



ERASMUS EXCHANGE REPORT

Stephanie Reinkilde

Step1855@stud.kea.dk
Fashion Business & Promotion
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INTRODUCTION

My name is Stephanie and I attended Birmingham City University during my Erasmus exchange semester in 2022. At KEA in Copenhagen, I'm studying for my top-up bachelor's degree in Design & Business – Fashion Management.

During my semester at BCU, I joined the Fashion Business & Promotion class. Some of the reasons why I wanted to study abroad were to experience studying in another country and studying different modules than what KEA had to offer.

Deciding on BCU as the host university was mostly due to the fact that they offered very interesting modules and classes that I wouldn't be able to choose at KEA.

My expectations for Birmingham were not that high since I had never really heard of the city before moving here and I also did not know what to expect from BCU as no one from Fashion Management had done an exchange here before.

EXPERIENCES AT THE HOST UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

When I got accepted to BCU, I was contacted by the BCU Erasmus coordinator, who was very helpful throughout the process of choosing my course. Furthermore, the process of finding accommodation was also very easy and fast. Before starting, I was also introduced to the Course Director for Fashion Business & Promotion, Beth, who was super nice and really helpful. She was also teaching in both the modules along with other lecturers.

I joined the 1st year of the Fashion Business & Promotion class because the modules for the spring semester sounded the most exciting and interesting, but this also meant that most of my classmates were very young. The semester consisted of 2 separate modules: Trend Forecasting and Visual Merchandising. On Next page I've added the module descriptions.

Trend Forecasting

“This module will enable you to understand the process of trend forecasting. Understanding trends and the emerging values and needs of groups in society provides you with a foundation to innovate and create change. Trend forecasting is the analysis of past, present and future phenomena, translated and presented for people to understand. By researching trends, we can explore and predict how people might live, consume and dress in the future. Capturing the zeitgeist (spirit of the age) is an essential skill within the trend forecasting process.

You will learn how to document this by scanning the world around you, looking for signs of change. Using field and desk research, you will investigate historical, cultural, social, technological, political and environmental phenomena, understanding how this socio-economic environment influences the fashion business. You will develop a trend manual, which will propose a future scenario for the future of the fashion business. This will contain a selection of your key research, a trend synopsis, and a consumer tribe. You will also apply your trend to a specific consumer group, showing the visual aesthetic of your trend and presenting exciting and informative directions and solutions for your chosen fashion sector. Your trend research will help shape the future and provide a guide to show how fashion sectors can reach consumers in an innovative and ethical way.”

Visual Merchandising

“The module will introduce you to the challenges and exciting developments within the retail sector with a particular focus on innovative visual communication methods and visual merchandising strategies. The project provides you with the opportunity to explore the spirit of innovation that can be found by looking out into the world, predicting, shaping and responding to the cultural zeitgeist and building strong creative and brand partnerships at the forefront of fashion. You will determine the recipe for innovating in today’s challenging retail environment and consider how physical retail might evolve through innovative visual communication techniques. In groups, you will be expected to create a detailed creative direction report and an innovative visual merchandising strategy for Selfridges 2022 retail campaign ‘Super Futures’. This project will culminate with a presentation of your visual merchandising strategy with the best projects being shortlisted to present to the Selfridges creative direction teams. The winning group will see their final visual merchandising concept play out within the Selfridges Birmingham store.”

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

All the classes that I had during my time at BCU were really good and I really enjoyed the whole school experience. I was very happy with the relevance and up-to-date topics that were discussed and presented by the teachers. As previously mentioned, I enjoyed all my classes but especially VisCom(Visual Communication) was my favorite class since this is something that KEA doesn't teach or prioritize, which I think is a pity Viscom was by far the class that I found most rewarding and interesting because we learned about graphic design, typography, video making in After Effect, and working in Cinema 4D.

The Team's lectures that I had for an hour each Monday were probably the classes I found least valuable. These online tutorials were mainly just presentations for the upcoming week and what we could expect for the next few days. My usual school week consisted of 3 days of class sessions on campus and one day of Team tutorials.

As for the social part of BCU, it was a bit limited in the sense that the school didn't really organize any social activities for the exchange students, which I had hoped for.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

As for the cultural and social experiences, I found it a bit difficult to find friends in the beginning since I had expected BCU to do more activities for all the exchange students. Nevertheless, I became really close with all my roommates, and I spent loads of time with them. Apart from this, I also became part of a female/non-binary DJ collective that often did workshops and other events where you could meet people with similar interests.

One of my favourite spots in Birmingham was the IKON gallery, a small contemporary art museum showcasing really nice and interesting exhibitions. Another place in Birmingham that I enjoyed was Digbeth. Digbeth is an up-and-coming area of Birmingham that used to be an industrial area but is becoming a more creative and artsy neighbourhood. The area has quite nice bars, party venues, independent shops and restaurants, and many art galleries. Furthermore, Digbeth also hosts 'Digbeth First Friday', which is exhibitions, late-night openings, special events, culture in unexpected spaces, performances, live music and more. Regarding finding events and activities, I often found them through Instagram or through people I met at some of these events!

Since Birmingham is 1,5 hours away from London, I would often visit and stay with friends living in London since there wasn't too much to do and explore in Birmingham.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES

The application process was relatively straightforward, although it did seem a bit intimidating to begin with. There were many steps, documents and applications that needed to be approved but Hanne, the exchange coordinator at KEA, was quite helpful during this process. As I got accepted to BCU, I was put in contact with the BCU Erasmus coordinator, who was very helpful throughout the process of choosing my course. Although midway through my stay, she stopped working at BCU, at that point, I would just ask Beth, the Course Director.

The process of finding accommodation was also very easy and fast, and there were quite a lot of accommodation options. I lived at University Locks, which was only 2 minutes away from my campus, which was very convenient. The weekly price for my accommodation was 150 pounds a week which was one of the more expensive accommodations. My expenses were similar to the ones I had in Copenhagen before coming.

Looking back at my stay at the accommodation I think I would've chosen another one although it was nice, modern and safe. The reasons I would've preferred another one was simply because they were very strict and constantly checking up on us. For instance, they had 24-hour security and were very strict with having visitors over as well as always checking our flats and kitchens which seemed a bit excessive.