

Darcie Walston
Copenhagen Business School
Spring 2011
darcie.walston@gmail.com

When I applied to study at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) for the spring of 2011 I had already studied abroad in Denmark from July 2009- July 2010. During my first study abroad I was a student at the University of Copenhagen (KU) and took one class per semester at CBS as I was playing with the idea of taking a business related master after undergrad at the time. Those few classes at CBS are what confirmed my interest and led me to take a full semester at CBS in order to finish up my graduate pre-requisite courses. Since I had already spent time in Denmark and had personal connections and a job in Copenhagen after my first study abroad I was eager to return to pick up where I left off.

The biggest reason I chose CBS was because it is a business school and would offer those pre-requisites required to apply to a masters program. I also was partial to CBS because I had an opportunity to meet some full time CBS students who discussed the student life and “campus atmosphere” as being much more unified than at KU which I had experienced the year before.

Before I departed for my study abroad at CBS I made copies of important documents such as my passport, prescription information, materials given at orientation, and contact information for those people I met at orientation that were also from Madison or CBS. I also exchanged contact information with my parents and helped them set up Skype on their computer. There are always more things that can be done to make the move more convenient such as setting up a calling account on skype for my parents so they could call my cell phone at any time or looking into the banking system in Denmark to see if it would be more efficient to open an account while abroad or use my home account but many things, such as banking in Denmark are more easily understood when in Denmark and with a buddy assigned by the school who can come along for situations such as this.

Although I was always in an apartment during my time abroad, I would recommend staying in a dormitory residence or “kollegium”, because students are

often given their own room and bathroom and share a kitchen with ten to twenty other students on the same floor which makes it easy to meet people right off the bat. CBS provides a full week of welcome activities for a small fee of about fifty dollars. During this week there is basic information about the school, practical information and study procedures as well as social events in the afternoons and evenings. This was particularly helpful in getting basic and important information and getting to know the other students at the same time. CBS also offers a one-week Danish crash course which I would highly recommend both because it is good to learn some of the language of your new home and because it is a great way to meet people and have time to spend with them as the classes are quite small. Our ScanDesign coordinator welcomed us via e-mail and scheduled a coffee meet-and-greet upon our arrival which was a good way to get in-touch with some fellow UW-Madison students, while we didn't spend a lot of time together the ScanDesign group was a great support to have as it was one more connection made while abroad.

The structure of academics at CBS and administration is very different from UW-Madison. For students studying at CBS, registration for classes is done before hand so that the student can discuss the possible transfer courses with an advisor. If any changes need to be made once the student is abroad, there is a period of one to two weeks (usually starting during intro week) in which the classes can be changed at the international office. The fastest and most effective way to get administrative issues worked out is to go in-person to the international office for face-to-face help. Generally speaking, classes are much more self-driven at CBS than they are at UW-Madison. The student is given a syllabus and is expected to keep up with it without reminder. Teachers are available for questions before and after class but often do not hold official office hours instead appointments need to be made for out-of-class instruction. Exams are usually based on sets of broad questions meaning that memorizing material for a test is rarely effective because students usually need to explain a theory from several angles and include examples. This approach may sound intimidating but if a student reads the text and goes to class, the exams are very manageable. CBS has one main library that has an attached computer room. The library is always busy and almost always full therefore getting

a seat to study or read is very difficult after 9:00 am however there are many group rooms and study-friendly areas in all of the CBS school buildings. One very beneficial element of teaching at CBS is the emphasis placed on group work. This not only gives students an opportunity to meet others but it often helps to have a group to talk through material with and help each other in studying for the exam..

As stated previously, I was in an apartment during both of my study abroad periods. While this arrangement was fitting for me because I had a connection in Denmark who facilitated my living situation, I would not recommend listing apartment living as a first priority on the housing form because it is very difficult to meet people in an apartment situation. The majority of friends during the spring of 2011 lived at Peder Skramsgade. Here, students have their own rooms but share a bathroom and kitchen with about 20 other floor-mates. Therefore the living is not glamorous but the location is. It is a short walk from the metro as well as some great sights and areas such as Kongens Nytorv, Amalienborg, and Nyhavn and a short bike ride from everything in central Copenhagen. If I were to make a suggestion, this would be it.

CBS is located in a section of Copenhagen called Frederiksberg that is located about a 10 minute bike ride outside of the city center in a neighborhood with small families and young college students bustling between the shopping center, cafes and boutiques that are situated around CBS campus. The CBS campus has primarily two or three major areas where Solbjerg Plads is the main building for CBS and has the greatest "campus atmosphere"

It is important to remember that while Copenhagen is a very safe for being a large urban area it is still a large urban area. As far as safety is concerned, follow the same rules you would at your home university such as going out and walking home in groups at night and staying aware of your surroundings. Upon arrival in Copenhagen all students need to go to the "kommune" to get a CPR card, which is like a social security and health insurance card in one. The office is located on the corner of Nyropsgade and H.C. Andersens Boulevard. This is one of the most (if not the most) important errand to run upon arrival in Copenhagen but requires that the student has obtained his or her visa before requesting the card. This card is used

often for things such as buying a telephone or going to the doctor. Each student is assigned a doctor based on the district they are living in so the clinic is never more than a short walk or bike away. There is a number for these clinics on the CPR card so if in need of care that is not an emergency, call this doctor's number. However, in the case of emergency the number in Denmark is 112.

If I could only recommend one thing for students planning to study abroad in Denmark, it would be to learn some Danish while abroad. Danes are very friendly but very private people. They tend to be more reserved than Americans. The best way to meet people in Denmark (especially Danes) is to learn Danish. There is an opportunity to meet other international students in Danish classes and after your skills have developed enough to have a short conversation, it is much easier to both start a conversation with a Dane and keep one once you have showed your interest in their language and culture. Danes are not snobbish about language and are often eager to speak English but you will often receive a friendly welcome if you try to speak Danish with a Dane. Danes also tend to have close groups of friends and are not quite as open with strangers and new people as Americans, that is to say, it takes a bit of time to build a friendship with a Dane but just be persistent and with time you can build a great friendship with a Dane. A bit of advice culturally when hanging out with Danish people is keep your word when making plans. It is very rude to say "we should get together next weekend for coffee" if you don't follow up or actually plan to go. We as Americans tend to say things like "we should get together sometime" or "lets go get a drink after class" as a friendly gesture showing that we would like to spend time with someone "sometime" but not necessarily exactly when stated. The most important thing to remember with Danes is to be honest, if you want to get coffee next weekend, then make plans to do it and if you can't make it to a party call and let the host or hostess know as soon as possible. The Danes respect this and are more likely to get in touch with you again if you are up-front with them.

ScanDesign's assistance in my study abroad was more than helpful, it was in fact, what allowed me to study all together. As a fifth year senior it would have been at best difficult for me to study abroad without the help of ScanDesign even though I

had a part time job in Copenhagen where I worked 15 hours per week. I found the best way to transfer or access money my first year abroad was to open a Danish account because I was going to be spending a full year there and would be working. I know many students who studied for one semester found it easier to use their bank account from home if they had a VISA debit card or would withdraw cash periodically from ATMs. Copenhagen is an expensive city therefore I would suggest budgeting \$1000-\$1300 per month for rent, food, transportation and miscellaneous expenses. Some unexpected expenses were transport the metro and bus system can get very expensive if used every day so the best way of lowering transport costs is to buy a bike. Copenhagen is not very big and very flat so biking from one end of the city to the other doesn't take more than 20 minutes. Generally speaking everything is more expensive, but minimizing how often you go out to eat or drink can do a lot in keeping the costs down. Groceries are also slightly more expensive but going out is very expensive and it is not uncommon to pay twenty-five or thirty dollars for a burger and a coke.

Our ScanDesign coordinator was welcoming and contacted us almost immediately after our arrival with the first scheduled get together. When we met for coffee we had the chance to ask questions and get some ideas about common things like where to shop for groceries or clothes or fun places to eat to sites to see. The ScanDesign group was a great way to connect with people from home that were going through the same things at the same time and could share the experience and memories after returning to Madison again, I think this was a great benefit of having the ScanDesign group. The activities that were planned for us were great because they were experiences I either would not have thought of, would not have been able to fund or both such as going to Aarhus or the island Hven which were great opportunities to see beyond Copenhagen. While there was no central ScanDesign office our guide made herself available by phone or email and encouraged us to feel free to contact her at any time.

The ideal student for this particular study abroad is one who is looking for an unforgettable experience and is excited about going out and grabbing hold of it. While Denmark can be experienced passively, a student will find the most

satisfaction in participating in Denmark by trying to speak the language, eat the food and talk to the Danes. To get the most out of Denmark a student needs to be ready to go out and explore it in many ways.

I would give my experience top ratings in quality in large part due to my ability to experience Danish culture and society through language experiences are much more rich when experienced the way Danes experience them. This advantage was made even more valuable when ScanDesign facilitated trips and experiences to parts of Denmark that were almost unknown to me. While Danish language skills are without a doubt the greatest benefit of studying abroad, they can also be the most challenging as it takes time, patients, a lot of practice, and a sense of humor to get it to a functioning level but the reward is great as every step further into Danish language is a step into Danish society and culture.

I would recommend this program and applying to become a ScanDesign fellow to anyone who is passionate about learning and experiencing by doing. Denmark is a little country with great history, people, and personality that facilitate an experience of a lifetime for a student abroad.

If you are a student planning to study in Denmark please feel free to email me with any questions. I am now living and working in Copenhagen so for those students who may be abroad now, or next semester I would be more than happy to get together for any questions or just to chat over coffee!