

Erasmus report

Hiya, I'm Hanna and I was a student at the London Southbank University during my Erasmus semester in 2022. At KEA in Copenhagen, I'm doing my top-up bachelor's in Design & Business - Communication Design & Media. For my Erasmus semester, I was looking into visiting a big city that has a culture within fashion, art and music because that's the industries I'd like to work in after graduation. So, I wanted to get a feel of what it was like living and working there. Deciding on LSBU as the host uni was mostly due to the fact that they offered classes in many different subjects that I wouldn't be able to take at KEA, such as photography and film classes. My expectations were pretty much to take classes that are close to my professional field but in a different category without the commitment of doing a full degree, travel around the UK a bit and get a feel for London.

Experiences at the host uni LSBU

The reception at LSBU was really fun. The school kept us updated with emails and organized introduction events for the new students, as well as walking tours through London. This is where I met some of my friends from the exchange. During the introduction events, we received advice on how to move around in London, find a doctor, recommendations on what to do and see in the UK, and how the school works.

I picked most of my classes ahead of arriving in London, so when I got there I received my full timetable. As it turns out, two of my classes were overlapping, so I had to change one of them. The school's exchange coordinator Kasia gave me some options that would work, so I chose from them. I ended up taking the classes Creative Industries, Film Analysis and Self Publishing and the Photobook.

My favorite one of these was Self Publishing and the Photobook because it was a very hands-on teaching style. We would literally print, cut and bind our own books. The tutorials for this during class were super useful and gave me an overview of the options I have when making my own book. Taking the images wasn't part of this class, which I think should've been mentioned in the module description to avoid confusion for new students. The lecturers Paula and Tamara were very knowledgeable and offered regular feedback sessions to guide us in our process. They also provided lots of background information on the self-publishing world and brought plenty of different photobooks and zines to class as inspiration. For this class, I produced a photobook with images of the Copenhagen neighborhood Nordhavn.

Another class I thoroughly enjoyed was Film Analysis. This one was taught in a more traditional uni setting with one or two lecturers presenting in front of the class and us taking notes. Since I didn't have a background in film, basically everything was new to me. We learned about how to critically analyze and interpret all sorts of aspects of film, such as color, sound, narrative, mise-en-scene etc. Part of this class was watching films that our lecturer had previously selected. After the lecture and watching a film, the class would discuss the film based on the topic of the current and previous lectures. This was very helpful to me, in order to figure out what questions to ask myself while analyzing and what type information can be expressed through technique. Based on one or more of the films, our exam consisted of writing an essay analyzing it. I think this was the most challenging exam of them all since there was so much information and skills I had to catch up on. However, it was also the most rewarding one because now I can look at films with a more analytical eye which is quite fun, as it turns out.

The class I had mixed feelings about was Creative Industries. First of all, the actual content of the class differed greatly from the module description. I was expecting to learn more about how creativity works and is viewed in different industries and cultures, as well as what that means to an individual

working in a creative field. To wrap it up, I'd to be working on my own creative project. Instead, we got lectures about how to look for jobs, write CVs, and set up our LinkedIn profiles. This can all be useful information when you're younger and don't have any work experience yet but for me, this felt a bit redundant. The exam was split into two submissions, one being a case study on a creative professional that inspires us. I enjoyed working on this exam because it made me take a closer look at the career steps and work of one of my favorite graphic designers. I learned a lot about the techniques and themes he uses, which was super beneficial to try something new and grow my own skill set as a graphic designer. The second exam was a group project about how a specific industry can use storytelling to inspire or educate its consumers. This exam, similar to the first, came a bit out of nowhere because the lectures didn't really deal with these topics as much. So, most students in the class were confused and discouraged. If this module exists next semester, it would be helpful for the lecturers to have a specific goal on what to teach to the students (definitely narrow it down) because it was very unclear and besides the first exam, I didn't take anything useful from this class.

Quick note: The course titles including descriptions can be found in the appendix.

Social and cultural experiences

I was positively surprised by how easy it felt to settle in and make London feel like home. It's a diverse and multicultural city, there is practically no language barrier if you speak English (which helps with connecting to the culture) and people are very open and easy to talk to. I found most of my friends through introductory activities organized by LSBU. Here, students are all in the same boat as they just got to London and don't know anyone yet, so they're open to connecting. Another great way of making friends was the app bumble BFF. It's basically like Tinder but it offers a section that's exclusively for platonic friendships. Here, I've met people from other unis, people that are working or just passing through.



Regarding activities, there's lots and I mean LOTS to do. Before I list some of mine, I highly recommend downloading Tiktok (not sure if I'm allowed to recommend that in this report but it was a huge help to me haha) because as soon as you land in England, the algorithm will start sending you videos about events, places and activities to do in London. And in case the algorithm isn't blessing you this time, you can look up hashtags about the city and activities. The places that popped up on my feed were usually towns close to London that work great as day trips, restaurants from any cuisine and events like concerts, raves or local markets and openings. For concerts and live acts in general, I used the app Dice. Most of the events happening in the city can be found here where you can bookmark them, buy tickets or join a waitlist. I found this super practical. As for navigation apps, I used Google Maps, although I've heard from lots of Londoners that

they prefer Citymapper, as it shows you the prices for bus and tube rides and is supposedly more accurate in terms of arrival and departure times.

Some of my activities included a day trip to Windsor Castle, Stonehenge and Bath. Oxford and Cambridge are also closeby and definitely worth a visit. I haven't been to Brighton but almost everyone I met that's gone, loved it. In the city, I regularly visited the cafe Little Louie at Elephant & Castle, as it's pretty close to LSBU's student halls and campus. Here I would study, hang out with friends or watch people walk their dogs. Other than that, every neighborhood has their



shops and spots from Brick Lane in Shoreditch and Borough Market in Southwark to the Victoria & Albert Museum in South Kensington and Camden Town with its market and Primrose Hill. Also, most museums have a general exhibition that's always free to enter.

One of my favorite spots was definitely The British Film Institute, short BFI. It's a charitable organization that promotes and preserves film-making and television in the United Kingdom (according to Wikipedia lol), but most importantly it offers people under the age 25 a discount on tickets, so that you only pay 3GBP to watch a film at their cinema. It's a mix between old and newer movies, mostly shown as part of a theme for a month. When I was there, I watched a bunch of anime



films, Gaspar Noé movies and lots of Judy Garland's work because those were some of the themes for the months I was there. I really enjoyed going there, especially considering how expensive it is to go see a movie in Denmark. Highly recommend checking out the BFI's program!

I could go on and on about what to do in London, so if anyone wants specific recommendations, feel free to dm me on insta @hansylvester. This goes for any other questions about the exchange here as well :)

If there's any advice I could give is to talk to people, any people in London really, be it at parties, on the street or book shops. Most people are honestly up to it (at least in my case luckily) and everyone experiences the city differently, so it's fun to get somebody else's perspective.

Practical experiences

The application process at first seemed a bit intimidating, as there were so many steps, files and applications that needed to be approved but with the help of Hanne, my exchange coordinator at KEA, it was actually kind of fun. She helped me with any questions and anxieties I had. Also, the use of Mobility Online broke down the process into manageable steps that gave you an overview of how far into the application process you were. This made everything seem a lot less daunting. The only difficult thing between steps was the waiting.

Once my application was somewhat accepted at LSBU, I had a million questions for my exchange coordinator in London, called Kasia. When would I get an unconditional offer? When and how can I apply for student halls? When will I know if I got a room? When do classes start? etc. Kasia answered all of them as much as she could and usually responded within the day.

The option to live close to uni in student halls was one of the reasons why LSBU was such an attractive exchange school to me. London has a pretty competitive and expensive housing market and I wouldn't have moved there if I would've had to deal with all that stress. But student halls presented the perfect solution for a temporary, easy and relatively affordable home. At LSBU you can choose between several locations and room sizes depending on what you're looking for. I chose the cheapest option both for location and room size, which was Dante Road at 142 GBP per week. For most months, this came out at around 5000-6000DKK per month, which is similar to my rent in Copenhagen. Students can apply through a portal on LSBU's accommodation website and they will be notified when there's any news about their application.

The accommodation itself was fine. At Dante (which was a 10 minute walk from school and about 20 minutes from the London Eye), you get a room with a bed, closet, desk, shelf and a sink. While the furniture is provided, you will need to bring your own bedding. Furthermore, you share the bathroom

and kitchen with your flatmates. Once a week, the common areas of the flat get cleaned by maintenance but you are responsible for the cleanliness of your own room.

When I moved in, some things weren't working properly like my heater, the wifi and some light switches in the bathrooms. You can request someone to fix this at Dante's reception and for the most part this worked out well. The only thing that was a constant struggle was the lack of hot water in our flat. There was a limited amount of hot water each flat is provided with for the day which cannot be refilled once it's empty. So everyone tried to squeeze in a shower in the morning and by 11am, the hot water was gone. Other than that, I enjoyed my time at Dante a lot. My roommates were lovely, respectful and clean. There were plenty of supermarkets close by, along with a small park and gyms. Most spots in central London were walkable and since there's always something going on in the streets, the walks never felt that long.

In terms of expenses, the biggest one would obviously be the accommodation. Other than that, going out to eat or excursions like day trips, partying and shopping. In the supermarkets, food was priced similarly to Denmark, perhaps a little bit cheaper. To be honest, I didn't eat the healthiest when I was in London because there was always something going on, so I had a quick bowl of pasta with tomato sauce or simply ate out.

Lastly, I came to London by plane. Arrived pretty late in the evening at Heathrow and was a bit overwhelmed by the whole tube and bus situation, so I chose to take a taxi to Dante. It came out at about 110 GBP which was kinda expensive, so next time I'll definitely try to go by tube or book a shuttle.

In conclusion, London definitely exceeded my expectations because I learned so much about the city's culture and myself here. LSBU was a big part of that and I enjoyed getting more into film and photography here. The lecturers really cared about our progress and always offered advice and support that pushed me forward and helped me get better at what I wanna do professionally. I also met a bunch of amazing people here that put a friendly face to this giant city. Doing an exchange in London was definitely the right choice for me, as I wanted to do lots of exploring besides studying as well. Would 10/10 recommend!

APPENDIX

Course titles and descriptions

Creativity: The Creative Industries (CIN_5_CCI)

This module conceptualises the notion of creativity, unpicking what constitutes 'the creative industries'. Taking a critical look at contemporary tactics and strategies that define cultural production, the module introduces aspects such as organisational behaviours, policy frameworks, cultural and civic contexts, and issues around value and monetisation of creativity. Furthermore, the module supports students to develop a creative project around their own creative interests and expertise, through: a) questioning for themselves what it means to be creative, b) reflecting on how their creative practice sits within an industry context, and how it is valued. Students apply the theoretical and critical frameworks presented onto a creative project developed through work experience or mentorship

Film Analysis (FAM_5_FAN)

This module includes a film screening series, lectures and seminars designed to explore the way dramatic narratives work and are constructed. Narrative Theory in the context of Film is about the relationship between characters in a film, between author and text, and between text and audience. How do we know what we are expected to know when watching a film? How are our sympathies provoked and our curiosity stoked by onscreen drama? The module will culminate in a 2000 word essay focused on an aspect of narrative screen theory that is intended to help you better understand how narrative works on screen and how you might thereby develop your own original screen narratives.

Self Publishing and the Photobook (AME_5_SPP)

In recent years developments in digital technology and advances in home printing and print on demand services have led to a rapid increase in photographers self publishing books, outside of the traditional publishing models. At the same time independent and mainstream publishing houses have also increased their output of photobooks. In this module students will explore the photobook as a means for disseminating work and creating an audience. Each student will photograph, design and create a photobook. Collectively you will host an event at which your books can be seen and can be purchased by an audience.