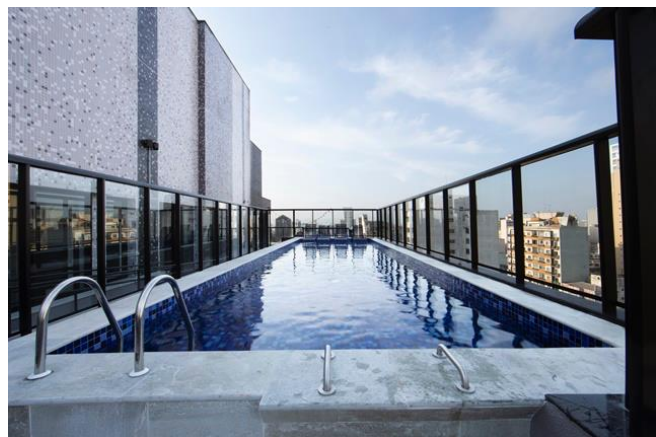




Experience Report Exchange Semester
MGPI Program at FGV EASEP Sao Paulo
Autumn Semester 2021
Samira John



1. Application phase

The TUM SOMex "Going Abroad" web page provides you with all relevant information. Make sure to be prepared beforehand to be able to meet all necessary language requirements. The Application phase starts at least half a year before the intended stay abroad (for TUM Exchange even earlier!). For graduate students that means that you must receive all necessary certificates within the first months of your first semester. I already did an Erasmus exchange as an undergraduate and therefore wanted to leave Europe for my second semester abroad. My main intention was to experience a stronger cultural difference and hoped for a more diverse group of internationals. For meeting the language requirements, I did the free English DAAD certificate test and a Portuguese A1 course at the TUM Language Center. Be aware that you do not have to receive a certain level for going to Brazil, making it possible to receive a certificate of participation even before the final exam (and its grading period).

After being accepted, both, TUM's and FGV's International Office provided all required steps and offered several networking events with former and fellow students. That was helpful specially to clarify questions regarding the pandemic situation, housing, and credit recognition. Keep in mind that the Brazilian semester starts earlier and therefore, overlaps with the German semester. Good options are applying for a leave of absence and take some time to explore the country beforehand or, how I did it, focusing on seminars or courses that tend to have an early exam. I also saved the electives for the semester abroad to simplify and ensure recognition.

Together with the acceptance letter of FGV, I received information regarding the registration to the online system and courses, the language course, health insurance and the student visa. For all those aspects the responsables of FGV are very obliging and actively support us with our requests. There was no need for hesitating to ask them for help!

2. Visa

For me the Visa application process was quick and easy. I am convinced that this was also due to the low workload at the consulate in Munich at that time, as the situation in Brazil was still rather tense regarding the pandemic and the differing application process due to the situation in Germany. To make sure to hand in the correct documents I contacted them via email several times and always received an answer within the same day. After sending the documents on a Friday, I received them and the visa already on Tuesday. Also, except the costs for gathering the required documents and for the postal service, the student visa was for free and covered the whole period of stay.

Nevertheless, I would recommend starting to prepare the visa right after receiving the acceptance letter and additional information from FGV to make sure to have all required documents. For the application it was necessary to book both, the outbound and the return flight beforehand. I decided for a flexible ticket for the return flight and in the end extended my stay.

3. Arrival

The international office at FGV created a Whatsapp group before my stay, through which I got in touch with other exchange students. Here I was also recommended an accommodation and moved in there with a Belgian girl. I lived in a house with 9 roommates in Vila Madalena. In addition, there were two other houses in the neighborhood, so I quickly made friends from the beginning, not only with students from other universities, but also with working internationals and Brazilians.

I liked the neighborhood very much. Vila Madalena is one of the safer neighborhoods and is called "Brazilian San Francisco" by Brazilians because of its smaller houses and many hills. There are many cute cafes and stores here and for going out people meet there to a large extent. If you look for an Airbnb or other flat I can recommend you to look in the following neighborhoods: Vila Madalena, Pinheiros and Itaim Bibi. However, I would not recommend my accommodation here because it was in a very bad condition.

Therefore, I decided to move afterwards to Share Consolaço. It is a modern student housing which offers 4 different types of rooms, I shared the apartment with two friends from my first accommodation. Even though the neighborhood is not very nice, I enjoyed my time there a lot which was mainly due to the cool mix of international and Brazilian students. Lots of my fellow students were living there. It was common to get predrinks on the rooftop and the studyroom as well as the gym were especially valuable to meet people in the online teaching environment. We also loved to spend our lunch breaks at the pool on the rooftop! More information can be found on the website (<https://sharesl.com.br/consolacao/>). Feel free to reach directly out to them through Whatsapp, which is one of the most used communication channels in Brazil.

Once you arrive in Brazil, you must also report to the Federal Police within the first three months to officially register. You will receive all the necessary information from the university. Otherwise, it is always helpful to get in contact with other exchange students. The process was again very uncomplicated for me. Nevertheless, you should not postpone the whole thing for too long.

4. Academics

The FGV-EAESP is a very well renominated private university in Brazil and a lot of current business leaders in Brazil have a background from this university. The campus of the business school is located very close to the famous Avenida Paulista, however, the campus itself is nothing special. In general, compared to the TUM, classes are more interactive and there is more personal interaction with the professor. Usually, the final grade is composed of multiple deliverables which contributes the workload over the semester. But it can be said, that the workload as well as the level of the class is lower than at the HSG, and very good grades can be achieved.

The semester is split in 2 modules and per each module a maximum of three classes can be chosen from the MGPI program. Since the number of classes offered by the MGPI program is limited, I recommend planning well and being in contact with the accreditation office.

Consumer Success Management (Module 1)

Professor	Carlos Eduardo Lourenço
Credits	6 ECTS
Crediting	Independent Electives
Grading	30% Group Assignment (presented separately) 10% Quizzes 40% Paper / Case Presentation 20% Individual Final Exam
Description	Super approachable professor who wants to spark interest in Customer Success Management and builds his lessons on actual cases to do so. With an extensive background in marketing from previous studies, the module unfortunately does not bring too much added value in terms of content.

Corporate Finance (Module 1)

Professor	Rafael Schiozer
Credits	6 ECTS
Crediting	Independent Electives
Grading	25% Quizzes 30% Case Studies 10% Class Participation 35% Final Exam
Description	Very basic class about Corporate Finance. While all the concepts covered in class were already familiar due to my undergraduate background, the case studies were an interesting application which also sometimes required more advance knowledge. The Harvard Business cases required some basic modelling, why I can still recommend this class. The professor was competent and engaged, and informal discussions with him were interesting.

Brazilian Economy (Module 2)

Professor	Antonio Carlos Manfredini da C. Oliveira
Credits	6 ECTS
Crediting	Independent Electives
Grading	30% Group term essay 15% Group presentation 55% Final Exam
Description	Actually, a very interesting class which is unfortunately taught very poorly (might be different in presence lectures, but highly doubt that). Very conservative professor, who is oversimplifying and generalizing concepts, which makes it almost impossible to follow the class. I stopped following the class and instead did some recommended readings which were quite interesting. Very untransparent and arbitrary grading system. Not recommended.

International Economic and Emerging Markets (Module 2)

Professor	Julia von Maltzan
Credits	6 ECTS
Crediting	Independent Electives
Grading	20% Class participation 20% Country Outlook 30% Business Project 30% Final Exam
Description	A very interesting class taking the current business environment into consideration, taught by a competent and sympathic professor. A lot of macroeconomic discussions in the context of emerging countries which were very enriching and interactive. The class requires a higher level of involvement and participation; however, it is definitely worth it. Highly recommended.

Agile Project Management (Module 2)

Professor	Fernando Coelho Martins Ferreira
Credits	6 ECTS

Crediting	Independent Electives
Grading	30% Team engagement 30% Mid Term Exam (Project Presentation) 40% Final Exam (Project Presentation)
Description	In the module, theoretical approaches are discussed briefly and then put directly into practice. To do this, you have to develop your own product/service in a team using an agile approach. It was very exciting to reflect on our own work progress and to compare it with that of the other teams. In addition, there were some really good ideas among the teams. In addition, the module made it clear which problems can also arise later in the working world when it comes to the development of a product/service. As a result, however, the grade unfortunately also depends on the group members. All in all, one should not expect too much added value in terms of content. Compared to the more theoretically oriented modules at TUM, however, this is a nice change.

5. Living in Brazil

Transport: I did always use Uber, however there are also other applications (like 99). I can also recommend the Metro, it's working very well and especially during rush hour it's a lot faster. For longer distance travelling there is a quite well established bus system (<https://www.clickbus.com.br>) and inland flights are also a valid alternative, especially when booked in advance they are not so expensive.

Party: Samba, Cachaça and Funk will be an integral part of your exchange experience and you will feel the joy of life of Brazilians. Mostly I went out to Pinheiros, Vila Madalena, Bela Vista and Rua Augusta. All range from bars with live music and dance floor to real clubs. Also, I really liked the fact that everything is designed very open and a lot of party takes place on the street! Sao Paulo offers the whole ranges from rather alternative spots (e.g. Kingston) to chic bars and clubs (e.g. Trabuca Bar, Galeria) with all kinds of music. Whereby you will definitely pass funk.. Due to Covid I did not end up too often in clubs since they were closed at some points in time, but there are definitely valid options as well.

Lifestyle: Thanks to the online semester, I had many opportunities to explore not only Sao Paulo. Sao Paulo is great for everyday life, but there is still so much to see in Brazil that you are drawn out more often. Therefore, I spent the first half of the semester virtually everywhere in Brazil. In the second half, we had more and more opportunities to attend lectures on campus. The gym, cafeteria, sushi bar, etc. were still closed. Nevertheless, there was a fancy prom party and huge university parties in the second half of the semester. We also got more in touch with the Brazilian students and did a lot of things together in Sao Paulo or on weekends.

Safety: Don't feel scared because of all the things you heard. If you stick to some basic rules and if you apply some common knowledge, you will be safe. The risk of pickpocketing remains. It therefore makes sense to take a replacement cell phone with you (brands that you know here are much more expensive there). In addition, I would recommend especially in the first few days to quickly seek contact with people who have lived in Sao Paulo for a while and know where you should be careful. Basically, however, I have done well with the method of observing others as they behave on the street and adapt to it.

Overall, I can highly recommend you to go to Brazil! The frustration which you might experience in the beginning will quickly fade away and with time you will develop some kind of love for Brazil! In case of any questions, feel free to reach out to me through LinkedIn or Mail!

