

Post Study Abroad Evaluation

THE BASICS				
Your Name	██████████			
Your Program of Study/Year	Fashion Design and Technology, Fourth Year			
Host Country	Finland			
Host School/Agency	Metropolia			
Participation Dates	January 3 to May 31			
Type of Study Abroad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> Practicum	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Section 1				
GENERAL EVALUATION				
Please rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 10 (one being poor and 10 being exceptional)			9	
In a couple of sentences, explain why you rated your experience the way you did.	The courses were interesting but I found the registration process very confusing. Once my courses had been approved I really enjoyed the teachers, material taught and differences compared to my home university.			
Section 2				
ARRIVAL				
How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)? *Always verify immigration regulations with the consulate or embassy of your host country*	It was not difficult. It was necessary to be very organized due to the short time frame of receiving the acceptance letter from Metropolia and applying for the student visa. My visa arrived within a week of my flight, which was a little stressful.			
Describe your transportation arrangements to your host country. Would you change any part of those arrangements?	My flight left January 1 st and arrived the night of January 2 nd due to the time change. I was really tired for the first week or so, which made the orientation a little difficult. However, I would not have changed my arrangements.			
How was your experience clearing customs and immigration upon arrival in your host country? Any surprises?	I have never had an easier time going through customs in Helsinki. No surprises, no long line, no issues.			
Describe how you traveled to your host facility. How long did it take and how much did it cost?	Metropolia has a tutor program and my tutor picked me up at the airport. We took a 40 minute cab ride to my student apartment, approximately 25 Euro, compliments of Metropolia.			
Section 3				

ORIENTATION AND ASSISTANCE	
How satisfied were you with the orientation and assistance available to at your host school/agency.	The orientation was good. It included the entire exchange group so we all got to meet each other. The international coordinator was a good contact but I had some issues discussing my registration problems with her.
What help did you receive from the international staff or office? What was your impression of the international staff or office?	The international staff helped with the class registration, introduction to their version of "moodle" and in dealing with HOAS the housing company. Everyone was very friendly and easy to approach. I loved having the tutors for help in everyday life as well.
What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one? How well did it suit your needs?	Orientation introduced us to the tutors, exchange students the campus', HOAS and courses. It was a little long and we introduced ourselves way more times than necessary but I think it was well worth the time.
What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? Were there people you could talk to about what you were experiencing?	Adjusting took a long time because of the language barrier. Small tasks like grocery shopping took longer because you would have to figure out what the item was based on your dictionary or pictures on the product. I always expected to get lost at first, but it was easy to ask for directions. All the exchange students stuck together so we had each other to talk to as well as our tutors.
How receptive were the local people in providing assistance?	Finns are very nice people and were always easy to approach. I never felt threatened or unsafe while out and about on my own.
Section 4	
HOUSING	
Describe your accommodation arrangements.	I lived in a three bedroom HOAS apartment in Vantaa. My flat mates were both female, one from Italy and the other from Spain.
How early could you move into housing before term and how long after the end of term were you allowed to stay?	I could move in the first of January and the contract was until May 31. But HOAS offered the month of June for free. The contract was binding and it was an issue to move out early. I am not happy with HOAS due to several issues and would like to see their professionalism improve.
How comfortable were you with your accommodation?	My accommodations were fine. The bedroom was furnished with a single bed, table, wardrobe and shelf. Everything else I either bought from IKEA for cheap or was given from other exchange students in neighboring building.
Describe what you did about meals and what other options were available. How satisfied were you with the food?	The cafeteria at school was cheap and the food was decent. There were three grocery stores near my apartment that were good. At least once a week the exchange students in Vantaa would have a potluck, which was a lot of fun.
How close was your accommodation to where you had to study?	My apartment was two stops away on the train from school. It was only a block to walk to the train from school and home.

Section 5

COURSE REGISTRATION

<p>Please describe the registration process at your host institution. What assistance was available to you? Were you satisfied?</p>	<p>Metropolia has the exchange students fill out a Learning Agreement with the courses the student would like to take before the semester begins. But upon registering many of the courses that were available were no longer. It was frustrating trying to figure out what courses were available to the English speaking students. In the end it was necessary to track down the instructor teaching the course you wanted to participate in and ask if you could join. This wasted a lot of time and was not always possible. I think the registration could be better organized and the international coordinator could have helped more.</p>
<p>How successful were you in registering for classes? What advice would you offer to another exchange student about how to register at your host institution?</p>	<p>In the end I was able to take most of the courses I really wanted to participate in. It took a lot of communicating with the teachers to organize my schedule. For the next students I would recommend them to be open to change because the courses may not be available. For Metropolia I would ask that they communicate with their teacher about having exchange students take their class before the semester begins.</p>
<p>How many courses did you take per semester? What course load would you recommend for future students? What particular courses would you recommend to other students?</p>	<p>I took seven courses during the spring semester and it was a fairly heavy course load. Some of my classes overlapped but it wasn't a problem to make up the time. I would recommend taking Finland Close Up, Finnish for Foreigners, and Weaving. The first two classes really help you connect with the Finnish culture and weaving was a lot of fun.</p>

Section 6

ACADEMICS

<p>How satisfied were you with the amount of knowledge/skills you obtained from your host?</p>	<p>I feel that I learned a lot and I learned a variety of new skills.</p>
<p>How did the style of teaching compare with that in Canada? How did the workload compare to what you would expect in Canada?</p>	<p>The style of teaching is much more relaxed in Finland. Most of my courses were fairly self-directed, or participation based. My projects were flexible to what I wanted to do rather than what the teacher thought was best. The workload was fine for the courses I took.</p>
<p>How many courses did you take during your time abroad?</p>	<p>Seven</p>
<p>What impact did the language barrier have on your learning?</p>	<p>Some times things were difficult to understand but overall it was not an issue.</p>
<p>What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, internet access, specialized</p>	<p>The facilities were pretty nice. At my campus, Tikurilla, I got to use a semi computerized loom and had access to interesting photography equipment.</p>

equipment and supplies available at your host facility?	
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Section 7

COSTS

Books and Supplies – per term	200-300 Euro
Flight	\$1400
Accommodation – per month	391 Euros
Meals – per month	250-300 Euros
Local transportation – per month	Transit pass was discounted for students. I don't remember exactly how much it was per month, but around 35-45 Euros.
Health insurance – per term	Health insurance was covered from Kwantlen's extended benefits.
Communications (internet, phone, etc.) – per term	Internet is included at the HOAS apartment, you just need the connection cable.
Travel documents (passport, entry visa, etc.)	Student Visa \$358, check online for changes.
Vaccinations	N/A
Personal Spending (eg. entertainment and extra travel) – per term	As much as possible! I had \$5000 to spend and came home with no money.
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were less or more expensive than you expected?	Eating out was very expensive and often not very tasty! Having a drink at the bar was also very expensive. Night transportation cost more, and cabs were not affordable. Most things are more expensive than in Canada.

Section 8

EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

How satisfied were you with the out-of-class opportunities at your host site?	Very satisfied, the tutors and esn metka always had interesting events you could participate in. Often the exchange students would just plan their own events and gatherings as well.
What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to you while in your host country? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future students?	Cross country skiing! I did this on my own from my apartment, but there were also lots of other events with esn metka like ice skating, fazer chocolate factory tour, trips to Russia, Lapland and Sweden. Do as many as you like/can!
What opportunities were there to work or volunteer. Did you require special permits to do this?	I didn't find any work or volunteer opportunities.
What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?	Explore as much as possible! It is easy to travel in Finland and to anywhere in Europe.

Section 9

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Describe any safety concerns you had during your experience.	I didn't have any.
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Section 10

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends? How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) people?	It was pretty easy making friends. The people that live in the same areas become friends quickly and then through classes we are all connected. Becoming close with Finns was a little more difficult because most of them were really busy with school. But our tutors would come out adventuring with us as often as they could.
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What was it like to adjust to the culture of your host site?	It took some time to get used to the culture and the weather, but eventually it felt like home.
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What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging?	Adjusting to the language barrier was the biggest challenge. It wasn't just Finnish, but learning to communicate with people from all different background.
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What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?	I really love Finnish people. They are very genuine, honest and fun.
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How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?	I was treated very well, and often mistaken as a local, until I opened my mouth of course. Everyone was very nice and welcoming.
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As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?	It would be easy. Their facilities aren't entirely wheelchair accessible and the snow might be a problem but I think it would still work out.
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For students who are visible minorities in your host country?	There are a lot of different ethnicities in Finland, I don't think there would be an issue.
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For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?	I don't think there would be an issue.
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Section 11

TAKING STOCK

What are the 5 most important things one should take with them when going to your host country or region?

1 A wall plug adaptor

2 Computer

3 Warm clothes and footwear

4 Camera

5 Extra medicine/vitamins they prefer

What are the 10 most important things you would tell another student who is going to your host facility/agency:	
1 If you intend to travel after your semester research where you want to travel to in advance	
2 Travel!	
3 Meet as many Finns as you can and do things with them.	
4 Make friends with exchange students	
5 File a report to HOAS on the state of your apartment as soon as you get there	
6 Try new things every chance you get	
7 Make the most of your time because time flies.	
8 Don't bring too much stuff with you because you will end up with a lot of things by the end	
9 Take as many courses as you can	
10 Be open minded	
What was the most rewarding part of your study abroad experience?	The entire experience was so rewarding, I wouldn't change any of it for the world. It was also really rewarding for me to finally start understanding Finnish words.
What was the greatest challenge you faced during your experience abroad?	Missing my boyfriend back in Canada and being older than most other exchange students.
As a result of your study abroad experience, how has your perspective changed?	I feel like I understand Europe a lot better and that I have a greater appreciation for language.
What else do you want to say about your study abroad experience?	Experience of a lifetime!