

## **Field Report: Semester in Amman, Jordan**

**Period of Stay:** October 8, 2024 – February 2025

**Introduction:** I am an ardent believer in perseverance, unwavering in my pursuit of goals regardless of the challenges that arise. From experience, I have learned that the most fulfilling and worthwhile achievements often come with unforeseen and unimaginable hurdles. My journey to Amman, Jordan, where the third leg of my academic program was set to commence on October 8, 2024, at the German-Jordanian University (GJU), was no exception. Though the journey did not go as planned, the experience reinforced my resilience and introduced me to an incredible support system that made all the difference.

**Motivation for the Stay Abroad:** My decision to pursue the regional track of my academic program in Amman, Jordan, was driven by my keen interest in mental health and psychosocial support for refugees. The program offered at the German-Jordanian University (GJU) provided a unique opportunity to gain theoretical and practical insights into this field within a regional context. Beyond academics, I also sought to immerse myself in Jordan's rich cultural and social environment.

**Preparation (Planning, Organisation, Application):** Preparation for the semester involved a detailed application process, including securing admission to GJU and applying for the PROMOS grant to support my stay. I also sought housing arrangements in advance through connections with previous NOHA students. Additionally, I familiarized myself with visa requirements and travel logistics to ensure a smooth transition.

**Arrival and Visa Process:** Originally scheduled to arrive in Amman on October 2, 2024, my journey was disrupted due to an unexpected geopolitical event—a conflict between Iran and Israel, which led to the temporary closure of Jordanian airspace. As a result, I was stranded in Ankara, Turkey, for three days, as flights to Jordan and neighboring countries were indefinitely canceled. Flights to Germany were available only after a three-day wait, leaving me in a state of uncertainty.

During this time, both my home university, Ruhr University Bochum (RUB), and GJU provided unwavering support. The NOHA staff at RUB reassured us that we would be supported regardless of our decision to continue or withdraw. GJU staff promptly sent emails and organized an online meeting to offer guidance and encouragement. Their reassurance played a crucial role in my decision to proceed with my studies in Amman.

Applying for my visa was one of the smoothest processes I have ever experienced. I submitted my application in September through the Jordanian Ministry of Interior app and received approval within two weeks. The entire process was conducted online, eliminating the need for any in-person visits or additional paperwork.

Upon finally arriving in Amman two weeks into the semester, I was welcomed warmly, and my delayed arrival was accommodated seamlessly by the university staff.

**Accommodation:** Through the assistance of previous NOHA students, a few of us secured a three-bedroom apartment, which made living arrangements more affordable. The

PROMOS grant significantly contributed to covering my share of the rent for the four-and-a-half-month stay.

**Financial Aspects:** Living expenses in Amman were moderate, with the PROMOS grant covering most of my essential costs, including rent and daily expenses. While some activities and tourist sites were expensive, group travel often reduced costs.

**Studies and Teaching Experience:** Despite my late arrival, my professors at GJU were extremely accommodating. Online classes had been arranged for those unable to attend in person, ensuring that we stayed on track. Once in Amman, I experienced an interactive and dynamic learning environment that differed from the rigid teacher-student dynamic I was accustomed to in my home country.

Classes were held four days a week—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday—typically lasting two hours each. On Wednesdays, we had an additional evening class at 5:00 PM. Professors were approachable and encouraged open discussions, making the learning experience more engaging and collaborative.

**Host Institution Support and Facilities:** GJU provided exceptional academic and administrative support. Faculty members were accessible, and there was a strong sense of community among students and staff. The university's resources and teaching methods made adapting to the new academic environment seamless.

**Daily Life and Free Time:** My daily routine involved arriving at the university by 8:30 AM for my 9:00AM classes. After classes, I often stayed back with classmates to study or work on assignments. We also explored the city's vibrant café culture. Thursday nights were equivalent to Friday nights in Western countries, as Jordan observes Friday as a religious day of rest. On these nights, we visited rooftop spots in the city to unwind.

Due to financial constraints, I did not visit many major tourist sites, as group trips were more cost-effective and the people I would have gone with had already visited them. However, the overall experience of living in Amman was fulfilling and enriching.

**Conclusion (Best and Worst Experiences):** One of the most challenging experiences was being stranded in Ankara due to the airspace closure. However, the unwavering support from both RUB and GJU turned a difficult situation into a testament to the strength of my academic community.

The best experience was the sense of peace and clarity I found in Amman. Not only did I achieve my academic goals, but the environment also provided me with personal growth and mental well-being. The city's tranquility and the support from my peers and professors helped me refocus and find renewed motivation for my studies.

#### **Helpful Tips and Links:**

- **Housing:** Reach out to previous NOHA students for affordable accommodation options.
- **Transportation:** taxis are cheap

- **Cultural Adaptation:** Fridays are a day of rest, and many establishments are closed. Plan accordingly. You're likely to have classes on Saturdays.
- **Financial Planning:** Group trips can significantly reduce travel costs to tourist sites.

**Final Thoughts:** My semester in Amman was an unforgettable experience that exceeded my expectations. Despite the initial setbacks, the warmth of the people, the academic environment, and the peaceful atmosphere made this journey one of the most valuable chapters of my education.