

Persönliche Angaben	
Name	Catalina Villa Melendez
Alter	28
Fachbereich	Produkt Gestaltung
Fachsemester zur Zeit des Auslandsaufenthaltes	10
Gasthochschule	Tongji University, D&I
Land, Stadt	VR China, Shanghai
Aufenthalt von/bis	15 Februar – 17 September

1. Welche Formalitäten mussten erledigt werden? (vor der Abreise, Einschreibung, Versicherung, Papiere)

The paperwork that had to be filled/written to apply was easy to get, and the contents were clear. Dagmar was really helpful explaining us all the requirements.

A visa is required to enter China, but it is also easy to obtain directly at the Chinese Visa Center in Frankfurt.

It is mandatory to have insurance, but the Tongji University also requires us to pay an extra one (that part wasn't clear, we never got a card for that)

2. War es schwer, eine Wohnung zu finden? (Wohnheim oder Privat, Kosten, Qualität, Tipps)

In our case it was really easy to find an apartment, we signed a contract 2 days after arriving. We lived in a nice compound (with 40 Buildings, each one with 32 floors!!!) that was not in the hip part of town, but was relatively new and well connected. For a 2 bedroom apartment we paid around 1200 Euros (with TV, Internet and one cleaning lady that came every week). However, the utilities weren't included and were sometimes expensive, especially electricity.

3. Wie schätzt Du das Lehrangebot, die Kurswahl und die fachliche Betreuung an der Gasthochschule ein? Gibt es Pflichtveranstaltungen? Einführungsveranstaltungen?

I'm very satisfied with the courses from D&I, and think they are useful for HfG students since they are focused on a completely different side of Design that is not offered at the HfG. That said, I think professors should learn how to manage the expectations, since some of the promises made by them at the beginning of the courses were lately ignored, and some of the courses extended for more than a month and required far more work than they should have (compared to the amount of credit points given). Specially one professor demanded us to cancel some of our other classes and activities to take part on hers (even if the course was over for longer than a month) and threatened with failing us if we didn't showed up.

There was one introduction session one week before starting the courses with really useful material regarding courses and general information about the courses.

4. Dauer/Umfang einer Lehrveranstaltung? Wie viele Wochenstunden hat man im Schnitt?

Each course should take around one month to be completed, with around 8 weekly hours of class. However, as I mentioned before the 4 weeks were respected just by one of our professors who did know how to manage the time. The others weren't organized at all.

5. Vergleiche das Kursangebot der Gasthochschule mit dem der HfG:

During our stay at D&I we only had the chance to design one physical product, the rest of the classes focused more on the intangible, and product and service system design, which got us lost sometimes. However, this was really interesting. Other courses focused more on business, start-up creation and generation of ideas.

6. Wurden spezielle Kurse für Gaststudierende angeboten bzw. gibt es Beschränkungen?

Mostly all of the courses we took part in were specially designed for exchange students and the chinese students preparing themselves to go abroad.

7. Werden Sportkurse/sonstiges Kulturprogramm angeboten?

Yes, some sportcourses were offered (including ethnic sports) and the sport infrastructure from the university is really complete. Other programs related to Chinese culture and history were also offered.

8. Welchen Eindruck hattest du von den Werkstätten/EDV-und Bibliotheksausstattung?

The workshops are big and complete, but the Shifus (persons in charge of the workshop) did not speak any English and it was really hard to communicate with them. The library was really nice and also complete and up to date.

9. Wie und wann erhieltst Du konkrete Informationen über den Lehrplan der Gasthochschule?

I got some information before our trip, but it was limited. During the introduction session more complete information was given, but the final schedule changed during the whole semester.

10. Welche Kurse hast Du an der Gasthochschule belegt? (kurze Bewertung)

Parametric Design: Which is not really parametric design, it was 3d modelling. We designed and 3d printed a lamp. Professor Steven Ma knows how to sell himself, but he was really busy and his assistants ended up teaching the class. Mostly all the plans he had for our designs did not happen (he needs to manage the expectations)

Experience Design The purpose was to design an unified user experience at the Shanghai Museum and the Cleveland museum of art. Kaja Tooming Buchanan gave us some useful tools for design research, however we never learned how to design an experience, since she left before the course was over. This completely changed the structured of the course which extended more than a month from what was stated at first. This was the most exhausting and stressful academic experience of my life.

Garden Factory: This is the class giving more credit points. We designed an event related to urban farming were we thought the community around the campus about that subject. It was really interesting and a great experience to work with the Italian professor Davide Fassi. Very well organized and conscientious of the time limits of the course.

Data Visualization: We learned how to obtain data, but the visualization part wasn't really the strong point of this course. This course also extended 2 weeks.

Culture and Innovation: This class from the Sino Finish Center seamed at the beginning to be extremely inspiring. It was, however it was badly structured and the professor did not really prepare the courses, felt improvised.

Creative Entrepreneurship: A simple and straightforward course, we got what was promised at the beginning, so it was satisfying. We did a business plan for a start-up.

Chinese History and Culture: I was excited about this course, but lost all interest since the professors never managed to get our interest. Even if it was well structured, the information wasn't clear at all (language barrier maybe)

Wofür bekommt man Credits? Art und Anforderung der Leistungsnachweise?
Credits are given for attendance and performance.

11. Wird ECTS angewandt? Wenn nein, welches Bewertungssystem gibt es an der Gasthochschule (Umrechnungsfaktor)?

Yes

12. Sind die Professoren auch außerhalb der Veranstaltungen hilfsbereit?

Some of them are always at D&I, others are just guest-professors

13. Welche Projekte (in den besuchten Kursen/während eines Praktikums) hast Du im Rahmen deines Auslandssemesters durchgeführt?

Design of a lamp for 3d printing / Shared experience between the Shanghai Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art / Bee-In: a shelter for pollinators / #HOWTRUMP: Data Story and visualization about Donald Trump and Social Media in China and the US.

14. Erläutere den Innovationsgehalt deiner vor Ort hergestellten Arbeiten:

I started to look at projects from a different point of view, more general and complete, offering a broader product that goes beyond the tangible.

15. Wie schätzt Du die Umsetzungs- und Transfermöglichkeiten Deiner Arbeiten/Lernergebnisse ein?

Some of the projects developed at D&I gave me a clear direction for my Diplom, which is going to be oriented to the creation of my own business.

16. Hattest du die Möglichkeit Deine Arbeiten zu präsentieren – z.B. Ausstellungen, Konferenzen, Workshops etc.?

We had a presentation with the leadership of the Shanghai Museum (Experience Design), one exhibition at D&I (Data) and one Prototyping workshop also at D&I. I also took part and came third on a Drama Competition playing "The Happy Prince" from Oscar Wilde.

17. Konntest Du während Deines Auslandsaufenthalts mit anderen Einrichtungen/Firmen Kontakte knüpfen?

Many people from different companies visited D&I with the purpose of finding students to work for/with them.

18. Worin siehst Du persönlich die besondere Qualität der Gasthochschule?

- _ Well known university
- _ Guest professors coming from other universities/institutions to teach
- _ Focus on Product Service System design

19. Für wen ist Deiner Meinung nach ein Auslandssemester an dieser Gasthochschule sinnvoll?

For Product Design students that:

- _ are interested in Product Service System Design and Entrepreneurship.
- _ are interested in learning about other disciplines.
- _ won't feel disappointed if they don't design products during that semester.
- _ can work in intercultural groups
- _ are interested in China

20. Inwieweit kannst Du die dort erworbenen Fähigkeiten/ Erfahrungen im HfG-Alltag anwenden?

I would like to use them for my Diplom, and the Product Service System Design and Research tools are useful to find solutions in a different way as the one thought at the HfG

21. Was kannst Du über das Land/die Stadt sagen?

I visited China and Shanghai before, but this time I can see it with other eyes. The city is very active and there is everything you can imagine. But if what people are looking is the traditional Chinese experience it is not the city for them. I like it though, **even if it is too western.**
It is interesting to see how people behave, how they live, etc.

22. In welcher Sprache wurde unterrichtet, wie bist Du damit zurechtgekommen?

Gibt es während der Vorlesungszeit studienbegleitende Sprachkurse an der Hochschule?

All the classes were in English, it was ok. Chinese language courses were also offered.

23. Wie waren die Lebenshaltungskosten im Vergleich zu Offenbach?

I live in Frankfurt, and I can say that the prices are similar, been Shanghai a little more expensive regarding food and drinks.

24. Hast Du den Zuschuss für künstlerisches Verbrauchsmaterial in Anspruch genommen? Wenn ja in welcher Höhe und für welche Anschaffungen:

No, I forgot to send the first receipts for markers and paper, and the printing costs were cover almost entirely by Tongji University.

25. Hast Du Verbesserungsvorschläge in Bezug auf Betreuung und Organisation an der HfG?

No, but I would try to focus the Shanghai program more to PG students, and the Beijing program to VK students, since it would be more interesting for them.

26. Fazit (beste und schlechteste Erfahrung, Wertung, Kritik, Schwierigkeiten, Tipps für nachfolgende HfG-Studierende)

When I decided to go to Shanghai I was thinking it was going to be really chill and relaxed... at least that was what all the previous exchange students told me before. However, it wasn't like that... the time required by the courses was way higher than expected. I think that the curriculum got restructured. Still, this was a really enriching experience and I am happy I took the chance (risk?) to do the exchange semester.

It was refreshing to see design from a different point of view, learn new tools, techniques and approaches. However, the most interesting part was dealing with people from other cultures, not only with the Chinese students, but also with the other Europeans. These last months has been a constant reflection of who I am, why I do the things I do, why I think the way I do, and so on.

The most difficult part was working in groups and dealing with the Chinese way of doing things. We sometimes forget that our way is not the only, or the best, is just a different one. At first the culture shock hits hard, but when you get used to all the burping, slurping and spitting and you get learn a little bit more about how Chinese think it gets really interesting.

I would suggest future students to stay in China longer and do not leave once the courses are over, that is missing the fun part! Keep an open mind and embrace all the differences and chaos. They will be missed back in Germany.