

2022 SUMMER STUDY ABROAD REPORT



University
of Cologne



Hazel Joomratty, 49231939
Kapil Pupneja, 73298036
Rujuta Korgaonkar, 36663995
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UBC Sauder Business School

INTRODUCTION

This report will be a collective report from Hazel, Kapil and Rujuta from the PMBA 2023 Cohort on our experiences at the University of Cologne's Leadership and Diversity Summer program. We have also shared a few pictures from our trip in Appendix 1. We come from different fields and industries, but our common interest is summarized below:

Hazel Joomratty

In my role as Vice President of Finance in the cleantech space, I have been facing challenges relating to diversity, including overcoming them. Taking part in the summer program abroad has given me the opportunity to get to know different cultures, work with people with different backgrounds, and most importantly, understand the intricacies of diversity and how as a BIPOC woman I can continue to pave my way forward and continue to promote diversity in the workplace.

Kapil Pupneja

My purpose behind taking part in the leadership & diversity summer program was to learn the significance of diversity in leadership and how to enhance it. Through this program, I wanted to explore ways to encourage employee engagement and bridge diversity & inclusion gaps. Participating in the PMBA global summer course allowed me to connect with many professionals from all over the world and, more importantly, taught me how to effectively connect to people while being able to formulate and implement leadership strategies.

Rujuta Korgaonkar

Diversity and Inclusion is a very common topic for discussion in the workplace. As a Project Manager for construction and infrastructure projects, I have been working in a global environment which lacks gender diversity despite visible efforts to improve this norm. My motivation for attending the program was to learn how different industries and countries tackle a global challenge. It was a unique opportunity to be a part of a global discourse, understand the complexities of diversity, and create meaningful strategies.

ORIENTATION

Prior to attending lectures, we primarily communicated via email and were informed on how to access the school portal for the syllabus and courses. We were also provided with detailed directions on where to attend the lectures. On the first day of the lectures, we were each given at no cost a 9 Euro train ticket for the month of August and had an introduction session where the professor, Dr Meir Shemla and the program manager, Anna Lytton, explained the topics we will be covering, team exercises, and tour visits and we were then served pastries, coffee, and spritz (fizzy water) so we could mingle with each other.

That afternoon we met for dinner, which was fully sponsored by the University, and was a great opportunity to connect with everyone and try Cologne's famous beer, the Kolsch beer.

COURSES & REGISTRATION

There was no course registration required from the University of Cologne. However, we had to register a WEX account to get the study letter required for people who needed a Visa to visit Cologne and ILLAS, which was the school portal for the syllabus and course lectures.

We had three assignments deliverables which consisted of a debate on diversity quota which we had to do in groups, a case study presentation taking into perspectives of a real company at play and the third one we each had the option of meeting with the Professor and a professional executive coach to do a cultural immersion video or present how diversity varies in the country we come from. Kapil and Hazel chose the first option of cultural immersion video and Rujuta presented the diversity landscape in Canada. The course work was manageable and required lots of group interaction which was an amazing team building opportunity.

TEACHING

The course was lecture-based, peer/class-interactions and had a few guests' presentations. One of the few guest lectures was from McKinsey and several in-class discussions/presentations that kept us engaged and allowed us to learn from each other's experiences. An in-class debate focused on diversity quotas that enhanced team collaboration and allowed us to structure & present our thoughts using persuasive arguments. This module was structured to make students feel more connected to the learning environment due to its interactive approach and various in-class activities.

LANGUAGE COURSES

There was no language course requirement. All presentations and tours were in English. The only places where we were exposed to the German language were restaurants. Most Germans we interacted with spoke English and only had some minor issues interacting or having to use google translate at the Clinic or with Uber/Taxi drivers.

CAMPUS FACILITIES

WI-FI

We were each provided with a unique username and password on the first day to access the WI-FI.

Lecture-room

Since it was summer, it was really hot in the lecture rooms as there was no AC except for air circulation as part of Germany's sustainability practices. It was at times uncomfortable, but the program manager always did her best to switch us to other lecture room where the sun rays were less.

CAFE

We were given a student letter signed by University of Cologne that allowed us to use the cafeteria. We received a WERK card and only had to deposit 5 Euro on the card with a top up amount if we were eating there. At the end of the program, we had to go to collect the remaining amount on the card including the deposit. It was a very simple process and cash was the only method of payment to get the deposit on the WERK card.

HOUSING FACILITIES

Kapil and Rujuta

We were recommended Hotel Flandrischer Hof by the Program Manager at the University of Cologne. We stayed at the same hotel, which was around a 15-20 mins walk away from the campus. This hotel is centrally located, close to the shops and several restaurants nearby. You can also walk to Cologne Hbf station, where the Cologne Cathedral is located. The hotel had an amazing breakfast buffet with a good selection; on sunny days, we could enjoy breakfast on the terrace. Each room was provided with a table fan. However, if you are visiting during a heatwave and are used to cooler temperatures, it might be recommended to opt for an air-conditioned hotel.

Hazel Joomratty

I opted to stay at Steigenberger Hotels which was a block away from Hotel Flandrischer Hof and it was centrally located as mentioned above. I had the best stay there and stayed in a business room that was air-conditioned with both dry-clean and breakfast included. The breakfast was lavish and had coffee access anytime of the day. The customer service was excellent and the people there were helpful especially when I had to go to the clinic due to a medical emergency.

Since we were all from Canada, neither of us had to pay any cultural tax and only had to fill a tax form.

STUDY TOURS / FIELD TRIPS

Cologne Cathedral

The University had arranged for a guided tour to the top of the Cologne Cathedral. We all could at any time visit the towering Cathedral inside and the view is spectacular from the outside and at ground level. However, the tour to the top also provided mesmerizing views of the Cathedral and the surrounding city. It was led by a restoration team member and provided good insights into the history of the museum.

Bonn (Museum & Haribo)

As a part of the program students also had the option to attend a field trip to the Bonn Museum. The trip started with a train ride from Cologne to Bonn and was on the route for the 9 Euro train ticket provided by the University. Bonn is also home to the Haribo Factory Store and a great place to pick up the famous Haribo gummies.

Escape room

As a part of the program, we were required to undertake a team diversity project. Teams were pre-assigned by the University and Professor for this project. After first day of class the University had organized a trip to an Escape Room, which we were required to tackle with our respective project teams. During the class each team had developed a team charter for the Escape Room. We then had to tackle the Escape Room within the parameters of the charter with our respective teams. There was a neutral observer from the University in each of the Escape Rooms. Post-activity they provided a debrief on our decision making, leadership, and individual strengths and weaknesses. As the Escape Room was located near the Rhine River, we also enjoyed a pleasant evening walk along the Rhine.

Beer Garden

On the afternoon of our last day of class, we had an official farewell at a beer garden where the food and drinks were sponsored by the University. This was located in a park walkable distance from the University and besides a lake. During the evening the Beer Garden is lit up and becomes a nice respite from the summer heat.

Restaurants

Cologne has an amazing food culture, and we were able to try cuisines from around the world (including traditional German food). During the field trips to Escape Room and Beer Garden, our meals were also paid by the University. There were also a good number of vegetarian and vegan options for people with dietary restrictions. Overall, the food was good and not too expensive.

COSTS/ EXPENSES

Here are the costs breakdown for each of us:

Kapil Pupneja

Accommodation - \$794

Flight - \$1473

Food/Restaurant - \$1000 approx.

Uber/Taxis/Train - \$50

Hazel Joomratty

Accommodation with dry-cleaning: \$2,128

Flight, there was no direct flight but did a short lay-over in Munich: \$1,903

Food/restaurant: \$1,000 approx. with 20-30 Euros per meal

Uber/Taxis: \$75- to and back from airport and to and back to the clinic

Rujuta Korgaonkar

Accommodation - \$985

Flight - \$1,578.16

Food/Restaurant - \$1000 approx.

Uber/Taxis/Train - \$60 (to and back to Cologne Hbf)

WHAT TO BRING

Considering the amount of travel/walking involved, we recommend travelling light. It would be ideal to bring a backpack and a carry-on and some comfortable running/walking shoes. The price of medicine there can be quite high, so if you suffer from allergies, etc., please remember to bring your medication along.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

The Summer Study Abroad program at University of Cologne was a very enjoyable experience. As all participants were from MBA schools around the world, we learned a lot from each other and from the planned activities and lectures as the group was relatively small (around 14 people). Furthermore, the tours and field trips were amazing. For anyone interested in learning about different cultures and how things are done differently around the world, this summer program is a must-attend. Cologne also has great connectivity to rest of Germany and neighboring countries for people who are interested in exploring other places in Europe.

APPENDIX 1: A FEW PICTURE MEMORIES

