

Experience report: University of Technology Sydney

From the beginning of March until the end of June 2019 I spent a semester abroad at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. The decision to enrol in a postgraduate course at a foreign university was made in the previous academic term. A one-on-one consultation with an advisor from Göttingen International was the first step of a well-structured application process for both the Tuition Waiver program and the partner institution. After receiving the letter of admission from the Australian university I acquired the recommended health insurance from Medibank Private (OSHC), submitted an online visa request to the Department of Home Affairs and applied for a room in one of the campus accommodations. By setting up a learning agreement beforehand I ensured that my proposed study program is confirmed by the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences.

Flights were booked two months in advance via Cathay Pacific's website for a favorable offer and to avoid any inconvenience. At the end of February, I began my +-24 hours journey across the globe and flew from Hannover to Sydney with intermediate landings in Frankfurt and Hong Kong. I arrived 10pm local time at the Kingsford Smith International Airport and took the free shuttle service to my campus accommodation.

Similar to what I am used to in Germany the Autumn session started with „Orientation Weeks“, whereby local and international student alike visit mandatory/voluntary events to see what the university and its faculties offer and to discover the surroundings. Classes commenced from the 11th of March. Prior to my arrival I enrolled in four subjects of the postgraduate business program. Every exchange student is required to take at least three modules (full-time) in order to obtain visa. Once enrolled I had to allocate myself to the subject's various lectures and tutorials, setting up my own timetable online. The content covered in class was very interesting, which was also due to the fact that the teaching staff appeared to be competent and enthusiastic. I strongly believe that my time at UTS has prepared me with valuable tools and techniques for the professional life. However, it is worth mentioning that Australia's educational landscape differs significantly from the German when it comes to assessments. For each subject, students have to submit/write three of those that are presentations, assignments or midterm and final exams. Workload can be high at times. The assessments are prepared individually or in groups. I particularly enjoyed working on a project with my international colleagues, although other students reported „varying standards“ of commitment in their groups. The university's facilities are well equipped but seem to lack purposefully built learning and study buildings. This problem may be eradicated by the new central building that will open in the subsequent Spring session of 2019.

Besides the academic program UTS offers its students the opportunity to sign up for different sport clubs and societies. I took advantage of that and joined the tennis team and the motorsport community. Members of UTS Housing furthermore had the opportunity to join the resident networkers for weekly activities and excursions to places within Sydney and the surrounding national parks (figures 1 and 2).

Looking back, I can conclude that the semester abroad has been an important experience, one that I would not want to have missed. Special thanks are due to the staff at Göttingen International and the DAAD for organizational and financial support.



Figure 1,2: Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge, Royal National Park