

Report on my studies and life in Great Britain: Challenges and Chances

After living in Australia for almost one year, I was keen to tackle the challenge of starting my studies in Great Britain. Brunel University offered a degree that sounded both demanding and intellectually stimulating: Business Studies and Sport Science, a combination which cannot yet be found in Germany. However London, with the 2012 Olympic Games just around the corner, seemed like the perfect place to start a new chapter in my life.

Sure you can never know what you will expect as a student when you move to a country that you only had seen through the eyes of a tourist before. Although a typical red double-decker bus dropped me in front of the university, I knew my comfortableness and confidence would be challenged soon. In my first lecture, the Business School was introduced to around 400 other new students by my Egyptian lecturer. Not only was I confused by the specific business terms he used, but also the pronunciation of certain words made it difficult to understand him. Later I found out that the lecture's Powerpoint slides were available on "u-link", our electronic learning platform; going through them the day before facilitated my preparation for the topic and increased my understanding. Therefore, staying positive and being opened to the facilities offered by my university helped me get used to my new environment very quickly.

Another personal challenge depicted the little contact hours with lectures and seminars within a normal week. Some students might welcome this, but for me being used to the German "spoon-fed" system, as they like to call it, the lack of direction initially worried me. The study system in the UK emphasizes independent self-study and therefore requires a high amount of personal initiative and self-management. This is a very important skill to acquire for a later job situation in which the boss expects his or her employees to deal with difficult tasks on their own. Luckily, my lecturers are very approachable for giving tips and hints during their private office hours. I learned that especially in the social sciences, there often are no single right solutions; as long as the reasoning is traceable and backed up with

evidence, the individual opinion can be a powerful tool to convince your audience.

Incarnating this within the next four years of my studies, my previous shy character will be shaped here in the UK and let me become a strong, educated woman ready for the international business market.

Keeping one's chin up when challenges seem overwhelming on bad days, I always remember myself of the chances my life and studies here in the UK offer me: truly getting to know individual strengths and weaknesses, skills that yet need to be developed, and what I want to achieve in my life, both personally and academically. For example, Brunel students were offered special codes to accelerate the application process of becoming a "2012 London Olympic Games Maker". Getting involved as a volunteer in a sporting event with global significance has always been one of my childhood's dreams – and now I am one step closer. Moreover, this extracurricular activity might be the crucial aspect and advantage over competitors for my future employer in the sports event management industry.

Also the social experiences I collect in actually living in such a highly diversified culture might be valuable for later international business deals. How many employees are able to organise a fun night out in central London with a group containing eleven different nationalities? Sure sometimes the culture clashes are inevitable, for instance, concerning different meanings in body language such as the closeness during conversations. But this knowledge and sensibility are essential personal skills which in my opinion cannot be understood in the same way by reading a book about it.

To sum up my experiences so far, studying and living in a foreign country can be an intellectually stimulating, exciting, and challenging, but also a potentially daunting venture. Although difficult in the beginning, I am convinced that leaving the personal comfort zone is a true accelerator for the development of a strong and confident character; one that I assume is highly appreciated and sought after in both the economy and the employment market.

Katrin Schlimm