

My exchange semester at Imperial College London

Right after the application process within Leibniz University, where I got my first choice for an ERASMUS stay, the pandemic started to affect all of our lives. As it was a completely new situation for everyone, the communication and planning with the exchange university in the UK was very unusual and uncertain for everyone, but still very positive and as optimistic as it could be. In the end I was able to start my stay abroad at Imperial College in London in November, a little later than originally planned. Due to the uncertain situation, I started planning my stay as late as possible. About a week before I left for London, I started applying for rooms. For the first three days, I stayed in a hotel and had a few room viewings near the campus. I found a suitable room quite quickly and moved in the next day.

The aim of my stay at Imperial College was to work on a research project in medicinal chemistry at the beautiful new White City campus in west London.



White City Campus - Molecular Sciences Research Hub (MSRH) Building

Unfortunately, the labs were only at 50% capacity during the first months of my stay, so I wasn't allowed to be on campus on every second week. In consequence I was not able to work much or meet many people from the research group. Additionally, due to the extremely bad pandemic situation during the winter months, I was forced to take a break in between where I could not return to the lab for more than 2 months, which

was the reason for extending my stay until the end of June (instead of end of April). In the last months, the capacity was slowly increased until it reached four days per week in the last month of my stay and I could finally get to know the whole group. During my exchange, I got an insight into the different working styles of the group members in the lab and acquired some new skills. Everyone was nice and helpful, so I was able to solve problems and challenges quickly. I also got better at working independently on a research topic so that I can apply this to my current work on my Master's thesis back at Leibniz University. In terms of communication, I not only improved my English, but also my confidence to speak it freely, which was one of my main goals. Furthermore, the laboratory report, which I also decided to write in English, improved my scientific writing skills and of course depend my knowledge about my research topic.

Although no group activities were allowed during my stay, I was able to connect with some of the other students and PhD students beyond chemistry.

In my free time I had a chance to explore the city while in lockdown and silence as well as post lockdown in a bit restricted way. The city is stunning, every borough has its own magic and is significantly different from others.



London by night.

I could make a big part of the exploration of London together with other students (not only from the Imperial College), that I got to know there. I am still happy about meeting this lovely people from all over the world. The mixture of our attitudes and cultures was always fun and we shared a lot of good experiences together. We also visited besides

a lot of different places in London, other cities like Cambridge, Oxford, Brighton, Bristol or Bath.



Daytrip to Oxford.

This experience abroad is certainly different from any other I had before. It was challenging due to the pandemic and therefore many restrictions during my stay, but I am still very glad that I was able to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity. Also, the fact that my studies are taking longer than planned, does not affect me negatively, when I think about what I got in return. I have developed and changed in a very positive and consciousness-opening way in the past few months and learned to see everything in a more positive light, even if not everything is going as planned. This is an experience that no one can take away from me. I have learned a lot and I am sure that I can only benefit from it in my future, be it professionally or personally.