

# GIESSEN 2018 - Expedition Report

The QMUL expedition fund allowed me to take part in a one-month long internship in a hospital in Giessen, Germany this August as part of the International Federation Medical Student Association (IFMSA) summer programme.

## Arrival

I arrived at the airport Frankfurt in the sweltering heat and was picked up by one of the LEO's, a semester 10 (fifth-year) medical student named Saskia. After a short drive we arrived in Giessen a small university town next to Frankfurt and Marburg. Saskia told me a little bit about the history of the town during the drive there, one of the facts was that the population of the town is almost 50% student due the three large universities situated in the town.

I met my roommates, Elke, Nina and Sebastian who offered to show me around the town and help me get acquainted with the cardiovascular team when I started the placement the next morning.

*Two of my roommates*



## Hospital work

Like most surgical placements, I had an early start each morning. Most days I stayed at the hospital from 7:30 until 4. Attending the morning meetings was extremely helpful because it wasn't just where tasks were delegated, the doctors and medical students kept up to date with research by taking it in turns to present a research paper each week. The staff at the hospital were very kind and helpful and seemed like a

very close-knit department. The anaesthetists explained all of the surgical procedures and demonstrated how to use the transoesophageal echo machine while the some of the surgeons taught me different types of sutures and basic surgical skills. After a few days of adjusting I was allowed to scrub in to some of the surgeries. I've had an interest in cardiology, but this placement allowed me to become familiar with the common cardiovascular procedures that I've learned about in previous years such as coronary artery bypass grafts, aneurysm repairs and a David's procedure which is a method of repairing the aortic valve while leaving the valve leaflets intact. In addition, I learned basic wound care while I was with the vascular team which is something I haven't had a chance to do here as there are usually nurse specialise in wound care here in the UK.

There were three other German medical students who were also doing a four-week placement within the department at the time. We took it in turns rotating between ward work and attending surgeries. I noticed that although the healthcare systems in the UK and Germany were similar, there were key differences. For instance, the final year students took on some roles that the FY1s would do here and in contrast to the large wards, patients were in smaller rooms. In this particular hospital, there weren't any phlebotomists which meant that the medical student were the ones who did most of the venepunctures, cannulas and examinations. All of the German medical students had to do a three-month internship with the nurses before they were allowed to progress on to their clinical years. I also found it interesting that in their system, doing a short summer internship was compulsory in their clinical years

During the weekends, the LEOs organised trips, which meant that we were able to visit other nearby cities. During my time in Germany, I got a chance to visit Marburg (right), Frankfurt, Berlin (top left) and St. Martin (bottom left)



I have learned so much this summer thanks to the expedition fund and have made friends who I will be sure to keep in contact with in years to come