1. Preparation for exchange
   a. Helpful Information While Planning Exchange

   It’s helpful to research phone plans in your host country before you arrive so you can try to lower your phone costs per month. Vodafone and O2 are big cell service providers in Germany and Europe, but you can also find cheaper options at local grocery stores like Aldi Talk.

   Always over budget for unexpected costs, and plan out how you will bring money with you to Germany. If you are with a local bank in Vancouver, like Vancity, you cannot transfer money by yourself from your account to a foreign account while you are in Germany. It’s best to figure finances out while you are still home.

   b. Academic details (researching courses)

   If you are taking the summer semester, you can start registering for courses in April. To research courses, go on to the LMU exchange webpage and under the courses tab for exchange students you can see all the courses offered in English/German from the previous semesters. You may not get an updated list of courses offered for the semester you are taking, but I found that the course offerings from the previous semesters were mostly offered in the next year.

   c. Packing, what to bring

   - passport, passport copy, and other documents
   - Clothes, jackets (the first couple months of the summer semester is still cold)
   - 2 travel adapters
   - Power bank(s)
   - USB cords
   - Can bring router for wifi (If you’re living in student housing, internet is available but there is no cord and you will need your own router) or buy this when you arrive
   - Personal care products
   - Shower caddy (if you may be sharing the bathrooms)
   - Euros and credit cards
d. Travel and transportation

The train, tram, and bus options are excellent in Munich and the rest of Germany. This is usually one of the best mode of transportation for students. The transit network will take you anywhere you need to go. Other options are cycling or signing up for electrical scooter services.

With your student card as an LMU student, you can get a discount to ride the trains, trams, and bus lines. This cost around 170 euros for the entire semester.

Marienplatz U-Bahn Station, in the heart of Munich. Very clean.

e. Financial details (i.e. cash/credit card based society, cost of living as compared to Vancouver)

In Germany, cash is king. However, in a large city like Munich, many places accept debit and credit cards as well. Keep in mind foreign debit cards are not so widely accepted.

Munich is the most expensive city in Germany, and the cost of living here is equal or higher to living in Vancouver. One piece of good news is, Germany is fairly student friendly and you can get student discounts at some establishments. It doesn’t hurt to ask.

2. During Exchange
   a. Arrival and orientation
When you arrive, depending on how much luggage you have, you can choose to travel to your hotel or accommodation by train. There are trains connected to the main Munich Airport so it will be easy for you to travel. The ticket costs only 13 euros to ride the entire network for the day. This is a lot cheaper than taking a taxi, which will cost you ~100+ euros to get into the city.

Officially, LMU's orientation for incoming summer exchange students is around the 2nd week of April.

b. Accommodation and living

When you're applying to LMU online, there is an option to select student housing. Your housing will be assigned by “Studentenwerk” and they are who you will be paying rent to. Choosing this option is a lot cheaper than trying to find your own place in Munich. In Munich, the rent is just as high, if not higher than Vancouver’s. It will be very hard to find a place if you are a student who will be on a budget. I definitely recommend signing up for student housing.

c. Academic details (lecture format, schedules, grading, etc.)

At LMU, you add courses to your timetable online, but that does not register you for the course. Your timetable is important because that is how your grades are updated to your transcript at the end. For lectures, you do not need to register for the lecture itself, but you do need to register for the exam. Yes, exams for lectures are usually worth 100% of your grade. You may need to register for seminars or tutorials by emailing the instructor.

d. Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.)

Germans speak in a very direct way, but please don’t think they are being rude. They just don’t like to beat around the bush. They may seem distant at first, but I’ve met some of the nicest people in Germany. It would be a good idea to research cultural differences beforehand so you know what to expect.

Always stand on the right side of the escalator if you are not going to walk up. The left side is for people who want to walk up. Germans get very annoyed when someone blocks the left side. And by doing this, you are more polite.

Watch out for cycling lanes on the sidewalks in Germany and the rest of Europe. Cyclists will not slow down for you and they cycle at really fast
speeds. Make sure you’re not absent-mindedly walking on the cycling lane.

Odeonplatz, near LMU campus. Watch out for cyclists!

Munich is also the home of BMW. Make sure you drop by for a tour – there are discounts if you show your student card!

e. **Social and extra-curricular activities.**

There are always events happening in Munich. I would suggest adding social groups like Erasmus on Facebook or Instagram. They organize events for exchange students. You can also participate in sports or fitness classes -- details should be covered during the orientation.
When it's sunny during the Summer season, lots of locals and visitors alike go out and sunbathe in the fields of English Garden located in central Munich.

3. Reflection After Exchange
   a. What you've learned and the challenges you faced

   The biggest challenge for me was to learn how to restart my life because when you move to a new country it feels like you are starting over. I had to relearn what I knew from living in Vancouver and adapt to a new culture.

   During the first couple weeks, I felt very lonely and that I should just go home. I’m really glad I decided to stay because I had such an amazing experience in the end. I think everyone feels lonely and out of place at the beginning (and crushed with so much to do in the first few weeks when you arrive), but it will get better. Make sure you are actively trying to talk to fellow exchange students because everyone is trying to make friends at the start of the semester.

   b. Advice/tips for other students

   The language and/or excursion program that LMU has 1 month before the semester begins is really helpful to learn basic German and go on trips around Munich and learn more about the amazing city you are staying in. It’s also really helpful for making friends quickly when you first arrive because everyone is on exchange and is in the same situation you are.

   On one of the excursions, we visited a nearby city called, Nuremberg.