

My Exchange Semester at the German Jordanian University

Hello, my name is Yahya Alfarahta, and I am currently studying Engineering and Management at Hochschule Merseburg in my fourth semester.

Before starting my exchange semester, I worked as a Buddy at the International Office of Hochschule Merseburg for two semesters. During this time, I supported international students arriving in Germany, helped them with their first steps at the university, and introduced them to German student life and culture. This experience had a strong impact on me and made me realize how valuable international exchange can be. After supporting international students in Germany as a Buddy, I wanted to experience an exchange semester myself — this time from a new academic and cultural perspective.

That was one of the main reasons why I started thinking seriously about doing an exchange semester. I wanted to experience what it feels like to live, study, and grow for a few months in another country, within a different university system, and in a new academic environment.

The International Office at Hochschule Merseburg provided strong support throughout this process. They helped me with the administrative steps, encouraged me personally, and also provided valuable organizational and financial support. For that, I am truly grateful.

In the end, I chose the German Jordanian University in Jordan. Looking back now, after almost four months, I can honestly say that it was one of the most valuable experiences of my studies so far.

I lived in Amman, the capital of Jordan, while my engineering campus was located in Madaba, around 30 to 40 minutes away. The university provides buses from different areas of Amman to the campus, which made the daily commute manageable. Most of my lectures took place in Building C, the engineering building, where I spent a large part of my semester.

The academic environment at GJU was international and supportive. The professors were cooperative and helpful, and the lectures and exams were held in English. In some situations, professors also explained certain points in Arabic when students needed additional clarification, but the main language of instruction and examination was English. This makes the university accessible for international students as well.

As an Arabic speaker, I personally did not face any language barriers in daily life. However, I also met German exchange students from other universities, and from what I experienced, they were also able to manage everyday life in Jordan quite well. Especially in Amman and in the university environment, English is widely used. The people I met were open, helpful, and willing to communicate with international students, which made daily life easier and more welcoming.

What made this semester special was not only the academic side, but also the overall experience of living in Jordan as a student. Although Jordanian and Palestinian cultures share many similarities, this exchange semester still gave me a new and valuable perspective. Living in Amman, studying at a different university system, meeting students from different backgrounds, and experiencing everyday life in Jordan in an academic context made this semester special in its own way.

Amman itself is a city with many different faces. East Amman, Downtown, and Jabal Amman show the older and more traditional side of the city, with historic streets, local markets, and a strong cultural atmosphere. West Amman, where I lived, is more modern and dynamic. I stayed near the 7th Circle, an area that is always active and full of restaurants, cafés, shops, and everyday life. The city offers a vibrant student life, with many places to eat, meet friends, and experience daily life in Jordan.

During my stay, I also had the opportunity to visit many of Jordan's most famous places. One of the highlights was the southern part of Jordan, especially Wadi Rum, Petra, and Aqaba. I would truly recommend spending several days there. Wadi Rum offers an unforgettable desert landscape, Petra is one of the most impressive historical places I have ever visited, and Aqaba gives a completely different atmosphere with the Red Sea, mountains, and a more relaxed coastal feeling.

I also visited other beautiful places in Jordan, including the Dead Sea and different areas around Amman. These experiences helped me understand how diverse Jordan really is. Within a few hours, you can experience a modern capital city, desert landscapes, ancient history, mountains, and the sea.

Beyond the academic experience, this semester helped me become more independent, adaptable, and open to new perspectives. It showed me how valuable it is to step out of a familiar environment, take responsibility for myself, and experience student life from a different perspective.

As my exchange semester comes to an end, I look back with gratitude on an experience that has enriched me both academically and personally. I am thankful to the International Office at Hochschule Merseburg for giving me this opportunity and supporting me throughout the process. I am thankful to the German Jordanian University and its professors for their continuous support. And I am thankful to Jordan and its people for their kindness, hospitality, and the way they welcome international students.

This exchange semester was more than just studying abroad. It was a chance to grow personally, experience student life from a new perspective, and understand the value of international exchange in a very practical and personal way. I will always look back on this time with gratitude.