



A FRUITFUL JOURNEY

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

This report is to share the experience of studying the dual-degree program in Uni. of Mannheim.

Karen Lin
IMBA Student

First of all, I want to thank IMBA for providing this precious opportunity for me to go to study at the University of Mannheim. That is an incredible journey of my life. For me, it is more like to click a pause bottom of my life, to make a turn from many-year working and step to an unfamiliar land that I have ever been to. I hope this report can benefit the readers who are interested in taking the dual-degree program in Mannheim whether the cultural, financial, daily life tips.

I. Preparation

IMBA office hosts the dual-degree information session every summer for new intakes, so it is good to attend the event and know more about the application process. Once you decided (or have this thought) to apply for this program. It is important to take the TOEFL or IELTS test during the first year in IMBA. Unless you have the qualified test result (check the expiration date!) for the dual-degree program application (maybe you took the exam for applying for IMBA and the score also reaches the dual-degree program criteria). The second condition is academic performance, I would highly recommend finishing all IMBA required courses with as good grades as possible because these grades are not only for applying for the dual-degree program at Uni. of Mannheim, it is also will be converted to your final transcript which attached to your graduation certificate in your German degree. I have listed the tasks for the first year in IMBA for dual-degree program applicants. (1) English proficiency test (2) IMBA courses taking and get the required scores (3) application package preparation and take an interview from IMBA faculty (4) (after accepted) apply for the scholarship from Ministry of Education and DAAD (5) book the visa interview timeslot in German Institute Taipei ASAP! (6) prepare the documentation for the visa application (7) prepare the course selection plan for MMM (stands for Master in Management, that is the program we take for the dual-degree program in the host university), it will be revised till the period of the course selection ends. (8) optional, to take German courses

Some heads-up for visa application documentation preparation and the interview process: more information, check out [German Institute Taipei](#)

1. Visa interview reservation: if there are more than 2 people in NCCU who are going to Uni. of Mannheim, it is possible to do the group interview which is less competitive in getting an interview spot.
2. Overseas insurance: to have that insurance for the visa application from the local Taiwanese insurance company first will save some cost. But it is required that the insurance contract is from a German company when you apply for the visa extension after 6 months in Germany. That also means our visa from German Institute Taipei is with 6-month validity alone. Therefore, to plan your visa extension application before 6-8 weeks of your visa expiration date is important! The visa extension will be conducted in the city hall. Find your visa officer by searching your first letter in your last name.
3. Proof of financial resource: you will need to open a block account. As of January 1, 2021, the assumed annual standard requirement that must be paid into the blocked account when applying for a visa is 10,332 euros. The way to open the account and the deposit keep updating, please Google the latest information online.
4. Reach out for help: if you need any documentation but you haven't received it from the International office in Uni. of Mannheim, please contact the double-degree program office, they are very supportive.

Once again, the most important action item is to get the visa in time. And one more thing, it is not possible to apply for a student loan from MOE.

II. **Accommodation**

1. Arrival at Mannheim:

Mannheim is 30-minute away from Frankfurt Airport by ICE (same as HSR in Taiwan). You can buy the train ticket from "Frankfurt (M) Flughafen" to "Mannheim Hbf", the fare is approximately €20. If you also like to travel more frequently by Deutsche Bahn (German Railway), to get a Bahn card is a nice option (I recommend a 25% or 50% discount Bahn card, that means when you buy the Bahn Card, you can get 25% or 50% discount for each trip which operated by Deutsche Bahn in 12 months or the 3-month version) and yet if you didn't cancel that card before the expiration date, the card will

be auto-renewed. If you arrive in Germany with other students who head to Mannheim, the price of a charter van service after splitting is reasonable and it is much convenient when you don't have to transport again from the Mannheim train station to your accommodation with your bulky suitcases. If you go for the cost-saving option, you can take a bus from Flixbus or other intercity bus service providers, it costs €10 or less but it takes one hour to Mannheim. By the way, it might take some time to find the bus stop at Frankfurt airport.

2. Accommodation seeking:

You will get the dormitory reservation time from the International office. Due to the competition is intense for limited rooms, I'd recommend accessing the website as the moment it opens for booking, you can search these rooms and their locations list your priority before the reservation. That is much convenient for signing off the lease with the Uni. Instead of private accommodation. If you cannot get one from the Uni., keep following the posts or write a post in the Facebook group “曼海姆台灣同學會”, “德國台灣同學會”, or wggesucht.de are helpful too. The monthly rental depends on the location and the type of rooms. If the room (apartment) locates in the square (downtown) will be higher. My experience is €278 per month for a 5-person shared flat (Ulmenweg, 20-minute tram to the Uni.), €335 per month for a 4-person shared flat downtown, and €382 per month for a single apartment downtown. The monthly payment includes utility and internet service. Plus, each household has to pay €17.50 per month. Hence, it depends on your budget for choosing the type of accommodation. The challenge of living in a shared flat is to adapt will have to compromise and adapt to each other. For instance, Spaniards eat dinner at 9 p.m. at the earliest, but it's very common to start the evening meal as late as 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. and many Westerners take morning showers. However, you might get a chance to make more friends by living in a shared flat and have fun. Most of the German classmates I know go for a shared flat so it is up to your preference.

*A shared-flat is called WG in German, of course, please pronounce it in German.

III. Studying at the host institution

1. University life: academic

In the MMM program, all courses are constructed by many theories, frameworks, and models. Also, it required quantitation knowledge (calculus and statistical methods). The exams are more likely to focus on memorization these theories and also use the required framework to analyze the case. For the core courses (CC501, BEI, and BEII), the familiarity of each question on weekly problem sets is the key to pass the exams. me, Class periods, the structure of the academic year (semester system, trimester system, etc.). MMM program is prestigious in Germany, nearly all students are intelligent and diligent and they aim for 1.0 (A+) in the final grade, therefore, the competition is intense. To have good time management and be resilient for personal studying, active and express your thoughts boldly in a group project are somethings I would underscore here.

2. Campus life

The school canteen (Mensa in German) provides meals at a low price and the taste perfectly fits the price you pay. One meal (with the main dish, salad and a bowl of soup) takes €3.3. You can check the [menu](#) here and others on campuses such as EO Café with cafeteria, A cup of black coffee costs €1 and €1.5 for a cup of Caffe latte from a machine. however, it shouldn't be a surprise that you can get a beer in these refectories. I enjoy the coffee from Café Sammo and going to the Asian food corner, Chang, to get a full plate of fried noodles or rice for €2.5 only!

Many students go to SAP or BASF for a part-time job which you allow to work for 20 hours per week during the semester and 40 hours per week during the semester break. As non-EU students, the total working days cannot exceed 120 days. (less or equal to 4 hours is half of a day). The hourly wage is different from the departments and the company you work for. (The minimum wage will increase again from 1 January 2020 is set at €9.35.), to ask people who work(ed) over there or searching

the data from Glassdoor is good to get the sense of it. Apart from earning some money, the most important thing is to gain experience in a German company. Many students who don't speak good German work in SAP, so I would encourage you to give it a try and have that in your portfolio. It is not necessary to have software development experience for acceptance. I am glad I can work in SAP, it helps me to expand my vision of data analysis and adapt myself to an international working environment.

3. Language proficiency level, language courses offered at the host institution

Every student at Uni. of Mannheim can enroll in one course in the continuing education center for free, most international students take the German course. In my personal experience, if your German is good, it is advantageous for utilizing all resources at the school such as workshops, events, forums, and immerse in local cultures, people. Most importantly, it is much easier to take care of things from a bank, a post office, or the visa office. If not, it is inconvenient but you still can survive during the stay in Germany.

IV. **Everyday life and leisure time**

1. Cost of living

People might have the impression that the cost of living in Germany is higher than in Taiwan. On the contrary, if you cook to prepare your food by yourself, then you will find the monthly cost is lower. The total monthly cost include can be €650 (80% is the fixed cost on the rental, internet, utility, and insurance). To collect the coupons or points are also good ways to save a little budget (the coupons on the Rossmann app and Payback points). The competition in discount supermarkets (Aldi, Lidl, Rewe, Penny, Edeka, and Real) is very strong, so to keep an eye on the special offers is wise. Another tip is to buy second-handed items or get free furniture during the semester break, many students move out and they left the stuff on the ground of the dormitory.

2. Culture experiences

Speaking of cultural experiences, almost all shops are closed on Sundays, so prepare extra food for the quiet Sunday is a must-do! Speaking of quiet, get to know the Ruhezeit (quiet time in German) is necessary, that generally forbid you to make excessive noise on Sundays, or at night time during the week. such as do loud DIY jobs, play loud music, hold noisy gatherings, wash your car, and so on. The quiet time is from 10 pm to 6 am or 8 pm to 8 am, check the rule where you are at.

For engaging more local people and students, I joined a student organization, Insight, it held weekly gatherings for international students. The theme of each week is related to German culture. They also provide a welcome program which is to assign you a local family and you will get to know more about German culture by interacting with them. I had a very nice experience with my host family, especially I got invited to their Christmas eve dinner. Besides, I have signed up for the Buddy program from another student organization, VISUM, which I got a very nice and helpful buddy from Uni. He helped me out with registration in the city hall and settle down, also invited me to different events.

One thing I enjoy is to go to the local Chinese Christian fellowship (CCGM), the fellowship organized events on Moon festival and Lunar New Year with plenty of Chinese dishes! I also made good friends in this fellowship and some people are graduated or study in MMM at the moment. I got lots of support from these dear friends for studying, working on student job applications, and several things. It doesn't matter you are a Christian or not, you are fully welcomed.

Before I came to Germany, I have made my mind of doing a short-term volunteer program in Europe so I went to a village in Hungary for an English summer camp with Operation Mobilisation (OM). From this trip, I received more than I gave. And now I have lovely friends in Hungary that I couldn't imagine before.

*The IMBA volunteer certificate can be issued by OM.

3. Climate / weather

The summer in Mannheim is extremely hot (it can be almost 38 or 39 degrees) but it is tolerable over time you stay here even there is barely any Air conditioning. The first thing to get once arrive at Mannheim during summer is a fan. But the summer in Germany just for three to four weeks, then the Autumn comes and followed by the winter. It is rare to see snow. One thing I like about Germany is to appreciate the beauty of changes in seasons.

4. Leisure opportunities, travel tips

Heidelberg is closed to Mannheim (20-minute train), it is a nice place to start your travel in Germany, and there are many nice hiking sites around Mannheim. As an international student, we can get the free semester ticket at the first term, to travel to more cities in [semester-ticket areas](#) and pay the price for the rest of the stops to the city out of the free zones is highly recommended. Moreover, there are some special tickets on weekends, a day, and for groups (use the Deutsche Bahn App, Saver Fare, and Regional Offers, Omio, a global multi-mode search engine for all major forms of transport.)

I attended the Mannheim marathon with other international students, it was really fun. And if you are interested in going to a concert, the Mannheim National Theater provides student discounts to many concerts.

V. Conclusion

All in all, I would still choose to study in Mannheim if the decision-making point occurs again. However, I would make sure I could have more self-disciplined to keep up the weekly exercise for each course and do more review and preview. Prepare the exams as earlier as possible. Also, it would be good if I could know more German (to reach A2.1 at least) before arriving in Germany. In general, I have a positive experience in Germany. I feel grateful that I got great chances to encounter different people, some people stay, some people left but these memories remain. I am blessed that I have learned lessons on time management and financial management, also been more independent. For me,

the time in Germany is not only for studying for a degree. More than that, I have experienced an extreme different culture in contrast to my home country. Meanwhile, it is the time to grow the maturity in many dimensions. For people who are reading this report, I pray for you to have your own fruitful journey in Germany. Toi Toi Toi (Jiayou in German)!