

## **EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT**

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**Institution where you studied:** Kobenhavn University  
**Term(s) of participation:** Spring 2015  
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### **1. WHY AND WHERE:**

**a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?**

From a young age, I always had a curiosity to travel and experience things outside my comfort zone. I always knew I wanted to study abroad while in college, and wanted to experience living in a new country and culture. My mom had told me stories of our Scandinavian ancestry and given me trinkets from her trips here. I additionally met a Danish exchange student during high school who told me all about Denmark, particularly Copenhagen. Scandinavian culture is unique to the rest of Europe, and this made Denmark stand out to me. I love that Copenhagen isn't too big, but is a key city in Denmark so there is always something going on. Denmark had everything I was looking for in a study abroad program: good university and courses, unique culture, and an interesting city.

**b. Why did you select the program/University?**

When choosing a study abroad program, Denmark seemed like the perfect fit for me. The university seemed challenging and had science classes that I could take that would count towards my major. I also had a chance to take Danish language and culture courses that allowed me to better understand my new home. The university has a lot of research going on as well, and I wanted a chance to experience research in a different country. As a science major, Copenhagen was the perfect exchange university for me.

**c. What were your expectations?**

I expected Copenhagen to be similar to other people's study abroad experiences, but I found it to be much more than that. I expected classes to be difficult, being they were based on one oral exam, and was curious to see how that structure would work out for me. I also wasn't so sure how I felt about having 3 hour class blocks. I was a little nervous about living arrangements being I would be living with a random roommate. I expected the Danes to be friendly and happy people. I wasn't expecting the very high English proficiency, which made my transition much easier.

**d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?**

I made sure to have all the living documents and student permit paper work filled out and submitted in advance so I wouldn't run into any issues once I got to Copenhagen. I had attended the IAP orientation for students study abroad in Denmark, which was very helpful in retrospect. Overall, I felt prepared to come to Denmark and didn't have many issues once I got here.

**e. How could you improve your preparations?**

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

**a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.**

It depends if their orientation starts before their housing contract. I had a place to stay once I got here, so that was my immediate accommodation. If their contract hasn't started, I know a lot of people who booked hostels or an airbnb. Booking an airbnb with a group of other students from your home university who were in the same boat seemed like the best decision if people couldn't move into their flat yet. With an airbnb, you didn't have to worry about things being stolen or extra storage for all of your luggage – and people got a chance to meet other people right away!

- b. Please 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 adapt?

The orientation that IAP put on before we left for Denmark was definitely the most helpful. They covered a lot of topics I had not really thought of and had students and staff who studied and/or lived in Denmark. One of the students who studied in Copenhagen the semester before put together a google doc with information on grocery stores, things to do in Copenhagen, cool places to see, etc. The google doc was very helpful and made me feel a little more comfortable once I arrived. The orientation at KU once I arrived was also helpful, but less extensive. They briefly covered topics like getting your CPR card, getting a phone, navigating the university, and things of that nature. It was a nice introduction, but I found myself still asking questions after. However, everyone I asked for assistance was overall helpful.

## 2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Please evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:

- class registration

Class registration was overall pretty easy. They used an (slightly outdated) online system. The only frustrating part was you didn't get confirmation of what you were enrolled in for until a couple weeks before you got here. I did end up getting into all of the courses I enrolled for, so it wasn't an issue, but I was still a little stressed about it. At UW we use an online enrollment system as well, but it allows you to see the number of seats available, so you immediately know if you'll be in the course and what your schedule is for the upcoming semester.

- classroom structure

My classes were small with about 30 people in them. My courses had multiple professors that each taught a different portion of the class based on their expertise. I enjoyed this, and being there wasn't exams after each portion (like there is at UW) having different instructors didn't change the format of exams. Lecture format was always consistent and followed a set schedule. Everyone in class was always respectful and engaged in classroom discussions. The amount of engagement surprised me, being it can be hard to get a good discussion going in my courses at Madison.

- instruction

All of the professors I had were fantastic. They were all very knowledgeable and likeable; I never had problems paying attention to lecture. They were also very interested in teaching, which can vary in professors at UW. The professors I had also presented a more casual atmosphere and asked to be called by their first name. This atmosphere made it much easier to ask questions and feel comfortable talking to them.

- teacher/student relations

- grading/exams

I had two oral exams and one written. My oral exams had the structure of: pulling a question out of a hat, having 20 minutes to prepare an answer for the question, going into the oral exam and explaining main question, answering other short answer questions for the exam proctors, receiving the grade. Oral exams were something I had

never done before and I was very nervous about them. They ended up going well and weren't too painful. It required more preparation compared to my exams at UW, but I felt like I understood the material much better. My written exam was a 10 page paper on the welfare system and how it affects Danish culture. This wasn't too bad, however the prompt was very vague and there wasn't a lot of direction in what they were expecting.

- administration

I didn't interact with the institution directly other than picking up my student card. They were good about sending out emails with information when necessary.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

The libraries were a great resource. I spent a lot of time studying there and I also figured out how I could loan books (in English) to read for leisure. The only downfall was that the libraries weren't open at the most convenient hours. I'm used to having a number of places to go and study during any time of the day, but that was not an option at KU.

**b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.**

I thought the instruction was of high quality and all of the content was relevant and interesting. I really enjoyed the courses that I took at KU. I was impressed with the science course I took as well as the culture/language courses. I feel like I got a lot out of all of them, and the lectures all provided quality material.

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

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

I would definitely recommend the Evolutionary Medicine course I took. It is a course that isn't offered at UW, and gave me a new perspective on a lot of biological concepts I previously learned. The instructors were all very knowledgeable and were researchers in the field. I also really enjoyed the pre-semester Danish language course. I would absolutely recommend that other students do it. It was great to learn the basics of the language of the country I'd be living in, and definitely helped during my stay. It also gave me a month to get adjusted and meet other international students.

**3. HOUSING:**

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

This was the most unpleasant part of my experience. I booked accommodations through the KU housing foundation. I booked my room and sent in all the paper work, only to have them email me saying they booked me a room that wasn't actually available. By this time, all of the other accommodations were booked and my only other option would cost twice as much than I was planning on spending. After a number of emails and unhelpful staff, I managed to get an arrangement sorted out. However, this arrangement involved me moving into an apartment for one month and then moving into a separate apartment (on the opposite side of Copenhagen) for the rest of my stay. Not only this, but I had to correct their invoice four times until they charged me properly. I know a number of students who were over charged and did not catch the mistake until it was too late. I would not recommend the housing foundation to anyone. That being said, there are not a lot of options when it comes to housing in Copenhagen so I don't know what a better option would be.

**b. How did you locate your housing?**

**4. EXCHANGE SITE:**

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

I really enjoyed all of the different campuses and they all provided a bit of a different atmosphere. The science and humanities campuses were much more modern, but had very nice facilities and the surrounding community for both was very nice. The central campus had an older feel to it, but I also really enjoyed that aspect of it. The surrounding area to CSS was fantastic. It was right in the heart of the city, with gardens, churches, and shops all around it.

#### **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

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

I didn't have any issues with either during my stay. Copenhagen was a very nice place to live and I never felt unsafe.

#### **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 used various ways to try my best to fully integrate myself into the culture and community. I was involved with the mentor program that was set up by KU. I was assigned mentors who also studied science at the university, and we attended many of the events that were coordinated for us. We actually became quite close and I spent a lot of time with them outside our organized events as well. I joined a dance team through USG (the university sports program) and had the opportunity to meet people there as well. It turned out to be a great way to have fun doing what I like with other students who shared an interest with me. I volunteered at a research lab on campus as well, and this proved to be an excellent way to integrate myself into the culture. I got to experience the work/research atmosphere in another country and got to know other students who were interested in medical genetics. I additionally met a few Danish students from the Scandesign events as well who I became close with towards the end of my stay. All of the people I met through these various activities took the time to show me around the city and culture by taking me to various events, pubs, and places throughout the semester.

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

The hardest social adjustment was getting used to how Danish people do not small talk. I'm used to being friendly to anyone, and it took a while for me to get used to how to approach the Danes. I didn't have any gender issues or any problems with stereotypes. I found the Danes to be very open minded and accepting in most cases.

#### **7. FINANCIAL:**

a. Please describe how the Scan|Design Foundation fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.

Without the Scan|Design fellowship, my study abroad experience wouldn't be possible. This fellowship relieved a great amount of financial stress from me and my family. I would've had to take out loans to cover the high cost of living in Copenhagen. I have always dreamed of having the opportunity to live in another country and truly experience a new culture, and Scan|Design made this possible. Scan|Design has allowed me to have an opportunity that has greatly impacted my life and I am beyond grateful for their generous fellowship.

b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?

I set up a bank account with Danske Bank and then transferred money from my UW Credit Union account. This was fairly easy once it was all set up and the transfer fees were not too bad..

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

I would say that a budget of around \$1000 a month is a good amount and leaves you with some spending money as well. This would be once you are all set up, being the first month ends up costing a lot more being you're getting settled in and you don't have the best idea of what's cost efficient. This budget applies to my personal living situation though. I know a lot of students who paid almost \$1000 for rent per month, making this budget obviously unrealistic. My rent was around \$500, so I had \$500 for food, transportation (I mostly biked), and miscellaneous costs.

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

I would say that cost of living here is more compared to Madison. I found cheap accommodation here, so my rent ended up being about the same. That being said, the cost of food and simple necessities in Copenhagen is much higher than it is in Madison. I would say the largest difference is in going out and doing things in the city. A meal in Madison would cost \$10 and here it'd be about twice as much. The same thing applies to going out to bars here. We definitely found it more cost efficient to have drinks at a friend's place and then go have one or two at a bar (which is what many Danish students also do).

## **8. EXCHANGE/SCAN|DESIGN FELLOWSHIP ADMINISTRATION:**

- a. Please comment on the assistance and activities by the Scan|Design Fellowship coordinator before your departure, upon arrival, and during your stay. What worked and what could be improved or changed?

All of the assistance provided by Julie was excellent. She was always good about answering any questions I had and made me feel very welcome to the program. The dinner we had with all of the fellows and Danish students before we left was great. It gave us a chance to meet with people in the program and really made me feel prepared about my upcoming study abroad experience.

- b. Please evaluate services and effectiveness of the University administrative offices.

## **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

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

I feel this type of exchange is best suited for a student who really wants to commit to experiencing life in a new culture and has a very open mind. Denmark has a lot of differences compared to the states, but if you really embrace and take the time to learn the culture the experience you get out of it is unbelievable. A student who is flexible and willing to go out of their comfort zones will definitely get the most out of this exchange. I found a lot of times I had to be proactive about integrating myself into the culture and meeting Danish people. This proactive attitude proved to be extremely rewarding and I had the opportunity to experience many things most exchange students wouldn't. I would tell future students to go into it with a really open mind and take every opportunity you can. I found saying 'yes' to almost anything provided a number of experiences I never would have imagined. I would also tell them to take the time to enjoy the country and city they are living in. Denmark has a number of things to offer and some of my favorite trips were when we went outside of the city. Copenhagen itself seems to have an endless amount of things to go and explore, so they should definitely take advantage of the awesome place they live.

## **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

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

I would definitely give my study abroad experience and my experience with Scan|Design program a 10/10. I couldn't have imagined a better experience during my time living in Copenhagen. There is a reason why Denmark is ranked as one of the happiest

countries in the world. My quality of life while living and attending school here was excellent. I would recommend this program to anyone and everyone who is looking for a life-changing study abroad experience.

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

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

The greatest benefit of studying abroad was it gave me the opportunity to be completely independent for the first time, while also stepping out of my comfort zone. These things also proved to making the experience challenging in some ways. I only could depend on myself for a number of things, and had to make myself uncomfortable at times. Not having the comfort and convenience I am used to at home was difficult at times.

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

**Thank you again for everything. I am looking forward to helping out and giving back to the program any way I can in the future!**