

**Dual Degree Report**  
**University of Mannheim**  
**Fall 2017 – Fall 2019**  
**Yan-Wu Wu**

My name is Yan-Wu Wu, a student in the class of 2016. I am a double degree student in the University of Mannheim from Fall 2017 to Fall 2019. Before joining IMBA, I was an engineer in the automotive industry in Taiwan for more than 5 years. As I planned to expose myself to more international environment, I applied for double degree program. In this report, I will share my experience and some information in the following topics: preparation of the application, the study at the University of Mannheim, life in Germany, and my job seeking experience.

**Preparation of the application**

When you start your new life in NCCU IMBA, you will be able to attend information session organized by IMBA office and talk to students who have experience on dual degree program. The application with different universities has different requirements. It's better to sincerely check the requirements on the dual degree program website and prepare for them as early as possible. It's noteworthy that GMAT with score of 600 is one of the prerequisites for the application of HHL Leipzig and University of Mannheim requires TOEFL with 90 or IELTS with 6.5. Getting valid scores takes time. Frankly speaking, it's always nice to have longer lead time if you need to prepare for GMAT, TOEFL, or IELTS. Furthermore, in my opinion, your target university or school influences your life in Germany a lot. So, I would like to share my experience on selecting my target university.

When I was applying for the double degree program, we had choices between Germany and France. As my academic and professional background focus on engineering, I decided to apply for one of the schools in German. There are two options of schools in Germany: University of Mannheim and HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management. Giving priorities to these two schools was very difficult since they are excellent in different fields. Regarding the University of Mannheim, marketing and economics rank no. 1 in Germany and famous companies in the industries such as finance, automotive, IT, etc. locate nearby the University. Furthermore, many students graduated from Mannheim joined consulting firm, investment banking, or finance companies to develop their career. Because western Germany is more prosperous than eastern Germany, the average salary is also higher. In terms of HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management, the school has a strength on entrepreneurship and its own accelerator for startups. With the location nearby Berlin, students interested in startups may be able to connect to certain resources in Berlin. Trivago is one of the brands built up by their alumni. Moreover, HHL Leipzig maintained great relationship with Roland Berger, a consulting firm, and students employed by consulting firms is the majority of the student body. Because of the above-mentioned strengths of Mannheim and HHL Leipzig, making the

preference between them is very difficult. As I would like to focus on marketing and weighted higher on the convenience of job seeking, I gave the University of Mannheim the higher priority.

After you make the choice and submit your application documents, you will receive the result within around one month. Then you can start to prepare following things for your student visa, which costed 60 euros at the moment. Firstly, you will receive the letter of admission from the University of Mannheim. This letter is very important to apply for the visa with German Institute Taipei since it proves that you will study in the University of Mannheim. Secondly, you have to make an appointment with German Institute Taipei for visa application. This appointment can be made in either group or individual and can only be made 3 months before your planned arrival date. Thirdly, you can apply blocked account right after you successfully hand in your documents. Please be reminded that, if you fail to fill the application form of blocked account correctly, you will be rejected by the bank and you should run the application process of the blocked account again, meaning that your visa application will be influenced since the time for the application of the blocked account is counted in the 3 months. Fourthly, after you successfully receive the notification of visa application, you will be asked to provide them with your health insurance. You can select certified insurance providers listed on the website of German Institute Taipei. The process of visa application takes time and German Institute Taipei is impossible to issue your visa faster, so taking care of your timing plan is really important. After you successfully receive your student visa, you will be able to book a flight ticket.

In terms of accommodation, you will receive an email from University of Mannheim to briefly introduce the online portal, MyUniMA, and inform you about your login information and the time and date to book rooms through the portal. The spots are limited so it's better to access the portal with high-quality internet on time. For example, the spots in the city downtown were taken after around 5 minutes of the starting time of room booking at our year. Thus, if you are too late to book a room, finding the room by yourself is another choice. You can also find local source of accommodation or sublet information on "MyUniMA" or on the German local accommodation websites, such as [wg-gesucht.de](http://wg-gesucht.de) and [immobilienscout24.de](http://immobilienscout24.de). Usually finding house in Germany requires a motivation letter to make landlords or flatmates have a better picture of you and, normally, the price of a room in a share flat ranges from 300 to 400.

### **The study at the University of Mannheim**

University of Mannheim offers various types of courses in different academic areas like marketing, management, innovation, and finance and you can autonomously select different courses to participate in, which is the most favorable part of my academic life here. Courses usually include "class" and "exercise". Classes go through the regular content by professors and exercises are held by teaching assistants or PhD students to teach about calculation part or to run group projects. With respect to the way that the University evaluates your learning result, majority of courses evaluate with simply written exam (100%) and some of the courses take

into account both written exam (75%) and group project (25%). For written exams, 60 and 90 minutes are the possible duration of the exams.

The structure of the academic year is the same as that of Taiwan. Currently, the tuition fee for double degree student is around 90 euros per semester. On the other hand, academic writing of master thesis and seminar paper requires much effort and the application of them are worthwhile to pay attention to. Different chairs have their own prerequisites and process. You can find relevant information on the main page of the chair you prefer to apply for. After receiving the score of seminar paper, you can apply for your master thesis. Likewise, carefully checking the requirements on the main page of your preferred chair before sending out your application is very important.

To improve your German, there are some options offered by the University of Mannheim or by private institutes. Through the University of Mannheim, you can take intensive course in the summer vacation and normal course in the semester. If you incline toward private institutes, you can find some options such as Abendakademie, AIMS, and Domino. Since the German learner are abundant, the demand of German courses is usually high. For instance, Abendakademie is so popular that its courses are usually fully-booked 1 month before the start of the courses. Therefore, the longer lead time for the registration of the German courses is, the higher the chance to save a spot.

Life in campus can be fruitful. Many organizations and clubs held different events and activities in the campus. For example, during the semester, regular events are held on L3 Café on Monday and parties are regularly held in Schneckenhof on Thursday. At the beginning of the semester, “raise your flag” party held Schneckenhof to welcome people from different countries. For the Chinese festival like Lantern Festival, you can even find events to participate in. Apart from fun time, many activities regarding career happen in the semester. However, many of the career-related events are offered in German. You can still find some in English. For instance, case study, consulting week, finance week, Excel VBA seminar, company visitation, etc. happen in the semester frequently. In April, University of Mannheim will cooperate with Hays to held a 3-day career fair in the campus. Different day is with different topic. For example, the first day focuses on consulting firms, the second day includes different banks, and you can find companies in different industries in the third day. You can participate in the fair, talk to recruiters, and further hand in your CV.

In the campus, you pay everything with ecUM card, as known as student ID card. For example, if you want to have a lunch in canteen, you have to pay with your ecUM card. There are two canteens in the campus: Mensa and EO Café. Mensa offers price-friendly meal and EO Café provide you food with higher quality. However, sometimes Mensa also offers outstanding meal. You should just go to different canteens and give them a try. To save the money in your ecUM card, you can save with either cashier at EO Café and the counter of Studierendenwerk at Mensa or Autoload machines. In addition to the regular payment, you need to have money in the printing account accordingly in order to use copy machine to copy or print documents.

There are two different printing accounts: one for L7 computer pool and one for other libraries. The printing job costs 0.02 per printing in L7 and 0.04 per printing in other libraries.

Out of the campus, University of Mannheim offers different sports programs with fair price. For instance, if you are a fan of gym, you can buy membership with the price up to 19 euros per month and the location is nearby the campus. For badminton, you are able to play for the whole semester with only 10 euros. If you prefer the competition on the basketball court, you can play with free of charge. Therefore, various sports programs are offered with fair price or for free. The up-to-date information can be found here: [https://www.hochschulsport.uni-mannheim.de/angebote/aktueller\\_zeitraum/index.html](https://www.hochschulsport.uni-mannheim.de/angebote/aktueller_zeitraum/index.html).

### **Life in Germany**

Regular life in Mannheim would cost around 800 euros per month, including the rent, food, social life, traffic, etc. To avoid bankruptcy, cooking at home helps you control budget. Please be noted that this cost estimation doesn't include travel expense.

The weather in Mannheim is comfortable and has fixed pattern. Comparing to Taiwan, Mannheim is less humid and has fewer rainy days. Normally, the hottest period starts from June to August. Starting from September, the weather becomes gradually cooler and the temperature will rise up in the last week of September. After that, weather will become cool and snowy. For the extremity of the temperature from August 2016, the lowest temperature is -8 °C in every winter and the highest temperature reached 40 °C in June 2019.

I believe that everyone will go somewhere to travel in Europe during the period of your dual degree program. According to my experience, the academic life in Mannheim could be very busy during the semester. Therefore, I highly don't recommend to travel a lot during the semester. Travel can be either costly or economical. You can always find the way to control your budget. Here I would like to share my ways to reduce your cost on travel. Firstly, bus is the most common way to travel among different cities in Europe. To travel with bus, you can either visit Omio (it was GoEuro) on website and app or purchase Flixbus 5 for 99 euros voucher (simply google "5 for 99 Flixbus"). This voucher is only valid for bus without transfer (i.e. direct bus) and Flixbus sometimes would release vouchers with more discounts. Secondly, for certain destination such as Sicilia, you have no choice but flight. In order to check flight tickets with cheaper price, you can also visit Omio. Thirdly, travel with train increases not only your comfort but also your expense. To reduce cost of train ticket, you can seek discount offered by BahnCard.

Apart from transportation, I want to share the tips of saving cost for accommodation. First of all, hostel is a common choice to reduce costs and you can find it through hostelworld or price comparing platform such as Expedia. Secondly, Airbnb sometimes offers options with friendly price. I highly recommend to find accommodation with kitchen on Airbnb if you travel with a group of people since cooking by yourselves saves cost.

## **Job seeking experience**

Job seeking in Germany is so different from Taiwan that I would like to share my experience in the following five aspects. Firstly, I think it's the most important point since it's influential to your job seeking strategy. German weight profession more than degree. In other words, your professional experience is more important than your degree. For example, if your work experience focuses on engineering in automotive industry, applying business development related job in pharmaceutical industry would highly weaken your competitiveness. Secondly, the required documents in Germany is different from Taiwan. In Germany, we usually prepare cover letter (i.e. motivation letter), CV, and documents mentioned in your CV such as certificate and degree. Regarding cover letter, you must customize it for each position that you applied for. This rule also applies to CV. Furthermore, German have their own preference on the format of CV and cover letter. Thirdly, unlike Taiwan, Germany has no such job seeking platform as 104 and 1111. You have to use different platforms to seek for open positions. Linkdein, Stepstone, Xing, Monster, and Indeed are popular job-seeking platforms in Germany. In addition, Glassdoor offers valuable information about salary and interview experience. You can also participate in career fair in Germany to talk to recruiters in person. Of course, some people may suggest that sending message on LinkedIn or social with Alumni can be helpful. However, I only discuss about the ways that are feasible and applicable to everyone. Fourthly, the timing is important! Because German place emphasis on work-life balance, it's hard to receive any feedback from companies from the end of December to the beginning of January during the vacation of Christmas, which is comparable to our vacation of Chinese New Year. Same rules apply to other public holidays in Germany. Furthermore, they are not necessary give you feedback, so waiting for 1 or 2 weeks for the feedback is normal. Last but not the least, language fluency decides the number of your opportunities. According to the statistics offered by the University of Mannheim, English jobs only occupies 10% of the job market. When I was searching on Stepstone for open positions in Stuttgart, the number of all jobs (German and English jobs) is 4000 something but the number of English jobs is only miserably 100 something. Thus, if your German reaches business-fluent level, the number of available vacancies is at least ten times more than that of English vacancies.

## **Conclusion**

If life is reversible, would I consider to study in the University of Mannheim? If you ask me this question, my answer is yes. The life in Mannheim is unforgettable and remarkable. I had opportunities to expose myself to educational challenge in one of the best business schools in Germany, meet top students from different countries, and immerse myself in another culture. In my perspective, life is an accumulation of experience on the road and the content depends on different individuals. This experience broadens my horizon and is one that I will cherish. Once you fortunately and successfully attend the dual degree program in the University of

Mannheim, I believe that you will not only enhance yourself in academic but also collect fruitful experience throughout the whole program.

Yan-Wu Wu

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