or bike. The weather at least until December is like summer in Germany. You can even go swimming. It is not recommended to swim in the ocean (at least in Hualien) but you can swim in the river. In general I feel I've done in Taiwan more sport than I've ever done in my whole life :D You can do a lot of sport on campus, like tennis, badminton, different martial arts but also you can surf, skate, go camping, hiking, climbing and much more. University has a lot of clubs not only for sport but also for other different activities which you can join.

International office organized for us a couple of trips to Taroko park (incredibly beautiful place) and also some other attractions. All of them were definitely worth it. I also travelled with other international students over the island and visited some other cities and in every city there is something to see. You will definitely not be bored during your exchange semester. Traveling is very safe and with the scholarship we got from MOFA is also very affordable.

General experience, conclusions

My general experience I can describe with the word awesome. I didn't expect my exchange semester to be so good.

I want to say some separate words about international office because they contributed a lot to my great experience. First of all, the scholarship we got was very very helpful. Secondly, they really tried to organize for us a lot of activities and treated us very well. We got the best places in concerts, free hoodies from university and plenty trips to beautiful places for free. Sometimes we even felt that it is too much and that regular international students don't get so much things as we do, what was quite sad. I wish they would have the same experience as us. International office really put a lot of effort and tried to make our experience as comfortable and amazing as possible. The whole team every time tried to reply to our questions and solve all our problems as quick as possible and I am very thankful for that.