

Anna (BA German & International Relations) – Toptranslation, Germany



Despite having little to no interest in translation or being a translator, I chose to take on a twelve-month placement at a translation agency in Hamburg for my year abroad. The city was the great attraction for me and this placement was the only way for me to guarantee my place there. I did apply for non-partner placements but the schedules of the companies did not match the university requirements of having everything signed off by Easter and so I chose the path that had already been trodden.

My placement takes up most of my time here in Hamburg which is quite intense and took a while getting used to. Having started in July, it is only really in the New Year that I feel comfortable and confident in my role. Our company is a start-up, which is not a differentiation I had considered before applying as I had no prior experience of office work. The nature of the company, however, is very dynamic and can be stressful as it is constantly testing its limits in order to grow in the market and to continue to receive attention and investments. As employees we bear the brunt of the work

but this also means that procedures are new and that we see the immediate impact of our feedback when we adjust our processes. Something to bear in mind when applying is that a 40 hour German working week is actually 45 hours in the office because of the mandatory lunch hour. This along with the longer “start-up hours” mean that I am learning what my energy limits are and how to say no to things!

As far as my role is concerned, I do not do any translating instead I am a project manager. Essentially I am the middle person between the translator and the customer and am in charge of translation projects with time scales that range from a few hours to eight weeks. The responsibility I am given astounds me sometimes and despite the weight that comes with it, I am very grateful that the placement is so much more than making tea or copying documents.

Outside of the placement I have found a football team to play for and having another Leeds student doing the same placement has been a lifesaver at times when I have felt lonely in the city. I was very lucky in finding an apartment with likeminded flatmates and even if we are not the best of friends, it is nice to have people who will ask questions at the end of a day’s work. And the best part of it all is that I get to be in Hamburg! The city is interesting and the people who live here are even more so. It is a very liberal city and the music, art, food and festivals that call this Hansestadt their home reflect that in so many ways! If you are torn between two placements, I would recommend you visit the two cities as your location is equally as important as your job.



Office life perks!

One of the most important things I have learned is how important it is to walk away from the office. The greatest thing about a job is that you get to leave at the end of the day and no longer have it play on your mind in a way that studying does. Make the most of it and remember: it’s only a placement, enjoy the rest of your year abroad as well!

Having chosen a placement, I now cannot imagine studying or doing British Council. Although I do envy the amount of free time that those students have and how much travelling they get to do, I really see the improvements in my written German, my confidence in knowing that I AM employable and also am so grateful to have the chance to learn what it is that I want/don’t want from a future job. That job may even be as a translator, we shall see! Also, I am so excited to be back in Leeds for fourth year and have all that freedom in my schedule again!