



Freiformulierter Erfahrungsbericht

Studienbegleitender Auslandsaufenthalt

Basisdaten (bitte alle Angaben eintragen!)

Fakultät/Fach:	Socioeconomics (MIBAS)
Fachsemester:	5.
Gastland:	China
Gasthochschule/-institution:	Fudan University
Art des Aufenthalts (z.B. Studium, Praktikum)	Study
Zeitpunkt des Aufenthalts (z.B. SoSe 2016):	SoSe 2023
Dauer des Aufenthalts (z.B. 3 Monate):	5 months
Mobilitätsprogramm (z.B. Hamburglobal, Zentralaustausch):	Zentralaustausch + Hamburglobal
Bewerbungsrunde (z.B. März 2016):	October 2022

Vorbereitung und Anreise

I applied for the Central Exchange Program in November 2021 and was planning to spend my semester abroad at Fudan University, China, the next Winter Semester 2022. The application process was easy to understand thanks to the information the university website provided and the detailed steps that the Service4mobility platform displayed. For any other issues which these two sources did not cover, the International Office at the University of Hamburg was a good place where to ask for help, either by writing them an email or calling them by phone.

However, after I was successfully selected to go to Fudan University, the preparation for my exchange semester turned out to be more complicated than others due to the pandemic and the restrictions in place at that time. China had very strict rules for those who wanted to enter the country until January 2023 and because of all the uncertainties which stem from that situation, it was hard to organize everything at first. Fortunately, the International Office at the University of Hamburg helped me a lot and was able to give me suggestions regarding what best to do. They even offered me to change destination; yet I decided not to take the offer but to postpone my stay from Winter Semester 2022/2023 to Summer Semester 2023. The student office of my faculty was also ready to assist and advised me against my Learning Agreement, i.e., what courses to take and how they would be recognized at UHH once I was back.

Since I owned a Chinese passport, I did not need a visa to enter the country. A health insurance was also not required. International students are however asked to have both before departure, and Fudan is normally ready to help in case one needed any information or paper. The host university was indeed pretty efficient in terms of replies to emails and sending out all the necessary documents. I received my admission letter in November 2022 for the Summer Semester 2023, which lasted from 12th February to 24th June 2023. December 2022 they also provided me with an information package (which I received though the International Office at UHH) containing semester dates, accommodation suggestions, courses selection period, etc., which was very helpful.

My flight to China was booked for the end of January 2023, around two weeks before the semester started in order to allow enough time to finish the quarantine which all people entering China were supposed to do. Luckily, this restriction was cancelled in December 2022, shortly before departure, but

instead of rebooking the flight (which would have caused additional costs) I decided to keep the initial ticket and spent that time with my family in China. The flight was direct from Frankfurt to Shanghai and costed 1400€ because it was bought during Covid times (a normal price for a one-way ticket to Shanghai would range from 400€ to 700€).

Once I was in Shanghai I was picked up by my family. Therefore, I did not need to use public transport on my own, and the following information is just for reference. The way from Pudong Airport (which is where generally international flights land) to the university is quite long and takes around an hour by public transport. Otherwise, there is the option of getting a taxi for around 150RMB (20€), which also takes around 50 minutes. In this case it would be best to have some cash ready in order to pay the driver. In China there is almost no one using cash anymore: everyone pays and received payment through Wechat or Alipay. It is therefore important to get a bank account as soon as you are there.

Finanzierung des Auslandsaufenthalts/Kosten vor Ort

For my study abroad, I applied for the Hamburgglobal funding and was able to receive a monthly financial support from UHH. The application was done during the October round 2022 over the platform Service4mobility and the entire process was pretty smooth. Whenever I needed, the Hamburgglobal team was there to support me with additional information either via email or via phone. What I found particularly helpful was the “Gruppenberatung” session they offered in March 2022, where students could talk directly to the people working in the office and clarify any doubt about the application to the funding program.

Besides the 450€/month which I received from UHH, I covered the rest of my expenses thanks to my parents' support.

In terms of living costs while studying abroad, I must admit that it was more expensive than expected. My biggest monthly expense was accommodation, followed by food and money for travelling. As a student, I barely cooked in my apartment because canteens, restaurants and delivery options are so many and easily accessible that I was eating out every day or ordering food. Even though each meal cost way less than in Germany, everything added up at the end of the month. The same went for taxis: despite being way more affordable than in Europe, I restrained myself from using them all the time. On top of that, costs for trips were also a big part of my expenses over the semester abroad. Short trips to nearby cities were not pricey, but a longer one which includes flights and travelling for more than a couple of days, that ended up being a large expense at the end of the month. The first month was also harder because of all the things I needed to buy for my apartment, as for example hangers, plates, cleaning appliances, etc.

In order to save some money while eating out there is the chance to use Apps such as 大众点评 or 美团. They either offer vouchers or menu sets at a cheaper price than if you order from the normal menu. Plane and train tickets are instead more or less the same price in every app.

Unterbringung und Verpflegung

For the time I was at Fudan, the university did not offer accommodation to exchange students. I am not sure if this decision was due to Covid or to the fact that one dorm building was under renovation, so rooms were not enough for us. Nevertheless, we all had to look for our own accommodation, and rent in Shanghai is high. I lived in a one room-apartment which was five minutes from the campus and was paying 5990RMB/month (around 750€). Electricity and water bills were not included; deposit was a one-month rent. Apartment hunt was however pretty easy and quick: my family and I drove to Shanghai one day before the semester started, visited a couple of options which we found on the internet and were able to sign the contract the same day.

As far as I know, exchange students do however normally get a room in the student accommodation on campus (specifically, in the north campus, 北区). Rent would end up being way cheaper this way, supposedly around 1200RMB (151€) a month. Application needs to be completed over a specific

website within a certain period, but the exact procedure is unknown to me given that we were not offered this option. The Incoming Office at Fudan normally sends out an email containing all relevant information and is however happy to help in case more information is needed.

The university had five canteens only in Handan campus (北食, 旦苑, 南苑, 南小食, 南食) and food was relatively cheap. For a single meal, I used to pay around 20RMB (2,8€). Canteens normally also come with a bakery where it is possible to get drinks, bread and sweets. Opening times are however quite early: lunch time would be from 10:30 to 13:00, while dinner was served from 16:30 to 19:00. Some canteens also offered breakfast and supper in the late evening. Canteens were normally only open to students and university staff, as we needed to use our student card to pay. I used to top up the amount on the card using the university app on Wechat.

If I wanted to eat out, there were also a lot of other options around the campus which I could take into account. Close to the main campus there was the University Road (大学路) which was full of restaurants, cafés and bars. A little bit further there was 五角场, where there are several malls with a lot of shops and restaurants. Price in those places was however quite high in comparison to school offers (for a single meal I would expect to be paying from 70RMB to 100RMB, i.e., around 10-12€). Besides proper restaurants, there were also tons of snack bars and bistros around the campus area where it was possible to get simple food at a low price. Another option for those days when I did not want to leave my room was ordering food to my place, which normally took half an hour to one hour to get delivered and was quite affordable.

Gasthochschule/Gastinstitution

Fudan University had different campuses around the city, but exchange students were normally in Handan (邯郸), located in Yangpu district, north-east of Shanghai. Overall, it was a well-organized institution which had everything you needed within the campus walls. Apart from teaching buildings, offices and canteens, every campus also had small supermarkets, libraries, coffee shops and sport halls/courts. There was also a building where to practice music in the East Dorm (东区).

At the beginning of the semester the campus was only accessible to students, professors and other university staff as we all needed to scan out university card to get in. At every gate there were security guards who made sure those who entered are part of the university. However, as Covid rules loosened, all universities in China open their doors to visitors as well. After May, it became thus common to find groups of young students or families coming to Fudan to visit.

Ablauf des Studiums (z.B. Kurswahl, Anforderungen)/Praktikums/ Forschungsaufenthalts etc.

Shortly before the semester officially started, we had an orientation day where they explained us everything important that we needed to know for the semester including university facilities, course registration, things to pay attention to, etc. Within the first week we were also supposed to complete our registration by accessing the university Wi-Fi and uploading our passport picture on a specific portal. The apartment where I was staying also demanded me to communicate to the police about my stay in Shanghai, which I did via filling in an online form.

As I was living close to campus, I either walked or biked to class. On foot, it would take me 15 minutes to get to the teaching buildings in the south campus (南区), and half an hour to get to the north campus (北区). By bike, it was way quicker: 5 minutes to the south one and 10 minutes to the north one. To get from one campus to another (e.g., from Handan to Jiangwan) there were buses departing every half an hour from the university (the bus stop was inside the main campus, next to the library). As I was going to Jiangwan pretty often to play badminton, I mostly took public transport (metro + shared bike) to get there.

In Handan there were mainly two libraries: one on the main campus and one on the south campus, where it was possible to study and lend books. Other places which I found nice to study or do homework were the Asian Youth center in the north campus, the coffee shop on the 30th floor at

Guanghua Tower, or empty classrooms in teaching buildings. Personally, I liked very much going to the East Building of the Shanghai Library (上海图书馆-东馆), which was half an hour from the campus by public transport, but which offered a really good studying atmosphere. The building was quite new and very beautiful (worth a visit even without staying longer for studying). In order to secure a spot, I usually booked a seat for me some days in advance over Wechat.

As long as courses are concerned, as a General Advanced Student, I was free to choose from all courses from all faculties at Fudan. Since I did not need any more ECTS to complete my studies at UHH, I signed up only for courses which I was truly interested in and had less pressure than other students in this area. Generally speaking, English courses are not many at Fudan. However, I was able to attend some courses in Chinese and ask the teacher to let me write my final exam in English, which was very helpful. Registration for courses happen in three rounds. During the first round from February 20th to March 4th, we could sign up for all the courses we wanted to take and if we realized it was not for us after attending the first class, we could also drop them. The second round (March 4th – March 6th) was instead supposed to be only for those who wanted to add new courses into their curriculum. There was no chance of dropping courses anymore during this phase. The last chance to drop a course was during the mid-term period. From April 12th to April 20th, there was the possibility to drop courses upon payment of a fee (300RMB/credit point). Since most courses are worth 2-3 ECTS (or even more), it is not recommended to drop them at this point of the semester since it can turn out pretty expensive.

Overall, courses at Fudan were not easy. As one of the best universities in China, the people who get into this university belong to the top of their province, and classes are tailored to address this type of students. As an exchange student, however, teachers are less demanding towards us and understanding of the fact that we come from a different background. In case of need, I could contact them via email or talk to them at the end of the class. Sometimes I would even text the teacher privately on Wechat for any organizational question such as communication of my absence or questions regarding exams, etc. In fact, at the beginning of the semester each course would normally create a Wechat group with all the students and teachers, so to make communication easier and more efficient.

Each teaching unit lasted for 45 minutes, followed by a 10- or 15-minutes break. One class would normally encompass two to three teaching units, but there were also courses which implied 4 or 5 teaching units per week on the basis of how many credit points they were worth. From 12:30 to 13:30 and from 18:00 to 18:30 there were no class, as to allow students to get lunch/dinner. The first teaching unit starts at 8am and the last one ends at 9pm. The break allows the students to have enough time to travel from one side of the campus to another. My courses were mainly in Building Five (第五教学楼) and Building Six (第六教学楼), which are the one next to the other, so I personally did not have to travel much.

Beyond classes from different faculties, Fudan also had Chinese language courses for those who wanted to learn the language. The offer ranged from basic to advanced Chinese; some courses were general and included grammar, writing, listening, reading and speaking, while others were more specific and focused on only one of those aspects. I did not take any language course because I did not find any which was suitable for my level and competencies.

Lastly, exams were of different type according to the major. Most courses had written exams at the end of the semester, which could be either closed or open book. Some other courses required students to write a final essay or report. It was also usual that students had to prepare presentations on a specific topic over the course of the semester, and the performance would be counted in the final grade of the course. For many courses the professors would also plan group works, which could be either freely created or assigned by the TA (teaching assistant). Homework was also very common for most courses.

Alltag/Freizeitmöglichkeiten

Shanghai offered a list of entertainment options for my free time. Discovering the city itself was one of them given the many and diverse neighborhoods. As one of the biggest cities in China, there were

concerts, musicals, operas, and events of various kind taking place every week. Museums were also an option for those moments when I wanted to spend time indoors discovering more about art. Local Chinese people liked to go to restaurants and check out dishes from different cultures and places. Disneyland is also a big attraction in Shanghai, and it is easy to reach by metro. In terms of travelling options, there were a few cities around Shanghai which were worth visiting: Hangzhou, Suzhou, Nanjing.

Fudan itself was also full of things to do. The university had different clubs, which every now and then organized events for which students could sign up, on top of the regular courses one could attend throughout the whole semester. For example, some of the events I signed up for were: a volleyball course for beginners, a tennis course for beginners, a basketball match (as spectator), a climbing experience, a singing competition (as spectator), music nights on the rooftop of the Asian Youth Center in the north campus, a couple of guest lectures by well-known Chinese and International professors and/or experts on current topics, etc. On top of that, I also took part in a trip organized by the 复旦登山协会 that implied hiking for three days in an area which was 6 hours away from Shanghai by bus. For those who like outdoor activities, this club had trips planned every week, both within China and abroad, which lasted from a couple of days to a week/10 days.

In terms of job opportunities, I have not taken any because of lack of time, but a lot of local students are tutoring lower-grade students in order to earn some extra money during their free time. I have barely heard of anyone working in bars or restaurants. Most of them are actually full-time students since the workload at Fudan is pretty heavy and it requires them to be on campus most of the time. Internships were also not an option since they were normally full-time and would be possible only during semester breaks or for those who are almost done with their studies and do not need to take any course anymore.

Public transport was pretty efficient in the city. Metro stations required me to go through security checks every time I wanted to board, but that did not generally take long. There was no such thing as monthly abonnement for public transport and in Shanghai I simply scanned my transport card (which was virtual on your phone) whenever I got in the station and got out. The amount was automatically deducted from my Alipay/bank account. For buses I needed to scan my card only when I hopped on and all trips cost 2RMB (around 28 cents). However, buses were not very efficient because of the traffic jams which were persistent in Shanghai throughout the whole day. I barely took any bus over the course of the semester. Taking the bike was instead a good option for me for shorter distances or within the campus. There were different providers of shared bikes, and it was extremely easy to find them around campus or in the city in general. The monthly card costed around 15RMB (2€) and allowed me to take the bike for up to a couple of hours. When I needed to use the bike, I scanned their QR code with either Alipay or Wechat and the bike was unlocked from the app. A lot of students also used electric scooters to get around, but I did not want to buy one, so I never considered that option. Lastly, when travel distances were quite long and public transport were not available (metros stopped working at around 11pm, therefore during the night I needed to find another way of getting around), taking the taxi was the best alternative. As already mentioned, taxis were quite affordable all over China and there were different platforms offering the service.

As I was in Shanghai from February to beginning of July, I experienced both winter and summer. The winter is bearable and not extremely cold. However, when temperature rises in the summer and reaches over 30°C, it feels way hotter because of the high humidity.

Zusammenfassung

All in all, the semester at Fudan was a great experience. I was able to live in a completely different environment and get to know better a whole different culture. I am Chinese of origin, but brought up in Italy, so I knew a little how the Chinese system and mentality worked, however I was never able to get to experience it in first person. Thanks to this chance of spending 5 months there, I realized how different and fascinating it is. Living so far away from my normal reality also made me more independent and capable of facing new challenges.

As all the courses I took at Fudan were not inherently from the School of Economics, I was able to learn a lot of different things, which is normally not the case when you start attending university and would rather focus on one specific subject. I thus had the possibility to take some additional language courses (French and Korean), learn more about climate change from a meteorological perspective and dive deep into product design and development. More importantly, it was interesting to work in an international context and improve my intercultural cooperation skills.

Culture shock was less evident for me for obvious reasons, and I was able to get on well with both local and international students. The university was also very organized and prompt to help in case I needed assistance or had doubts about anything. I appreciated that they were able to reply to my emails or messages very quickly.

The only drawback of my semester in China was related to health issues. I visited the hospital twice because of gastroenteritis, once because of allergy and another time because of a bike accident. None of them were serious illnesses but it was clearly not pleasant to be so often at the hospital. The good side of hospitals in China is that they are very efficient and everything works quite well so that it is quick to get treated (especially in emergency); however, they are always very crowded and personnel may not be nice and patient all the time.

The semester flew and in a blink of eye it was already time for me to come back to Germany, but I am really grateful for the chance I was given. I have to admit that sometimes things were easier for me because I could understand the language quite well, but I know people who do not speak Chinese and still managed to find their way around and ended up having an amazing time. Overall, I am very satisfied with my experience as exchange student at Fudan and would recommend it.

Fotos/weitere Anhänge (Fotos bitte beschriften)



Picture 1: Shanghai Library – East Building 上海图书馆-东馆. Picture 2: Sunset in Shanghai



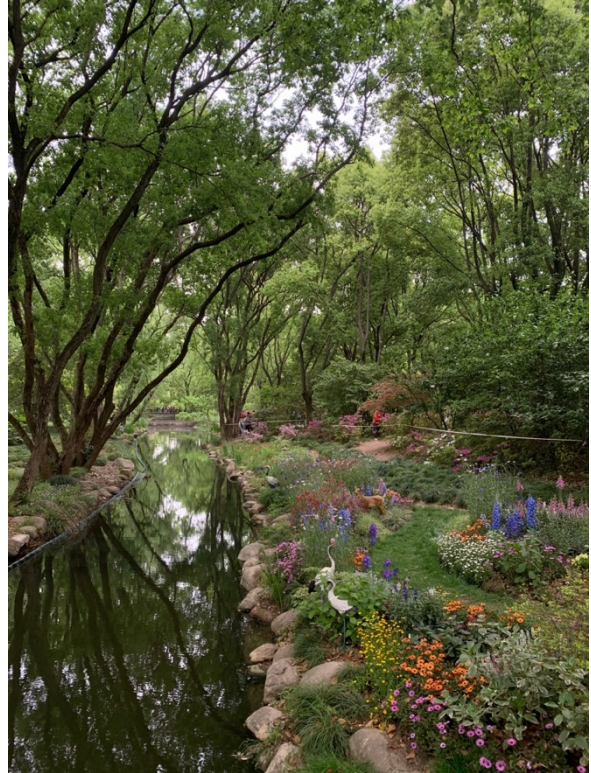
Picture 3: The Bund (外滩) at night



Picture 4: Landscape of the trekking tour taken with the Trekking Club in Fudan (复旦登山协会)



Picture 5: View of Shanghai from the east side of the river, more precisely from the Pudong Art Museum (浦东美术馆)



Picture 6: Gongqing Forest Park (共青国家森林公园), North of Shanghai



Picture 7: Guanghua Tower, emblematic building of the Fudan University



Picture 8: Building of the Law Faculty on Jiangwan Campus