

Podcast - How to Hochschule



Show transcript

Episode 1 - How to Start

00:00:00: Stephan Hanf: Welcome to How to Hochschule, our audio guide about tackling life and work at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, one of the most international universities in Germany. So grab a cup of coffee, put on your comfy headphones, and join us as we explore the world of Hochschule Rhein-Waal.

00:00:41: Stephan Hanf: It's September, 2022. What you hear in the background is the homecoming cup.

00:00:47: Voices from the Homecoming Cup: Here we go. O'clock, Friday afternoon, Fresher's Week. It's time for the homecoming cup. How are you? Prepared?

00:00:59: Stephan Hanf: It's a special event, always taking place in the end of the Fresher's Week.

00:01:03: Nele Decker: Very simply, that is the introductory week for new students that start in the winter semester. But I would also say Fresher's Week is kind of the main event of the university.

00:01:16: Stephan Hanf: This is Nele Decker. She's part of the Welcome Centre of Hochschule Rhein-Waal. The Welcome Centre organizes various events throughout the year. The Homecoming Cup is part of the Fresher's Week.

00:01:28: Nele Decker: It kind of narrowed down, so it starts with kind of also a big official semester opening.

00:01:32: Nele Decker: So obviously we have two locations in Kleve and Kamp-Lintfort, so we always make sure that of course kind of, it's equally set up, so there will be an official semester opening at both campuses. And then there's kind of plenty of events going on. So there can be kind of more on the information providing basis from the faculty is kind of telling you how to start your studies.

00:01:55: Nele Decker: Right. I guess there can be different workshops, of course. Also like the socializing aspect is very important, so really kind of getting to know the university staff members, getting to know fellow students of your faculties, but also at the whole university. So it's also about getting to know the region of Kleve and Kamp-Lintfort, which of course, especially for international students, but also national students that did not grow up in Kleve, they can get to know different companies and organizations in Kleve and Kamp-Lintfort at the fresher's markets. That's definitely also a big event and something that we started, well, two years ago virtually, and then last year in presence was the fresher's music night. So that is a concert from students, for students and that was also a huge success. Also, definitely one of the main events.

00:02:49: Stephan Hanf: The music side of the Hochschule we will listen to in the other episodes. But Nele is not only working for Welcome Centre, she's also a student. And this is what she heard from her fellow students about Fresher's Week.

00:03:03: Nele Decker: I would say and I also heard that of a lot of students. So they first of all get to know many of their peers during Fresher's Week, so it's also a very exciting event for them.

00:03:13: Nele Decker: And the Homecoming Cup kind of refers to American traditions. So it's really getting all students, not only newly enrolled students, but also older students back to campus, back to the university. And it's just, almost like a big sports party going on on campus.

00:03:29: Stephan Hanf: And this is how the Homecoming Cup works.

00:03:31: Nele Decker: But basically, first of all, so you would form groups, so it could be groups of students. I think actually there might have even been some professors that took part in Homecoming Cup, but I'm not, don't pin me down on that. So the first kind of main task is canoeing through the Spoykanal. Obviously there would be a lot of other students cheering you up.

00:03:51: Nele Decker: So in the end it's about which team is the fastest at kind of going through the whole track. And I mean, also it's very mean because canoeing is the first part and I've seen some people drop into the water and then they have to finish the whole track with all of their wet clothes, et cetera, which obviously add a lot of weight. After canoeing, and also don't settle me on the right order. But I think it's actually biking across campus and then running and in between kind of through the running phase there would also be kind of obstacles that you would have to go along and that also sometimes during the bike track you would have to bike on a very narrow plate or something like that.

00:04:33: Nele Decker: Then, so each individual group member would have to go through that track, and then in the end, there's the wall. So the wall, if I'm not mistaken, is five meters and basically all team members have to climb the wall in order to kind of finish the track to win, possibly in the end. I've seen like some very kind of athletic people, strong people that can easily climb that wall, but also other students who might not have been that athletic, coming up with some very interesting.

00:05:05: Nele Decker: And weird ways to climb the wall. And of course it's also about helping each other. Yeah, putting your hands down so someone else can climb or use your hands to climb the wall, et cetera. That's always kind of the biggest part, to just see how well are people doing with that massive wall.

00:05:21: Voices from the Homecoming Cup: Maybe not. There he comes! Let's go! Onto that wall, Team 38. Get over there. The rest of them went for a bit of a explore. Here they come, here they come.

00:05:38: Stephan Hanf: Starting something new can be both exciting and intimidating. It's natural to feel a bit overwhelmed at the prospect of tackling something unfamiliar. It's like climbing a wall as a group. Everyone starts at the bottom full of anticipation and maybe a little bit of nervousness, but as you begin to climb, you realize that there are obstacles in your way.

00:05:56: Stephan Hanf: Maybe you realize that you didn't bring the right equipment, or perhaps the route is more challenging than you anticipated. Obstacles can be frustrating and make you want to turn back. But the thing about climbing a wall is that you don't have to do it alone. You have your team with you supporting you, helping you overcome the challenges you encounter.

00:06:12: Stephan Hanf: As you work together to overcome these obstacles, you begin to build confidence in your abilities and in your team. Starting something new as a student is much the same. You may encounter challenges that seem insurmountable at first, like not having enough time or not feeling prepared, or just have the feeling to be completely lost in a foreign country where you never have been before.

00:06:42: Stephan Hanf: Less number one: planes, trains and hierarchies.

00:06:46: Dr. Zunera Rana: I grew up in Lahore in Pakistan. It's a huge city actually. So when I first came to Germany, I think Cologne was what reminded me of my, my city. So it was that big.

00:06:58: Stephan Hanf: Dr. Zunera Rana is a research associate in artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision making systems at Rhine-Waal University. In addition to a work at the Hochschule Rhein-Waal, Dr. Rana completed her PhD in development economics at Radboud University, the Netherlands where she is now a lecturer.

00:07:15: Dr. Zunera Rana: And yeah, I have lived there for almost 23 years. In Lahore in Pakistan. I did my schooling over there. I did my, until my bachelor's, I did everything over there.

00:07:26: Stephan Hanf: The podcast is called How to Hochschule .

00:07:29: Dr. Zunera Rana: Yes.

00:07:29: Stephan Hanf: So the idea was if you're going to do a podcast about a University of Applied Sciences, what can you do? So basically you can just explain how you can find a Hochschule, what can you study there and stuff like that. But the problems with a university like this, there are so many different fields that you can study. It's really hard to explain in the short term, because podcasts, of course, you can do it like 16 hours episodes where you try to explain every field of science and so on.

00:07:57: Stephan Hanf: But it will be too complicated and maybe it's not like the right medium for it. So the idea was we want to do something where we can tell about the experience of studying at Hochschule Rhein-Waal and have something that's general for everyone in a condensed form so that you can take something with you, like an experience, right?

00:08:16: Stephan Hanf: And that's why we call it How to Hochschule and we explain it like an audio guide. A guide is something different from something like an instruction. So an

instruction would be step one, open your browser and type in Hochschule Rhein-Waal. Step two, okay. Then you can find, you know that, so it's, a guide is something different. A guide is something like a person guides you through something, right?

00:08:37: Stephan Hanf: And that's like the idea. So we get different people who get different experiences from the Hochschule Rhein-Waal, and they will guide you with their experience through certain topics. The first episode will be about how to start, right? So better to listen to stories like your story, for example, and then people who are in a similar situation or maybe completely different situation they can experience, okay, it's how it was for you.

00:08:59: Dr. Zunera Rana: Um, So in 2012, I graduated from my bachelor's degree and I had no intentions of coming, going abroad, mainly because it's super expensive to go abroad. But a bunch of my friends, so the group that we had together, they were all considering applying abroad and then came this process that, oh, Germany could be a good option because there aren't these huge fees that you have to pay.

00:09:25: Dr. Zunera Rana: So we started exploring those further. So around the middle of 2012, I think we thought, okay, we, this is something that we can really consider, and we started applying. We got already in the September, so by we, it's four of us. We already got in September batch for Hochschule Rhein-Waal, uh, for 2012, but there were no Visa appointments available at all.

00:09:52: Dr. Zunera Rana: And Rhein-Waal said, you are welcome to come as late as you want, but there was no appointment until December that year. So we said, could you please extend it to the next semester? And they said, that's not possible. So we said, okay, we try again. So we tried for the summer semester and this time we were prepared with the visa appointments.

00:10:12: Dr. Zunera Rana: We applied in for the summer and we got in. So I came then to Germany in 2013 in the summer. But surprisingly even there, the interesting part was that despite looking for an appointment beforehand and everything, the visa was delayed so much that the semester started on 11th of March and we landed in Germany on 27th.

00:10:35: Dr. Zunera Rana: So we received our visa on 25th of April, and we landed in Germany on 27th of April. So it was the first time outside Pakistan ever for me. Yes. So it was the first time I had sat in a plane and flown outside the border of my country. Really? Yes. So directly to Germany. Oh, that's great. And to Kleve. It was really overwhelming.

00:10:57: Dr. Zunera Rana: And Pakistan is size-wise, big. So, and there's no culture of, well, there are no trains. So you have buses, but otherwise you take taxis or you take your own transport, you know when you are going. And that was what we had in mind at the time as well. When we landed, we are going to take a taxi from Düsseldorf to Kleve because, um, yeah, that's what you do.

00:11:20: Dr. Zunera Rana: You know, that's what we knew. But luckily for us, one of the friends in our group had stayed in England for a couple of years, and he said, what? Taxi? No, no, no. We, we go by train. So we found a train after a very long time because everything was in German and it was a completely different language. And on the train when we got in, it was RE10.

00:11:41: Dr. Zunera Rana: This are our, our, our standard RE10. It was written Kevelaer and Kleve both. And for a very long time I tried to tell my friends, I think it's Kevelaer, and I think we just wrote the name incorrectly on the piece of paper. And he said, no, no, it's

written this K L E V E. This is where we are going to go eventually. So, and that was the last stop.

00:12:05: Dr. Zunera Rana: And we came, we had these really huge bags with us and we stood there because we did not know where. We had booked a room in the old Rilano Hotel. Now it's now really brand new and really fancy. Before it was on the side, I forgot the name of the street, but, and it was, it was the only hotel here that was, that was visible on Google.

00:12:25: Dr. Zunera Rana: So there were small ones around, but not couldn't, you couldn't search for them. And we stood there on the Bahnhof. Trying to study the map, but something we had never done in our lives. And then a lady stopped. I very clearly remember.

00:12:39: Stephan Hanf: So you would say like, the first impression you have from Germany, was this woman with a, she had a dog or

00:12:46: Dr. Zunera Rana: No, she, she was actually going in her car and she stopped for us.

00:12:49: Stephan Hanf: Oh, okay.

00:12:51: Dr. Zunera Rana: And she got out, I still remember she put her hands on her, on her hips, you know, and she looked at our faces and she said, first in German, can I help you guys? You seem lost. We said we don't speak German. And then she said, yeah, can I help you in English. We said, yeah, we want to go to Rilano. And we have no clue what, where it is or how we go there and everything.

00:13:12: Dr. Zunera Rana: And then she helped us. She told us, go in this direction. So and so, and you know, take this road and everything. And that was already a very welcoming feeling for us. It's not common to happen in a different country. Not common to happen even in Pakistan. If you're lost, you are lost. And so in that sense, I think it was very nice.

00:13:31: Dr. Zunera Rana: It was very welcoming, definitely overwhelming. Also because of the language, I think it was really overwhelming initially, and obviously new place, you have to find a home and everything and yeah, we, uh, but we found our way to Rilano and we were, it was the sense of achievement for us.

00:13:51: Stephan Hanf: So what was the first time for you going by plane, by train.

00:13:56: Dr. Zunera Rana: Yes.

00:13:56: Stephan Hanf: And then also reading a map?

00:13:58: Dr. Zunera Rana: Yes, yes. Yeah. Going on an international, uh, flight, taking a train, and then, you know, reading a map and reaching here. Yes.

00:14:09: Stephan Hanf: So you were like the second batch of students here in Kleve, right?

00:14:14: Dr. Zunera Rana: Yes. For the master's program definitely. Yes. Yeah.

00:14:17: Stephan Hanf: So how was it in the beginning?

00:14:19: Dr. Zunera Rana: The classes were quite small, so I think for our group it was around 20 to 25 people, but not all of them were for from that semester. So it was from previous semesters as well, I think. Yeah, for our batch it was quite mixed. We had people, we have very, we had very few Germans actually in our class, which was really surprising for us.

00:14:40: Dr. Zunera Rana: There were only, I think, four Germans in the class and some people from Russia, a person from Finland, and some exchange students as well, and a lot

of people also from our part of the world. So from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, this area. Yeah. That was the, the mixed, the group was quite mixed in that sense.

00:14:58: Dr. Zunera Rana: A lot of professors that I see now, were not there, I would say, but the main professors for us, I think for the teaching part, the, the first day we came in, we were welcomed by our study, there was no study manager at that time for our degree program, but the professor who was in charge, who was the head of the degree program, professor Zigman, he saw that there are these new faces in the class.

00:15:22: Dr. Zunera Rana: So we did not really say that we are new or anything, but he saw that and he approached it, us at the end of the lecture and he said, you know, you guys should come to my office, office afterwards at this time, and I can just, you know, to have a chat with you. And that's literally what he did. So he, um, We went to his office and he just welcomed us and he said, I can understand it's overwhelming to be here.

00:15:46: Dr. Zunera Rana: If you, there's something we can do to help, we would be happy to do it and everything. So he just had a one-on-one, just, you know, welcoming us and saying, be comfortable and we'll figure out. Figure it out. And that was really helpful, I think. That was really needed at that time as well for us because we were joining in the middle of the semester and it was, yeah, we were afraid we will not make it, you know, at that time.

00:16:08: Dr. Zunera Rana: So it was, it was, I think they got a really warm welcome also from the professors as well. And I think for me the most surprising part was, so we come in Pakistan, there's really a hierarchy with professors and everything. You, the professors do talk to you and everything, but it's really formal. You always call them "Sir".

00:16:28: Dr. Zunera Rana: You just ask your questions. They answer the question and everything. It's not hi, how are you kind of a topic. And I remember, I think it was the third or the fourth day we were in Mensa. And we had taken this course of Professor Bauer from, he, he was teaching financial maths or something like that, and he saw us in Mensa.

00:16:47: Dr. Zunera Rana: And he said, yeah, I join you guys for food. And we thought, oh my God, there's a professor, he's, he wants to sit with us and he wants to eat with us. That is so weird, you know? And he was standing in line, getting his order like everybody else. It was not a, a you know, an office boy or something delivering food to his office or something.

00:17:06: Dr. Zunera Rana: So it was a really different culture in that sense. We, in Pakistan, it was comparatively different compared to here, so, and he said, you know, I will sit down with you guys and eat. And he ate and he didn't talk about studies. He talked about Germany and about his own work experience from the past, or just random anecdotes from Kleve and all of that.

00:17:24: Dr. Zunera Rana: And yeah, it was really nice and. Really different experience, a more pleasant experience, I would say in that sense. Yeah.

00:17:37: Dr. Zunera Rana: Lesson number two: this is what an international university looks like.

00:17:41: Dr. Joost Kleuters: You know, this part of Germany didn't really have a university, and, and, and this case it's, it's an applied science university, so it's.

00:17:48: Stephan Hanf: So this is our second guest .

00:17:49: Dr. Joost Kleuters: My name is Joost Kleuters.

00:17:51: Stephan Hanf: And he heads the Center for Internationalization and Languages. Dr. Joost Kleuters has been part of the Rhine-Waal University since its early days.

00:17:59: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Partly it was meant as a possibility for, for young people to, to stay in this region and do their studies here. And also they took the opportunity from from the outset to offer most of the study programs completely in English. And you know, since it's such a unique opportunity to build up a new university from scratch, there was a unique possibility also to do something different and make this a real international institution.

00:18:22: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And also the students here, but also the people who work here, together they really are this international academic community, which is very, yeah, international, diverse. So you can actually, you know, stay in this region and do all different kinds of studies here.

00:18:37: Stephan Hanf: So let's go back to the early days of Dr. Joost Kleuters's academic career and the history of the Hochschule Rhein-Waal .

00:18:46: Dr. Joost Kleuters: I grew up in the Netherlands in a place called Eindhoven, which is a little bit more to the south. I moved with my parents to Nijmegen when I was 16, which is a larger university town, it has a big university, and a big applied sciences university as well. So roughly 30,000 students.

00:19:04: Dr. Joost Kleuters: So I finished high school there and also went to the university there. I'm here now, but you know, I never really had like a very clear career path. No. So I studied political science, international relations. What I would wanna do afterwards was, you know, very much unclear, but first I thought I wanted to be in diplomatic service.

00:19:20: Dr. Joost Kleuters: So after my studies, I went to work for the Dutch Foreign Affairs Department. I spent one year at the Dutch Permanent Mission to the UN. So that was a very interesting time. Then I went back to the Hague, to the ministry. That was less interesting, you know? And also diplomacy is sort of a weird parallel universe, right?

00:19:39: Dr. Joost Kleuters: It's not really, it's not as international as, as you would think. The only thing I, I, that was always clear to me, I wanted to do something international. So after one year in the Hague, I got a call from the professor that I wrote my thesis with. He asked me to come back to the university and I worked on my PhD there.

00:19:55: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And in that time, moved to Kleve because I met my wife. My wife got a job here. That's how I ended up in Kleve.

00:20:02: Stephan Hanf: For Love.

00:20:02: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Yes, yes, absolutely. And uh, and all of a sudden there was like articles in newspapers, the Ministry of Education in Düsseldorf decided there were going to be three new applied sciences universities in in, in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

00:20:19: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And there was sort of an application process for cities. Or like consortia interested in applying for this, for this new initiative to have that international new university in their, in their city. So Kleve together with Kamp-Lintfort, some other cities and some other public actors as well, sort of applied with a bid book like you would do right for the Olympic Games.

00:20:43: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Applied, to Düsseldorf, to have this university here. And, um, that's probably when I first found out about it, just to read in the paper that they have been successful. First, it really didn't occur to me to, to apply here. They were looking for people in

marketing and, you know, German is not my, my, not my mother tongue, but then later they were looking for somebody to work in the international office.

00:21:03: Stephan Hanf: And the international office back then didn't really exist, right?

00:21:06: Dr. Joost Kleuters: So where the campus is now in, in Kleve at least, it used to be the harbor of Cleves. So there's a, a canal going from the Rhine River into the city, and I think it's from 18th century somewhere. It used to be a very active harbor for a long time, but then, you know, it wasn't really used anymore and that's where they decided to build a new campus.

00:21:26: Dr. Joost Kleuters: What's now the warehouse and there's still like a smaller house next to it, which used to be the Hafermeister house. There is this blog in Kleve called Kleveblatt, KleBlatt, which has all sort of old pictures of Cleves and old postcards where you can still see images of, of the former harbor and so on. But the way it was like when we moved here, like around 2002.

00:21:50: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Yeah, like I said, it was like a big. Junkyard. And you know,

00:21:53: Stephan Hanf: I mean, what's interesting is the transition from the old rundown harbor to this modern university with people from all over the world. I mean, that's a little bit what, what a harbor is, right? Like people coming from all over the world and, and going away.

00:22:09: Stephan Hanf: So the function of the place is still the same, but before it was an exchange, more or less of people and goods. And now maybe it's a place of people and knowledge.

00:22:22: Dr. Joost Kleuters: So I think your idea of, you know, the former function of the harbor of people coming and going in exchange of people and ideas and then enter this university is very interesting.

00:22:30: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Now, the library, it used to be a warehouse to stock goods. I dunno which goods they kept there. Maybe grains or you know, agriculture products or something else. I don't know. But the idea is where they used to stock goods and produce, we now stock knowledge. So books and that's where students go too. So there you go.

00:22:52: Stephan Hanf: Yeah.

00:22:53: Dr. Joost Kleuters: No, the strange thing is of course, that once the decision was made to, to set up a new university, things move extremely fast, right? So, like I said, they sort of closed off the whole premises and then a good two and a half, three years later, as you know, it almost looks like as if nothing happened, right?

00:23:11: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And the, the old crane that you see is not from here, but came from the former harbor Duisburg. And of course, you know, is there to remind everyone on campus that you know of the history of, of what, what is now a university campus. It used to be the harbor of Cleves and you can actually still see the, the, the cobble stones on that place and the railway tracks, these big cranes, you know, that they used to offload the ships were, were standing on.

00:23:37: Dr. Joost Kleuters: I think that's very elegant way of sort of showing how the universities are rooted in the past of Kleve. So there was a very positive development for the city of Kleve, right? So to get rid of the old harbor and then build up a new campus. Same thing for Kamp-Lintfort, which used to be a former mining town with the mines closed.

00:23:57: Dr. Joost Kleuters: The university for those cities was really a unique opportunity to develop the city in another direction, to have more young people come in, people moving to the town to start working at the university.

00:24:09: Stephan Hanf: And from the student side, like the first student coming here, do you remember what they said?

00:24:13: Dr. Joost Kleuters: It was really incredible that they were actually able to, to find us. Because well, you know, in all honesty, Kleve and Kamp-Lintfort are not the most widely known German towns across the world. Düsseldorf, maybe. Cologne and so on, Berlin. But then Kleve, Kamp-Lintfort, not so much. And of course, you know, we were not an established university just having started a year earlier.

00:24:38: Dr. Joost Kleuters: What was especially interesting for me was coming out of the faculty, just finished my PhD. This had nothing to do with theory, which was great, you know, and just to see how you manage organizing and, and working together with, with other people under pretty heavy time pressure. That was very interesting.

00:25:00: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And then that grew very rapidly. So of course at one point, you know, things start to get bigger and also a little bit more anonymous. So what was very attractive in the beginning was, of course there was, you know, a lot of work setting up a new university. Very chaotic, if that's the right word. You know, we really had to work hard, be flexible, you know, just to, to make sure we, we got organized and were able to offer classes and so on.

00:25:27: Dr. Joost Kleuters: But of course that was also the charm of it, right? That we were all in this together. And this was also clear to the students, right? So they came here and you know, they actually made the deliberate decision to come here knowing that they're gonna be one of 60 students in the first year that this university was, was existing.

00:25:45: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And interestingly, that's what they all found very attractive because you know what went for us also went for the students that we had a chance. You know, if you're setting up a new university, You can very actively participate in how this university is gonna look. Students actually enjoy that very much, and we tried to listen to students as as much as we could about what it was that they needed or things that they were interested in.

00:26:14: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Yeah, that was one of the big charms of setting up a new university from scratch. Yeah.

00:26:19: Stephan Hanf: Do you have the feeling that with the students, Kleve got more international or was it always because of the border and maybe even because of the harbor and for its size and international town, or because you said you lived here before the university, so can you tell me about the difference before and after, or do you see even a difference?

00:26:39: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Yeah, so Kleve is very much a, a border region. So Dutch and Germans, you know, they move around freely across the border and there's always been a lively mix of Germans and Dutch people living here, working here, and vice versa. For our international student community, this of course, is very new. We have students from all over the world from, from more than a hundred different countries.

00:27:04: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And that, of course, is very different from what people living in Claver were used to, right? This was a very. It's a small town, it's a very rural region. And of

course for students it's a challenge because they come here because they, you know, in part because they can study in English and they want to come to Germany for their studies.

00:27:21: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Yeah, they really need to speak German if only, you know, for everyday life to get their groceries, to be able to read signs and so on. So I think especially for them, that's a big challenge.

00:27:32: Stephan Hanf: Is, is there something from that time that you are missing right now, or not right now, but that's not there now, but that you miss?

00:27:40: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Yeah, well it's really the sort of everyday contact and personal exchange with students and with a lot of colleagues for that matter. So like I said at the beginning, we really is a small team and pretty tight knit bunch of people trying to cope with the stress of setting up a new university. And of course, you know, along the way, you know, your organization grows and you get to focus more on, on the things that colleagues at your own university would do.

00:28:07: Dr. Joost Kleuters: So you sort of specialize in the area that you were hired to set up. So you lose touch a little bit. And then it's nice when we have some festivities, like before Christmas or there's always a summer party to sort of, you know, catch up again and reminisce about the good old times when things were still new and chaotic.

00:28:24: Stephan Hanf: Do you, um, would do it again looking back?

00:28:29: Dr. Joost Kleuters: No.

00:28:30: Stephan Hanf: But what you don't know?

00:28:31: Dr. Joost Kleuters: No. Um, no, I don't know. It's, it's interesting because, um, well, what I learned and which wasn't maybe clear from the outset where of course, you know, what was clear from the outset was that, okay, so we're gonna have a lot of study programs in English.

00:28:50: Dr. Joost Kleuters: I think even at the beginning it wasn't clear how successful that was gonna be. People would just find us on the internet, you know, students who wanna study in Germany, but then in English and Germany doesn't have any tuition fees. So, you know, it became clear pretty quickly, right, that we were really attractive for, for international students and they would come to us.

00:29:12: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And now we have almost half of the students are, are international students. So after a while it, you know, it quickly became clear that we were a big draw for international students because of that reason. What maybe wasn't so clear in the first years, but what we have learned right now, not just me, but I think that goes for a lot of my colleagues at the university, is to have this international community of students is really an asset to the university.

00:29:37: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Something that we have and others don't and really sets us apart from other universities. It makes us very attractive. And German students are a part of that. That's something we learned and where we also draw from, right? How to engage the international community that we have, they are a big part of this university.

00:29:57: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And also, uh, what makes us a lot different from, from other places. Like for example, we have this network of international offices in North Rhine-Westphalia and they would, you know, sort of ask us things like, okay, how do we deal with language? Right. A lot of language, you know, we are very bilingual, you know, everything is in, in German or English.

00:30:18: Dr. Joost Kleuters: And not just the teaching, but also the signs on campus or the menus in the cafeteria, which is something we have done from, from the outset. And other universities are just starting to think about. So it has, you know, how do you do this at Rhine-Waal?. What are the challenges? How did you solve certain problems?

00:30:35: Dr. Joost Kleuters: How do you deal with international students issues like, you know, diversity? How do you sort of keep it together? And, and, and like I said, you know, it's a big plus for this university. You have so many students from different countries, right? It's very well mixed. That's also an asset, not necessarily a challenge.

00:30:53: Dr. Joost Kleuters: Or how do you deal with issues like, you know, loneliness or, or, you know, personal problems, integration of students, how to make them feel at home, student support, things like this. I think we have learned a lot from that, just from this international community that this, that this place is, if you, you know, just, and you can go on campus in Kleve, or Kamp-Lintfort, you can just see it, right?

00:31:15: Dr. Joost Kleuters: A lot of things that, that, you know, sometimes are just being discussed really as reality here. And it's everyday practice. This is what an international university looks like.

00:31:30: Stephan Hanf: Lesson number three: let it all come to you.

00:31:33: Norman Körber: So where I come from and what I do.

00:31:35: Stephan Hanf: Right.

00:31:35: Norman Körber: Yeah. So my name is Norman. I grew up in, in the area of Kleve. I currently study sustainable tourism at the Hochschule Rhein-Waal, and yeah, I'm in a first semester right now. The exams are coming up, so I'm a little bit stressed, but it's okay.

00:31:50: Stephan Hanf: What's interesting in your case is that you are just in your first semester, right? What was like your first week you had?

00:31:57: Norman Körber: First week was very chaotic because I didn't know university was starting. I calculated that it started on 1st of October because that was like where everyone starts, and I have friends also that said, yeah, first October semester started, so I thought first October, and then I got the notification, yeah, university starts this week and it was like on a Sunday, so it started the next day.

00:32:20: Norman Körber: I didn't have any notebook. I didn't have a college block or something. I was very unprepared, but then I got there. I missed the first day because I didn't have a car or something because it wasn't planned. Yeah. The first week was, I don't know how to describe it, but kind of felt, very nice. So you got it. What do you do here?

00:32:42: Norman Körber: What is your fear of work? What can you do with it later? Yeah. What's the aim of this particular subject that we are doing right now? And a nice welcome and, uh, yeah, as I said, a bit chaotic, but I got into it really quick.

00:32:57: Stephan Hanf: What did you know about Rhine-Waal before you applied there?

00:33:00: Norman Körber: So, my father lives in Kleve for like 10 years now. So I knew there was a university that's relatively new. I also have stepsisters there. They, one of them went to Rhine-Waal, so I kind of knew what was going on. But I didn't have the knowledge of what university really is, what it really feels like. And I then got to know through the internet that yeah, what kind of different fields they have and things like that.

00:33:28: Stephan Hanf: Do you know that it's actually one of the most international universities of applied sciences in all of Germany? Did you know it before?

00:33:35: Norman Körber: I didn't know that. I have already seen when I was at my father's house in Kleve that there are many international students there. But I didn't know that it was that international.

00:33:43: Norman Körber: When I got to Rhein-Waal and saw like this many faces and from all over the world, I was like, yeah, yo, what's going on? Yeah, I didn't know that, but I kind of like it. So you have these multiple cultures, multiple, point of views from everyone, different backgrounds. So when you go to a big city, you have all these kind of international people there, but in this area, in this closer area, nowhere.

00:34:08: Stephan Hanf: What were like the most complicated things for you when you started your studies?

00:34:13: Norman Körber: I really had the fear that I was being left alone. Cause I also thought of a big class and that definitely wasn't the case. I think also because we are such a small class, but you get to know each other very well. The profs do teamwork all the time to, so you get to know each other.

00:34:30: Norman Körber: You have connections you can ask everyone when there's something to do. The biggest challenge was getting to know what the profs want from you. One teacher wants two PowerPoints every week and like two essays every week, and in the teamwork, and then, yeah, how do you do that? How, how much is enough? How do you, yeah, part the work that you have to do with your colleagues, I think that's, that was one of the biggest challenges.

00:34:58: Norman Körber: The exams are coming up, so I think that will be a big challenge too.

00:35:01: Stephan Hanf: What helped you out of these challenges?

00:35:04: Norman Körber: Yeah, just going with the time. You spend like two, three weeks in these classes and you know what the teachers want from you. How your, your mates like think about you, how your mates think about the subject, what the mates do, and just giving a time and also adapting a little bit to it.

00:35:22: Stephan Hanf: Just so that I really capture that. So the switch for you was, at first you just applied for it, right? Because the university was near here, or the field of studies was interesting to you? Right?

00:35:32: Norman Körber: Uh, both.

00:35:33: Stephan Hanf: This is how you started out, then you applied for it, then you got accepted but you gotta accepted in different cities. You decide, okay, I will go to Rhein-Waal, and then when you experienced it, and you met other people, then you made the decision. Okay. Something maybe I want to continue.

00:35:51: Norman Körber: Yeah.

00:35:51: Stephan Hanf: This is where you are right now. At least.

00:35:53: Norman Körber: I thought of university as a lot, a lot harder. I would say. I didn't, I didn't think it was that easy.

00:36:00: Norman Körber: The ones in the seventh semester are currently laughing right now, but I'm in this first semester and I didn't really think that it would, yeah, it would go that fluent.

00:36:10: Stephan Hanf: Correct me if I'm wrong, but you felt more lonely in the beginning? And that was your fear?

00:36:15: Norman Körber: Yeah.

00:36:16: Stephan Hanf: Yeah.

00:36:17: Norman Körber: But yeah, as I've said, made some colleagues came in time.

00:36:20: Norman Körber: Also, some relationships evolved in time. Yeah. So first, uh, you were very distant with the person, but then, I don't know, you had a group project and then you're very close.

00:36:30: Stephan Hanf: I mean, studying can be very lonely, I guess if you. I think you, I don't know. It's depends on the person of course, but there are the possibilities to meet people, especially in the first semester even.

00:36:43: Stephan Hanf: And you missed like the first week, which is like normally the week where most people meet, like for the first time. And yeah.

00:36:50: Norman Körber: Also in, uh, Fresher's Week. I didn't was at the Fresher's Week and then there is like, you have a bigger pool of people there because they're all in the first semester and you could get to know each other.

00:37:04: Norman Körber: But because I wasn't there, I didn't really have anyone. Uh, a connection with anyone again. Yeah.

00:37:10: Stephan Hanf: Ah, interesting. Um, okay, we, I got more or less one last question. When you started to apply to Hochschule Rhein-Waal til now? Half a year or less? What did, what is like the one lesson you learned?

00:37:23: Norman Körber: Let it all come to you. So don't rush anything.

00:37:23: Don't like, don't have any Vorurteile.

00:37:30: Stephan Hanf: Uh oh, uh,

00:37:33: Norman Körber: Prejudices.

00:37:33: Stephan Hanf: Yeah. Yeah.

00:37:34: Norman Körber: Don't have any prejudices. And yeah, just let it sink in. Let everything sink in. Let's get to know everything. And then you, you adapt to everything. It's really not that difficult as I thought.

00:37:52: Stephan Hanf: Since opening its doors in May, 2009, Rhein-Waal has grown by leaps and bounds. In fact, there are currently over 6,000, to be honest, almost 7,000 students enrolled at Rhein-Waal. Starting in the summer of 2016, the university began offering a total of 25 bachelor's degrees and 11 master's degrees in fields ranging from natural sciences and economics to technology and social sciences.

00:38:15: Stephan Hanf: Plus, there are many degree programs available as dual or part-time studies. Around 75% of the programs are taught entirely in English. Over 120 nationalities are represented among the student body. The Technology & Bionics, Life Sciences, and Society & Economics faculties are located on a modern campus at Kleve,

which includes a large lecture hall center, modern labs, halls for mechanical engineering and agriculture technology, language center, cafeteria, student service center, and support facilities. The Communication & Environment faculty can be found at the Kamp-Lintfort campus with many graphic and media design courses, as well as the Fab Lab. Whether you are interested in natural scientists, economics, technology or social sciences, there's a program here for you.

00:39:17: Stephan Hanf: Thank you for listening to the How to Hochschule podcast. We hope you enjoyed the show, and feel free to follow us and recommend us to your friends. If you have any thoughts or suggestions, or just want to let us know how you like the episode. Please don't hesitate. Take courage and do reach out to us at podcast@hsrw.eu.

00:39:37: Stephan Hanf: We're always looking for ways to improve and we appreciate your feedback. Also, be sure to check out our show notes for links and more information on today's topics and guests. Next time on the How to Hochschule podcast.

00:39:49: Stephan Hanf: I find something out about you. It's really interesting. So you are in the end of your studies.

00:39:55: Hariharan Arevalagam: Yeah.

00:39:56: Stephan Hanf: And we had a discussion that your German got worse during your studies here.

00:40:02: Hariharan Arevalagam: Yeah. You say you found out something interesting. It's more like something quite embarrassing, I think, in my opinion.

00:40:07: Stephan Hanf: International student, Hari, will be helping us tackle the topic of how to German. Join us again as we explore the in and outs of navigating life as an international student at a German university like Hochschule Rhein-Waal.

00:40:20: Stephan Hanf: I'm Stephan Hanf, and this has been the How to Hochschule podcast. Thanks for joining us. We hope to hear you again next time. Tschüß.