

## Feedback from UWH BU DD Alumni

### **Emmanuel – Security, Intelligence & Diplomacy / PPE (2020, from Nigeria)**

1. Overall how was your experience? The experience was fantastic. orientation process was thoughtful including accommodation unit, medical unit, sport unit, library unit, everyone ready to meet new students on day Zero. the lectures are highly focused and more advanced. school located in a good student area.
2. What were your favourite aspects of BU? The highly focused and professional modules. the informal tutorial classes where we only just reflect and discuss the outcomes of the formal classes were interesting.
3. What would you say are the main differences between BU and UW/H? The structure of the modules. you take fewer modules per semester, highly professional, focused and in-depth, practical and advanced level while in UW/H you tend to take a lot of modules that are broadly theoretical, I guess this is the structure of a PPE courses anywhere and it was very valuable to do a broad theoretical course on one hand and another very focused course on the other. Main difference 2. BU does not have relationship and socialisation between students, there are no regular reviews and meetings by the course coordinators like in UWH
4. How was living in Buckingham (Social life, accommodation etc.) Not like Witten, quite expensive. no good Witten Friendliness and togetherness, you are practically on your own after classes. sporting is great, you can get to joining the clubs and start kicking balls immediately. the staff are very friendly, warm and approachable. BU community is great, the locals are extremely friendly and receptive to foreigners.
5. What benefits do you see the DD degree gives versus just doing a degree at UW/H or BU? More opportunities. Feels like having a good broad theoretical kick off with PPE in Witten then proceeding to complete with a highly focused module in Buckingham. This is good for specialisation. Study abroad experience and having access to a platform of two strong academic institution as well as the Alumni network is a great Idea.
6. What advice would you give future students considering the DD? I will advise passing as much courses as possible in Witten before going, I will advise starting applications well ahead and familiarising with the DD regulations
7. Any problems that need addressing or ideas for improvement? I think the integration of communication between the two universities in the initial stages of students applications can be done better. My experience is having to figure out the organisational processes one's self which might not be efficient
8. Any further comments? I think the DD is a great Idea.

## **Gianluigi – Money, Banking and Central Banking / PPE (2019, from Italy)**

My experience in Buckingham was, overall, extremely positive. First of all, I graduated in "Money, Banking and Central Banking", I followed their timeline perfectly and I received my certificate/parchment last month. The quality of teaching is very high, very small classes (I only had 4 classmates), the lectures are frontal, participated, and very well organized. For the department in which I was in, students have access to a computer lab with crazy-expensive software installed for statistical purposes. Nerdy comment: it was just awesome. I also had the opportunity to engage with economists from all around Europe (there is almost one conference per week) and in November 2019 they organized a two-day trip to Brussels (for free) in order to participate in a professional consulting meeting between my professors and few members of the European Parliament. One of the best academic experiences in my life. The best asset of this degree program is indeed the fact that it is connected with the research institute they founded there: the Institute of International Monetary Research (IIMR). So basically all the professors are both members of the faculty and researchers at the Institute at the same time. And this makes it easier to offer to students all these unique opportunities. In June, the Institute also offered me an internship position as a research assistant and I collaborated with a research project that is now under academic review.

The campus is also great. It is surrounded by nature (a very important feature for me) and all the buildings - dorms included - are modern, cool, equipped with everything one needs. They have plenty of extra-activities (sport and art/cultural clubs are everywhere) and their Student Union organizes parties/events every week. It was the first experience for me in campus and it was like living in a movie 😊

Their assistance to students is also great, and I can say that because I experienced a small incident myself. It was late January, I was playing for the basketball team and I got injured: I dislocated my right shoulder. They took me to the hospital and they took care of me for almost 2 months.

Regarding the combination of PPE+Buckingham.

They do not complement each other particularly well. I mean, they are both fantastic programs and they share the same culture about teaching (small classes, participation, teamwork, critical thinking etc...) but the goal is very very different. And I am glad you asked because it was something that destabilized me the first days when I arrived in Buckingham. I was expecting something very similar to Witten, with just a focus on Macroeconomy. But I quickly realized that their main interest there is Monetarism, which is a particular branch of the economic theory. And that's a huge difference. One does not go there to learn about Economics in general, maybe studying a little bit of every theory/school of thought. No, you go there to learn about Friedman and Monetarism, and everything you need to know to apply that theoretical framework (therefore statistical analysis, financial analysis and so on). It's not broad, it's very very specific. Of course, while you go through the process, you also learn a lot about so many things, but it happens indirectly, almost like a side-effect. Therefore, at the end of the day, the degree in "money, banking and central banking" is extremely technical. Before joining Witten I already had a background in Economics, so I ended up loving Buckingham anyway (and I feel like I have learned so much), but I would not recommend it for everyone. For example, for a person interested more in Politics and maybe its connections with the economic sphere, I don't believe it is the right place. Conversely, for a person like me, the combination of Witten+Buck was just perfect. During my first year, I opened my mind and my eyes to things that I would have never thought of, whilst during my second year I specialized in something that has always fascinated me.

## David – Money, Banking and Central Banking and PPE (2018, from Columbia)

1. Overall how was your experience?

I did miss Witten's progressive vibe, but overall the experience was quite enriching. From the beginning, it was clear what I wanted to do and which knowledge and skill gaps I wanted to fill. For example, I knew my knowledge on macroeconomics and finance was weak. The UoB met my expectations in that sense. As a philosopher, it also helped me to increase my employability, since their programs are targeted to the real needs of modern job markets. It was also an excellent opportunity to improve my English.

2. What were your favourite aspects of BU?

The small-sized courses were definitely a plus. It was very easy to talk to professors, other students and administrative staff. It doesn't sound like much, but it is really positive for many aspects of the student life. They are willing to help you with what they can. Another thing to mention is that the town was absolutely beautiful as well as the university facilities. Plus, everything is within walking distance.

3. What would you say are the main differences between BU and UW/H?

I believe the two main differences are rooted in the history of the two universities. While the UoB was highly influenced by Margareth Thatcher (according to Wikipedia, she "oversaw its creation" when she was the Education Secretary), UWH has its roots in new pedagogies and participatory forms of education. BU feels way more conservative. That could cause some cultural shocks to typical Witten students. So I would recommend having clear objectives to prospective students. If what they want is to have fun, I would recommend doing an Erasmus semester in Spain or Italy.

4. How was living in Buckingham (Social life, accommodation etc.)

BU offers two-year bachelor degrees and one-year masters, so most students are quite young and everything takes place quickly. They compete with the public universities by offering faster graduation times, so student culture is not as strong and social connections were not so deep. Still, many students lived within the university premises and there were many events going on during the weekends. However, I did not participate much in them, as I was significantly older than the average student. I did go out with my master's colleagues, although not many of us lived in town.

Something important I should mention is that living costs are considerably higher (in comparison with UWH), so prospective students should plan their budget accordingly. Food, accommodation and pubs are more expensive (or perhaps the wording should be: not as cheap as Germany).

5. What benefits do you see the DD degree gives versus just doing a degree at UW/H or BU?

I would say it depends on what are the student's objectives. Of course, the UK is well known for its universities and speaking English is a valued skill. In my case, I had a genuine interest in expanding my area of expertise and acquiring some practical skills. Although I wouldn't be able to speak for a BU student. Since, as I mentioned, the university's promise of value lies on fast-paced degrees and high employability chances after graduation, doing a second degree on philosophy, politics and economics doesn't sound too enticing. Most of the students I met were doing the degree with very specific objectives like changing professions, obtaining a

degree to validate the knowledge they already had in a certain area, obtain a certificate to be eligible for higher ranked positions within their companies, and so on. However, that was the case for Banking students.

6. What advice would you give future students considering the DD?

To summarize what I said already: know your objectives, calculate your needed budget, know the university's culture, and research whatever visa paperwork is required. Also understand that you will need to write two master theses, graduation will take longer and expenses will be higher.

7. Any problems that need addressing or ideas for improvement?

When I did the DD, many things were not clear. Staff at the UoB did not know anything about the "double degree" agreement. The directors of the master programs at Buckingham did not advertise at all the possibility of studying philosophy, politics and economics at a German university. It seemed like they were just trying to get more students for their newly created master courses. Also, I was told that I would only need to write a master thesis and later on informed that that would not suffice.

David getting to know English culture with "afternoon tea" in Buckingham:

