

As a part of the RISE Professional Program, I did an internship at ABB AG this summer in Mannheim, Germany. This opportunity was truly life-changing for me, both personally and professionally.

I had an incredible time during my internship at ABB. My supervisor and colleagues there were extremely helpful and collaborative. Although three months working on a single research project is perhaps not enough to form a solid enough understanding of the state of research in Germany, nonetheless, it was a unique experience getting to work in such a different environment with a very different approach to problems and their solutions. There was a great emphasis on trying to understand the problem, the goals, the means to reach the goals, and how they are all tied together in order to proceed and tackle any obstacles that pop up in the way.

My research at ABB was on a Named Entity Recognition task based on industrial text data. I have worked on similar tasks throughout my studies and research. But what made this project stand out was the data, and how it shaped the approach towards the task. Changing and adapting the strategies towards the end goal based on how the data behaved under different circumstances provided a unique challenge. I completed my part in the project with relative success. But it was these obstacles and challenges that kept me eager to keep working on the task.

My supervisor and other team members were incredibly supportive and helpful throughout my time there. They fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation that was vital towards achieving the desired results. They were always ready to answer any questions or confusions that I had had, and were willing to help me methodically dismantle any roadblocks. This helped me not only overcome those issues, but also figure out the reasons behind those issues. This is something that constantly helped me in handling any subsequent challenges. During my time there, I also got the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from people from other disciplines. This helped broaden my perspective of the tasks, allowing me to understand not just my viewpoint, but the viewpoints of others as well who would use, work on, or benefit from the success of the tasks.

A typical day at my internship would start off with me heading to the office early in the morning. The work hours there were flexible, so I always had some leeway in what time I started as long as I finished up my work accordingly. My schedule would vary day by day, but usually it would consist of making a to-do list of tasks for the day each morning, and then going through them one by one. Once a week I had a regularly scheduled meeting with the rest of the team working on the same broader project. These meetings would end with some feedback that I could incorporate into my work until the next meeting. I would meet my supervisor whenever the need arose. They were always in contact with me, making sure all my questions were answered and I was not facing any issues. I also enjoyed regular coffee breaks and lunch breaks with the other interns and students at the office. These breaks were essential. They helped dust off some fatigue, and helped me get to know more people and share some wonderful memories.

Writing up a technical report and presenting my work to the rest of the team working on the project, including members from different disciplines, was probably the biggest professional or academic highlight of my internship there. Working on the report and the presentation gave me a deeper understanding of what I worked on and provided a unique challenge for me to convey that understanding in a way that could be accessible even to people without any specialization or knowledge of the task or domain.

The personal highlights of my summer here would be the incredible amount of traveling I managed to get done. Traveling has always been one of my primary motivations behind whatever I have done in life. And this internship opportunity was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to get to do that while also growing professionally. I got to travel across many different cities during my time here. Outside of Mannheim, I traveled to Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Heidelberg, Bonn, Berlin, Vienna, Utrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam and Rome. There were more opportunities, of course, to travel to even more places. But I am grateful that I managed to see so much. And the fact that I still have places to see left on my bucket list can maybe serve as another motivation for coming back to Germany one day.

My time in Germany was truly incredible. I met so many amazing people, traveled to beautiful sights, ate delicious food, and listened to some amazing music. I also got a tremendous amount of helpful experience working at ABB for three months. My time here was truly life changing in every way. I would recommend this program without any hesitation. In fact, I have already started recommending it to friends and peers. I hope that I can come back to work or travel here again in the future.

“I agree that my report and accompanying pictures may be used by the DAAD in printed materials, presentations, and on websites in order to inform funding organizations, sponsors, and students about the RISE program.”