

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

Dear Grant Recipient:

The Scan|Design Foundation requests that fellowship / scholarship recipients submit an evaluation report concerning their experiences and the services provided by the institutions that manage grant programs funded by the Scan Design Foundation. This report has a dual purpose: to help us to evaluate our current programs and to help us inform and orient grant seekers who will be future recipients. We ask you to reflect on your experiences in the US or Denmark. Advice or comments on other topics are also welcome.

Thank you for your cooperation. We appreciate your time and effort.

EVALUATION OUTLINE:

Instructions:

- It is not necessary to answer every question
- Use this form and fill-in your answers.
- Send a copy to:
Admin@scandesignfoundation.org and to your University

UW – Seattle ScanDesign@uw.edu
UW – Madison jkallen@wisc.edu
PSU goffra@pdx.edu

Student Name: **Alex Kirschling**
Institution where you studied: **DIS Danish Institute for Study Abroad**
Term(s) of participation: **Summer 2013**
E-mail address: **akirschling@wisc.edu**

1. WHY AND WHERE:

- Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
I'm pursuing a certificate in International Engineering, and one of the requirements is to study abroad. I had been told many times that studying abroad is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and I definitely wanted to make sure I took advantage of the opportunity.
- Why did you select the program/University?
I wanted to study abroad during the summer, but the summer study abroad programs were a little more limited than during the school year. I really liked that the second class had a study tour where you got to go study in another country for a week. The price for the program was reasonable compared to other summer programs in Europe, and it just felt right after I went through all my options.
- What were your expectations?
For some reason I wasn't expecting everything to be in Danish. Everyone speaks English, but all of the street signs, food labels, etc. are only in Danish. Copenhagen was also a little different than I expected. Even though it's such a big city, it really didn't feel like that big of a city to me.
- What preparations did you make prior to departure?

DIS does a really good job explaining things you might want to bring. After I was accepted into the program they sent a booklet that lists all kinds of things you might need. I also made sure that I had multiple credit cards set up, and got some Danish kroner from my bank here in the US.

e. How could you improve your preparations?

I have a tendency to pack more things than I need, so I definitely brought way more clothes than I needed to. We had a washing machine and dryer right in our apartment so it was really easy to wash our clothes fairly frequently.

2. ACADEMICS:

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

- class registration

You pick your classes when you sign up for the program, they seemed really strict about not switching classes too.

- classroom structure

It wasn't too different from classes in the United States, but one thing that was different for me was class participation. We had a lot of discussions in class, and participating in the discussion was a huge part of our grade. I'm a somewhat reserved person so that was a little challenging for me to get used to.

- teacher/student relations

The teachers really made an effort to get to know me. It was definitely different than UW-Madison, because I'm used to 200-300 person lectures, and the classes were around 25 people.

- grading/exams

Grading was very fair, and so were the exams. I only had an exam in one of my two classes

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

I didn't use them very often, but it seemed like there were computers and places to study literally wherever I went in the university buildings. It would definitely be nice for students who are there for an entire semester and need to study more.

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

I thought the academics were easier than back home, but I really liked that because it gave me extra time to explore around Copenhagen. We also got to go on field trips/study tours for the classes. That was really nice to get a break from the classroom for a little while.

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

I took a class called Holocaust and Genocide, and it was one of the best classes that I have ever taken. We learned so much about the Holocaust, and my favorite part about the class was the week-long study tour we took to Poland. It's one thing to learn about the Holocaust in a classroom, but actually traveling to where it happened was a truly incredible experience. The instructor's name was Torben, and he was one of the best teachers I have ever had. I was always engaged in class and looked forward to going each day

3. HOUSING:

a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?

I REALLY liked my housing arrangements. I lived in an apartment with 10 other DIS students and a Danish RA. I became really good friends with all the people I lived with, and made friendships that will last a lifetime. Our apartment was also located right in the middle of the city, and only a 5 minute walk from our classrooms. Some of my classmates had to take a 30 minute train ride just to get to class every day, so I really considered myself lucky that I had the opportunity to live where I did.

b. How did you locate your housing?

When we first arrived, DIS bussed us right to our housing. I remember feeling so lost when we were first walking through the city, but after a week or so I knew my way around really well.

4. EXCHANGE SITE:

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

The DIS campus is located right in the heart of Copenhagen, but the buildings are spread out a little sporadically in the neighborhood. My favorite part about the location was that it was right down the street from where I lived, so my commute to and from class was literally only 5 minutes.

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.

Out of all the cities I traveled to in Europe, Copenhagen by far seemed the safest to me. I never felt unsafe or had to deal with any theft problems the entire time I was there. I know some people in my program had their bikes stolen, but personally I never had any problems, and thankfully I stayed healthy the entire 6 weeks so I didn't need to use the medical facilities.

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.)

Talking with Danes was somewhat difficult. They are somewhat reserved people, and I really didn't talk with as many Danish people as I wish I had. There was an optional event where we could meet with a Danish buddy, and I'm really glad I chose to do that. The guy we talked to was really cool, and he taught us a lot about Danish culture. There was also a national soccer game that we went to. Even though they lost 4-0, it was cool to experience a European soccer game and be in the crowd.

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

There were definitely big cultural differences. In general, people aren't as talkative as in the US. When we would go buy groceries, sometimes the cashier wouldn't say a word to us during the entire transaction. One thing that I really liked was that it seemed that the people just really enjoyed life. We spent a lot of time at parks, because that's what the Danes did and we wanted to fit in. When you looked around, everyone was having a great time, and almost no one was on their phones or other electronic devices.

7. FINANCIAL:

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

The scholarship that Scan|Design awarded me was a crucial part of my study abroad experience. It allowed me to spend extra money to travel around Europe more than I would have without the scholarship. I can't describe how thankful I am that the ScanDesign Foundation was generous enough to allow me to have these extra opportunities.

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

Danish credit cards are a little different from the US because they have this chip in them that requires a PIN instead of a signature. That being said, credit cards were the easiest way to pay for things, but it will work the easiest if you set up a PIN for the credit cards. I also got some Danish kroner from my bank in the US before I left just to be sure I had some cash incase my cards didn't work.

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

It's hard to say, because I ended up doing a lot of traveling on the weekends and in between sessions. Housing was included in our costs, so all I had to pay for was food and any traveling and sightseeing. For some reason I assumed that I could somehow find a way to live really cheap in Europe, despite everyone telling me it would be expensive. That was definitely not the case, and they even charge to use the bathroom in some places.

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

Copenhagen is definitely more expensive than Wisconsin. It's possible to find food for a reasonable price if you buy it from a grocery store, but it's pretty normal for a meal to be \$20 if you eat out.

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.

I honestly think that anyone who wants to experience a European country should go to Copenhagen. There's a bunch of different living situations to choose from, so you can be independent and live with a host family, meet Danes and live in a Kollegium, or share an apartment with other DIS students from the United States. There's so many students in the program, chances are there's someone who has the same interests.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

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

Studying abroad in Denmark was unquestionably one of the best, if not the best experience of my life. The memories and friendships that were made will last my entire life

- b. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?

I think that both the greatest benefit and greatest challenge to my study abroad experience was definitely adjusting to a new culture. There are things that are just done differently in Europe, and it was hard to adjust to these cultural differences since I've spent my entire life living in the United States. That being said, having the awareness that things are different in other places around the world is a valuable experience that I will use for the rest of my life.

FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.

Thanks again to the ScanDesign Foundation for helping me have one of the best experiences of my life this summer!!