

Erfahrungsbericht/ Experience Report
HÄME University of Applied Sciences – Valkeakoski
Academic Year Autumn 2022 – Spring 2023

HAMK
HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Degree Programme
Degree

International Business
Bachelor of Business Administration

Ansprechpartner HWG

Bereich Internationale Angelegenheiten

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Introduction

The Double Degree between the HÄME University of Applied Sciences and the Ludwigshafen University of Business and Society offers an incredible possibility to the students of both universities. The cooperation allows students to complete an agreed share of studies at both institutions and receive a degree certificate from both. The double degree takes a year to complete thus offering the time to not only increase your competence in the field of your study but more importantly to develop international skills. This unique opportunity made me choose the HÄME University of Applied Sciences in Finland.

University

That the partnering University of the Double Degree is stationed in Finland was a bonus for me personally as I have always wanted to go to Finland because of its nature. Valkeakoski, the city where the University I attended is stationed, is a rather small village with 20.000 inhabitants located between Helsinki and Tampere.



Valkeakoski Campus

The campus is a very great place not only to study but also to spend time with your friends. The school offers a cafeteria, library, gaming room, a room with table tennis, a gym, and the best in my opinion a sauna that can be rented by the students. The campus has two buildings that are located immediately next to each other. The International Business students share the campus with the Engineers. My classes were only in the main building which can be seen in

the picture. Classes were typically around two hours. Usually between 15-30 students attended the classes which made for a great conversational atmosphere with the professor. There were many presentations and group projects over the duration of the classes. In contrast to the German system, there is no final exam period after one semester. In Finland, one module is taught and finished before a new module starts. Some modules included tests as a final examination of knowledge but most of the time the presentations and projects you did over the course of the semester amounted to your final grade. In my personal opinion, this method of teaching allows for a less stressed learning atmosphere and avoids bulimic learning.

The courses I took mainly focused on future applications of skills acquired during my studies in Germany. The first module I took was “Strategic Management” which build a foundation in my knowledge regarding management with a special focus on financial analysis as well as new concepts for strategic thinking. The module “Developing Future Management Skills” build on the knowledge gathered in the first module and added more specialized insights, focusing on sustainability and cross-cultural communication. The last module I took was “Future Marketing Applications” which also had a special focus on the aspect of sustainability in the field of marketing. All these classes were very future-oriented and afterward made me feel like I was more prepared for entering the world of international business. I must also say that the knowledge I had from my first four semesters studying at Ludwigshafen allowed for a seamless transition between my studies at both universities. Even though some English technical terminology might have been new to me my studies in Germany made it possible for me to understand everything perfectly.

Writing my thesis took up most of my second semester. The module “Future Marketing Applications” which also took part in my second semester in Finland was online to allow part-time students and students from other Hamk campuses to take the course as well. Technically there was no need for me to go to campus. I still went there almost every day to eat lunch in the cafeteria, study in the library, or spent time in the common rooms.

Additionally, I took two Finish classes that allowed me to learn the language of the country I was living in. Before arriving in Finland, I knew no Finish besides basic expressions like hello and thank you. The finish language is very different from Indo-European-based languages like German and English because their origins are different so there is no way to derive the words from ones that you are already familiar with. After my year in Finland, I am confident in going to the supermarket or a café and holding a basic conversation in Finish. This is great because

the Finnish people are very friendly and helpful especially when they see that you are making an effort in learning their language.

At the beginning of my studies, the student organization Hamko organized various events and meetings for the new exchange students and degree students. This way it was easy to meet new people before your studies started. The school also organized sports activities for the students. We were able to play volleyball twice a week. A team was formed that was allowed to compete in the national student's league in Finland. We had a great time, and I am so grateful that the school organized and sponsored us for these events. Besides that, ice hockey practices were organized by the sports tutors during the winter.

The overall experience not only with my thesis supervisor but the professors and staff of the University, in general, was very positive. I always felt very supported. In contrast to Germany the finish culture has less strict Hierarchy levels. In Finish universities the professors are equal to the students. They are still treated respectfully and have authority but at the same time they are more approachable and more open to talk about personal life which is not the case in Germany.

Valkeakoski

Because of the size of the city, it is rather quiet with some places like cafés to meet but with the right people there is never a boring day. I found a great group of students from all over the world. We organized our own game nights, went for a barbeque, played beach volleyball, or just went on a hike. Finland is the perfect place for that as there are a lot of public places available that are free for you to use.



The school organized places for the exchange students to stay. I was very lucky with the place I ended up in. The building is mostly filled with exchange students and other degree students. This made it really easy to meet and connect with people.

View from my window:



I shared the apartment with one other student. We both had our own room and shared the kitchen and bathroom. The furniture was already there which made moving in much easier. The apartment is a 10-minute walk away from the University and in very close distance to two grocery stores.

The closest bigger city to Valkeakoski is Tampere. It is about 30 minutes away by car and 45 minutes by bus. The bus connections are pretty good with a bus stop right in front of the building that will take you to the city centre of Tampere every hour. If there is something specific, you cannot find in the shops of Valkeakoski you will definitely find it in Tampere. The area surrounding Valkeakoski is mostly made up of woods and lakes. There are so many paths where you can go hiking or do cross-country skiing in the winter.

Finland

During my stay here I travelled around Finland a bit. Over the Christmas holidays, some friends and I explored Lapland in northern Finland. I have never seen so much snow in my life. It was a great experience partially because of how welcoming the Finnish people were to us everywhere. Before coming to Finland, I had often heard the stereotype that Finnish people are cold and closed off but after my time here I have only positive things to say about Finland as a country and the people. Just like Germans, the Finnish people are very self-reliant and

independent but at the same time, they have this calmness surrounding them that makes it seem like they worry less. I guess I now understand why Finns are supposedly the happiest people.

Conclusion

Even the best of times come to an end and so as well my time in Finland. As the first person to complete the Double Degree program between the University of Ludwigshafen University of Business and Society and the HÄME University of Applied Sciences, I am incredibly grateful to have been granted this opportunity and can only encourage future students to use this opportunity the same way. Over the course of the last year in Finland, I grew academically through school, but I also grew as a person from the experience. It gave me the possibility to build my international and intercultural competencies as well as other social competencies.

I was supported throughout this journey by my university from back home and the staff of the HÄME University. I never felt alone because I always had someone to rely on. Ultimately, I can only conclude my time in Finland as one of the best decisions I have made. I made so many great memories and grew as a person in many different ways.