

Exchange report

Semester 4 – July to October 2018 - Deakin University, Australia



My name is Heidi Nathalie Mittag and I have been studying abroad for my 4. Semester.

This report contains thoughts and experiences in connection with my exchange at

Deakin University in Australia. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me by using the info below.

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Introduction

Why I chose to study abroad

I chose to study abroad during my 4th semester. I wanted to try something new and get some other experiences with studying. Furthermore I wanted to improve my English skills, because I think it is relevant for the international perspective of my education.

Why I chose this semester

I chose the 4th semester, because it was the perfect time for me when I was half way through the course. It was also the semester my international co-ordinator, Sophie, recommended because what they learned at home was something I could read about and study on my own and it should be more similar to the earlier semesters than the 5th semester will be.

My expectations of my semester abroad

I expected the semester abroad to be challenging, because I knew everything would be in English and obviously the teaching methods would be different, so there would be a lot of new things to get used to. But for the same reasons I also expected to improve my English skills and learn a lot of new stuff. Beside the studies I hoped to meet many new people and develop myself.

My thoughts before I left

I remember being nervous for the “studying in English” part, and of not being able to follow along in the classes. I took an English test before I left, but you never know what to expect when you haven’t tried something like this before. Fortunately it all went very well, and the challenges there has been has only helped me to improve my skills. I was also nervous for staying at campus – if it was a nice place and if people were nice. Basically everything I was nervous about turned out to be very positive.

Experiences of the host university

At Deakin University I studied two different subjects. I had to get at least 3 credit points to achieve the same amount as the school in Denmark. One of my subjects counts for 1 credit point, while the other one count for 2 which means it requires more work. The subjects were the following:

Matterscapes:

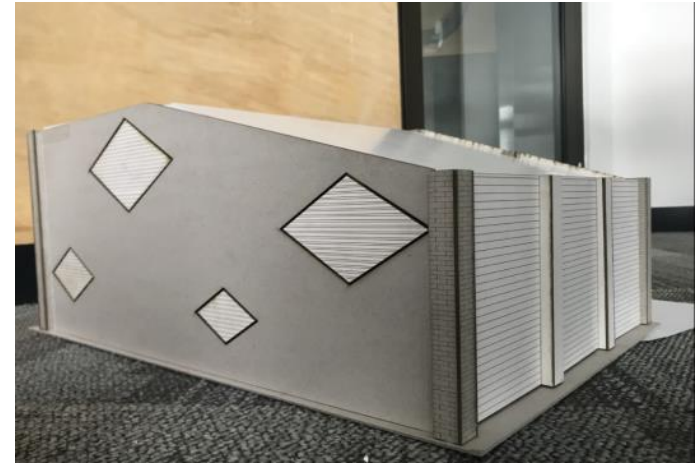
Matterscapes is an architect subject, which focuses on the creative and abstract parts around buildings. This subject counted for 2 credit points which meant that it was the most demanding subject and it required a lot of work. In this class we built heaps of models in different scales and with different materials to get an idea of materials, joints, and building methods. It was a different way to work with construction, and I believe it was a lot more architect minded than what I am used to, which was also interesting.

We had classes once a week in Matterscapes, and the rest of the week we worked on our individual project. The amount of work was pretty big, so I did spent a lot of time studying every day. Therefore, it was nice not to have classes every day. We presented our work often, for the rest of the class, which was a good practice in both explaining yourself in English, and presenting your work. By the end of the semester we had a final presentation with all our work, at least 10 different models, and a portfolio for the 12 weeks.

My teacher in Matterscapes is a man called Michael Sharman. He let us decide a lot of things ourselves and helped us being creative and thinking in different ways, but if we were stuck, he also gave us new ideas. I can definitely recommend him as a teacher and a friend on school to help you if you have any questions.

I would recommend Matterscapes if you are studying construction management and have chosen architect as your field. If you like to be creative and be allowed to try different things without too many rules, Matterscapes is a fun and interesting subject. Especially because you get to work with physical materials and models, and because of the workshops we got, it is possible to get some really nice results.

Below are some photos of some different projects in Matterscapes and how I presented it.



Modelling studio:

Modelling studio is also an architect subject, where we are taught how to use different 3D CAD software's and also how to use different software's to present our work such as Photoshop and InDesign.

In modellings studio we had classes once a week, where we also introduced to the weekly activity that we had to do for the next week. Beside from that, we had one project that we worked on for the whole 12 weeks, and which we presented at the end of the semester. By the end of the semester we had to submit a physical model, a portfolio with all the activities, and a presentation of our final product.

My teacher in modelling studio is called Simon Finn, and he is one of the best teachers I have had. He is very encouraging and interested in your work, and always ready to give you a hand if you need it. He is also someone you can always find on school and talk to if you have questions.

Modelling studio is a subject you chose, if you want to learn more 3D CAD softwares and get some good presentations of your work. If you are studying construction management and chose architect as your field, I would say that modelling studio is a good subject. Below there are some photos of some of my projects in modelling studio.



Bicycle parking station drawn in Rhinoceros.



Bicycle parking station printed by lasercut to a physical model



Presentation day for the last project

Social and Cultural experiences

In Australia people are generally very kind and helpful, and I have had so many good experiences with strangers I have met on my way. Also specifically the teachers on Deakin and the team on Res has been very nice and helpful. The teachers are good at their jobs, and the students are good students. You can always get help from the other students or teachers and everyone is doing their best to get good quality work.

My experience socially was very good, but a big part of that, I think, was because I chose to stay at campus, where I was with the other students every-day beside from school. There was always someone to talk to or be with, and it helped me a lot.

I would say that Australia is an easy country to go to by yourself and make friends, because people are so friendly. Also, there is a lot of social events and school events that you can go to, if you want to meet new people.

What to do in the city

In the city of Geelong there are different bars, caf  es and restaurants to go to, which is nice when you need a break from studying. There is also a cinema and a shopping Centre and several of training centers.



Practical experiences

The travel

I travelled to Australia by flight from Copenhagen, and it took me 26 hours to get there, with a stop in Switzerland and a stop in Hong Kong. Fortunately, Deakin University offers to pick up their students in Melbourne Airport, which is about an hour drive from school and the residential house. So the driver waited for me outside and drove me to the place I stayed, and helped me with my luggage, without charging me anything. That was my first good experience of the host university.

Living on res

Location

I chose to stay at the residential house at campus, because it was recommended by my school counselor. I don't regret that I chose that, because it had a very good location and it did make things easier for me, to have everything close by. It was 3 minutes walk from the university, and also in walking distance to the grocery store, shopping centre, caf  es, bars and restaurants, the bay beach where you can walk or run lots of kilometers around, the train station that goes directly to the city of Melbourne in 40 minutes and the coast where you can drive to the closest beach or visit the Great Ocean Road.



Social experience

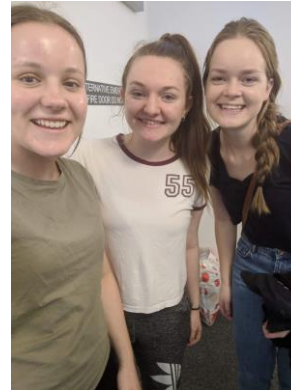
The stay on campus was also a good experience because I lived close with all the other students. This meant that I got lots of friends in a short time, and we were able to share knowledge and help each other with school stuff. I never felt alone, because I always had friends around me, but I still had my own room where I could close my door if I wanted to study or just be alone. Each level also had rooms where we could go and study, watch movies, and make food or just chill. We often made dinner together with the ones staying in our apartment, or the other exchange students. Level 11 was a place where everyone could come and study, play games, watch movies or make food, and the residential team also often ordered dinner for everyone to come and grab and have a nice chat. This meant that we also met the people from the other apartments and got a bit of a break from the studies.



The "Residential ball" at Deakin



Dinner at the residential house with the exchange students



Saying goodbye to my Australian roommates



Studying and playing music in one of the study rooms at the residential house



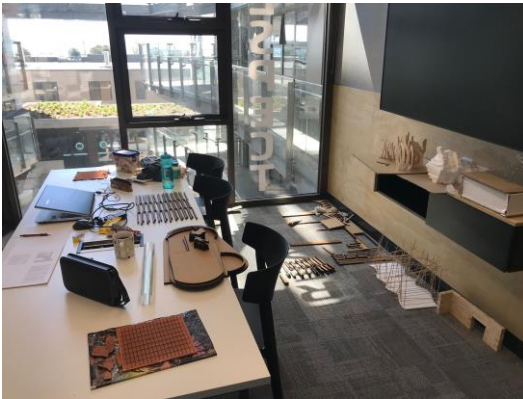
Exchange students from KEA



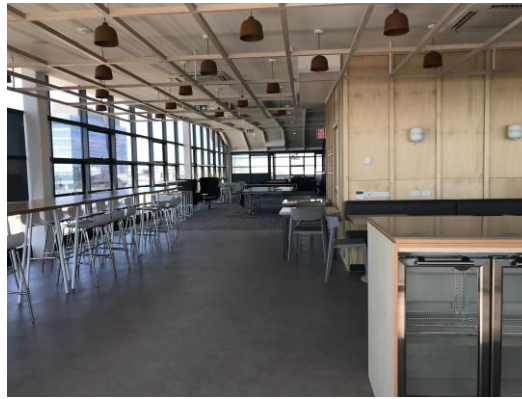
Study break with good friends from Deakin

Facilities

There was about 150 students staying at the residential house, and we lived in shared apartments with around 6 people in each. Everyone had their own bed/study room and then we shared the 5 bathrooms, living room, and kitchen. All the facilities were new (2018) and they were still working to improve the place. On one side of the building, there was a workshop that we could use to build, 3D print or laser cut models, and there were people working there to help us with anything. In the basement there was space to hold bikes, surfboards and basically anything we needed to store.



The study room, which you can find on every level



Level 11, where we had all our social activities



The residential house above from level 8



The view from level 11 on the residential house

Safety

First and foremost I reckon the area in Geelong was a good area, where I also felt safe. But the school also did a lot to make us feel that way. The school has a lot of good politics, and their main goal is to get the people living on res to respect each other. We are constantly reminded of this by the messages on the windows, in the elevator and on e-mail. I think that this helps the school and Res to be a good and safe place to be. Furthermore, there were people in the reception 24/7 if you needed anything, and there would be guards walking around in the evenings to make sure everything were well. We also had an app, which we could use to press a red button, if we were somewhere and did not feel safe. Furthermore we could call the guards one was working at school until late and did not feel good about walking alone.

Cost

The cost for living at the residential house was not cheap. I paid between 1200-1300 Australian dollars each month. But compared to what we got and what we did not have to fix ourselves, I am happy that I chose to stay there.

Food

I made dinner myself almost every day, but often with some of my friends on Res. The supermarket was very close by, and I believe the prices are close to the Danish prices. Sometimes we went out for dinner, and sometimes we got dinner from the residential team. But it was certainly nice to have a kitchen and be able to cook proper food.

Conclusion

The experience I have had with studying abroad has been better than I could have expected. As I wrote earlier, I had a few expectations of what I would learn and where I would improve, and these were also things that I consciously was working on. But what I have learned beside from that, both professionally and culturally, and what I have got of friends and people I have met, and things I have learned about myself is a lot more that I imagined. So I think it is safe to say, that I am very happy, that I chose to do a semester abroad and if I had the chance I would do it again.

The country of Australia is also fantastic and the people that lives there are so friendly and kind. It has been an amazing place to live and experience, and I would definitely recommend to spent some time travelling around the country and see some of its beautiful places.



Visiting "Ayers rock" in the middle of Australia, Northern territory



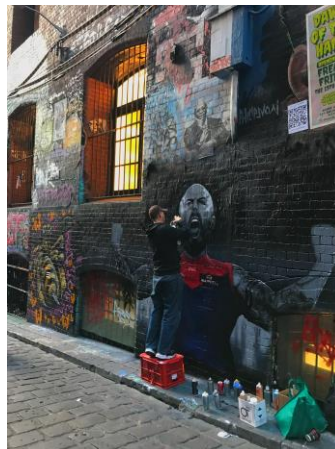
Hiking trip to "Point Nepean" in Sorrento, Victoria.



Visiting "Loch ard gorch" at The Great Ocean Road (which is about an hour drive from the school in Geelong)



Visiting "The twelve apostles" at the Great Ocean Road in New South Wales



Visiting the city of Melbourne