

Exchange report

Fashion Institute of Technology, New York City

Spring semester 2018



Preface

Kea Program - Digital concept development, 7th Semester.

Exchange Program - Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) January – May 2018

Courses attended abroad -

- Workshop in direct marketing
- Mass communication
- Direct response copywriting
- Advertising and promotion

Introduction

In September 2017, shortly after our first semester on the top up: Digital Concept development began, I decided to look closer into the possibility of studying abroad. It was not in my plans to do at this time, but I've had the experience before and I know how giving it can be.

I listed the countries and cities I could see myself stay in for a semester and from there I looked deeper into what the universities could offer.

Two remained, one in Melbourne, Australia and Fashion institute of Technology (FIT) in New York. I chose New York because of the 'Direct and interactive marketing' program they offer and because it would be my first time in the US.

My expectations for this semester were high. I had heard of the study structure and I was familiar with the many test, exams and much reading beforehand.

Academic Experience

How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

The first two weeks of the semester was about introduction to the school and to choose the academic courses. It was two quite confusing weeks, as the school is so big and it was hard to find the way around to the different academic departments for questions about the courses.

There are many courses, many different hours and weekdays they are offered, and for every course there are many different teachers as well. In Denmark we would select the courses we found most interesting or relevant, but in the US is a bit different, students would primarily select the professor they prefer. There is an online platform called 'Rate my professor' where all student rate the professors, leave comments and share experiences. I later understood why this is so important — their teaching methods varies greatly.

Courses and credits

The major I studied at FIT was 'Direct and interactive marketing' whereas they offered several different courses. The requirements for a full-time student per semester is 12 credits which resulted in 4 courses. Each course lasted three hours, usually with one short break of 10 minutes. It took a little time to adapt and stay concentrated and focused for a long time compared to how lectures are being taught at kea.

I had classes Monday, Thursday and Friday in total 12 hours a week. Besides the teaching there has been a lot of reading material, individual assignments and group projects as well. One book per class is required and usually we had a chapter a week to prepare in each course and the chapters were up to 30-40 pages. It has been a few years since I last studied and read English, so it also took some time for me to adapt to study, understanding and remembering this much content in each course. When that's said, it wasn't at all a problem.

In one of the courses we had a test every second week that would cover approximately 3 or 4 chapters. It was a multiple-choice quiz with 30 questions and 5 possible answers. I enjoyed this teaching method because it always kept you up with the reading material.

At the final exams we had four group projects and four exams so eight in total within a few weeks.

Every multiple-choice tests, individual assignment and group projects gives you a 'percentage' of a great. Fx. 89 out of 100. Each professor has their own grading system but usually it goes from A+ which is 95-100 percent, A- is 89-95 and so on to F. In the end of the semester you get your final grade. They have an understanding that everyone is different, and some people might be good at multiple choice and others might be better at bigger projects. Therefore, I really believe this grading system is very fair and precise of what

you can do and how much effort you have put into your studies, compared one single 30 minutes exam in the end of the semester like in Denmark where you must present everything you have learned the past 5 months.

What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

Workshop in direct marketing

This course presented theoretical knowledge about the concept Direct and interactive marketing. We were introduced to methods of measurability and direct response marketing and personal communication with consumers.

We have calculated return of investments, practically developed offers and direct mails to specific market segments. For our final project, we had to promote a tourist attraction in the US. for this we developed a campaign, including a 2 minute video, social media content, direct mail, newsletter and then we presented the concept and strategy to the class.

Direct response copywriting

This course taught us the process of the creative brief, development and execution. We learned about copywriting and to analyse target groups and use specific words that would be appealing to their needs and provide valuable benefits. We wrote radio commercial and TV commercials using specific structures and methods and practically developed both for our last exam project. There was a lot in this class I knew beforehand, but I still feel like I learned some valuable techniques I can use in the future as I want a career within advertising.

Mass communication

The content of Mass communication class included a lot about American culture and sociology. we learned the basic communication process, mass media understanding and planning and the development of media throughout the time. We had a written exam for the midterm and a 30-minute presentation about a self-chosen subject regarding the subjects in mass media we had discussed throughout the semester.

Advertising and promotion

In advertising and promotion, we had a multiple choice every second week. We prepared a chapter for each class and the teacher went through it. The first half of the semester was a lot theoretical. Later we had a few

individual assignments about analysing advertisements and creating ones for specific products. It was very broad, but I feel like I learned a lot.

What classes would you advise other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

The classes to choose depends a lot on your interests and your plans of the future. The major offer courses in database marketing and online marketing as well. Get a good understanding of what the different courses offer and use rate my professor ones you have selected the courses you want to attend. Be fast, cause the most popular professors get selected first and ones their limit of students is reached, the opportunity closes. It can be a bit stressful when we are not used to this structure.

What I like about kea is that we are working practically with the content that is presented to us. Whether its a model or a theory. It helps me to remember a lot better than reading many chapters and know one specific definition. But this semester I also got to work with a lot of different projects throughout four courses where at kea we work at one big project for the semester.

Social and cultural experiences

What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

I experienced cultural differences in the academics, which were common for all four courses that I attended. The offers and advertisement requirements was a lot different to what we would do in Denmark due to culture. It was (of course) very 'American', but it was interesting to learn about the culture professionally and reflect about how you can apply terms you have learned in your own culture.

New York is a very hectic and busy city. People are here to work their a*** off and focus on themselves. It is a very individual orientated culture, where as we in Denmark are more social orientated. Also, the students at FIT are younger than we are back home at 'undergrad' degree. They are from 18 to mid 20's. In some of my classes I felt the age difference and this could be demotivating. I adapted quickly to the culture and after one week I walked faster than the average person on 7th avenue. I think the culture chock might hit when I return.

How helpful was the receiving school in this process

In general, the classes was not as social as I expected. But the FIT community provides a lot of opportunities to engage in social events. Gym, yoga, meditation, sport teams, art clubs, political, fashion and design orientated communities. These are being introduced during intro week. I joined the W27 local newspaper,

published at the university each month and worked voluntarily 5-10 hours a week. The team was 10-15 students that all work together to develop this newspaper ideas, news articles to print. I positioned as a photographer and interviewer in the art and design section. The social life at FIT is what you make of it. But it requires some effort from your side.

What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

There is always something to do in New York City. I have enjoyed a lot of my free time in Brooklyn and Williamsburg as well. If you are into art, this is the place to be. In Springbreak I went to Miami, that was an amazing experience as well, and I met fantastic people.

If you are open minded to new experiences and people and try to get the most out of your stay, you can't go very wrong. I already had friends staying in New York that I knew from Barcelona (where I also went on exchange) I really tried to get my friends to meet and hang out in big groups. From my experience a lot of people are finding it hard to get friends in New York City, so make a network and connect. Ones you break the ice people in New York are very open minded. I also had a lot of great experiences with the people I lived with, everyone was studying something different and people invited each other to many social activities.

Another advise: use Facebook. I found a lot of social events on Facebook

What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

I would say don't worry too much the first weeks. You will manage. Ask and talk to people, they are willing to help.

Make good friends with your teachers. They are all very kind and in general the relationship you get with the teachers in the US are much more personal than in Denmark. Make good use of it.

Also, I don't think the content of the studies was harder than what we learn at kea, but there are a lot to remember for the tests. So make sure you keep up with the reading material.

Use the time between studies to be cultural and social. Go to baseball games, watch super ball, visit museums, learn as much as you can about this city you are in.

Practical Experience

How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

It is possible to get accommodation at FIT. They have student housing right across the road from the university. It was the same price as finding something on my own, so I chose to do that. I wasn't in dialog with FIT about housing at all.

How was the application process?

As mentioned earlier, it is my first time to the states and the whole process was long and complicated, both being accepted to FIT but also the student visa application. Especially if you have not been through this before. I used a lot of time from the process began in October till I was actually ready to leave mid January. Expect to use a lot of time with practical stuff and the application process besides your studies.

Kea was very helpful throughout the application process. I had a lot of questions and the International coordinator, Anne, was always there to answer and help. Two other students from another kea department was going to FIT as well, so we kept in contact and helped each other.

I don't think FIT was the most helpful during this process though, weeks went by before I got a reply on my emails. I was told they were very busy this year, but it could be quite frustrating at times. It also took a long time before I got the final accepting letter, so other practical things as renting out the apartment was kept on hold for some time.

Where did you live?

Was it difficult to find accommodation? Was it expensive?

I was very lucky to be one of the few selected to stay at a student house on the upper west side for my semester. This saved me a lot on my budget. I didn't realise how expensive New York is.

I joined several facebook groups on facebook when I was looking for accommodation:

[Gypsy Housing NYC/Available *NEW](#)

[Student Housing New York](#)

[New York City, NYC – housing, apartments, rooms, sublets, roommates](#)

There are several to join. Be critical, check out the private profile and if it sounds too good (cheap) it probably is. But there are a lot of possibilities. The rooms on manhattan cost minimum 1200\$/month and in Brooklyn its possible to find a room for 900\$

There is also a company called New York Next, they help you find an apartment/room that fits your criteria of space and price. Generally expensive but it doesn't get cheaper on Manhattan so this is helpful for new students coming to the city. I have some friends here who share a big apartment in Brooklyn or Williamsburg, is generally cheaper to live out there and it's easy and convenient with the subway directly to Manhattan and FIT. Amazing place.

A helpful app is the 'NYC subway' map so you can always keep track of where you are, even offline.

What kind of expenses did you have in general?

Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted

I made a budget. And my monthly expenses included:

- Student house taxes and utilities.
- The MTA (subway card) 121\$ for unlimited rides/months or you can refill your card as I did with whatever amount you prefer.
- Books The books were quite expensive. And some very hard to find online. After I bought three books I found a rental service where you deliver the books back at the end of the semester. Very convenient as you won't have to travel back with heavy books. I rented at Chegg.com you can have them sent to your address or you can pick them up at your local Barnes & Nobel book store. There is one at FIT.
- Food There are so many different supermarkets in New York and the food is expensive here. Fairway is good for fresh takeout food, they have warm dishes, sushi station and many more. Trader Joe's is the super market I used to go to ones a week. It's cheaper when you buy a lot. You have to plan your grocery shopping. Expect double prices.

I spend much more than my budget. I applied for 6 scholarships and besides my student house I didn't receive of them. This culture involves going out, so when you are being social it often involves eating or drinking out. And it has been very expensive.

I had a student loan during my time abroad and I used savings to finance it.

Conclusion.

Even though the process was long and practical stuff was difficult, it is all worth it. It is amazing how many experiences you can achieve in just 5 months when in a new place. Whether it's your first time or third time abroad you always surprise yourself of how much you can accomplish. Go abroad because you are curious

about the culture, because you want to meet new people, expand your network and have amazing new experiences. I met many now very good friends during my stay that I would never be without. Life is really happening when you're away.

