

Karen Bien
University of Copenhagen
Spring 2010
kbien@wisc.edu

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

1. I decided to study in Denmark because of the program offered by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I wanted an exchange program where I would be directly enrolled in a foreign institution, so that I could study alongside other international students and Danes. I selected the University of Copenhagen program because I wanted to study in a large city, and have many different options for classes. I expected the program to be academically challenging and culturally very rewarding. I knew that I would not be surrounded by only American students, so I knew that I would be able to immerse myself in Danish culture. I made several preparations prior to arriving in Denmark. In addition, to securing a visa and residency permit, I applied for housing through the university and requested a Danish mentor from the school's international office. I also joined all of the Erasmus Facebook groups, so that I could start communicating with the other exchange students. I feel like my arrival to Denmark went very smoothly. However, I should have selected a hotel next to my dormitory. It was difficult to transport everything by myself.
2. I stayed at a very small hotel in Amager, but I should have stayed at the Hotel Cabin Metro, which is right next to my building, Signalhuset. I wanted to be in a busy part of the city, but since the future students will have so much time to explore Copenhagen, my recommendation is to stay as close to your building as possible. I felt that both the University of Copenhagen and the University of Wisconsin provided excellent orientation programs. I did not feel like I learned anything new at the Copenhagen orientation because my home university provided all of that information. Also the materials that Copenhagen mailed to me were extremely helpful. Although the Copenhagen orientation proved to be mostly redundant, the topics were important and a good way of meeting people. I also attended the pre-semester language course, which everyone should do. I think that the University of Wisconsin should put more emphasis on how important the class is for most students. It is the absolute best way to meet friends. The students who arrived a month after as felt it was much harder to meet people and many groups were already established. I found incredible friends because of the pre-semester class. I was not informed that I was a Scan|Design recipient until after I had settled in to my life in Copenhagen.
3. I found the academics at KU to be very different from my home university. The class registration process would have been easier if the school website was in English, but the Politics Department was very accommodating when I went to the office. They just enrolled for me because I could not figure out how to register on the website. I enjoyed the classroom structure. I was used to having very large classes, so I liked being able to have discussions directly with our professor during class. At KU, there is more of a personal relationship between students and professors. They treat you like equals and seem truly interested to hear your opinions. In Wisconsin, students interact with their

TAs, while professors typically just run the lectures. I was told that the grading would be much more difficult in Copenhagen. However, I was able to achieve the same grade level. If you put in the work during exam time, then your grades will reflect that. In addition, the exam formats are either a long paper or an oral examination. Most people that I met, besides the law students, chose to write a paper. I spent over a month in the library everyday to finish my two papers. While it typically took several days to receive an email back from the administration, they were very helpful any time I had a question. I absolutely became a library expert in Copenhagen. I am not able to study in cafes, so I spent a significant amount of time in the libraries doing research a writing my appears. The library at Wisconsin is extremely helpful and efficient, so I was sometimes frustrated in Copenhagen. However, everyone is always willing to help and learning the library website saved me a lot of stress. The classrooms are very nice and the entire Humanities campus is brand-new. My experience with the classroom instruction was mixed. One of my classes was very organized, while the other one was not. I felt like one of my professors did not come very prepared for class, although he was very knowledgeable about the subject. I went in to his office hours frequently, and he always explained the subject well and helped direct me with the paper. However, I know many of the students were frustrated by his classroom instruction. The Danish Culture Course however was an excellent class. There were different lecturers most weeks, and the excursions were also well thought out. I loved that the classes were small and everyone could have an open discussion about the subject being studied. I disliked that the total academic freedom. I only had one assignment in each class, which was a paper. I really like being tested throughout a course, which several small and large assignments. I sometimes felt like I did not have clear direction in class. I think the single most important class to take is the pre-semester language course because of the number of people you meet. I also really enjoyed the Danish culture class. Many of my friends enjoyed the Media Law class

4. My housing arrangements in Signalhuset, a kollegium, were fantastic. I made incredible friends in my apartment, but I still had my own room. The building was built in 2006, so everything functioned well and was very clean. The building is far away from the city center, but on the metro. I felt at the end of the program that I was much happier being further away with so many friends, then in a smaller building in the center. The University of Copenhagen provided the housing for me. I did not have a choice in housing. I would recommend mine, but the most talked about building is Tietgen on the Islands Brygge campus. The building is incredibly beautiful, but there are very few international students there, so it is harder to make close friends. Signalhuset is half international and half Danish, so I made friends from a variety of places. These buildings are nothing like dormitories at Wisconsin. Most students have their own room and bathroom, so it is a great balance between privacy and social life.
5. The University of Copenhagen campus was beautiful. The campus is spread out throughout the city, but each campus is beautiful. There were libraries and computer labs available everywhere. I took classes at the Islands Brygge campus and the city campus. Both were very accessible by metro. The city campus is in a beautiful part of the city with many shops and restaurants. It is also near a lot of the tourist attractions. The Islands Brygge campus does not have a nice surrounding area, but is very close to the city by bike and metro. The campus is new and looks very modern.

6. Copenhagen is generally a very safe city. There was only one time during the entire six months that I felt in danger. I was almost mugged in the city center, but it was very late at night and I was walking home alone. I also know a few people who were pick-pocketed too, but Copenhagen is much safer than other major cities. Denmark has universal health care, so if anything happens during the trip, anyone who has a residency permit gets full medical benefits. My neighbor in the dormitory broke her foot, and was thrilled with the care she received at the hospital.
7. I was able to immerse myself in the Danish culture by meeting people in my dorm. Half of my building had students from Denmark, so I met many people from the country. I tried to speak the language when I was out. For example, I would order food in Danish. I did not join any clubs, but I regret that I did not join the student athletic club. I joined a gym early on in the program, so I was able to take classes through them. I also became close with a mentor. He was a friend's mentor, and invited us out on several tourist trips. We also ate out a few times. I did not experience a lot of culture shock. The only real issue is that Danes tend to be more reserved making friends. However, the international students are easy to meet, and since I put in effort to become close with Danes, I made a few close friends. Copenhagen is a very international city, so people are welcoming to foreigners. Danes are very politically liberal compared to the United States. I agree with their political views, but some Americans that I knew struggled to talk international students about politics. Every aspect of politics is so far left what many Americans are used to. However, as a politics major, I loved hearing their views about government, culture, and health care.
8. The Scan|Design fellowship completely transformed my experience in Copenhagen. I was able to travel all over Denmark and the rest of Europe. I was also able to participate in all of the tourist attractions during the program. I really took advantage of all of the castles, tours, museums, and sports games that I could. I also was able to very occasionally eat out, which was something that I never would have done without the scholarship. I was really able to enjoy the country in a way that would not have been financially possible. I opened a bank account at Nordea bank and transferred money in installments. The value of the dollar changed while I was there, due to the European economy. If I had transferred all the money in on lump sum, then I would have lost value in the transfer. I spent about \$800 a month on all expenses, except for rent. I paid my full rent before I arrived in Copenhagen, which was \$4000, including the deposit. Copenhagen is a very expensive city, but I did not do any shopping and very rarely went to cafes. I spent a significant part of my budget on traveling and sightseeing. My only unexpected expense was my computer completely broke down in the middle of the trip, and it needed to be replaced. I spend very little money when I am at home in Madison. The cost of food is the most shocking price increase. However, I was careful and spent money well while I was there.
9. I thought the Scan|Design program is a well-oiled machine. The two mentors in Copenhagen, Marianne and Anne Line, are wonderful. They were so friendly and knowledgeable. We did a variety of activities. I went to Dyrehaven, Marianne's summer house, a soccer game, and several dinner parties. I loved the dinner parties because they were so comfortable and a great way of getting to know each other. I only met my coordinator after I had been in Denmark for over a month, so I cannot comment on how helpful she was earlier.

10. The exchange is best designed for someone who wants to meet people from all over the world. A huge number of the Wisconsin exchange programs are with only other Americans. This is a direct exchange, so you should be prepared to be open to meeting people very different. I met so many people from around the world, who spoke many different languages. The people that I met in Denmark were the best part of the experience, and I know I have made life-long friendships.
11. My overall experience was fantastic. I could not have asked for a better exchange experience. I loved Denmark, Copenhagen, my friends, my building, and my school. I also loved the flexibility I had to travel around Europe. The Scan|Design program was also a great venue for meeting people and provided me with the funding to make the abroad experience feasible. I had very high expectations for the experience, and I feel the Copenhagen program exceeded all of them. I was very nervous about traveling completely by myself, but I adjusted well and the academics were strong. I still feel as though the University of Wisconsin is more challenging academically, but the people I met at my university in Copenhagen were highly intelligent. Scan|Design has found the two best possible coordinators in Copenhagen. They were so helpful throughout the experience. The greatest benefit to studying abroad is the amazing people you meet. I know that I can make friends with people from countries around the world, and they absolutely changed me for the better. The biggest challenge for me is being away from my family. I am very close to them, but Skype makes the distance seem much smaller.

THANKS YOU SO MUCH SCAN|DESIGN!