

## EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

**Student Name:** Daire Byrne  
**Institution where you studied:** Aarhus University  
**Semester of participation:** Fall 2019  
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### 1. Pre-Exchange. Why and Where:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
  - I was curious about living and experiencing life in Scandinavia in general, and the fact that UW had the ScanDesign fellowship made me attracted to Denmark specifically.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
  - I more chose the city. I wanted to be in a smaller city, so was attracted to Aarhus. I wanted to have options regarding which classes I could take, so I liked that Aarhus University was a big university.
- c. What were your expectations?
  - I didn't really have any! I just wanted to move abroad and experience a new place.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
  - I got a residence permit (travelled to Houston in June to do this), housing through the university, and signed up for classes through my assigned adviser.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
  - I think I was as prepared as I could be. It would have been nice to have bedding/essentials in my room when I got there, but that was not possible.

### 2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
  - I stayed with my boyfriend who was living in Copenhagen at the time for a few nights before taking the train to Aarhus. I moved into my apartment on the day I arrived in Aarhus.
- b. Comment on the orientation and activities offered at both your home University and the host University, what did it cover and how did it help you prepare / adjust after arriving?

The orientation was fine and useful, but they did not provide any information that I did not already know/was not in online materials. The orientation covered general information about the university, getting a CPR number, how classes operate, etc.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
  - class registration

An adviser registered for me. Was more difficult and tedious than my home university's registration. Was frustrating having to go through someone to know if classes were full/if I could register. The adviser was

very helpful, though, and was able to get me in classes I was interested in.

- classroom structure

Pretty similar to smaller classes at UW in the way the classes were structured. All of my classes were 3 hours long but had plenty of break time, and were overall pretty informal and relaxed.

- instruction

Professors were all very open and easy to talk to. All of my instructors were great and were good at responding to emails/questions.

- teacher/student relations

Teachers were very approachable and were not intimidating, which was nice. I did not feel like I was at a disadvantage because I was an exchange student.

- grading/exams

All of my exams were longer papers. I was worried about my exam performance because I heard that European universities are much stricter with grading and give out less A's than American ones, but I got generally good grades on all my exams. I was only confused about one of my exam marks, but it was not anything too concerning.

- administration

I did not really interact with administration besides emailing my adviser for class registration. The international office helped with moving in and out, and not much besides that.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

The libraries in Aarhus are AMAZING! I loved studying in all of them and found them very productive environments. Also the public library DOKK1 is a nice place to study.

**b. Evaluate the quality and content of instruction.**

It was all great! Not too different from smaller classes at UW. Teachers were very attentive and knowledgeable.

**c. In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?**

I liked the actual instructors and classes. It was hard getting used to the Danish system that does not have a lot of official homework and the only graded assignment is the final exam, but the instructors were generally clear about what they were looking for with the final exam papers.

**d. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?**

I took Modern American Horror with Mathias Clasen and loved it. Mathias was a great lecturer, and the class itself was fun and interesting. It was one of my favorite classes I have ever taken, including the classes I have taken at UW.

**3. HOUSING:**

**a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?**

I lived in Munkegade Kollegiet. The apartment was mostly other Danish students so it was difficult to meet and connect to people. I wished that I was in more of a dorm style living situation, it would have made it easier to build a community where I was living. However, Munkegade Kollegiet is very nice and was one of the best-located student apartments (right in the city center and close to the University), so it was very easy to get downtown and meet with people and I did not need to spend much money on public

transportation (I probably used the busses in Aarhus less than 10 times).

- b.** How did you locate your housing?  
Using Google Maps.

**4. EXCHANGE SITE:**

In general, please describe your impressions of the host University campus and its location and surrounding community.

Aarhus is a great city, and the university itself is also a great place to learn and take classes. Compared to Copenhagen, where I also spent a good amount of time, Aarhus was much more manageable and easy to live in. Aarhus is also very friendly, beautiful, and safe – I am really glad that I ended up there.

**5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

Describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study.

None at all! The worst thing that happened to me was losing my wallet, but it was promptly returned to me with all of its contents (including the 200 kroner!)

**6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:**

- a.** How did you integrate into the host country culture and meet members of the community? (e.g., mentors, clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)  
I mainly met people through my classes and international nights. I do wish that I had more time and chances to connect with people, especially local Danes, but because of my living situation I did not. I did get to know Danes in my classes and through ScanDesign events, though, and they were all very open to conversation and interesting to talk to. The Studenterhus had a variety of weekend trips that weren't too expensive and were very fun and a good way of meeting people and seeing more of Denmark!
- b.** Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)  
The main cultural differences were language and basic interaction-based. I found that Danes were not as reserved as I expected them to be, all of the people I met in my classes were very friendly and open. I did not experience any huge cultural differences and challenges – Denmark isn't *that* different from Seattle in a lot of ways.

**7. FINANCIAL:**

- a.** Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.  
ScanDesign is *the* reason I went to Denmark. They made studying abroad a lot more accessible and less stressful financially. ScanDesign completely covered my tuition for the semester and I had a bit of money leftover for rent/living expenses. So, I had a lot more money to use to travel around Denmark and around Europe in general. I also really appreciated the dinners/trips that ScanDesign funded, it was a great way to get to know alumni and Denmark more closely.
- b.** What is the best way to access/transfer money?

I had two no-foreign-transaction-fee credit cards, and paid the bills using the card's mobile app. My parents would also occasionally send me money, but did so electronically because we are in the same credit union. I did not set up a Danish bank account and did not ever really need one.

- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

My rent was ~\$400 a month, spent around \$400-\$500 a month on food, and \$30 a month on transportation (I rented a bike through swapfiets and had a rejsekort to use on busses in Aarhus and Copenhagen). So, around \$1000 a month is probably a comfortable a month to budget for basic living expenses. If you want to travel, I would recommend a bit more or having an outside travel budget.

- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.

Housing was *much* cheaper. Food is a bit more expensive, but groceries are pretty comparable (restaurants are just a lot more expensive). Seattle is an expensive city in the US, so I was not too shocked in Denmark by the prices of most things.

## 8. EXCHANGE/SCAN | DESIGN FELLOWSHIP COORDINATORS AND ADMINISTRATION:

### Coordinator team

Comment on the assistance by the Scan|Design Fellowship coordinators and administration before your departure, upon arrival, and during your stay. What worked and what could be improved or changed?

- Before departure, it would have been useful to get a bit more information about the visa/arrival process. Other than that I never really had any troubles I needed assistance for, but felt comfortable and knew where to reach out if I needed to.

### Activities

Comment on the number and type of activities arranged by the coordinators. What worked and what would you like replaced with some other activity.

There was a welcome dinner soon after we arrived which was nice, and all the events/activities ScanDesign planned were very fun and a good way to get to know Denmark and other fellows.

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

Maybe more longer trips? Possible a trip to Skagen or something? I never got the chance to go and it is kind of difficult to get to.

## 9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Describe the type of student for whom this exchange is best suited and what advice would you give to future students.

Anyone! As long as you are comfortable being more independent and not having a group to be with the whole time. Exchange in general requires a good amount of independence, autonomy, and comfort doing things by yourself. It was really nice having the support of ScanDesign, though, and having group activities every so often!

## 10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

**a.** How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?

It was great!

**b.** How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?

I think they were generally realistic, but I didn't go in with any huge expectations to begin with. ScanDesign definitely made it more financial feasible in general, and it was nice to know that I had a community of people in Denmark that I could meet up with even though I came in not really knowing other people.

**c.** What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?

Benefit: being able to live in a different country and among a different culture for a short period of time while being able to have financial support and little outside commitments

Challenge: being alone in a new country where you may or many not know the native language or know other people. It can be a challenge to transition and you might have to get used to being by yourself more often than you would at home.

**FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.**

Thank you ScanDesign! 😊