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Study Abroad Goes Hybrid

Some 90 exchange students have kicked off their semester abroad at the HWR Berlin this September. Their study-abroad adventure features a mixture of online and in-person activities.

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You might think that international exchange would have ground to a halt during a global pandemic, but for some 90 exchange students who have started their exchange semester at the HWR Berlin this September, COVID-19 didn't stop them embarking on their study abroad adventure.

The 90 students from 20 different countries all hail from the HWR Berlin's extensive network of international partner universities and will study at the HWR Berlin for either one or two semesters. The majority of students have now arrived in Berlin, with some arriving later and some choosing to follow online courses from their home country.

The students' international experience kicked off on September 7th with an online orientation programme. Students joined several online events hosted by the HWR Berlin's International Office aimed at preparing them for their studies and life in Berlin. Aside from receiving practical information, the exchange students also had plenty of opportunities to connect with one another both virtually and in person. This semester's specially-designed activity programme featured virtual hang-outs and in-person boat tour and museum visits. This cohort due to its smaller size and the current circumstances seems to have bonded quickly and students are taking advantage of all the opportunities they have to connect with one another.

New channels of communication have also been set up so that students have ways to reach out to members of the International Office despite current restrictions regarding entry to the HWR Berlin's buildings. Students can attend virtual "Sprechstunden" or office hours via Big Blue Button and there is a weekly online coffee break session for students to check in informally with members of the International Office.

Exchange student Olivier from France reported that "the virtual Welcome Days were a useful framework for us to begin with and the in-person activities have offered great added value. I think the HWR Berlin is doing great in terms of adaptability." Of course student life is very different this semester and the thing that Olivier and his fellow exchange students miss most is enjoying a "nice coffee break together between classes!"

We wish Olivier and the rest of this year's cohort of international exchange students a fruitful semester and a great time in Berlin.

Partner Universities and Mobility

The HWR Berlin has built up an extensive network of partnerships with some 180 higher education institutions across the world. The foundation of these partnerships is regular international exchange between students, lecturers and



administration staff.

The DAAD's funding statement for 2019 reflects the HWR Berlin's flourishing international ties. The HWR Berlin ranks number one among all German schools of applied science for Erasmus+ funding. In Berlin the HWR Berlin also ranks number four amongst all of the city's universities and schools of applied science for Erasmus+ funding and is number one recipient amongst Berlin's schools of applied science for the DAAD's combined funding for 2019.