

University of St Andrews, Scotland

STAP Experience Report

Fall term 2024 (9th September - 20th December)

Courses:

EC4433 Behavioural Economics,

EC4411 Labour Economics,

EC4405 Economics of the Environment



School of Economics and Finance Building

Preparation & Arrival:

The application for my semester abroad went smoothly, as the ZIB of the WiSo Faculty and the Global Office of the University of St Andrews sent regular emails with all the necessary steps. Just make sure you observe the deadlines and obtain an English certificate in good time for your application. I also applied for accommodation provided by the university, which I would highly recommend (more on this later). I only needed a passport for my stay, not a visa. However, as regulations can change, be sure to check which documents you need. I took a direct flight from Cologne to Edinburgh and then the 'St Andrews Shuttle', which is a popular alternative to public transport from Edinburgh/Glasgow to St Andrews among students. You can book your shuttle online in advance and it will take you directly to your accommodation in St Andrews. The first week after my arrival was orientation week, during which all new students can get to know the university and its numerous student societies. Whether you are interested in sports, art or politics, there is something for everyone here.

Accommodation & Administrative Matters:

Unlike many other university towns, St Andrews has enough student halls of residence to accommodate (almost) all applicants. After you have accepted your place at St Andrews, you can apply for a room via an online portal. You can indicate which type of accommodation you prefer, e.g. shared vs. ensuite bathroom and catered vs. non-catered. I recommend that you opt for a catered accommodation, as you won't have to spend time cooking and the shared meals are a great opportunity to get to know other students. The administration is very well organised and can help you with any kind of problem, from technical issues to study-related matters and accommodation. A little heads-up though: you will be monitored quite closely in St Andrews, there are regular 'cleaning inspections' in the halls and 'academic alerts' if you fall behind in your studies. Since St Andrews is so small, everything is in principle within walking distance. If you live in an accommodation outside the city centre, such as David Russel Apartments, I would still recommend renting a bike. There is also a bus for which students get discounted tickets, but it is very unreliable.

Courses, Teaching & Assessment:

The teaching style in St Andrews is very different from what I was used to in Cologne. There were significantly fewer students in my courses and all tutorials were conducted by the lecturers themselves. Attendance at the tutorials is compulsory. Furthermore, there are regular classtests and essay assignments throughout the semester, in addition to a final exam. Some examinations are open-book and take place online. I chose the modules EC4433 Behavioural Economics, EC4411 Labour Economics and EC4405 Economics of the Environment. I particularly enjoyed EC4433 because the lecture was interactive and the behavioural models in the course were an exciting contrast to the standard models usually taught. The topics of EC4411 were also interesting, but the independent project, which made up a large part of the final grade, was quite challenging because little guidance was provided for the data analysis and the preparation of the essay. I did not like EC4405 as the lecturer was difficult to follow and the learning materials were somewhat disorganised.

Extracurricular Activities & Travel Experiences:

St Andrews has a vibrant student community, with a society for practically every conceivable activity. I joined the debating society, which practices formal debating in the British Parliamentary Style and regularly organises public debates. It's a great opportunity for anyone who likes to discuss a wide range of topics and wants to improve their spoken English at the same time. I also got involved in the Green Shores Project, a sustainability initiative dedicated to protecting the coastal landscape and combating climate change by planting saltmarsh. If you are interested in politics, I can also recommend to join one of the political societies, which often organise pub nights with discussions on current topics, as well as joint debates against each other. Moreover, St Andrews hosts a variety of theatre performances and classical music concerts. Check out the Byre Theatre website for more information.

During my stay, I took several short trips to the nearby cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Both have a fascinating history and are definitely worth a visit! Although there is a direct bus connection from St Andrews, an overnight stay makes sense to avoid spending half of the day in the bus, especially for Glasgow.



Isle of Skye

Another must-see during a semester abroad in St Andrews are the Scottish Highlands. I took the train to Inverness and from there I made a day trip across the countryside to the Isle of Skye. The many 'Lochs', old castles and mountain landscapes are simply breathtaking. Another advantage is that in winter there are hardly any tourists, so you have the roads almost to yourself.

Conclusion:

The University of St Andrews is a great place to get to know Scottish culture, meet people from all over the world and experience a completely different student lifestyle to the one in Cologne. In St Andrews, you will find hipster cafés and fast food chains right next to ancient buildings and narrow lanes. St Andrews' university is relatively unknown in Germany, although it has been among the top-ranked in the UK for quite some time. University representatives there even speak of 'Stoxbridge' as the top British universities and you will meet a surprisingly high number of students who have also applied to Oxford or Cambridge. I am very happy to have spent my semester abroad there and would recommend this hidden gem to anyone.



St Andrews' Beach: "East Sands"

Short Testimonial: "During my time in St Andrews, I not only learned a lot about the education system and culture of the UK, but also gained a new perspective on my home country."