

STUDY REPORT

for the exchange programme of

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at the institution

Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulu



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Introduction

In the following report, I would like to share my experiences during my 5th semester abroad in Helsinki. I study International Business at HSN and have taken modules in International Business and Logistics at MUAS (Metropolia University of Sciences) to obtain the required credits. Despite Corona, I really enjoyed the semester, met a lot of great people and I was able to gain a lot of valuable knowledge for my studies.

Preparation

My original plan was to do my exchange studies in Spain, but because of Corona and the country's higher incidence rates, I decided to look for an alternative. At that time, the International Office organised presentations in which students who were currently abroad reported on their experiences. Students who spent their exchange studies/internship in Northern Europe were the first to present and Helsinki was one of the focused. After that, I simply researched the partner universities in Helsinki and decided on Metropolia because the modules offered there during the semester exactly corresponded to my needs. In addition, the homepage is very transparent, so it's easy to find your way around and quickly access the most important information about applying for an exchange programme.

I applied at my home university back in November 2020, which was quite early, but I thought it would be better for me to be done with it. Then I had to repeat the application process at Metropolia from March to May, but this was (is) just a formality. However, I had to redo my learning agreement since Metropolia updated their list of modules after I sent my application, but it was also a mere formality as well since we could still change it during our stay. MUAS is very organised, and I received several emails from our international coordinator which helped me a lot specially to find out about possible accommodations.

I applied at HOAS (Helsingin Seudun Opiskelija-Asuntosäätiö) which is a student housing in Helsinki. I could also specify my priorities, whether I preferred to live alone or in a shared flat and the prices were between €350 and €650 per month. According to them it was first come first serve and you can only get a single proposal, so you can either reject or accept but you will not get another offer. After months of waiting, I received neither an offer nor information about when I would get something. So, I began to look for other alternative which were also listed in one of the info mails that I received from our international coordinator at Metropolia. HOAS

then sent me a mail when I was already in Helsinki and had a place to stay that they do not have a room for me.

Accommodation

As I mentioned above, I did not get an offer from HOAS so, I started searching on my own. Fortunately, there was a WhatsApp group for all exchange students where we could share information and a special group was created thanks to a student who envisioned living with a lot of students together. He sent information in the group about **Forenom Hostel**, which looked promising, so I immediately informed myself. Then I contacted him to get more details and he also asked me if I wanted to share a room with someone, which I didn't really like at first, but I wanted to save some money, so I started messaging the person and we started getting to know each other and, in the end, we decided to book a room together. I was quite surprised though when I arrived at the Hostel because it looked quite shady. The reception was close the entire months that I stayed there (and probably still) and the shared facilities (kitchen, shower and restroom) were also not that clean. The bedroom, however, was fair enough for the price, I paid 294 € per month, which was half of the original price.

Most of the tenants were students (mainly German speakers from Germany and Austria) and there were also students from the Netherlands and Malaysia. We met through the WhatsApp group and immediately sympathised and over time we built up a really strong bond. After weeks we learned the hostel manager and he was so kind-hearted that he would basically give us things that we needed around the hostel, since there was nothing when we arrived, especially in the kitchen. We needed so many stuffs that we headed right away to IKEA on the second day to buy necessary utensils. After months I got used to it especially sharing a room. My roommate came from Malaysia so as a fellow Asian I was not taken back when she did her stuff like using ointments and such. We became better acquainted and are still in contact.

We students, started to transform the hostel in a way where we feel comfortable. We also had a basement where we could throw parties whenever we can. So, we marked Thursdays as our basement night and we also chipped money to buy a projector to watch movies together. It was really an adventurous four months, since there were also a variety of other tenants besides us students. Nevertheless, my

stay at the Hostel was so incredibly priceless, since I really found friends for life. We kind of built a little family during those months and I must say, even though I don't recommend staying at Forenom it was still a right decision for me at that moment.

Public Transportation

To use public transports effortlessly, you need the so-called HSL card, (buses do not sell tickets) in the which you can get at many different main stations in a city area (Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, etc.). There are several ways to charge your card; you can either have a monthly subscription or charge it for a fixed period of time. You can do this either directly at the Service Point or via the HSL app. As cities are divided into four zones (A, B, C and D zones), you must also indicate in which zones your ticket will be valid. Most of us who stayed at the hostel had AB Zone cards, which allowed us to travel around Helsinki (Zone A) and some areas in Vantaa (where my university is) and Espoo (both are in Zone B). It is also easy to buy a ticket if you want to travel to other zones. All you need is the app and a Visa card or other payment method accepted in Finland. Otherwise, you can buy it at any ticket machine in train the stations.

The hostel is also very well located. The bus stop to the university is only 1 minute walking distance and it only takes one bus ride to get there (orange bus, line 30). The bus stop to the city is also just a stroll away and you can take several buses to get there (orange bus line 200 stops right at the central station, blue bus line 30 and 25 in Kamppi). We also learned that the colours of the buses have meanings. You can enter the orange bus from the back, and you don't necessarily have to scan your ticket (the scanners are usually out of order especially bus line 30, otherwise scan it because it will cost you a hefty amount) or show it to the bus driver. On the blue bus, on the other hand, you always have to get on at the front and scan or show your ticket. And you always have to wave to signalized that you want a ride, or else the bus drivers will simply drive past you.

University life

As I mentioned earlier, the university seemed well organised. MUAS is the largest Applied Sciences in Finland with four fields of study; culture, business, health care and social services, and technology, located in 3 areas; Helsinki, Vantaa, and Espoo. I was at the Myyrmäki campus in Vantaa, where industrial engineering and international business courses are conducted. I studied International Business and

Logistics there and at my home university I study International Business Administration. Normally, the fifth semester is the practical semester, but I swapped it with the sixth semester and therefore only had to complete 3 modules. (Digital Marketing, Contemporary Economic Issues and Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace).

Nevertheless, I had to obtain at least 30 ECTs at Metropolia at the end of the semester, so I also took three more modules. All of my courses were in English, so I did not have a hard time to follow the lectures. I also took Finnish A1 as a language course, since it was a good opportunity to learn not just the language but also some basic Finnish culture. I really enjoyed it for its uniqueness, but I also had a hard time getting into it because it is a pretty tricky language. I also wrote the final test, which wasn't my best test, but I'm really proud of myself for doing it to the end.

Before the actual first week of university, there were orientation days, however it was online due to Corona, but it was clearly worth arriving earlier in Helsinki. I received an information e-mail before my arrival and was assigned to a tutor group. It was a great opportunity to get to know other Erasmus students directly and to get oriented at the university. We were given a formal introduction and assistance in Helsinki registration form (which we were able to hand in directly) and to buy a ticket for public transport. In addition, there were some leisure activities, such as excursions or pub crawls, so that we could also get to know other tutor groups.

Then in the following week, university life started right away. My courses were almost, very well organised and the library turned out to be the perfect place to study because I really had to read a lot for my courses. One particular course (Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace) was not well organised in my opinion, but only because it the first implementation of the course. So, the lecturer didn't have any feedback beforehand on how to do it effectively, especially because we had to work with students from Mexico and the Netherlands. We did not have a lecture it was more self-research since we were provided with lots of PDFs to read for our homework's. For our final presentation we were given a task to interview a company of our choice and do a Benchmarking and GAP Analysis with it. My group specifically had four students from Mexico, so we decided to choose a company from Mexico (Kalpa Ventures), and the students there did the interview. And since we needed another company to compare Kalpa Ventures, we from MUAS, chose NOKIA and did our research on it. I find the idea of working with other students from different

countries a good opportunity to learn different working cultures and just to collaborate with others even though it was just through ZOOM. However, I personally think it was difficult to coordinate the schedule because of the time difference. Both sides had other priorities besides this course, so I was really conflicted about it. Nevertheless, we mastered the course until the end and also got to learn new friends.

Besides the lectures the university also offer different sport activities. You can obtain the so called "ZONE" membership and use the facilities for free and join any sport courses that you want. There were also paid courses, but I did not consider them. There is also a possibility to join the Student Union called "**METKA**" which I did and paid €30 for the entire semester and got the "ZONE" card. Exchange students could also become members of the student association "**Trombi**", where they receive benefits such as reduced prices for events and especially for the student overalls (the traditional student outfit).

The cafeteria at Metropolia but also in other campuses around are really great as well. There are several so-called "Uni-Cafés" all over the city, where you can get a main course with salad and water/milk for €2.70. Metropolia also serves burgers with fries every Monday to Thursday and pizza on Fridays.

My highlight during this exchange programme was definitely the opportunity to volunteer at an event called "SLUSH", where thousands of people from investors, start-ups and guest speakers from renowned companies came together to pitch their ideas, present their know-how and expertise. It was so overwhelming to be surrounded by people with such fascinating ideas and founders who shared their successes and failures and their future goals. It really inspired and motivated me to keep developing and basically never give up.

Living in Helsinki

Helsinki is a very beautiful city with many small islands, some of which can be reached by public ferry (Suomelinna, for example, is highly recommended). Tallinn is a great destination for a day or two trip (can be reached by ferry as well). The Nuuksio National Park, which is very suitable for hiking, is also close by (just two buses ride from my hostel). Many museums offer free entry once a month, so it's worth checking out the websites! Helsinki also has a lot of nice cafés where you can also study. There is also the very beautiful Oodi Helsinki's new central library

(located next to the main station) which I can only recommend. I often go there at the weekends and do most of my homework. You can book a room for yourself or for a study group in advance on their website. In addition, there are also different areas where you can do other things than study. For example, there is a gaming area, a music studio, an area where you can sew and many more.

As beautiful as Helsinki is, it is unfortunately also very expensive... Going to the pubs can be a small investment (at least €7 for a beer with student discount) and eating out is also a luxury venture. The cost of living is also a little more expensive than in Germany, but this can be well compensated for by the university cafés I mentioned. Alcohol is incredibly expensive as well and also only available until 9pm. You can get beer in the supermarket, but for more high-proofs you have to go to the *Alko-Shop*. My hostel family would always go to the Irish Pub and spend the night there, singing karaoke and just having fun at the weekends.

In October we had a one-week holiday period, so I went with some of my hostel family to Kuusamo, a city in the north-east of Finland. We rented a car to go there and stayed in a great cabin for four nights with 16 people. We hiked in the area, some went to the sauna and had snowball fights afterwards and sledged at the Ruka ski resort, where I hurt my knee, but it was worth the memory. I also took part in a cruise to Stockholm organised by ESN from 7 to 9 November under the theme "Pirate of the Baltic Sea". The ship departed around 5pm from Helsinki and arrived at Stockholm the next morning. We had six hours to explore Stockholm and then went back to the ship to Helsinki.

I was also in Lapland from 4 to 11 December. The whole thing was organised by the exchange students of HAMK (Häme University of Applied Sciences in Hämeenlinna). A classmate from Nordhausen did her exchange studies there, so I tagged along. We rented a car and drove up north to visit the Santa Clause village, admire the northern lights, take a husky tour, get our reindeer driving licence and drive snowmobiles. It was an unbelievable experience, and I was able to tick off many things from my bucket list thanks to this exchange programme.

Return and Conclusion

The formalities after the return went very smoothly. From now on everything will be via mail, so I do not have to pick up or submit any documents in person. The crediting is still on going but I already got some of my results per mail.

Some tears were shed when I had to say goodbye to everyone. I will never forget the great time of my Erasmus and hope to stay in touch with the many lovely people I met there. One thing is for sure though: the hostel family will soon have a reunion. Studying there taught me a lot and gave me guidance in choosing the career path I want to pursue. It also made me appreciate many things, especially about myself. I can only recommend doing a semester abroad and taking the opportunity to develop yourself further. And I hope the pandemic will not stop everyone from experiencing it.

Declaration of consent

I agree that the report shall be made available to other students of the HS Nordhausen and, if necessary, to publish it on the HSN website.

03.01.2022, Bad Lauterberg im Harz

Date and Place



Signature