

# Questionnaire Study Abroad/Exchange

1. *Where and when did you study abroad?*

I went to Laurea University in Helsinki.

2. *What KEA program did you attend at the time?*

Business Economics & IT

3. *What classes did you take during your semester abroad? Please briefly explain what each class was about.*

- Service Design - design thinking, researching a problem and designing solutions for it.
- Digital Marketing and Sales - the theory consisted of a lot of online courses from Google, Meta and Hubspot. You learn about digital marketing (SEO, Ads, etc). The final project was done in collaboration with a company where we would have a contact person. For us we had the Finnish Railway Museum and had to develop a strategy for attracting more families to visit.
- Digital Analytics & Consumer Insights and - a brief look into data, understanding consumer trends, a little power BI or other tool for visualization.
- Planning and Implementation of Media Elements - creating content with Canva

## Academic Experience

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

Extremely, they were very friendly and helpful. A while after filling out the form for applying to the exchange semester, I realized that I did not press submit. I was sure it was ruined, that I was not going abroad anymore, but I sent an email and they were very helpful and said it was fine, and that it was fixed.

After moving in, the receiving process was very simple, there was almost no paperwork, and it took very little time.

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

The Service Design course was well structured, it was split into a theory part and a project part. The theory part was well structured, it was a self-learning path written by the teacher based on a Service Design book and some other methodology, where we only had to go through the essentials and we were also provided with a lot of video resources.

There was almost no teaching, most courses that I took at Laurea were based on self-learning. It is a very relaxed environment, and it's as demanding as you want it to be. You basically can't fail a class if you put in the minimum effort, but on the other side, if you want to focus on the course and do all the requirements, you can learn a lot of useful things.

I think it is a general occurrence in exchange semesters, that you will most likely be surrounded by other exchange students, out of which some are going to treat it as more of a holiday than a university semester, and that's fine until a point, just make sure you discuss it in the beginning of projects so that you get teammates that show up and do the work. I must say I was lucky and didn't have any bad experience in this matter.

The project part is quite similar to what we have done at KEA, with some pros and cons. I will talk again about Service Design, but it also applies to Digital Marketing and Sales.

The project is much better structured, we get a template of how the final project should look, in the form of a presentation where it says that we should use these methods and these models, which means we have time to focus on learning how to apply the tools, instead of debating and not being sure about what tools we should use.

We also had a very detailed evaluation criteria table, so that we know exactly how it will be graded, and combined with having a single teacher that developed the course, the grades are quite objective and it's easy to get feedback and understand what you did good at and what was wrong. I must say that this is something that KEA could learn from here, the clear structure of the projects, the clear communication with teachers, and clear requirements and grading criteria; it often happens at KEA that when asking three different teachers the same question, we get three different answers, and depending on which one you chose to follow and which teacher evaluates you, your grade will be very different and subjective.

The focus on self-learning means that you will have almost no classes, and it might be harder to meet people from your class or to get to know the teacher and ask them in person about something. You will get to know people through different activities organized by the

student organization, so you will not be lonely, but you will have no idea who you will be working with on projects until you start, so it's up to your luck.

*3. What classes/study experiences did you find least relevant or least valuable to you? Why?*

Personally, the least relevant was the Planning and Implementation of Media elements. It was described as a course where we will learn graphic design, tools such as Adobe InDesign and Adobe Photoshop, video editing, and even animations. All were things I was already familiar with, and I wanted to improve. Unfortunately, the entire course was based on learning Canva..., so if you are a total beginner I guess it is fine, but I was quite advanced for the level of the course.

The teacher said in the first class that if we have prior experience, he could assign us something else for the rest of the semester, so I ended up doing that. I didn't learn anything new, what I worked on was based on the skills I already had.

The Digital Analytics and Consumer Insights course was good in structure and content, but it was so uninteresting, we had around 4 classes in the entire semester, and a monthly assignment. In theory, it was good for me as I could focus on the Service Design, but I don't feel like I learned much more.

And Finnish Language, just don't. I didn't I'm glad I didn't ;)

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

As I said above, Finnish Language is quite useless in my opinion, but the other courses depend on what you want to achieve during your stay.

## Practical Experience

*1. How was the application process?*

*a. What did KEA help you with?*

*b. What help did you receive from your school abroad?*

On both sides everyone was very helpful and nice, always responding to questions and making it an easy process.

*2. Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your Destination?*

*a. How helpful was the receiving school in this process?*

Again, everything was on point.

*3. Where did you live?*

*a. Was it difficult to find accommodation?*

In Helsinki there is HOAS, an organization that manages student dorms, and it is very professional and have plenty of availability. The apartment I was staying in was right next to Pasila station, first station after Helsinki Central Station, and every train was passing through there, so it was an extremely easy commute to anywhere. In 10 minutes you are in the city center and in 20 you are at university.

The only issue was that the building was under renovation, and I was unlucky to be on the renovating side, with the first month and a half having a wood panel blocking any sunlight, and no windows in the living area. It felt like living underground, even though it was on the 4th floor. They took it down at some point, and I was left with a good view of the scaffolding, the plastic cover and the workers passing by my window. The worst part of it was the drilling, that was constant, Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00, making it impossible to be at home during that time, or to sleep past 08:10 when they started.

On a happier note, I know it was an exception, and Hoas is reliable enough, the apartment was in good condition and came furnished and had good utilities, the laundry was big and free of use. It also had a sauna, what more can you want from a Finnish student dorm.

*b. Was it expensive?*

In the beginning I was supposed to pay as much as I was paying in Copenhagen, around 440 eur, for a 10 square meters room in a 6 person apartment. We then received an email saying that due to the construction we would get a compensation in form of 75 eur deducted from the rent monthly, so I ended up paying 365 eur, but I would've payed the whole amount for a window and for not having to hear the construction noise surrounding me.

It was a bit unfair, because in the email announcing the deduction they were "surprised" of the situation, but they couldn't be, because they knew a well before the construction started, and it was not mentioned to us when we signed the contract, so they were keeping it secret from us. Even if they weren't keeping it a secret in the beginning, in their process you get only one offer, and if you refuse it you are put at the end of the list and most likely you won't get a different one, so you would have to figure it out yourself, and you might end up paying double.

It was also unfair that everyone got deducted the same amount, even though the people on the other side had windows and could get light and fresh air. In my opinion it should've been a deduction for everyone for the noise, and a separate one for the people that had blocked windows, but still it was hard to live there for anyone, and you can't put a price on peace, daylight and fresh air.

In any case, it was only my experience, and some bad luck let's call it, in all other Hoas buildings everything was fine, and it's still the best and most reliable housing you could get as an exchange student, and by next year the construction should be done, so even in the same building I was in, everything will be much better.

Also, stay in Helsinki, do not go to the Hyvinkka Campus, it's far away from all the things you might want to do.

4. What kind of expenses did you have in general?

a. Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

- The rent was 365 eur
- A transport card for ABC zones, which cover most of the city was around 80 eur a month
- Sim card with unlimited data was 20 eur (the apartment did have internet cables, but no wifi routers, so you had to buy one for ~80 eur, but you then have to get a sim card anyway, so in my experience it's better to get unlimited data and hotspot works really good)
- Food was quite cheap, as you get a **Kela meal subsidy card**, which you can use to all **Unicafes** (Student cafeterias around the city, with really good food buffets), where **meals are usually under 3 eur**. So you can eat lunch in the campus and then dinner in the city center for 6 eur a day, which is amazing. Groceries are similar in price with Copenhagen, sweets are cheaper, but you might only need to cook on weekends when Unicafe is closed, other than that there is no point in cooking.

For everything mentioned above it would be a total of around 700 eur/month, so almost all of it is covered by the Erasmus Grant, but everything extra will be out of your own savings. But if you get SU + Erasmus Grant, then you will be more than secure.

5. What kind of income did you have during your exchange?

a. Did you receive SU and/or Erasmus

I did not receive SU as I am an international student and I didn't have a job in Denmark, but I received the Erasmus Grant of +500 eur.

b. Did you apply for any grants and did you receive Any?

Just the Erasmus Grant.

## Cultural/Personal Experience

*1. What challenges did you experience culturally while being Abroad?*

You get used to the life here in the first 2 weeks, I can't say it's much different than the challenges I already had as an international student in Denmark, so I can't think of anything specific.

*a. How helpful was the receiving school in this process?*

The international office organized all the meetings for getting documents and it was a clear process.

The student organization has a lot of events and it is very easy to get to know people and do stuff.

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

I think that it was a good break from the routine, I had time to reflect on what I want to do in the future, and I feel quite confident in future similar experiences.

One thing that stood out was the Helsinki Public Library - Oodi, where you can do so many things and it's a great place to hang out.

The museums are really good, there are many discounts for students.

You can also go hiking and some nights in the winter you might be able to see the Northern Lights from the outskirts of the city. Saunas everywhere, people are quiet, but really friendly and helpful.

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

Depends a lot on what everyone is expecting from the semester, but Laurea is quite reliable and flexible. It is not a place of performance, but of studying the basics or getting better at some specific skills. It is quite relaxing and they expect just what you want to give. You can learn a lot of things, but only if you want to do so., and at the same time you can have time for yourself and to explore the country and culture.

*We look forward to reading/seeing your report and to have you back at KEA soon!*

*Note: We use the exchange reports as a source of valuable information about each school/destination to share with students interested in going to the given school in the future. In some cases we upload them to our website ([global.kea.dk](http://global.kea.dk)) and in some cases we share the reports with interested students. When submitting the report, you automatically give us consent to sharing/uploading the report to our website. If you do not want your report shared or uploaded OR you want us to anonymize it before we do so you should explicitly request this in an e-mail to your international coordinator.*