

## EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

**Student Name:** Nishat Hossain

**Institution where you studied:** University of Copenhagen

**Semester of participation:** Spring 2017

**E-mail address (if possible *not* University email):**

nishat\_hossain8796@yahoo.com

### 1. Pre-Exchange. Why and Where:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
  - I decided on Denmark because it was a country that I didn't know much about but I had heard a lot of great things. I knew it was one of the happiest countries in the world and I wanted to experience why for myself. I also just didn't want to go to a country that seemed very typical or that my friends were going to such as England and Italy. While those countries were great to travel to, I wanted a different experience.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
  - The University of Copenhagen offered classes that helped with my major and it seemed to be a little different from UW-Madison in the sense that it was four separate campuses and how each class is structured. This program was also within my budget, which was a plus. I also wanted to have experience with international students rather than just other Americans – this turned out to be a great decision.
- c. What were your expectations?
  - I honestly was pretty nervous before going and wasn't expecting it to be the life changing experience that people always say study abroad is going to be. I didn't have a lot of luck with housing at first (which I can explain in the housing section) and so I got nervous that I would have a hard time making friends since I would be living far away where there weren't many people living. I did know that it would be pretty rainy and cold when I got there. I also didn't expect to make many Danish friends as I've heard from others that it was hard to do so.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
  - I actually didn't decide to for sure to go to Denmark until about a month before departure and so I prepared just about everything in that last month. I made sure I had everything ready to go for my visa, and moneywise. I tried to learn a little bit of Danish and went shopping for the weather, although it isn't much different from Wisconsin except for the fact that it rains more. I basically just googled and watched you tube videos about Denmark and Copenhagen so that I didn't come to the country not knowing anything about it.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
  - It definitely would've been easier if I had decided right away to go to Copenhagen, that way I would've had a lot more time to plan everything as

that last month home for me was pretty stressful. With that being said, planning ahead definitely saves the hassle of the stress. And doing your research helps a lot especially for your visa and housing. You also will want to know your transportation situation aka if you will be using public transportation more or riding a bike and get that figured out.

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

- a.** Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
  - Definitely get a mentor and have them pick you up! I had two big suitcases and I would not have been able to carry all of those myself. I stayed in a hotel my first two nights because my housing hadn't started yet. I liked the hotel except it was a little expensive. I know others who stayed in hostels before their housing started. The housing foundation is pretty strict about people not moving in before their start date. Sometimes you can find accommodation through them beforehand also. If your accommodation does start by the time you get there, figure out what time you can get your keys. Their offices have weird and inconvenient hours and if you arrive after those hours, try to ask someone to pick your keys up for you.
- 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?
  - In Madison we really just had one meeting together to talk about logistics and talk with previous students who had gone to Copenhagen. Then we could schedule meetings with our advisers to talk about anything else.
  - In Copenhagen, it depends on what faculty you are in but I had a three day orientation. Since I had two main campuses, two of the days were spread out on the two campuses, just talking about regular school stuff (classes, grades, how to stay organized, etc). The last day was actually a day where they took us out on a boat tour and then we had a huge party at the end of the night, which was fun and great in getting to know others. That definitely helped me make friends and become comfortable more quickly.

## **2. ACADEMICS:**

- a.** Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
  - class registration
    - registration was really weird because we had to email them what classes we wanted to take which is pretty different from UW where we go online and put our classes into a schedule and hope for the best. I didn't really have a problem getting into my classes in Copenhagen. There was a class where I was late in registering because the email got lost in my inbox but they were really nice about it.
  - classroom structure
    - The structure was pretty similar to what I was used to in Madison. There is a pretty decent sized lecture hall and a professor in the front lecturing.
  - instruction
    - In all of my classes they emphasized how they didn't want these to be traditional lectures and wanted to create more of a talking environment where people are constantly conversing with each other. It didn't really work out this way as it was mostly just the lecture and people asking questions here and there, which is exactly how it is in Madison. I didn't have any separate discussion sections though.

- teacher/student relations
  - People seemed to be pretty comfortable calling the professors out on things they didn't like. In one of my classes the professor had us write five papers throughout the semester but only one was graded at the end and we had no clue which one it would be until an hour before it was due. She would lecture on something that wasn't really related to the paper and then when it came to the paper, she would tell us to figure it out ourselves but would only give us a week or two to do so. These papers asked for a lot of information but they were never specific on what they were looking for. This made people in the class pretty mad so they would basically yell at her in class. Other than this situation, people seem to be very comfortable around the professors. They even had us call them by their first names and I ended up forgetting some of their last names.
- grading/exams
  - All of my classes had big papers due at the end and that was the only grade for the entire class. You get a pretty big chunk of time to work on them but it's pretty nerve wracking that your whole grade is dependent on one paper or exam. I know others that had exams but there were never any midterms or quizzes.
- administration
  - I didn't really have to talk to the administration much but when I did it was slightly frustrating. Since there are four campuses, they all have their own rules and ways they do things. You have to contact each individually to get to what you need. It also seemed a little bit disorganized because sometimes I would have to bounce back and fourth between people to get to an answer.
- library, computer, and classroom facilities
  - These were all really nice! They are pretty up to date on technology and everything is easy to use. The libraries are really nice and there are many all over Copenhagen so one should be able to find one that suits them.

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

- It seemed pretty similar to UW-Madison. I had really good lecturers and others who weren't as great. For the most part, my professors were pretty responsive with emails and were able to set time aside in case you needed extra help. I'm not sure if it was the classes I took but my classes were definitely easier than at Madison. I only had class two days a week for 2-6 hours each day so I definitely had more time to do other things.

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

- I definitely liked that I had to spend less of my time worrying about class/grades/homework and because of that I was able to travel a lot.
- I wasn't a fan of the fact that only one paper/exam at the end determined my whole grade in the class. That was stressful especially because you don't get feedback throughout the semester and tips on how you can improve.

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

- I liked the Danish culture course because we took some field trips to castles and museums, which were free for us.

**3. HOUSING:**

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

- It really depends on your accommodation and how you are as a person. I ended up in Signalhuset where I had my own room but I shared an apartment with three other people (who also had their own rooms). This was perfect for me since I like to socialize but also have my own space. There were others who lived in dorm styles where they either had their own room or shared a room. The housing foundation does guarantee housing for you but it might not always be what you want so it really is just luck and what time you log onto the place. – be aware though that the housing foundation has recently had a lot come out about them charging illegal fees so definitely keep your lease and understand it and also take pictures of everything right when you move in in case they charge you for something at the end.

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

- Well my housing really stressed me out at first. When I got the email saying I was invited to sign up for housing, I was on vacation and didn't have access to my computer. I also had been so busy with exams before going on vacation that I didn't really look through the options as carefully as I should have. So I had to wait until I got back home to be able to sign up, this was like 5 days after I got the email. When I first logged on, most of the good and reasonably priced housing was already taken and what was left were places that were about \$1200 a month or more. So I decided to check again everyday hoping there might be one that pops up that is cheaper. A couple days later I found one that was about \$450 a month but I had to share the room and it was way in the northwest part of Copenhagen. I had contacted my roommate and she said that they were mostly all Danish masters students and no one really talks to people in the building. After hearing this I didn't want to live here and so I kept checking for better options. Finally, about a week before leaving there were a few openings in Signalhuset so I decided to just take one of those before anyone else could. This was definitely a really good decision as I loved Signal and would recommend it to anyone! But it was a really stressful process getting there.

**4. EXCHANGE SITE:**

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

- I lived in Amager which is about a 15 minute metro ride out of the city but it is a new, developing area. Near me there were three grocery stores and one 24 hour store that was comparable to walmart – it was amazing. One of my campuses was located in Amager so it was really nice and had new buildings and facilities. There was a huge library as well and was right next to the metro but also super easy to bike to. My other campus was in the middle of the city and was the old hospital. It was definitely older and had a lot of character. I was able to just take a short walk into the city center so I could hang out there when my classes were over.

**5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

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

- I felt really safe in Copenhagen. I had never heard of anyone facing any life threatening issues but I do know that people have gotten their stuff stolen on the metros and the airport so it's important to make sure that you are always keeping an eye on your stuff. I didn't have to go to any medical facilities so I can't give much information on those. But overall I think that Copenhagen is really safe. I had to walk home alone at night a couple of times but I just

always made sure I was alert at my surroundings. I did have my bike stolen though, I was not there at the time but try to keep your bike locked and remember where you put it.

## **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 attended a lot of the social events offered by the university and my dorm. I had to get out of my comfort zone and force myself to talk to everyone I could.
- b.** Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
  - I could not change my habit of smiling at everyone I make eye contact with so that was definitely awkward at times. However, there were plenty of people who smiled back even though I had heard otherwise. Other than that, there were a couple of times when I had to go turn in paperwork for my visa and they weren't the most sympathetic/nicest people around and so I had a little bit of an issue communicating with them as I am used to people being almost too nice usually. It was also strange at stores and restaurants, the workers there wouldn't ask if you found everything okay or ask if you needed help. You needed to go up to them yourself, which in a sense was nice because you didn't feel overwhelmed at a restaurant or felt as though they wanted you to leave. The lifestyle in Copenhagen is definitely a lot more relaxed and you could feel it especially when it was nice out and everyone was out enjoying the weather. I feel like I am always stressed about something in Madison so it was a little strange not having anything to worry about.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

- a.** Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
  - I honestly probably would not have gone abroad if it hadn't have been for this scholarship. I was able to not have to worry about my living costs there because of it and then I could spend money elsewhere such as traveling and food. I was also able to get accommodation that suited me better rather than just the cheapest option.
- b.** What is the best way to access/transfer money?
  - I just got a travel credit card so that I could get points on my travel purchases and there weren't any international fees I needed to pay. I paid my bills off online. I know some people that opened up bank accounts in Denmark but that wasn't necessary for me and seemed to be too much work.
- c.** How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.
  - My housing was \$600 a month. And I imagine I spent somewhere between \$500-\$600 a month so I'd say somewhere between \$1000 and \$1200 is a good amount every month. I traveled for three straight weeks one month though and so I spent more money that month on flights, accommodation, and food. If you keep a budget and plan ahead, you can definitely spend less money than that though. Another way is to just get a bike and bike everywhere, I didn't buy a bike until about a month in and had it stolen about

three weeks before I left so during that time I spent a lot of money on transportation.

- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
- Copenhagen was hands down more expensive than Madison. But this mostly refers to eating out. Whenever I ate out at a sit down restaurant (which wasn't often), I spent over \$20 on just one meal and soda. Fast food places are pretty expensive as well, a meal at McDonalds was about \$10. I did however find decently priced clothes and could often find groceries cheaper than what I pay for in Madison, especially since cooking together is huge there in Cope, we were able to split the bill on groceries. Flights into and out of Copenhagen were pretty cheap usually as long as you plan ahead, otherwise last minute they get pretty expensive.

## **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?

- They were really helpful, as they usually responded to my emails on time and were able to provide thorough information for me. They provided a really nice guide on how to survive Denmark before I left which I was able to use to prepare for living there.

### **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.

- I kind of wish there were more. I want to say there were about 3 or 4 during the time I was there and couple when I hadn't reached Copenhagen yet or when I had already left. Many of the ones during the semester I either wasn't very interested in or I had already planned to travel at that time.

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

- I think a trip to Louisiana would have been pretty cool. Or possibly some sporting event. I know there was a pretty big event going on when I was there (I can't remember at all what it was) but that definitely would have been cool.

## **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.

- I think that a student who likes to be around others would really benefit from this program. Also someone who needs to get pushed out of their comfort zone a little bit! This program definitely did that for me but it also didn't force it to a point where I was just uncomfortable and wanting to go home.
- One piece of advice I'd give to future students is to be open! You should of course plan ahead for some things but not everything will go the way you planned and that's okay. And go do things you wouldn't normally do back home. You're in a different country for 5 months, you might as well make the most of it. Also go to Paper Island as much as you can, it was my favorite place in Copenhagen.



- Another piece of advice would be to try to mingle with as many people as you can. Don't just stick to one friend group or to only Americans. Your experience will be so much better if you get to know as many people as you can.

## **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

- a. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?
  - 1000/10. I absolutely loved my experience and wish I could do it all over again. There were definitely many downfalls I had during my time but looking back at it, it helped me be more comfortable in certain situations that I may not have been comfortable in before. Other than to see my family and friends, I had no interest in going back home.
- b. How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?
  - My academic expectations were pretty on par with what I experienced. My personal expectations were exceeded as I think I grew as a person, being alone in a foreign country for five months. I used to think that I was the type of person who wasn't a big fan of change and couldn't handle it well. In the beginning it was pretty hard but after only about a week or so, I adjusted fine and everything ended up being really great.
  - The ScanDesign program really helped me enjoy everything to the fullest and helped me experience things I otherwise wouldn't have been able to. I was able to travel more than I thought and that's something I am so grateful for!!
- c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?
  - The greatest benefit to studying abroad is being able to explore another part of the world and meeting all different sorts of people. I met some pretty amazing people a lot of whom I may never see again but they really made my experience better. I can't imagine not knowing some of my friends from abroad. Also I am a huge foodie and so being able to try food from so many different countries was just so amazing.
  - The greatest challenge of studying abroad is definitely adapting. While it was pretty easy for me to adapt in Copenhagen, it wasn't all great in the beginning. I also know of others who had a harder time adapting to their programs whether it was in Copenhagen or other places. It's hard to leave everything you know for a semester or a whole year and it takes some time to adjust. You never really know until you get there how you are going to react.

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