

# Exchange Evaluation Report

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This report is being written about my Fall 2009 study abroad semester in Copenhagen, Denmark. The experience that I had abroad was extraordinary. I'll start this report by going through some of the different aspects of my trip and exchange. These will include events leading up to the exchange, what happened when I arrived in Copenhagen, housing, academics, campus, health and safety, financial, cultural and administration aspects. I will include recommendations within the different segments of the report. After this I will conclude with a paragraph about the overall experience of the exchange.

I decided to study in Denmark when I first heard about the Scan|Design fellowship. Prior to returning to graduate school I knew that I wanted to participate in a study abroad program. I did not have the opportunity to participate in one when I was an undergraduate. After looking at the list of programs offered for MBA exchanges I determined that I wanted to study in Europe. I had never traveled to Scandinavia and became even more intrigued with Denmark and the surrounding area after doing some research and reading about the program. Copenhagen Business School (CBS) was the only institution offered in Denmark for the MBA program.

Prior to my arrival in Copenhagen there were a number of different events that took place. The application process through the Global Business Center (GBC) and the International Programs and Exchanges (IP&E) Office was very straight forward. I had no issues applying or being accepted into the exchange program. The information between the GBC and IP&E did get repetitive at times. The process to receive a visa was also very easy. It took approximately one week to receive my visa after mailing my passport to the Danish Consulate in New York City. I was a little hesitant to send my passport in the mail but everything worked out fine. The support of Anni Fuller throughout the entire application and preparation process was excellent.

The next main event that took place before the exchange was Danish 101. Taking Danish was a prerequisite to the Scan|Design fellowship. Looking back taking Danish 101 was a very beneficial experience although I would have never told you that at the time. It was by far the hardest class that I had spring quarter and took up more of my time inside and outside of class than any of my MBA courses. The most beneficial part of the class was connecting with other students that were going to be in Copenhagen in the fall and learning about the Danish culture. While it was nice to learn some of the

language prior to the exchange I used very little of it once I was there. Additionally, since Danish 101 was a 5 credit course I took one less elective than my MBA peers in the Spring and will have to take an additional class this year to make up for it. I would recommend that the Danish 101 class be modified for the fellowship students or possibly that a different course be created. If possible maybe the class could be shortened or changed into more of a balance between language and cultural aspects. The class could be more of an informal course that is not taken for credit. I would recommend one night a week where different instructors participate. The current Danish exchange students or past fellowship recipients could be involved. Financially with Danish 101 being 5 credits this pushed my course load over 18 credits and I incurred an additional tuition fee of approximately \$1000. Additionally, the books for the course were incredibly expensive (\$250+). I recommend that future fellowship recipients contact past recipients to buy the books second hand.

When I arrived in Copenhagen I had already arranged housing through CBS. There were a number of different options available to me through CBS. I chose to be in a dorm type of residence in the city center. I had my own room which was very large. This worked out very well although I was unaware of the age range of students that would be in my residence. The ages ranged from 19-31. There were some minor issues regarding cleanliness and noise since there were 10 of us on the floor sharing one kitchen and 2 bathrooms. The benefits to this arrangement were the social aspects of a dorm. Some of my best friends were the people that lived on my floor. They were from all over the world and it was very interesting interacting with them. The price of the residence was high comparable to private housing. I would recommend that future students take a good look at the housing options available to them. They should decide what their priorities are (privacy, social interaction, location, noise, etc) and choose accordingly. CBS offers a wide range of housing that was scattered throughout Copenhagen. Their website is very useful. I would also recommend either using CBS housing or having arrangements made prior to arriving in Copenhagen. I had friends that ended up living in hotels or hostels for multiple weeks until they were able to find suitable housing.

CBS offered a week long orientation that started on August 24<sup>th</sup>. The orientation was great and I would recommend that all future students participate in the program. It included a mix of academic, cultural and social events. It was an excellent way to meet the other exchange students (CBS had over 700 of them). CBS also had a buddy program for exchange students. A full time CBS student is assigned to you as a point of contact. The buddy system was a really nice touch. I exchanged emails with my buddy prior to arrival and he met me at the airport. He had the keys to my residence and helped to show me around the town.

Academically Copenhagen Business School is very different than the MBA program at the University of Washington. First one thing that I did not realize was that I was not part of the MBA program at CBS. CBS had a full time MBA program but exchange students were not included in it. I took courses with the traditional business grad students. The average age in the classroom was probably 21-22 as compared to 27-28 in a MBA classroom at UW. I would recommend that partnerships be established with the MBA program at Copenhagen Business School and that future exchange students be offered the opportunity to take the MBA classes. The classroom structure was very similar to the University of Washington. All four of my classes averaged about 40 students. The instruction and

teacher/student relations varied widely between my four classes. The thing that I learned about CBS is that the quality of the education is very closely linked to the choice of classes and instructors. The academic experience of the exchange students varied widely. I would recommend that exchange students contact prior or current CBS students to find out which classes and instructors are the best. For example, I took a Corporate Social Responsibility class taught by Jette Steen Knudsen that was very interactive and one of the best courses that I have taken in my MBA. On the other hand I took International Logistics that was not a very good course and where I learned very little. Another course I would recommend is International Negotiations. The coursework that I took at CBS will fit in with my MBA coursework and count towards elective credits.

One of the main differences in academics between CBS and UW was the classroom contact hours. I would say that on average I had approximately half of the instruction hours that I would have had at UW. There is much more reading and learning that is expected of the students to be done outside of the classroom. The grading and exam system is also very different. In total for 4 courses I submitted 3 research papers and took one 4hr closed book final. I have not yet received the grades for my courses. I had very little group work throughout the semester. The library, IT and classroom facilities offered by CBS are all excellent. The campus is very nice and offers a great social opportunity to students. The best part of CBS was interacting with Danish and International students.

Copenhagen is a very beautiful and safe city. At no time did I feel that my safety was a concern. Multiple times I would be out in the city late at night and walk home and there were never any issues. I had a bicycle and rode it every day to school. I would highly recommend getting a bicycle. Cycling around Copenhagen was one of the best parts of my exchange. It really makes you feel like part of the Danish culture. As a Danish exchange student you will also receive a CPR number (Danish social security number) and be assigned a doctor. I did not need to see the doctor while I was there but from what I heard from others it was very easy to do. Almost everyone speaks English and is very easy to approach and ask questions.

The best way that I found to integrate into the culture and meet Danes was to join a club. I joined a running club at school and made some great friends. With the limited number of class hours I would highly recommend joining a club or a group either associated with the school or the community. Outside of the running club the majority of my other friends were either international students or fellow Scan|Design fellows. The cultural differences that I encountered between Denmark and the United States were minimal. I would recommend that future exchange students sit down and chat for an hour or so with a past exchange student to find out about some of the little differences (grocery stores, metro, biking, shopping, etc.)

Another way that I was able to meet members of the community was by searching out business contacts. I was able to find a UW graduate that was working at Maersk. It was very interesting to meet with her and learn about working and living in Denmark from an American's perspective. I was also able to make a connection with the international company that I interned with over the previous summer. I spent a couple of days out in their suburban Copenhagen offices and even attended their Christmas

party. I know have some excellent business contacts that I may look up again if I return to Denmark to work.

Denmark is one of the most expensive places that I have ever visited. Without the financial support of the Scan|Design foundation I would not have been able to afford the exchange. Overall I spend approximately \$23,000 on the exchange. This includes all housing payments and tuition charges. It also includes a couple of small trips around Europe. I would recommend budgeting a total of \$22,000-\$25,000 for the exchange (including UW tuition). If you take out the UW tuition and some of the trips this would breakdown to approximately \$3500 a month. Everything is expensive in Denmark. One expense that I did not think about initially was books for classes. I found that it was less expensive to order the books in the US on Amazon and send them to Denmark. All of the books should be available in the library as well. I would recommend waiting to buy books until you find that they are actually needed. It was the case for many classes that they are only needed for a couple of days at the end of the term to use as references for research papers. I did not have any other unexpected expenses and did not have any complications using financial aid. It was beneficial to receive a portion of the fellowship funding prior to traveling to Denmark. This helped to cover the plane ticket and the first housing payment. Another recommendation is to be aware that the remainder of the fellowship money will not be dispersed until after the UW quarter starts and to budget accordingly. For me this was about 5 weeks after I had arrived in Denmark. I used ATMs to access money from home. The only wire transfer that I made was for housing payments. Some credit cards from the US work in Denmark but it was very unreliable. If you do not feel comfortable carrying around cash I would recommend opening a Danish bank account and obtaining a VISA card. From what I heard this was not very hard to do.

The Scan|Design administration both in Seattle and Denmark were outstanding. I feel truly lucky to be part of the fellowship community. It was very nice having a community of UW students in Copenhagen. Some of the highlights of the exchange included the trip to Bornholm and Thanksgiving dinner. I thought all of the events in Denmark were excellent. Marianne Stoelen did an amazing job coordinating activities and making each and every one of us feel at home in Copenhagen. One recommendation that I have is to increase the connections between current and former Copenhagen exchange students. The students that have lived in Copenhagen and completed an exchange have a large amount of knowledge that they could pass on to the new students. Possibly set up a lunch or dinner reception where the students that are getting ready to travel to Copenhagen could meet with past exchange students and ask questions.

The administration of Copenhagen Business School was not very impressive. Their website provides a wealth of knowledge but it is very hard to navigate. Course information was not available until very late and many of the course times conflict. I changed almost all of my classes after my arrival in Copenhagen. I would recommend signing up for classes as soon as possible and then finalizing the schedule once in Copenhagen. As mentioned earlier I would also recommend finding a way to enroll in MBA level courses.

I think that any outgoing MBA student would be well suited for the exchange to Copenhagen Business School. I say outgoing because with an exchange the amount of interaction you have with

others will greatly affect your experience there. Some of the most memorable experiences that I have come from activities (such as run club or volunteering for a climate conference) that were not directly involved with school. I would recommend trying to get involved in as many activities in Denmark as possible. The course load will more than likely be less than a normal UW term so there should be plenty of time to participate in events and experience the culture.

Overall the quality of the experience I had in Denmark was outstanding. The exchange exceeded my expectations. The Scan|Design fellowship made a huge difference in the cultural experience that I had. The greatest benefit was the exceptional group of people that I was able to become friends with. I'm sure that some of the other Scan|Design fellows will be friends of mine for the rest of my life. Additionally, the fellowship with the help of Marianne Stoelen exposed me to many cultural aspects of Denmark that I would not have discovered on my own. It truly set apart my exchange experience from my peers at other institutions. The biggest challenge was adjusting to life in another country and being away from friends and family for an extended period of time. There were moments during the exchange when I did feel a little homesick. The best way that I found to deal with that was to go out and explore Denmark, participate in activities and meet people.

I would like to conclude saying thank-you to the Scan|Design Fellowship board and administration. Without their incredible generosity this memorable segment of my life would not have been possible. I look forward to meeting the next group of fellowship recipients and hearing all of the wonderful stories about Denmark.