

Student Name: Dion Corless

Institution where you studied: Danish Institute of Study Abroad

Term(s) of participation: Fall 2014

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1. WHY AND WHERE:

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

I had prior experience with living in Denmark and had previous social ties, and thought it would be a fantastic experience to finish out my undergrad living in Denmark.

b. Why did you select the program/University?

My home university, Portland State, had established ties with two schools in Denmark, CBS and DIS. Receiving a Bachelor of Arts, I didn't think CBS would have that many classes that would be relevant to my degree. DIS had attention to the liberal arts and included interesting aspects like having study tours to other countries.

c. What were your expectations?

d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?

e. How could you improve your preparations?

2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

I registered as an independent student, which mean I sought out my own accommodation in Denmark. Copenhagen is a difficult place to find an apartment, and it shouldn't be expected as commonplace as the US. Many Danes find places to live via though a friend. It should be noted that one should start looking for a place a couple months ahead. There are many options that DIS provides to house students in Denmark, with mixed reviews. I hear from some students they have very much enjoyed staying with a host family, as a way to get more of the culture. I believe there are a couple of dorms in the city center, which is convenient for people who want to get out often and meet local people in the city.

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?

My home university provided standard details about living abroad, for example the psychological aspect, culture shock and what not. And also provided information about health insurance and logistics of traveling.

My host university puts together a 3 day orientation, where an introduction to the university is provided. Discussion on Denmark as a country and how to immerse yourself into the culture is provided, as well as a little 'find the sights' of Copenhagen.

2. ACADEMICS:

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

- class registration

Class registration was very simple, at DIS one signs up for class online before arrival in Denmark. It is also possible to see the syllabi for classes on their website beforehand, albeit for the previous semester—although there is rarely much of a change.

- classroom structure

DIS has a difficult aspect that there are a few breaks in the semester for study/individual travel. This can make it quite difficult to keep focus on the particular material for class. One week may not seem like a long time but as it happens often it is hard to get in a particular groove with courses and schedule. You are in class for two weeks, then a week off, then two weeks in class, then a week off. The lack of consistent schedule can get confusing.

- instruction

The instruction is fairly similar for the US, partially, no doubt, due to the students all coming from American universities. There is also study tours as well as field study days to get more out of the different setting.

- teacher/student relations

I find this comes down to the individual. For the most part I find the teachers to be quite friendly and approachable.

- grading/exams

DIS functions the same as the US, on a 4.0 grade scale

- administration

Administration is quite thought out, and set up well. If students have any problems the people at front desk are very helpful.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

The library is not very big, which is rather a shame. I find, though, that the classes don't seem to require outside research, which at least means you aren't at a loss for lack of sources.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

I think there are many well learned teachers at DIS, and a few also double as teachers for KU. I feel a little as though there is a small loss in quality as it comes to academically stimulation. However there is rather a balance that is necessary when studying abroad. As DIS contains only study abroad students, it understands that they also seek experience with the world, and not just academic university studies. I'm sure everyone would be upset if their course load required them to spend all weekend cooped up studying.

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

I think incorporating travel with the program a unique idea that is somewhat fascinating, I was able to visit St. Petersburg for this, which was something I have been interested in for a while

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

The current instructor for Danish I + II was very nice and didn't make you feel like an idiot while trying to learn a second language, I don't think it's too over the top for people to try if they wanted to get more than the basic Danish I class.

3. HOUSING:

a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?

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.

The campus is conveniently in the center of the city on Vestergade. It is made up of a few buildings in the vicinity. I think there is only something like about a bit over 1000 students, so it doesn't take up much space. The surrounding community for DIS would be businesses, shops, tourists, and what not, it's right next to Strøget.

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.

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.)

Honestly I find the pub a good place to meet members of the community. This is just because Danes aren't exactly the most socially forward people (sorry). But once they get a bit tipsy they are quite friendly and love to chat about anything. One place I could recommend is

GAME, where I have a friend working. It's a non-profit that has an array of sports to play and are always putting on events.

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

7. FINANCIAL:

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

Scan|Design came as an amazing assistance for my ability to study abroad. I'm not sure the time would have been quite affordable, as Denmark can get quite pricey.

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

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

At bare minimum someone could pull off \$1000 a month, but this would be without going out or doing anything adventurous and not eating anything exciting. I'd say something more reasonable would be \$1,500

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

Portland State for in-state students, I think, is at least half the cost of tuition at DIS.

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?

The activities by the Scan|Design Fellowship one in Denmark were fantastic! I enjoyed heading out to the various events put on by the fellowship immensely. I definitely recommend keeping up what you've been doing. I didn't receive any interaction with the coordinator before arrival, but I have a feeling that may be because I am a PSU student, while there is more involvement with Madison and Washington.

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.

DIS allows for a student who feels safer in a university environment closer to what they are used to at home. That being said, it also requires a person to show more initiative to immerse themselves in the new culture, for the school only has fellow US students. I feel a great many

DIS students create friendships with those they go to class with and lose out on all living in another culture has to offer.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

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

I rate the experience very well overall, Denmark is a place that requires work to really understand. But with that one reeks good rewards.

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 is definitely learning to open oneself up to new ideas and alternative ways of thinking. I find one becomes less closed minded and stuck only thinking in terms of what one grew up with. The challenge can be coming to a more vulnerable state, where one knows little about the setting and many things can be confusing. So it takes a lot of guts and initiative to put oneself out there and really discover what study abroad has to offer.