Exchange Student Report
Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia
Trimester 2, 2 July-19 October 2018
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Prologue

The very first thing I would like to state with this report is that, if one such as myself (read. a nerdy introvert) can manage to travel to the other side of the earth, have a great experience and get back home in one piece then so can you. And what I want for this report to do is try to give you a clear picture of what exactly you can expect, at least from the process of going and a little about what happens while you are 'down-under', so as to dispel some of the mystery about it.

Having said that I hope you will enjoy reading this report and I hope it will help answer some of your questions or doubts you might have about going.

Introduction

For reasons I'm not exactly quite sure of myself, I have never been too afraid of the prospect of one day perhaps working abroad. As such I had always thought about at least trying to study one semester abroad, to get a taste of what that might be like. However before I started my little adventure of going to Deakin, I had almost given up on the idea.
Before I started studying at KEA I actually had been around trying to find out exactly what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. As such I have been to different universities such as Copenhagen University for Law and Copenhagen Business School. When I finally found my passion here at KEA, I was rather determined to just 'get it over with' and not bother about going abroad.

As luck would have it I have managed to get decent grades here at KEA, and I still remember how under a completely random conversation in class a friend asked me if I had thought about going abroad since the deadline was only 3 days away. So I thought "What is the worst that could happen" and I went home that very same day the 12. March and registered online on KEAs online platform for exchange applications.

My point from this little story is for those of you thinking exchange can only be done when you have thought about long before hand. I had very little planning, money saved or really much thought about anything done in advance and 3½ months later I was flying to Australia.

Getting it all approved

If you read some of the other reports from previous exchange students, you might be a bit confused about what to expect from this process of being approved first by KEA, then by the host school and finally getting everything else done, for instance getting health insurance or a VISA in place.
Of course this can change, and I don't say my process was the norm, but I will write about the specific dates and how long went in between so you hopefully get a as complete picture as possible of this process, as this was by far one of the most frustrating/anxious times of this exchange.

The official Deadline for Fall 2018 semester on KEA was the 15. March. As previously mentioned I joined the application website on the 12. March, and had written my motivated letter by the 14 March.
On the 16 of March, Anne Dibbern the international coordinator here at KEA, informed me that the motivated letter I had uploaded was supposed to be in English (At the time I had written it in Danish because I thought it was only for KEA) I've added this little detail so you might not do the same mistake.
After this a period of 13 days went by and on the 29 of March I was nominated by KEA and my application was sent to my chosen university. Shortly thereafter on the 3. of April I got a email from Anne that now Deakin had accepted all the nominated students from KEA and now we should go through their own application site to get final approvement. This had to be done before the 10. of April.

Then came the long wait, and I was almost sure something had gone wrong, as there had been no news for 28 days. Then finally on the 9. of May I got word from Deakin that they had approved 3 units but needed me to pick a new one or provide more information about my abilities before they could finish my application.
It took 13 days of back and forth mailing before my fourth unit was approved, and I got sent my official approval from Deakin on the 23. May.
Now I had to wait for the BUPA health insurance policy to be email to me. This was paid through the Deakin Application website and it arrived on the 28. of May.

I finally had all the documents needed to apply for the final obstacle the VISA. From one of the previous exchange reports I very much dreaded this as a additional medical examination had been required and god knows what, and by now it was about a month from when I had to leave. The VISA website does feel incredible 'hostile' as they bombard you with very detailed questions, some you might never have even considered.
My advice is just to keep your cool and deliver as much information as possible, but within reason - I did not provide Bank statements but I did write briefly about what my financial situation was like. Don't bother calling their support as they aren't allowed to advise what you should put down - just do it as good as you feel you need to. I sent my VISA application on the 1. of June and it was approved on the 5. of June. I was finally ready to leave just 23 days before departure.

Accomodations

When I applied through the official Deakin portal I had initially chosen if it was possible to live on Campus as I would like to get the 'full' experience during my stay. When I got approved on the 23. of May I was initially told that everything was full, so I started looking through the different options. Deakin did give me some starter links to look through for a potential place to live but on the 28 of May some rooms was made available and I jumped at the opportunity and was quickly approved. I was to live in a apartment with 5 others, and this could be other exchange students such as myself or native Australians. Quite a big change for one who had so far only lived with his older brother in a apartment in Copenhagen.

Although there were perks about living on campus I would actually advice you to consider living elsewhere, as I felt there were somethings that did not live up to the expectations Deakin had made.

My room.

So first of all, living on Campus is very expensive. For the shared apartments without Air conditioning, I paid ~6.500 kr. a month. Compared to back home where I only pay 4000 kr. everything included. So what do you pay extra for? Well apart from the obvious convenience of living a 3 min walk from Campus, you pay for Cleaning twice a week in the shared rooms (Kitchen, living room, bathrooms), Security, Events (such as Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner-gatherings for all residents, or when a petting zoo comes around), free laundry, and a 24/7 support staff.

However due to my timetable I was often busy in class or with homework or simply too exhausted to really benefit from all of these services. Also I got the feeling that there is less action going on in the winter season, as the weather in Melbourne is very much like a Danish fall/winter - wet, muddy and gray/dark.

So there was not quite as much of a community going on at the residential areas as I was led to believe, which is what I referred to when I talked about not living up to the expectations. I'm guessing there might be more life and action going on in the summer trimester (T1/T3) so the campus option might be better then.
It might also be prudent to point out that Deakin University Burwood Campus (They have several Campuses), is located a little while from everything. It takes about ~45 minutes to

travel into Melbourne using the Tram System. There are however plenty of stores in a closer proximity. But this might be worth considering when finding a place.

Lastly there is this little thing about a fire alarm. If you choose to live on Campus you will also be briefed very, very detailed about it. The thing is that its a very sensitive alarm and almost anything can set it off - at least if you don't use your head. I never set it off, but I did get sent out into the cold 37 times the very first month. This number dropped during the trimester, to only 12 times the last month, but suffice to say it is extremely annoying to be standing outside at 2 AM in the freezing cold because someone decided to cook late and didn't start the cooker hood. Oh and it also costs you ~5000 kr. if you accidently set it off.

So, if you do choose to live on Campus and feel the extra cost is worth it, my advice to you is to make sure to take full benefit of all the services they provide to get your money's worth.

Deakin Residential area - I was living in the MD building in the back of this picture.

Academic Experience

Each unit at Deakin is worth 7.5 ETCS point and as KEA expects us to take on a full load, which translates to 30 ETCS, I had 4 units at my time at Deakin. I will add the original unit description from the Deakin Trimester 2 Handbook, and follow it up with my experiences with the unit.

SIT102 - Introduction to Programming

Content

SIT102 introduces students to programming. Students will explore the relationship between computer program code and the software systems that are generated from them. Students will experience developing simple software using a variety of data types, selection and repetition control structures, functions, simple text files, and console and Graphical User Interfaces (GUIs) to interact with users.

Assessment

Learning portfolio 100%

Experience:

SIT102 was actually not my first choice and it was a unit I had to change to in my 1 week of studying at Deakin. I had originally taken SIT255 - Game Development Patterns and the prerequisite for that unit was this one. However I, KEA and Deakin felt that I had already been introduced to programming - the only problem was I had been taught Java and Deakin thought I knew C++. So despite SIT102 being a first year subject I was allowed to take it, since it taught a completely new programming language I was unfamiliar with. It however ended up being my favorite subject while I was there. The reason for this was an amazing learning experience provided both at lectures and at smaller sessions where we were appointed a tutor. The assessment was a portfolio which was made of assignments we would be working out throughout the semester. The tasks came in different difficulties so as we learned more stuff we could take on tasks we felt we were suited for - that way people choose their own grade. If you wanted simply to pass you had to do all the pass tasks - if you wanted High Distinction you needed to do all assignments, including all the High Distinctions and everything below. The tutors were there to make sure that our tasks was done correctly and nudge us in the right direction when we had errors.

I can highly recommend this unit.

SIT207 - Android Programming

Content

In SIT207 students will explore the concepts behind Android, the framework for constructing an application, and the tools for developing, testing, and publishing software for the platform. In this unit, students will practice how to program using the Java language, develop mobile applications for Android, debug program code and decipher its meaning, summarise and articulate mobile programming topics and present a mobile application solution.

Assessment

Two projects (30%, 50%) 80%, portfolio 20%

Experience:

Android Programming was completely new to me, but it did however use the Java language which I was quite familiar with having been taught it from KEA. However unlike SIT102 where everything was very well defined what was expected of us, how information was presented to us (There were video guides for every week, the lectures summarized these and added a new twist, and the tutorials gave us assistance in coding this in practise), in SIT207 there was a huge focus on self study. It felt like we were given just barely enough information to pass and we had to figure out the rest to get higher.

Although I really found Android Programming interesting and I did manage to make a cool concept of an App in the end, I did not particular enjoy the teaching method.

Lectures was very generalized and dry, no practical coding was really shown which was followed up with seminar classes where we simply followed paper instructions, despite a teacher being present. Apparently the teacher was only there to help people who were stuck following the instructions, which often happened because it had not been updated in a year or two (Android Programming is moving very fast and things get outdated all the time).

I felt that this unit could really have benefitted from some group projects because everything was completely solo. The two projects was actual App programs we had to develop and finally we had to write a report/portfolio about how we had gained our knowledge and how we had worked on our Apps.

As far as I know this unit will be merged with IOS, so hopefully the material will be updated by then. I will recommend this unit despite its flaws, especially if you are interested in app development.

SIT215 - Artificial and Computational Intelligence

Content

The development of intelligent systems has been a central quest of computer scientists for more than fifty years, with the objective of creating artificial systems that can solve problems traditionally achievable only by humans. This field is underpinned by a range of computational patterns and methods that cover problems such as searching, problem solving, reasoning, knowledge representation and learning. In this unit students will investigate, through a range of problem-based learning activities, a range of artificial and computational intelligence techniques that underpin modern, advanced intelligent systems such as autonomous vehicles, robotics, game-playing agents, and expert systems.

Assessment

Problem solving tasks (group) 40%, project 30%, examination 30%

Experience:
I had never before, at least to my knowledge, tried a unit/subject that was a first timer. I later found out that Artificial and Computational Intelligence was exactly that, and it really showed. The unitchair (The one responsible for creating the unit) felt like he was trying to reinvent the wheel, and unfortunately we were the genuine pigs chosen to do this.
The learning process was made like so: First we had lectures, which sadly was also hosted by a professor who had the thickest indian accent, so I ended up not going because it was simply easier to listen to recordings later as you would sometimes have to repeat them a few times before you'd understand him. The lectures often touched upon very interesting information however this was also extremely complicated, often involving complex mathematical formulas - despite there being no real mathematical prerequisite for the unit. You would then go to the seminars, where you might expect us to get some practical know how, what to do with this information. However what really happened was we would start working on these "Problem solving tasks", which was part of our assessment, where we would have to solve problems which often barely related to what we had been told at lectures. Often we would have 1-2 weeks to work on a task then make a presentation for our

teacher at the seminar. What ended up happening was we never got a proper grasp at the theory presented at lectures, because we were occupied with learning completely new information (on our own I might add) for completely unrelated tasks.

At the end of the unit we were expected to deliver a project-report on some AI-tasks, however we would have to use a new programming language, Python, for this project something we had never used before. Finally they topped it of with an examination, a written one, which was about all the information the lectures had been about, something almost everyone had little to no knowledge how to do.

I certainly wouldn't recommend this unit, not before they completely rework how they teach things, as all that I knew who took this unit felt it had been a huge mess. Luckily there was a extensive survey for this unit (and all units), where we had a opportunity to give our feedback through the proper channels.

SIT223 - Professional Practice in a Digital World

Content

Not only are employers seeking IT graduates with good technical knowledge, they are also demanding that they have well-developed professional skills. SIT223 exposes students to a range of such skills providing opportunities for developing and extending them in an IT context. The unit focuses on professionalism and critical thinking preparing students for work as IT professionals. Students will explore the impact of information technology in society, through the investigation of ethical and professional issues, and explore the modern IT workplace, including contracting, consulting, entrepreneurship, start-ups as well as the more traditional employee/employer relationship.

Assessment

Group project 10%, Skills audit 15%, group scenario analysis 15%, portfolio 60%
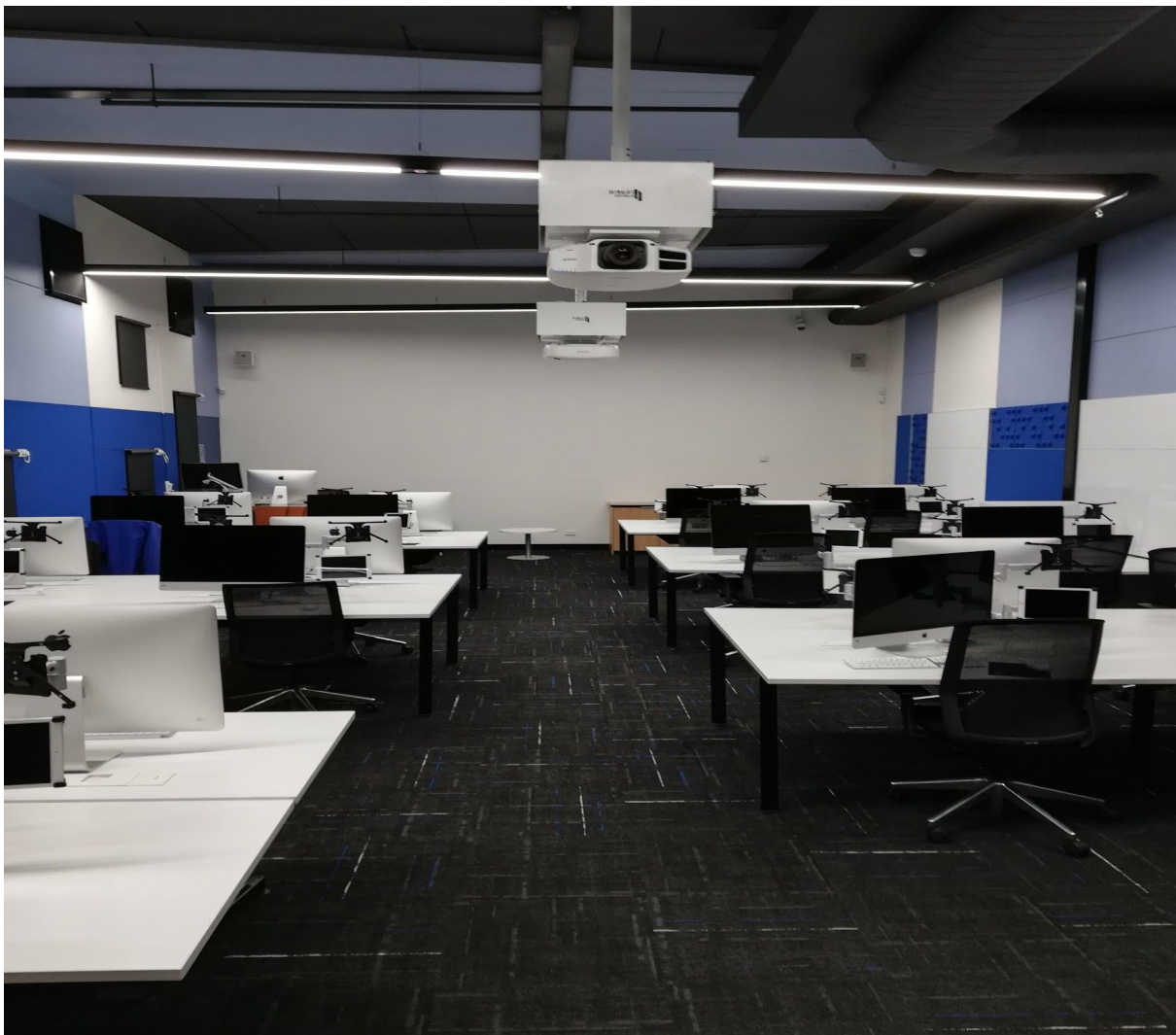
Experience:
This was my second favorite unit at Deakin, even though sometimes it felt like "Common-sense-the-Unit". What I mean by this is this unit focus on preparing on what lies after graduation. How to find a job, even how to read and understand job adds correctly, how to present yourself whether it be at a job interview or in a actual presentation. There was also plenty of other subjects such as work ethics, group work personalities, information

seeking etc.

One of the coolest moments of this unit was when there was a optional "real"job interview at Hoban Interviews in Melbourne. Here we had a opportunity to apply for a "real" add and talk with an actual job interviewer as if we were actually applying for the job, and get feedback back on how we did, if we got the job and what we could work on in the future.

There was also much more focus on group-work in this Unit than any other, which I also found very enjoyable.

Although it could sometimes feel like you already knew these things, I did gain a lot from it especially when working together with people from different backgrounds than myself. I would highly recommend this, if you wanted to be better at working with others and gain more insight in what lies after you finish your education.

A seminar class room - here you will be practising what has been taught in lectures. This is from Android Programming.

Life at Deakin University

If you had picked South Korea as your first priority but got sent to Deakin fear not, because there are a lot of asians as well as indians going at Deakin. There are of course Australians as well, but very few of them study software development and they are much more common in Business, Law and Medicine. The reason I am saying this is you just have to be aware that you might have to look a little harder than you'd expect to find Australians at Deakin than you first expect.

However as I have little experience with any of the different cultures and people who dominates at Deakin, this didn't bother me. It was all new and exciting, and I enjoyed getting to know my fellow students. One of my teachers, David Wang, I had in two different units, Android and Professional Practice and we got to know each other quite well during my stay. The atmosphere between teachers and students is very relaxed and casual, much like home, and I didn't run across any particular big cultural barriers. If I did have to point one out, it's probably that many of the asian students are very shy. This is partly because some of them are not particularly strong in the english language, and they are not taught to be quite as open as us Danish people. One of my group members, Amie a vietnamese woman, pointed out to me that they had very little practise from back home in presenting in class as this was not as big a focus in their schools as it is in Denmark.

My "Professional Practice" class - Excluding the guy in the stylish orange hoodie, there was only one native Australian, Leon, in the class. This was pretty much the same for all my classes as a software developer.

One of the best things about the teaching at Deakin is they record almost everything. Luckily I didn't have to waste time lying sick in bed, but if you ever were unable to show up for a lecture there would almost always be a recording you could watch later at your leisure.

But Deakin, and Australia what little I experienced of it, felt very much like home. Although the architecture was a little different and you saw some different plantlife, I sometimes almost forgot that I was on the other side of the earth when you were walking home in the rain with groceries.

If you want to experience a little more of the 'exotic' side of Australia has to offer you have to travel a little bit to find it. The Melbourne area is very much like northern Europe, and although I'm actually a little sad I didn't see a big spider, it was nice not having to worry about it in your daily life.

Although my budget didn't quite allow me to travel far away, I can highly recommend Healesville Sanctuary as a place where you can within reasonable travel time (1½ hours tram and bus) experience Australian wildlife up close.

Meeting little miss Maggie, a Kangaroo Island Kangaroo, for the first time at Healesville Sanctuary.

Money, money, money!

In the end it is up to the individual person how much they are going to spend on such a exchange trip, but I would try to give you at least an idea of how my own finances looked like while I was away.

As previously mentioned I had not saved up for this trip, and I first started saving when I uploaded my motivational letter back in March. I however found some work in the few months before I potentially had to go, to help boost my savings and then I tried to set a budget so I could get a better oversight.

So first of all - set a budget!
In Australia groceries are pretty much the same as back home, so although it might be a good idea to increase your food budget by a small amount there is no need to go crazy. I can throw in the fact that McDonalds can deliver in Australia so do with that information as you will.

As most places where you can end up living have utilities included in the monthly rent, there shouldn't end up being many surprises on that front. Again I would recommend spending the time it takes to find a good place with a good rent - just more money for adventure.

Before you leave Denmark I would suggest you either cancel your mobilesubscription or at least turn in to the very lowest they can offer you, while you are gone. Unless you have some kind of travel mobile subscription it is most likely better to simply get a mobile subscription down there. When I arrived at Deakin they delivered prepaid Vodafon SIM-cards. It's very easy to plug it in your phone, activate it online and then pick a subscription that suits you. I would highly recommend that you get one with plenty of data (find out how much you normally use and then add a little extra), and low Phonecall/text message cost. You will most likely be sending very few texts and phonecalls - it is much easier to use online social media such as Discord, Facebook, Skype or whatever you have available.
Likewise when contacting home I would recommend using online programs - Discord worked amazingly for my family allowing me to text, call with video and share pictures/files all with no other cost than data. Works on both phones and computers.
The Vodafon subscription I used cost about ~160 kr a month.

There are some who choose to open up a bank account in Australia during their stay. I wont say don't do it, but there was no real need for me to do it either. Check with your own financial institute first about if there are any extra costs while you are away. Usually using the credit card does not cost extra, however you have to be aware of the following:
Don't extract cash often - if at all. Try to bring some cash from back home as it often costs extra when you get cash while you are abroad. If you absolutely need to get some cash, make sure you get enough so you don't have to do it again. Although my parents insisted I bring some cash, I did not need to use it once.

Depending on where you end up living you might have more or less use of the Myki-card. Myki is basicly Australias version of "Rejsekortet", where you can put money on it online or in select stores. Then you simply swipe when you enter and leave public transport. It is slightly cheaper when traveling long distances than back in Denmark, but about the same when traveling short distances.

Also when you first arrive you need some kitchen utensils. If you are living on Campus you will be offered a "Kitchen-starter-pack" for 500 kr. I would not recommend buying this as it has a lot of very specific kitchen equipment you rarely end up using. It is much smarter to go to the nearby Kmart/Coles store (about 10 min in tram) where you can buy the different utensils one by one, so you get exactly what you need.

I ended up using about ~9700 kr. a month.
6.500 kr. on apartment.
~2000 kr. on food.
~500 kr. on extras (mobile subscription, travel)
~700 kr. on trips

Before leaving there was also some costs, these were:
Flight to Australia 4.600 kr.
Flight to Denmark 4.500 kr.
VISA 2.800 kr.
BUPA (Health Insurance) 1.500 kr.
Kitchen-equipment ~300 kr.
(I brought my own bedding, so expect ~500 kr. on this if you don't want to bring it with you.)

I could cover most of the expenses while I was there with my savings and the SU, plus the SU-loan. I did however get a little overwhelmed with some of the start up costs, which my family helped me cover with some extra loans.

At any rate, this should give you a rough idea of what your expenses could look like.

Final advice

I had a great trip, but there were one thing I might have done otherwise should I end up in a similar situation again.

First of all, I had very little experience with other roommates. As previously mentioned all I've ever really known is living with my brother (and parents before that), and being family we had a pretty good understanding of each others limits and how we would want to live.
And a good advice which you probably have heard already is to be "Open minded".
My advice is "Don't be too open minded".

My roommates, for a lack of a better word, were pigs. As in they never cleaned up, ever. Despite Deakin actually provided cleaning, if you just didn't clutter up everything, they never did. And that did kind of hurt my relationship with them, as I grew annoyed of the sink always being full of dishes and other unspeakable things. Of the tower of egg-containers that steadily grew in the corner, because they didn't threw them out in the garbage room. Of the table that always was full of books and laptops.

I actually cleaned up after my roommates before I even met them, because they were on vacation when I arrived, but had not taken out the trash or done the dishes.
And early on I tried politely hinting that it would be nice if people cleaned up after themselves, but nothing really happened.
Because I "only" had to stay for a few months and they had been living there longer (4 Aussies and 1 exchange student from Norway like me), I didn't feel it was worth the argument.
I would wish that I had put my foot down, because what ended up happening was I just gave up on the kitchen halfway through and went out eating instead. And although I had a decent enough relationship with my roommates, I could never really count them among the other friends I made while I was away.

Epilogue

I hope you have enjoyed reading my exchange report and that you found some answers in it. Some might think that going abroad is a life altering experience and they are a completely changed person because of it.

I won't go as far, but I will say that I am immensely grateful that I was given this opportunity by KEA, thankful for the help both my own family and Anne Dibbern provided, and I did really get a experience that I will remember for the rest of my days.

But most of all I am proud of myself that I took this chance, despite not having planned it for ages in advance, and that I came back home with my experience and some good stories to tell.

And if you have even the slightest feeling that this might be something you should do, then I believe you owe it to yourself to at least explore the option.

Pictures

If you wanted to see a little bit more of some of the locations and people you might encounter while being at Deakin I've added a few extras down here for you to peruse at your leisure.
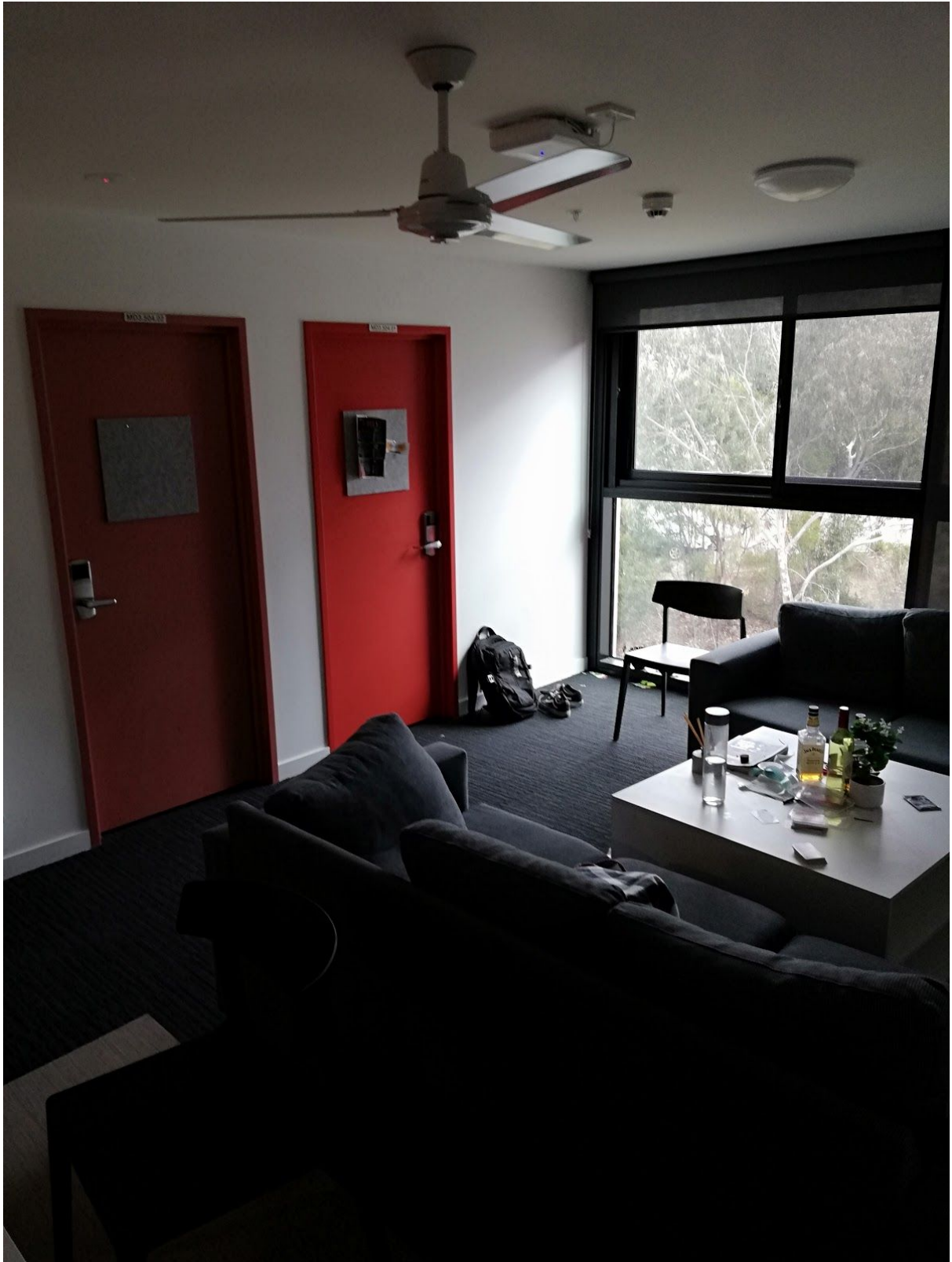
Deakin Residentials

Part of the "My room" Picture further up. Behind the bed is a rather big wardrobe, where you should quite easily be able to store your clothes, as well as your travel bags. The doors to the apartment and your room, is locked using a hotel keycard. Your keycard can open the main door to the apartment, but only your keycard opens your specific room.

Apartment common area. Red door leads to the rest of the third floor. Dinner table.

Living room.

Living room part 2. The red doors leads to the individual rooms. The door to the left is mine.

Turning right from the dinner table leads towards this hallway. To the right is the last 4 rooms where the rest of my roommates lived. The first door to the left leads to the kitchen, and further down on the left is where the bathrooms are. I have no pictures of these but in our

apartment, there were 2 shower rooms, with 2 sinks as well, and on the opposite side 2 toilets with sinks.

Kitchen part 1. The tower of empty egg containers in the corner grew steadily during my time at Deakin.

Kitchen part 2. Plenty of easy to use appliances were at your disposal. Just remember to close the door and activate the cooker hood before doing anything.

Picture of the map of Deakin you will be provided in your welcome-package. In the top-left corner is the Residential area. It took about 3-7 minutes walking from your front door to the furthest location at the Burwood Campus. As mentioned earlier I lived in the MD building.
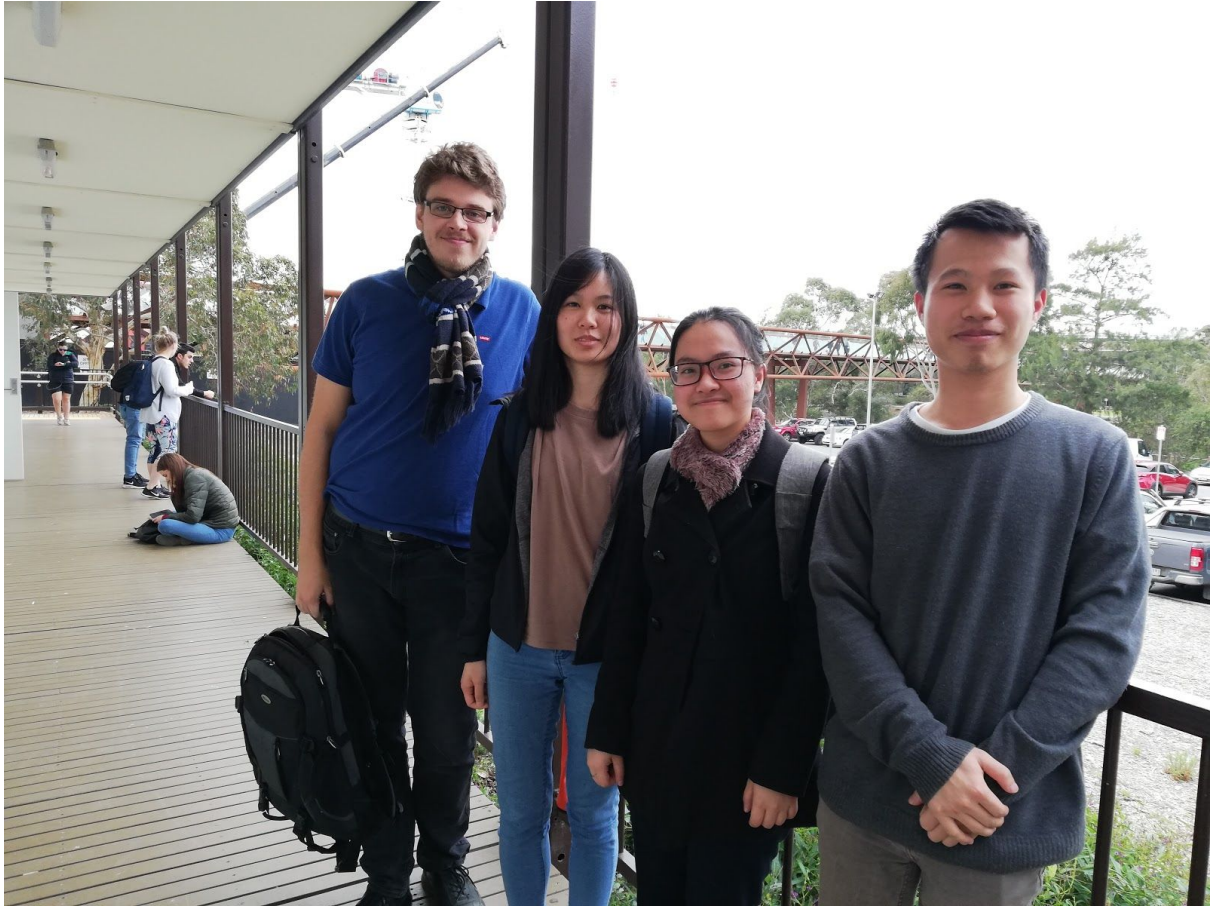
My Artificial Intelligence group. Teamed up at the very first assignment and stuck together through it all. Picture was taken just before we took our final exam.
From left to right: Abhi, William, Ronit and David.
Abhi and Ronit were both from India, while William came from Indonesia.

Although the unit Professional Practice had a lot of group work, with different groups, one of my most successful group projects was with the group above.

From left to right: David, Simone, Amie and Viet.

Simone came from Korea, Viet came from China and Amie was from Vietnam.

As I had the pleasure of having David Wang in both Android Programming and Professional Practice, as both Seminar teacher and Lecturer, I came to know him pretty well in the end. Picture was taken during my final days at Deakin, where him and me parted ways after enjoying a delicious meal at his favorite burger place.

Melbourne City

I will never say I'm good at taking pictures, and I often don't take very many. Despite visiting Melbourne quite a few times I don't have quite as many pictures as I would like to share with you. However I will share these, which were taken during our Hoban Interviews. This is the building where the interviews took place, at the 36th floor or some such.

Picture taken from inside the Hoban Interviews lobby, where there was quite the view of some of Melbourne City.