

Study Abroad at the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science of Curtin University in Perth 2017/2018



After finishing my vocational training as physiotherapist in 2016, which is the standard degree for German physiotherapists, I made the decision to expand my studies by commencing the B.Sc. ELP program at the Hochschule Osnabrueck, University of Applied Sciences. With the option to include two exchange semesters at a partner University in the B.Sc International Physiotherapy program, I chose the Curtin University in the Western Australian capital of Perth, hoping to gain insight into Australian physiotherapy, intensify my knowledge and live a life in the sun.

Organisation

During the first study week in Osnabrueck, I already had to submit my application for the international program. After a bilingual interview with the course coordinator Prof. Dr. med. Christof Zalpour and Prof. Dr. Brigitte Tampin, I started planning and organizing my trip to Australia, including booking flights, applying for a student visa, searching for accommodation. To be able to apply and study at Curtin University, I had to officially apply at the International Faculty Office at Hochschule Osnabrueck and at Curtin University. I was also expected to complete the English language TOEFL-Test at a certain level.

In close collaboration with the administration office in Osnabrueck, Brigitte Tampin and the study abroad team at the partner university, I chose subjects in the second and third year of the physiotherapy degree at the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Curtin University. A learning agreement would guarantee that my Australian marks were accredited towards my German degree.

The costs for studies abroad are rather high. With the support of my family, I had the financial security to follow this dream. However, I also found further funding sources. Usually the biggest part of the costs are the study fees for the study abroad program per semester at Curtin University (9.900 AUD = 6.115 €, 22.01.2019). [1] Additional costs include flight fares, student visa, overseas student health care cover etc. A national student loan for international studies (AuslandsBaFöG) was very helpful. To be able to cover my living expenses, I applied for another student loan (Bildungskredits der KfW). I was also granted the 1.200 € PROMOS scholarship by Hochschule Osnabrueck, which I had to apply

for by writing a motivation letter and obtaining a reference from a professor at the Hochschule.

Experiences in Perth

During the first days at Curtin University, I understood why the Australian physiotherapy is so renowned throughout the world. The lecturers, the intensity of study and the amount of evidence-based content cannot be compared to my German studies. A large number of international students make use of this high-quality education. After completion of their degree in Australia, most of them move back home and use their knowledge in their home country. I was the only person who was participating in the study abroad program of Curtin University in physiotherapy, which was somewhat special.

The close bond to fellow students made it easier to get through the huge amount of theoretical and practical content. Hours and hours spent on continuous practicing and studying, I met wonderful people and made incredible friends.



To work as a physiotherapist in Australia, students need to study full time over the course of four years. [2]

Australian physiotherapists-to-be are especially trained on forming a differential diagnosis and making use of therapeutic methods in musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary and neurological fields. Everything rests on the system of clinical reasoning, necessary for the work as first contact practitioner, which was established in Australia already in 1976. [3]

Experienced physiotherapists often operate as Advanced Scope Physiotherapist in primary care where they take on extended medical tasks and responsibilities. [4] My German tutor Brigitte Tampin also works as Advanced Scope Physiotherapist at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Perth in a Neurosurgery Spinal Clinic.

Physiotherapy in Australia is mostly covered by private insurance, except in some cases where the public health insurance Medicare takes over the costs. Therefore, physiotherapists are obliged to work very efficiently. [5]

Even in Australia, health professionals are rare. International physiotherapists are given the chance to apply for certification. [6] Anyway, the international physiotherapy program of Hochschule Osnabrueck does not allow me and participants to work in Australia straight after completion of the degree. But knowing the specific language and the way

physiotherapy works in Australia are helpful tools for the certification process. Further details on how to obtain work permission in Australia can be found on the website of the Australian Physiotherapy Council (<https://physiocouncil.com.au>) .

The content brought to me by specialists in their field during my time at Curtin University has made me become more considerate and reflective when it comes to assessing and treating mostly musculoskeletal conditions and understanding complex pain mechanisms.

As a physiotherapist in Germany, I have the expectations to work according to international standards and thereby offer an efficient treatment. Another point would be that I will try to raise the professionalism in German physiotherapy and change its perception. Working and living in Australia would always be an option too though...

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1 Curtin University. "Study Abroad". (2019). Im Internet: <https://international.curtin.edu.au/exchange-programs/study-abroad/>. Stand: 10.01.2020.

2 Tampin, B. (2010). "Australische Physiotherapie - was ist anders als in Deutschland?" physioscience 6: 45-46.

3 Australian Physiotherapy Association. „Our history". (2020). Im Internet: <https://australian.physio/aboutus/our-history>. Stand: 17.01.2020.

4 Tampin, B. "Physiotherapy Extended Scope Practice - erweiterter Aufgabenbereich für Physiotherapeuten." physioscience 2009; 5: 1-2.

5 Pälme, M.; Zalpour, C. (2011). "Verantwortungsvolle Freiheit." physiopraxis 10: 51-53.

6 Mitchell, M. "Enabling overseas physios to help fill the void." (2019). Im Internet: <https://www.australian.physio/inmotion/enabling-overseas-physios-help-fill-void>. Stand: 07.02.2019