Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
Instructors were more available to students, both one-on-one and in the classroom.

- Could you call them by their first names?
No.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
No. The student/instructor relationship was about the same as that at UCSB.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
Yes. Also via e-mail.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
No; they were about the same.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
No; the grading system consisted of numbers (1 being the best, 5 being the worst) instead of letters (A-F).

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
Content courses only met once per week for three hours. Intensive language classes met four times per week (Monday through Thursday) in the mornings for three hours per class. Each class had field trips and write-ups concerning those field trips (ex: Cultural Events, City Tours, etc). Each content course required a class presentation, a midterm and final exam, and a final paper of about 10 pages. The intensive language course was about the same, with the exception of the final 10-page paper.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
Both oral and written exams in language courses, but only written exams in content courses.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
Mostly inflexible. Each class’s final exam took place during the regular time slot. (Ex: if class is on Thursdays from 4-7, then the final exam would be on the last Thursday of the quarter/semester from 4-7). Makeup exams were also possible in extenuating circumstances.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
None.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
Yes. Studying abroad required setting aside time to study and read outside of class. This could sometimes be difficult in a new and exciting environment. Studying abroad also required multiple outside-of-class assignments that had to be completed outside of class, such as trips to museums, etc.

- Was classroom participation expected?
Yes.
- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
The host university classes did not have sections. They consisted of one lecture for three hours once a week (except for language courses, which were three hours per day, Monday through Thursday). Host university classes were more interactive than UCSB courses and much smaller (about 20-30 people per class).

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?
Experiential language classes were usually Monday and Wednesday from 9am-12pm, and intensive language classes were usually Monday through Thursday from 9am-12pm. Content courses were once a week, on whichever day they were assigned (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday). They took place during a three-hour time slot (1pm-4pm, or 4pm-7pm).

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?
Punctuality was very important. The students were expected to keep up with readings/assignments and participate in class, either with other students or the instructor. Eating or drinking was sometimes allowed, depending on the instructor.

Language

- In which languages were the courses offered?
The content courses were offered in English and the language courses were offered in German.

- What language did you take your courses in?
Content courses were in English and language courses were in German.

- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.
Before I could be placed into a particular German course, I had to take a placement exam online, and then submit to an oral assessment once at the university. The german courses were more difficult than those at UCSB, but required about the same amount of work. The instructors only spoke in German during class, unless there was something important that the students could not understand. The German instructors were patient and approachable. My German improved a lot while I was taking these language courses.

Host University

- How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?
Free University has about 32,000 students, so it is somewhat larger than UCSB. It is an urban campus that is somewhat spread out, but most of the buildings are moderate in size.

- Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?
The local students mostly live off campus or at home.

- If not located in the city center,
  - How far or close is it to the city?
The university is about 30-40 minutes by bus and subway from the city center.
  - What type of public transportation could you take – cost?
Subways, trams, taxis and buses. As a student, you will receive a student transportation card for the whole semester, which includes all of the subway, tram, and bus fares. Taxis are not as expensive as in the US.

- Could students take cabs -cost?
  Yes. About 30 Euros from the University to the city center.
- How long would it take to get to the city center?
  About 30-40 minutes by bus and subway, and 25 minutes by car.

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
  Yes.

- Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
  Yes. I bought my books and readers through my program.

- Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
  Yes.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
  The campus is mostly located near housing, but there are shops, cafes, restaurants, and public transportation stops within walking distance.

Housing
- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
  UC students can either live in apartments or homestays.

- How close are they to campus?
  The apartments provided through FU-BEST are about 30 minutes from campus. The distances from homestays to campus may vary.

- How did you find your housing?
  It was arranged through FU-BEST.

- Where did you live and with whom?
  I lived in Berlin-Steglitz in a single apartment. All of the other students from my program who stayed in apartments were located in the same complex as me.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
  N/A.

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
  The rooms were somewhat nicer than those of IV and about on-par with those of the UCSB dorms.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
  I am not sure how much the rent was, but it was definitely cheaper than rent in IV. The cost of rent was included in the FU-BEST program costs.

- How/who did you pay for housing?
Food
- What was the food like?
Delicious and most of the time, cheap. Some favorite foods include: döner (Turkish), currywurst, brötchen (sandwiches), gelato, schnitzel, pastries, sausages, beer, and potatoes.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
I ate most of my meals at the school cafeteria and from vendors.

- How much was an average meal?
Average meal from the school cafeteria was about 6 Euros. From a vendor, usually under 5 Euros. Restaurants tend to be more expensive, so about 10 Euros.

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Lunch was usually eaten around noon. Dinner was usually eaten around 6 or 7 pm.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
No. Many of the vendors offer veggie options, such as salads, cheese sandwiches, falafel, and fruit. The cafeteria also has vegetarian/vegan options to choose from.

Travel/Safety
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
The transportation system in Germany is very reliable and pretty inexpensive. It can take you pretty much anywhere. Busses and subways are the most accessible means of transportation near the university.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Yes. Try not to carry your passport or other valuables with you unless absolutely necessary. Always have a companion when out late at night. Try to blend into the culture.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?
Easily accessible, affordable, and reliable.

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
It was easy to travel to neighboring countries, either by train, plane, bus or car.

Host City/Country
- What was the weather like?
Somewhat colder than that of Santa Barbara. At first, overcast and in the 60s in September, with rain every few days. Colder once it hit mid-October (50s) and colder still in November (40s). Some snow at the beginning of December.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
Berlin is very diverse with many different things to do. It is also very big and requires a lot of time to get to know your way around it.
- What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
Shopping, going out to clubs, eating in restaurants, going to bars/pubs, attending sporting events, going to museums/concerts, taking tours of the city.

- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
Very international. There are many people from outside of Germany who live in Berlin. There are also many different options when it comes to products, food, etc.

Culture
- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
  - Time & punctuality
    Punctuality was extremely important and expected of everyone.
  - Eye contact & staring
    Eye contact is a must when speaking to someone, however staring is not tolerated.
  - Relationships
    More formal than those in the US with people who are older than you or unfamiliar to you. However, casual with people your own age or people you have gotten to know.
  - More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?
    Dress is about the same as at UCSB, only without flip-flops, tank tops, short shorts, etc.
  - Alcohol consumption
    Drinking is a social hobby and is usually done so in moderation. Drinking is legal on the streets/out in public and sometimes on public transportation. Getting too drunk, however, is frowned upon and embarrassing to the Germans.
  - What culture shock did you go through?
    I learned that Germans can be very straightforward and abrupt, but despite this, they are not rude. They simply say what they feel and expect that you will do the same. Try not to be offended if a German tells you that something is not proper; they are simply stating a fact. Also, riding public transportation was very different for me because I hardly ever took it before I went to Germany.

  - Other?

Banking
- Were credit cards widely accepted?
Only in large corporations, such as airlines, some high-speed rail companies, hotels, and certain international stores. Otherwise, German debit cards and cash were the main method of payment.

- Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
Yes. It was relatively easy to do.

- If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?
Deutsches Bank was popular because it is a partner with Bank of America, and therefore did not charge any fees (aside from the actual exchange rate between dollars and euros) to withdraw money.
from your Bank of America account while abroad. Sparkasse was also popular because it is a large banking company in Germany and had many ATM locations within the city.

- Were there ATMs on campus?
Yes.