

## Report

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### 1. Preparation (planning, organisation and application at the partner university)

The planning of our semester exchange was a little bit more complicated at our time of application, because the Stellenbosch University was not advertised as an official partner university. Because of this, the planning has already started about 1.5 years before the beginning of our journey. The search for the right contacts was a little bit difficult at first. The contact to the University of Stellenbosch initially hampered by long waiting times for responses and also through changing editors. Finally, Mr. Prof. Beucke assured us at least a verbal agreement for a semester exchange in South Africa through a short phone conversation with Mr. Prof. Wium (Head of the Construction Management Department). Nevertheless, we had to wait for the official application period on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011. Up to then, we had sufficient time to look after the necessary organization. Firstly, we applied for our passport and studied the necessary visa requirements. The student visa required a lot of documents. The exact requirements can be found at the following link (<http://www.suedafrika.org/downloads/Studienurlaubnis.pdf>). It should be noted that you can only apply for a visa with an official invitation from the university as well as your flight tickets. It is recommended that you acquire all necessary documents in advance that the request can be sent when the invitation is received. The processing time can take up to 3 months. An early booking of a flight can eventually sound risky, especially if one has neither a confirmation of the university nor a visa. However nothing else you can do. After all, the chance of a cheap flight is bigger. The application of the Stellenbosch University is an usual application form which included personal information, evidence of your English skills and a confirmation of your health insurance. Furthermore, you must make already a choice of your future courses. You can find more information about the course selection in Section 4 a. The whole registration and organization is not a difficult process, but it still needs a lot of time, so it should be started to plan as early as possible to avoid unnecessary delays.

## 2. Journey (organisation, costs)

As described before, it takes a lot of organization of the required documents. This is of course also associated with some costs. Briefly, the following costs approached us in advance of travel:

- Vaccinations: approx. 100 – 200 €
- Clearance Certificate: 15 €
- Passport: approx. 60 €
- Visa: approx. 800 € ( approx. 50 € administration fee and 750 € deposit which can be demanded back when you are back in Germany, but keep your receipt safe)
- Flight: approx. 860 € (Emirates, highly recommended, because of good conditions)
- Tuition Fees: approx. 500 €

Overall, the initial costs amount to € 2,000. You should be aware before deciding for a semester exchange in South Africa, that South Africa is no more the cheapest country. From personal experience, but also of other statements, South Africa has tightened its prices very much. It could even be said that it does not necessarily reflect a difference to Germany. Comparing Stellenbosch with Weimar, you can already recognize much higher costs on the subject of accommodation. Even in the supermarket you can benefit of low fruit and vegetable prices. Everything else, such as meat, cheese and dairy products are much more expensive. Often a meal in the restaurant is at least as expensive, if not even cheaper than home-prepared meals (excluding drinks). Furthermore, you should also plan your finances with a buffer for hospital stays or doctor visits. These you have to pay directly. In total, you should expect cost of 10,000 € for a 6-month stay. This sum may seem to look very scary, but it is regarded as realistic. The sum also includes short excursions which are strongly recommended for a semester in South Africa.

## 3. Accommodation (costs, kind of accommodation, etc.)

In the context of the accommodation, there is the opportunity to obtain a student residence in addition to private accommodations. We decided for the private alternative because the student residences are more expensive in comparison (about 400 € per month)., we paid about 315 € per room per month plus electricity and internet. However, water, a 24-hour security service, a laundry-service twice a week, a cleaning service once a week and a gardener are included in this price. The settlement with the electricity depends on your landlord. We had to buy our electricity in the supermarket by pre-paid system. About the Internet it must be said that South Africans use the Internet mainly at the university. There it is not free of charge like at the Bauhaus-University. Your usage is charged per megabyte. Not every property has an Internet connection. We had set up for Internet access with the equivalent of 30 € per person. For 4 GB, we paid on average 20 € per month.

What is not being consumed, expires. A flat rate would cost around 50 € / per user. The Internet is another point which is much more expensive in comparison to Germany.

You should try to find an apartment at a very early stage, if you decided for the private alternative. For us, it was somewhat difficult to assess the individual distances to the university or the region. Our apartment is located about 15 minutes walk to the university. This is very far for Stellenbosch conditions. Could we choose again, we would prefer a more central apartment, especially from the security perspective. Otherwise, our apartment had a good standard. However, there is the rule that you cannot find any things at most accommodations (private and university accommodation). Kitchen utensils, bedding and other items must be purchased on your own in most cases. These things you can donate at the end of your semester to certain organizations that will give it to needy people in South Africa.

#### 4. Partner University

##### a. Studying (courses, projects, schedule)

As an exchange student it is recommended to take not more than 3 courses. A number of 4 courses are the absolute maximum. As part of the agreed contracts with Bauhaus University, we could only attend courses of the Faculty of Construction Management, as well as one IPSU-course (IPSU = International Programmes Stellenbosch University) for free. The problem in our course selection lied in the approach to our student program in Germany. Thus we could only take courses that we already completed in Germany. We chose courses like PPP and Procurement, Construction Risk Management, Project Management and Human Resource Management. Although we did nearly the same courses in Germany, it was extremely interesting, because we got a lot of practical examples from South Africa and not only theoretically knowledge. Furthermore, we thus had the opportunity to learn the necessary technical terms. The courses took only as all-day block courses place, and you must not pass a written examination at the end of the semester. The structure of the different courses cannot be compared with our system in Germany. The final mark is made by assignments which you have to write during the semester. That means it could apply up to 5 assignments in each course with an average of 15 pages per assignment. This is not to be underestimated under any circumstances. However, this is a very good way to improve your research work. As part of IPSU-courses, individual tests and assignments must be passed during the semester as well as a final exam in the end. IPSU-courses include various subjects of Languages, Arts, Social Sciences, Business Management and others. These courses must be paid according to contractual agreements and cost between 200 € and 700 € extra.

The Stellenbosch University offers a lot of different projects, whether it is a social, scientific, recreational or sporting activity. We even took part in the organization Watergarden–Klapmuts once a week. There we cared for young children of the

community Klapmuts, a small township near Stellenbosch. Next to sporting and playful activities we tried to teach the kids in scientific, cultural and spiritual knowledge. You should definitely take part in a social project because of this you have the opportunity to see a different side of South Africa. The work with these kids made us so much fun. Although, it was not always easy to handle them, but it was still very nice, especially when we saw the joy and the thanks in the eyes of the children. For us, it is an absolute "must-do" during a semester exchange here in Stellenbosch. In addition to Watergarden, the Stellenbosch University offers a plenty of other social projects. At the beginning of each semester there are also held information sessions on this.

b. Support of the Partner University (international office and faculty/chair)

We appreciate the Stellenbosch University as a Partner University. The organization of the orientation week was quite perfect. You found connection to other students immediately and it makes you feel very welcome at the university. There was a full program of free events as well as informal arrangements over time of 5 days. Also, the International Office was always available for our many questions, not only at the beginning, but also during the whole semester. You should definitely attend to the orientation week. We found the orientation week very helpful in order to orient at the university, not only geographically, but also organizational.

c. Language courses at the Partner University

We did not pass a language course at Stellenbosch University. However, the possibility exists to pass these courses in the following languages:

- Afrikaans
- English
- Chinese
- French
- German
- Spanish
- Xhosa

d. University facilities (library, computer labs, etc.)

The Stellenbosch University has a large underground library with plenty of helpful literature and many workplaces. A new and modern computer lab is another room as a good workplace. Yet there you always have to be very early, because these places are very popular. For postgraduate students you can find a separate research room. The access is granted only by your student card. This is a very nice facility in the library. The research room is equipped with new computers, modern furniture, separate work areas, conference rooms and an outdoor terrace. Other computer labs are located inside the engineering building.

The Stellenbosch University has also a well equipped gymnasium. The range of sports equipment and exercise classes is very good. Other facilities in the gymnasium include a swimming pool, outdoor pool, basketball court and other

exercise rooms. The membership for 6 months is about € 170.00 and so very cheap for that what you can get there.

#### 5. Living (city/country, culture, food, communicating, jobs, etc.)

South Africa is a beautiful country with an incredible diversity. Once you have decided for a semester exchange in Stellenbosch you should allow for sufficient time so that you have the opportunity to explore the country. Only the Western Cape already impresses with beautiful wine regions and landscapes. The more than 350 existing wine farms invite you for wine tastings in the beautiful scenery. Stellenbosch is not only known for its beautiful inner city, but also for its university. Approximately 20,000 students attend to the university and thus give the city a student atmosphere. Many pubs, bars and clubs make it easier to make contact and connection to the students of Stellenbosch University. Life beyond the university can be created very well. In addition to the evening options, you can also make wonderful day hikes on the many mountains around Stellenbosch. Furthermore, you can visit a lot of markets in Stellenbosch and surroundings, where you can taste local delicacies.

In general it can be said that South Africans love to "braai" (barbecue). As soon as the weather is nice, the "braai" will be prepared.

Another big topic in South Africa is rugby. The Varsity Cup is highly recommended and you should buy yourself a season ticket for this big event. Sport, e.g. rugby or even the Champions League, is generally very popular in South Africa.

#### 6. Summary (best and/or worst experience, final words or advices to your fellow students)

In general, we are very satisfied with our decision to make an exchange semester in South Africa at the Stellenbosch University and we can highly recommend it to others. It was particularly interesting to see how the courses are held in comparison to Germany. One of the best experiences in South Africa definitely includes the exploration of the country. We achieved a lot of positive impressions. The cooperation with the organization Watergarden gave us a lot of new impressions and of course another image of South African culture.

An especially important topic is the security in South Africa. There are certain rules that you have to follow. You should always be aware that this country is still ruled by poverty in several areas. At nightfall you should take together in the group your way home if possible and carry only necessary things with you. Additionally, you should always keep an eye on your belongings and never leave them unattended. We made the experience of the theft as well as our friends. Fortunately for us, we can only speak about material loss and not of palpable assaults. Nonetheless, even this cannot be excluded. Especially as a woman, you should always try to find someone who takes you home. You must not be afraid to ask for a lift home,

because a lot of people take this for granted. The students form a large community and they always take care of each other.

We hope that our experience report can arouse the curiosity for many students for a semester exchange at Stellenbosch University. Furthermore, we hope that we could show the most informative impressions and information in this report. However, if there are still any questions, feel free to contact us. We wish the following students a just as beautiful stay as we had it and above all lots of experiences and impressions. For us, it was a wonderful time that we do not want to miss.