

Waterford, Ireland – SETU Exchange



By Daniel – IT Technology

Introduction

My name is Daniel and I am 27 years old. I am studying IT Technology (IT-Teknolog) at KEA (Københavns Erhvevsakademi) and I have just finished my 3rd semester abroad in Waterford, Ireland at SETU (South East Technological University). When I first heard we had the chance of going abroad for the 3rd semester I immediately declined and thought that was not for me. Then my best friend at KEA was going to go abroad and kept talking about it so I started looking into it and I am super happy that I did because what an experience it has been.

I chose Ireland because I had a few friends from here that are super friendly and I wanted to go to a place where they speak English but honestly that really does not matter much because most of my friends here ended up being international anyway.

The modules and Academic Experience

Choosing classes was not a fun experience. The timetable is very annoying to navigate especially if you are choosing from multiple studies. The teachers were in general very nice and accommodating to international students and so was the International coordinator, Alan Aylward.

When I first got here my plan was to follow the IT Technology class but after trying their modules for a week I realized it was not exactly what I expected and that I needed to try as many different modules as possible before honing in on the 6 I ended up with.

I started by having the modules Computer Networks, Network theory fundamentals, Database Fundamentals, Programming Fundamentals 2 and Introduction to Cloud Computing. I ended up only following Computer networks from that list. The teacher "David Power" was a great teacher and the module felt like a great refresher for what I had learned in the last 2 semesters while also learning a new program and a bit more practical. The modules in general are from 3-5 hours a week split between practical labs and theoretical lessons. They have a lot more individual work compared to at KEA.

Network Theory Fundamentals was just not for me. It is about graphs and math. In the short time I spent having it I did not find it useful or interesting at all.

Database Fundamentals is definitely useful and I would have definitely taken it but the teacher "Brendan Jackman" was really dry and would just talk for 2 hours straight without any breaks. That is not how I learn. I also had trouble fitting it into my timetable.

Programming fundamentals 2 was a follow up from their second semester with Java so I found it too difficult while only knowing a bit of Python myself.

Introduction to Cloud Computing I would have loved to have but they did not run it this semester and instead had Creative Problem Solving which was a fun and interesting subject and especially the teacher "Richie Lyng" was great. It did not require too much work so I would recommend it with other more demanding and practical modules.

The modules I ended up taking were a mix from all kinds of IT related studies.

Professional Practice was a module that is perfect for trying to find an internship that I needed to do for 4th semester. It is very easy and not very involved but it helps with figuring out a career plan and the teacher "Maria Cahill" is very nice. There were too many lessons that were very focused on internships and companies in Ireland and I would recommend figuring out when they are and only going to a few of them. If you are not trying to find an internship then this module is not for you.

I have always had a big interest in games so I ended up taking Introduction to Game Design which was very fun and had some practical stuff you will find in most tech companies such as Scrum. From the same teacher "Brendan Lyng" I also took Introduction to C++ for games which was fairly difficult as C++ is very different to Python but I would still recommend it. Both modules are not the most relevant for my studies but I am still glad I took them.

And lastly I ended up taking DevOps to replace Introduction to Cloud Computing. As I missed the first 3 weeks due to illness and just figuring out the timetable it ended up being a very difficult module. Especially the first assignment which requires a full Python program to run a lot of AWS Services, but I would highly recommend it as it was very useful if you want to go into Cloud Computing.

Practical Experience

The application process was not bad at all. I had a lot of small meetings just to make sure everything was done right but otherwise it was smooth.

The major headache I had with the process was with housing. The application process ends many months after the student accommodation has already been opened up which means you are not going to get a room at the dorms. I cannot recommend finding housing online without being in Ireland to go see the rooms. I heard of around 12-13 people who got scammed out of 1500-2500 euros and I almost fell for the same scam. I ended up finding a room a few days before I arrived and then immediately accepted it when I saw it just because of how frustrating the process of finding a room had been. However the house has been awful. The landlady is a very strange person and the house was not properly cleaned with mold problems and no central heating which makes for a very cold house or an expensive electricity bill. The other roommates that moved in were also not very clean and very young with 2 of them mainly minding their own business.

I paid around 550 euros for the room which is okay. A bit cheaper than what I would expect in Copenhagen. My expenses were very similar to back home and between SU, Erasmus grant and renting out my apartment back home I have earned a little bit. I am however also a fairly frugal person and I could have definitely spent a bit more on experiences. The prices average out to about the same as in Denmark.

Cultural/Personal Experience

The Irish are very friendly and open. It was however difficult to make friends in classes with them which I think would be like the Danish experience from someone coming in abroad.

The most frustrating part of Ireland was the public transport, especially the buses. They would always be delayed at least 15 minutes or would not show up at all. First weekend it took 4 hours for the bus to show up to Tramore. It is a however a great town oceanside town that I can recommend visiting. The bicycle greenway to Dungarvan was great too. In general Ireland is a beautiful country with a great nature but it rains too much to truly enjoy the outdoors. Invest in proper rain clothes if you are going to visit Ireland. It will be raining a lot, much more than Denmark.

The best part of the trip was all the friends that I have made. The Erasmus community is great so join all the social parties and events that are being posted in the start. Talk to people at the introduction and add them on WhatsApp. Most of my social life was with other international students but the clubs are a great way to meet and hangout with the Irish. I joined the Kayaking club and had a great time. It was also a great way to see nature and rivers in Ireland because of the trips we went on through it. Best advice I can give is to join one or two sports clubs that you have interest in. It does not matter if you are any good at it before you join because they will be open and friendly to new members and will teach you the ropes.

Another important thing to note is that in the first 2 weeks you will figure out what modules to do. Try as many as possible the first week because the timetables will change, and you might not be able to do the ones you wanted or they might not be what you expected. This is also your chance to personalize what modules you want so use it to your advantage.

Conclusion

If you are at all interested in going abroad, I highly recommend it. It is an experience of a lifetime that you will not get anywhere else. It is a great way to explore other cultures and for me it made me appreciate living in Copenhagen a lot more.