

Study abroad semester at Curtin University 2013

Prior to my arrival at Curtin University in Perth Western Australia I attempted to gain a scholarship with the Bayer Foundation. I was fortunate to have an interview but was not successful. After this I applied for the PROMOS Programme proposed by the DAAD at University of Duisburg-Essen at the Faculty of Education and was supported. I believe that this support was because as a future school teacher in the field of science, I wished to go abroad. I made contact with my pending supervisor at Curtin University in Perth Australia Professor David Treagust, while he was on a research visit at the University of Duisburg-Essen with Professor Hans Fischer, so that I could plan my visit. I also thank the support of the foreign exchange office at University of Duisburg-Essen who helped me with the paperwork. Unfortunately no advice could be given on Visa requirements which were at first stage quite a challenge. It would have made a lot easier for me. In the end a 3-month visit was the best option for me.

During my three months' time at Curtin University I engaged in the following activities in the Science and Mathematics Education Centre (SMEC) where I participated (but was not formally enrolled) in the following classes:

- 1 SMEC 612 Curricula –designing curricula in science
- 2 SMEC UNIT 622 Classroom Climate – evaluating the learning environment of science classrooms
- 3 SMEC Unit 627 Research Methods – different approaches to designing studies and conducting research
- 4 Doctoral Colloquia – a seminar and lectures series about SMEC students and their studies

To broaden my skills, I also participated in a Curtin Business School class

- 5 Communication Skills in Business CBS 4 classes – group discussion about reading business articles

While looking on my experiences I can say that it is a lot better from the monetary perspective to study in Germany as enrolment fees are very expensive (for Australian teachers a masters degree by coursework and project costs almost \$16000). Living costs are quite high in Perth compared to Germany. Sadly the University doesn't have a central Canteen (Mensa) and food on campus is quite expensive. Due to this, I brought my own food every day and usually joined others at the SMEC who also brought their own lunch. So this was the normal lunch routine. The people who I have met on Campus are all very polite and interested to learn what I was doing at Curtin.

The courses I have attended give me a new perspective compared to what I have experienced at my home University and let me think more 'out of the box' and I believe that will greatly contribute to my studies in Germany. I wrote an assignment in English for the first time on "*The influence of teachers attitudes and behavior on prospective engineering students' classroom learning environment*". *This assignment* will help me to proceed with my studies when I return to the UDE. The 3-month stay at Curtin gave me the opportunity to work with well-regarded scientists in the field of science education research and to get to know education research first hand.

In the classes I attended I got to know several students from a range of foreign countries. It is astonishing how quickly a cooperative and supportive environment was created and also how group dis-

cussion in the classes developed so easily. As a visiting researcher I met every day for lunch with SMEC staff. Also socialising between the students and the faculty took place on a regular basis, usually at the end of class sessions, when some one was departing after finishing his or her studies or a new student joined the research group.

Looking at the distance I had to travel every day I needed about one hour to get to the University Campus. Accommodation was organized privately. I can recommend that future students who go to Perth should consider the high living costs. Three months are a short time and this time is needed to develop a socialising basis. Now I have to leave but really I would like to have stayed longer. During my stay I had the opportunity to take a week off to see something of Australia's beautiful country and seaside.

I can only encourage other fellow students to take the step to experience a study stay abroad.