



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Aarhus University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2018
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Biochemistry

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Molecular Biology Project	English	BIOC360	18
Neuro, Muscle and Sensory Physiology	English	BIOC363	18
Human Security and Tropical Ecosystems	English	BIOC360	18

Any comments about these papers?

Because the majority of Danish bachelor courses were taught in Danish, all three courses that I took were Masters courses which meant it was academically more challenging. However, this was a welcome challenge. The Biological Project I took was the most valuable experience as I got the opportunity to take part in a PhD project and run experiments in the lab.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

Instead of one hour lectures typically two times a week like in Otago, classes in Denmark typically span 4 hours and twice a week. This was quite a long time to sit through class, however it was broken up with lots of class discussion. Apart from the Biological Project, my courses were tested through oral examinations at the end which were 20 minutes of discussion with the lecturer. I found this nerve-racking and difficult as I felt 20 minutes were not enough to encapsulate all that I heard learnt. In the end, it was a fun and accurate way to gauge understanding.

Other than that, the academic experience was similar in that smaller classes tended to be more discussion focussed while bigger lectures were more about listening to the lecturer.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

I lived in a campus dorm (Kollegium) right on the University Park Campus. I was often told by locals that I got very lucky because locals sign up 2 years in advance in order to wait on the waiting list to get in. Not only was its location convenient, but I had the chance to live with 15 other Danish people on the same floor. I was the only international! At first this was daunting, as I was expecting an international house where everyone will be on the same page to travel and explore. But I now feel extremely privileged to have had the chance to mix with the locals- most of my friends were Danish and I also learnt a lot of the language this way. Another pro about this accommodation was its price- It ended up being around \$135 NZD per week electricity and water included. This was one of the cheapest locations and helped me with saving the rest for food and travelling.

The Kollegium is unlike Otago dorms (Colleges) in that they do not host first years. Because of the waiting list, and because most Danes graduate at 19, take one or two gap years, do their Masters and take a long time to complete University in general, most people in the dorm were older than me (I am 24).

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

Accommodation, as stated above, was roughly \$135NZD per week- electricity and water included. Be prepared to pay roughly \$1000 NZD for a bond which you will get back. I recommend applying for accommodation as soon as possible.

Flights were roughly \$1800 NZD roundtrip.

Visa process was roughly \$956 NZD.

Eating out in Denmark is expensive- I rarely ever did it. My Danish flatmates also rarely ever ate out. We cooked a lot of communal dinners together. Danish supermarkets are reasonably priced and I would roughly spend \$30-40 NZD per week at my most frugal.

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

The Danish Krone is not a currency stored on the Cash Passport. I had a Cash Passport only to for the purpose of travelling to other countries that had the euro. It's most convenient to apply for a Danish bank account AS SOON AS YOU GET YOUR CPR NUMBER. Leaving it too late means the banks will most likely see no benefit in taking you on as a customer. Before I received my CPR number, (which takes about a month), I just did big cash injections from the ATM from my New Zealand debit card (which charges an expensive withdrawal fee however is the best exchange rate you will receive).

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

I had to apply for a ST1 student visa and the visa process was expensive. The consular fee was \$350, and courier fee was \$83. I was lucky to have been in Auckland visiting my parents, otherwise if you are not from Auckland you would have to pay for the flights to Auckland to visit the Visa agency contracted by the Danish Embassy in Sydney (VFS Global) which also has a service fee of \$47.50. On top of this, the actual fee for the student visa application (ST1) is DK 2110 which is roughly \$475. After you visited the Visa agency, they would then send your personal information (like your fingerprints and a photo) and your passport to the Danish Embassy in Sydney.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No, but it was highly recommended. I luckily never had to use the doctors, however with a CPR number, you will have access to free healthcare like other Danish citizens under the Danish Health Security Act.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

I highly recommend taking part of the language course that is offered- which regrettably I did not do. I felt talking every day with my Danish flatmates were enough of a language lesson already but other than that it is very easy to live in Denmark without ever learning the language because every speaks amazing English. It is a quirky and interesting language to learn!

I took part in a swing dancing class that was also mainly for Danish people, and 2 running clubs- one for international students and one for Danes. The international running club (Run for Friendship) is a great way to meet internationals and it was more of a social club with all sorts of fitness levels. The Danish Club was called 'SPAEN' which has a very high level of fitness- but I could not keep up! The only downside of these running clubs in the winter months is the darkness. It is extremely challenging running at 5pm in the dark.

What was the university/ city like?

The second biggest city in Denmark, Aarhus is the perfect size- not too big and not too small. It has the picturesque feel and character of Copenhagen while also retaining its own charm. It is a very young city just like Dunedin, but also has more of a young professionals presence too. There are lots of parks around the city, close to the coast, and cute cafes and shops. The Latin quarter is very beautiful as well as the town square.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

Aarhus Street Food by the Rutebilstation (Bus station) is a great place to find food. There are many parks around the city- Riskov forest is my favourite as well as the Botanical Garden in the centre. The Aros museum is worth a visit because of its Rainbow panorama and 360 view of Aarhus, and the public library- Dokk1 is a great place to hang out and study. I had a class out in Moesgaard- which is an old historic and beautiful part of Aarhus as well as Aarhus. It is worth a bike ride! The Museum out in Moesgaard is also apparently really great for Anthropology but I regrettably did not visit. There are also surrounding national parks like the Mols Bjerge National Park which is worth visiting and an old castle ruin Kalø Castle which is a ruin from 1313 built by the Danish King Erik Menved.

The student Friday bars are also a MUST do. These are bars organised by the student executives of each facility- and each Friday students all flock to their respective classrooms to have a beer with each other. They all have different vibes and stereotypes. For instance, the medicine bar is known to be the most "rowdy" and the biology bar the most chill. The Tour de Chambre (TDC) is an event organized amongst Kollegium floors every semester where there is a big spring clean and at night the whole floor "tours" every room which has a theme. This was a very Dunedin-esque event which was a lot of fun.

One thing I missed out on was the film festival in Copenhagen- it's a regret of mine not attending and I heard it was amazing as Denmark has an awesome film scene.

Any tips for future students?

Apply for accommodation early in order to get to live in a Park Kollegium- living with only Danes is an amazing experience that gives you a chance to look into how they view their own culture.

Get a Rejsekort at the earliest opportunity (when you get your CPR number) as it gives you a discount on public transport fares.

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

My exchange was absolutely amazing. I couldn't recommend going to Aarhus enough! It is an awesome experience to see Denmark from not just Copenhagen, where the majority of people visit- which is still an incredible place but it's a shame other places in Denmark get neglected. I have a great impression of Denmark and Danish people and feel very lucky that I got to live with them and get to know the culture. The winter months were tough as it got dark pretty early, but you will know all about their huggeligt culture which helps you get through it all.



My friend Danish friend Nikolaj and I touring Castle ruins **Kalø Castle** close to Mols Bjerger National Park.



View of the University Campus Park in December outside my Kollegium.



A Julefrokost (Christmas lunch) with my Kollegium flatmates.



Typical Aarhus streets.



An old part of Campus out in Moesgaard where I have one of my classes every week- a 12 km ride from my dorm but well worth the views of the Danish countryside.



The kitchen of the University Park Kollegium Dorm which houses 16 students per floor!



View of Aarhus from the top of Aros Art Museum.