

EXCHANGE REPORT

Mona Elbke Mortensen



DESIGN, DIGITAL and TECH students Questionnaire Study Abroad/Exchange

1. Where and when did you study abroad?

Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, for one semester from September 3rd to December 14th.

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

Entrepreneur Design

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

During my semester, I took these four following classes:

Design Management

This class was about learning to manage a design project from beginning to end. We did both group work and individual work, all of which was smaller or bigger design assignment. We learned a lot about the theory of Design Thinking, as well as many different design disciplines such as Experience Design, Communication Design, Urban Design and Design Activism. For our group projects, the groups were divided in terms of which design discipline we individually wished to work with. The professor of this class, Daniel Drak, is an amazing teacher and inspiring person, and I overall highly recommend this class.

Social Media

This class was centred around Social Media, in both an analytical way and in terms of marketing. We learned how to brand and market our self or our product on Social Media, and we have discussions about what affect Social Media has on the world, as well as current events on Social Media. We did both group and individual assignments, and in the end we took the Hootsuite exams in both how to use Hootsuite as a tool, and how to do Marketing on Social Media, which is very useful of you want to market and brand yourself/your product on a professional level.

Topics in Design

This class had a more philosophical approach to design. We discussed different topics such as Design Thinking and Visual Thinking, and the class was shaped after the students' individual interests during the semester. The professor was very open minded. We did a bit of group work in one smaller design project, but mostly individual work in form academic papers based on topics we discussed in class and articles from our curriculum.

Digital Design Studio

This class was very "all-round" regarding all topics in Digital Design. It is not required to have any sort of experience with digital design, and everything is explained from the bottom. We touched base with Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and After Affects, and at last we did a big individual project, where we could choose if weather we wanted to do graphical design as posters, or animation design in After Affects as either an animation or a small stop-motion movie. This class had only individual work, and zero group work.

Academic Experience

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

Ryerson was very helpful. The system can be confusing, but Ryerson is open to any questions and they answer fast on whatever doubts you may have. In the first two weeks of the semester, it is possible to change courses, if there is a spot open, and I can highly recommend keeping yourself updated with every class that might fall in you interest, and don't hesitate to ask all the necessary questions and do what you can to get a spot in the class you want, even after deadline.

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

My Design Management class was very rewarding in terms of having a very inspiring professor, and in the same time being able to work both in groups and individually, in topics and projects where the students has a lot of influence of the outcome. My Digital Design Studio class was very rewarding as well, as we learned to work individually on our own projects. I learned a lot about graphic design and animation. The most rewarding thing in general was definitely the opportunity to develop my English language in an academic context, for future and more professional purposes.

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

The Social Media Class war relevant in sense of our learnings about branding yourself and your brand on Social Media, in terms of Marketing skills and theories, but a big part of the class was discussing current events and phenomenon on social media, which I found interesting, although it is not something I am going to use in my further educations, which would make this class least relevant. I would still recommend the class though, given that the professor is very inspiring and I still learned a lot.

4. What classes would you advice other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose? DESIGN, DIGITAL and TECH students

I would actually recommend all of the above-mentioned classes that I took, given that I got a lot out of all the classes, each in its own way. These being:

- Digital Design Studio, CRI 300
- Design Management, CRI 520
- Social Media, RTA 902
- Topics in Design, NPF 558

Remember also, that even though you belong to the Faculty of Creative Industries (as I did), it is still possible to select courses from other faculties, such as Faculty of New Media or Faculty of Fashion Design.

Cultural/Personal Experience

1. What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

People in Canada is much chattier than they are in Denmark, which is nice but also something I had to get used to. People comment a lot on everything. Another thing is that almost all prices does not include tax, which is something to consider when you are on a budget. This goes for tipping as well, which is expected most places. But all in all I did not face that many cultural challenges, given that Toronto is a very multicultural city with people from all over the world, which makes it hard to stand out. People are friendly, helpful and understanding.

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

Ryerson was very helpful, we got a big lecture on how to behave and what to expect and we could ask all the questions we wanted. The international office was helpful with most things.

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

Honestly, I think it is all the compliments you receive from strangers. This really a thing in Canada and it is something Denmark could learn from Canada. I am going to miss this a lot. This best personal experience was definitely all the friends I got in Toronto, who I will miss a great deal as well.

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

Get as much out of it as you can, and make use of all of the offers and events there is at the school (or outside the school), where you can meet new people (and get free food) and just talk to the people who you are in class with, even though it seems scary. You never know who you will meet or how much you actually can have in common, despite coming from different parts of the world. But don't be afraid of missing out either, because there is a lot of events and opportunities which is great, but it can also be overwhelming. Take in as much as you can, but take care of yourself as well, and don't push yourself if you don't have the energy or desire, so that you don't get stressed.

Practical Experience

1. How was the application process?

It was a little complicated, but you can always get help, which is great.

- a. What did KEA help you with?

They helped me with what to expect and not to expect, and knowledge about the experience from previous exchange students.

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

I received help with registering my profile on the university database, as well as course selection and reminders about important deadlines.

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

Not really to begin with, but more later on.

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

They gave good advice about being a tenant in Toronto, but we didn't directly ask for their help in terms of finding accommodation.

3. Where did you live?

I lived 4 different places, with 2 other exchange students I knew from KEA. It first we lived in a Hostel near Sherbourne for 10 days, before the semester started, then we moved to an apartment in Kensington Market where we were supposed to live for the rest of our stay, but unfortunately had to move out due to a lot of complications, then we lived at a house for a month in Roncesvalles/Parkdale, which was great, and finally we lived in my friend's apartment in Little Italy, while she was out of town, which was great as well.

- a. Was it difficult to find accommodation?

It depends on what sort of accommodation you are looking for. My impression is that it is easier if you are alone, and want to find a room to rent, then if you are a small group who wants to find a place together. Price is of course a big factor as well, given that Toronto is a very expensive city to live in, but it is definitely possible to find prices that matches a regular rent in Copenhagen. There are several websites to find accommodation, but it is definitely easier to find, once you are in the city yourself. The complications we ran into with our first apartment is something I would not wish for my worst enemy. We technically did not get scammed or anything, we just had a lot of problems and disagreements with our landlord, in terms of minimum requirements on what standards a home should have, and we had to move out eventually which was an extremely stressful situation.

- b. Was it expensive?

Very expensive, but it is definitely possible to find accommodation that matches the rent prices in Copenhagen.

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

-The UHIP (University Health Insurance Plan) is an expense you cannot avoid, given that it is a legal requirement for all students in Ontario. Make sure it does not overlap with your own insurance, so that you do not end up paying double up for the same services.

-Rent is a given, but I actually ended up spending less than expected.

-Public Transportation, I bit more expensive than Denmark.

-Regarding food, my experience is that both groceries and eating out is slightly cheaper than in Denmark. Note that prices in food in supermarkets include tax.

-Phone plan. This is unfortunately more than double of what you pay in Denmark, of you want a subscription with 3G data, call and texts. I recommend buying an ISIC international student card, which gives you a 50% discount on a Canadian phone plan, as well as many other discounts on things such as tickets for cultural experience, food or flight tickets with Kilroy.

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

I actually ended up spending less than expected, which was a pleasant surprise, but I also cut down on shopping in the last couple of months of my stay.

