

I decided to apply to study Denmark because of its strong reputation for progressive urban planning and design. I chose the University of Copenhagen for its masters program in urban design. Professor Manish Chalana recommended the Faculty of Life Sciences (in which the urban design program is located). In addition, I saw that the program offered classes that would likely count as requirements for my masters degree in urban planning at the College of Built Environments at UW.

I cannot recommend that future students stay at the student apartment house (individual student apartments - studio layout) I was given by the Univ. of Copenhagen's Faculty of Life Sciences. The studio apartment was small (22 square meters) and overpriced (4800 DKK per month). Unfortunately, it is difficult to find housing on one's own, so I would still recommend applying for student housing unless it's possible to arrange for private housing ahead of time. If applying for student housing, I would recommend requesting the cheapest housing (dormitory style living), which is likely to provide you a private sleeping area and communal kitchen/social area that would, overall, provide more living space at a cheaper price than the individual student apartment.

The Faculty of Life Sciences (Univ. of Copenhagen) was quite good in providing orientation materials, Danish student contact and orientation events. The orientation event covered housing instructions, academic information, etc. It was an all-day comprehensive event that also provided contact and written information for future questions.

The instruction I received varied by class. In two of my courses ('theories of urban design' and 'urban ecosystems'), the instruction was similar to that at the Univ. of Washington. They included lectures from the course instructors, student presentations and field trips. They differed in that they were co-taught by two instructors and had more in-class time for discussion and exercises than my classes at the Univ. of Washington. Generally, more participation was asked of the students than at the Univ. of Washington. The final examinations were oral exams (approx. 10 minutes). I received grades that I found to accurately reflect my effort and performance. Future students would feel comfortable in these courses with a background related to urban design, urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, or ecology.

My studio course ('the urbanism studio') was organized such that the first half of the course would be centered around group work, whereas the second half would be more focused on individual deliverables. This course was also co-taught. The content was more abstract than I've experienced at the Univ. of Washington and, in addition, more concerned with aesthetic design than analytics. This course was taught by two architects who did not provide as much instruction as they did critique. It was a very demanding course that required weekly deliverables of models, posters, booklets, and videos using Adobe creative software. Future students should have a background in model making, Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe InDesign before enrolling in the course unless (like me) they are willing to teach themselves as they go. Future students with a background in architecture or landscape architecture would likely do well in this studio course.

In general, the classroom, library, computing, etc. facilities were excellent and comparable to the CBE facilities at the Univ. of Washington. The campus was very nice and located in Frederiksberg, an interesting and comfortable area of Copenhagen with parks, cafes, bars, etc. I

had fewer health concerns living in Copenhagen than living in Seattle due to the medical coverage provided by the state and safer biking infrastructure.

I think for someone from Seattle it is very easy to acclimate to Danish culture. The weather is, like Seattle, cold, rainy and gray. The culture, however, is adapted to this climate, providing many cozy indoor social spaces. Danish people speak excellent English and are friendlier than they believe themselves to be. It is easy to meet Danish friends through classes (especially intensive studio courses) and at social events arranged by the schools (Friday bars, Christmas parties, etc.). Copenhagen residents are worldly and interested in conversing with Americans. One challenging cultural difference is that Danes are less likely to make exceptions to explicit rules to suit individual circumstances. Therefore, it's best to be organized.

Financially, it can be difficult if the money from Scan|Design does not arrive until the beginning of the Fall quarter. I was expected to pay for ½ of my housing in August and began school at the onset of September. In effect, I had to front the housing money and costs of living out of my own pocket (private loans) without financial or fellowship assistance. Otherwise, I encountered no problems financially.

Scan|Design does an excellent job of preparing students for the exchange. The best resource is Anni Fuller, who does an outstanding job of helping students with issues related to their individual circumstances. Anni helped me over email and is very knowledgeable and competent with all issues related to the exchange. The IPE office is also good in helping students to understand application/credit processes, which can be complicated given that the Danish semester spans approximately 1.5 Univ. of Washington quarters and uses a distinct credit award system. My major concern with credit/grades is that the Danish grading system is completely different than the Univ. of Washington's grading scale. For example, a '7' grade in Denmark is considered a 'good' grade that many students will receive in any given class and be satisfied. I could be wrong, but I believe a '7' is translated to an American 'C' grade, which is usually reserved for students who perform poorly in a course at the Univ. of Washington.

Overall, I had an excellent time in Denmark and hope to return. I very much liked the Danish culture (sense of humor, etc.), which I find complimentary to that of the Seattle area. The education level is very high and it requires motivated students who will participate in class, work well in groups and work hard on his/her own time. It is my impression that Danish students work hard and also strive to use their free time effectively to make/continue social contacts and pursue other hobbies/activities. I believe that I got more out of my experience as a graduate student than I would have as an undergraduate student. I have learned a great deal about the importance of attractive design in my urban planning work and have also had a glimpse into what it's like to work in Europe, having had lectures from working professionals in Copenhagen. I have left Denmark with friends not only in Copenhagen, but also from other parts of Europe (who were also exchange students). The world today feels smaller for me and I look forward to continuing to collaborate with Danish individuals, academic institutions, etc. as it is very clear that there is a great interest in Denmark in pursuing progressive solutions to issues faced by professionals in the urban planning, urban design, architecture and landscape architecture fields.