ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT ÜBER STUDIENERFAHRUNGEN IN BAYERN

[Report on study experiences in Bavaria]

Herkunftsland [county of origin]:	Ukraine
Studium in Bayern [program in Bavaria]:	von [from] 2020 bis [until] 2024
Hochschule in Bayern [university in Bavaria]:	FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg
Studienfach [subject of study]:	International Information Systems
Abschluss [degree]:	Master

I. Practical Experiences and Tips

Preparation of the Stay

My journey toward studying in Bavaria began long before I officially applied to university. Thanks to my involvement in the Nuremberg Chess Club, I had the unique opportunity to visit Nuremberg several times before my studies began. These visits were incredibly valuable as they allowed me to familiarize myself with the city and gather crucial information about the university system. Meeting with academic advisors and exploring the FAU campus helped me understand exactly what I needed to successfully apply.

I applied to three different programs to increase my chances and was accepted into two of them. This was a strategic decision, as I knew competition could be high. Having friends in Nuremberg made the transition much easier, especially when it came to finding accommodation. I didn't have to go through the stress of searching for housing blindly; instead, I had insider advice from people who had lived there for years.

One piece of advice I'd give to future scholarship holders is to try to connect with local students or fellow applicants as early as possible. For me, talking to the study advisors answered all my questions and reassured me about the process. While online research is helpful, nothing beats having real conversations with people who have gone through the same experience. For anyone looking to study at FAU, I'd also note that while the application process is straightforward, it does require you to send documents by post in addition to submitting them online. The lack of a centralized system like Uni-Assist makes this easier, as you communicate directly with the university.

Travel and Arrival at the Place of Study

I took a flight from Kiev to Nuremberg, which was a smooth process. I was fortunate to stay with a friend upon arrival, which significantly reduced the usual stress of finding temporary accommodation.

Arriving in Nuremberg was an exciting experience. While I had visited before, coming as a student felt different. Settling in was made easier because I already knew the city from my previous trips, and my friend's help during the first days made the process even smoother. I was ready to start my studies without worrying about logistics or where to live.

Stay at the Place of Study

In the beginning, I didn't need to use public transportation much, as my studies were mostly online, and I preferred walking and cycling around the city. When in-person classes resumed, I opted for cycling as a cost-effective and healthy way to commute. The 35-minute walk or 15-minute bike ride to the university also allowed me to enjoy Nuremberg while staying active.

During my first year, I was self-funded, relying on savings I had carefully built up before coming to Germany. This was a challenging time financially, as living costs in Bavaria can be high, but I managed by budgeting carefully. The BAYHOST scholarship I received in my second year alleviated much of the financial pressure, allowing me to focus more on my studies and less on my finances.

Outside of academics, I remained active in chess, playing tournaments and continuing to represent the Nuremberg Chess Club. I also volunteered as a chess coach, teaching both remotely during the pandemic and later in person. This experience expanded when I began working with Ukrainian children who had fled the war, which was an emotionally rewarding experience that allowed me to give back to my community.

Socially, I found ways to connect with other students through WhatsApp groups and course projects. Although many of these connections didn't last beyond the projects, I made one strong friendship that continues to this day.

II. Academic Experiences and Further Qualification

Study at Your University in Bavaria

The academic structure at FAU offered an impressive range of courses, and I took full advantage of the flexibility to tailor my education. What I enjoyed most were the group projects, which provided a sense of real-world applicability to the theoretical knowledge we were gaining. I also appreciated the flipped classroom model, where lectures were prerecorded and our class time was dedicated to discussions and problem-solving. This interactive format made learning more engaging and enjoyable.

One standout course was taught by BMW employees, who shared their industry experience in strategic business management. This was particularly valuable because it gave me insights into how businesses operate at a strategic level, something that I continue to apply today in my own thinking. Another course that had a profound impact was one where we learned how to write scientific papers. This skill later proved crucial when working on my master's thesis.

For future scholarship holders, I would highly recommend taking advantage of these unique opportunities, as they offer more than just theoretical knowledge. Engaging with courses that focus on real-world applications can give you a competitive edge in your future career.

Involvement at the Department

One of the most rewarding parts of my academic experience was working as a student assistant at my department. This position allowed me to contribute to the development of a new course for our program, which was an inspiring and enriching experience. The atmosphere at the chair was relaxed and friendly, and I never felt like I was just another student; I was part of a team working toward a common goal.

My supervisor was incredibly supportive, treating me more like a colleague than a subordinate. This experience sparked my interest in academia and contributed to my decision to write my master's thesis under the same department. Through this role, I felt deeply integrated into the academic community, which significantly enhanced my research skills and interest in pursuing further studies.

Further Professional Qualification

Throughout my studies, I aimed to bridge the gap between business and technology. While my program had a strong focus on programming, I chose to focus more on the business and systems side, gaining a broad understanding of how technology integrates with business practices. This interdisciplinary approach has equipped me with a versatile skill set that I can apply in various career paths.

A major focus of my master's thesis was on the effectiveness of AI-generated educational scripts compared to expert-led ones. This research allowed me to dive into the future of education and assess how AI can be used as a tool to create meaningful educational content. My findings showed that AI-produced scripts can perform just as well as, if not better than, those created by human experts, particularly in terms of learner engagement and knowledge retention.

Assessment of the Study Visit

Reflecting on my time in Bavaria, I can confidently say that the experience has been transformative. Studying here has not only enhanced my academic and professional skills but has also shaped me personally. I've become more disciplined, learned how to manage my time and priorities effectively, and developed a deeper understanding of both my strengths and areas for growth.

If I had the chance to go back and make this decision again, I would choose Bavaria every time. The challenges I faced were outweighed by the immense growth I experienced, and I believe this study period has laid a solid foundation for whatever path I choose in the future.

III. Plans or Activities After BAYHOST Funding

As my scholarship period has now finished, I'm at a crossroads between two exciting paths. One option is to continue in academia by pursuing a PhD, building on the research I began with my master's thesis. My goal would be to focus on online education and its intersection with emerging technologies, ultimately aiming to become a university professor.

The other option is to step into the world of entrepreneurship, combining my academic knowledge with my passion for chess to create an online educational platform. This would allow me to merge my love for teaching and chess, offering accessible and high-quality education to people around the world. Regardless of which path I choose, I'm confident that the skills and experiences I've gained during my time in Bavaria will serve me well.