

KEA exchange report

Where and when did you study abroad?

I studied in Edinburgh at Napier University for 1 semester starting in September and ending in December 2018. Edinburgh is a great city with lots of parks, restaurants, pubs and old architecture. I loved the city, its culture and the student life – definitely a city I would recommend for studying abroad.

What KEA program did you attend at the time?

I studied a top-up in web development after taking multimedia design also at KEA.

What classes did you take during your semester abroad?

Scripting for cybersecurity and networks

This module was about security and programming in python. The modules covered an introduction to python, cryptography, algorithms, digital forensics, networking and discrete math. It was a very practical module with lab exercises and development of many small applications like a password cracker, encrypting/decrypting application, web scraper etc.

Web design and development

This module focused on researching web trends, analysing existing websites and implementing some of this knowledge in a practical project for a client. Throughout the module we had to develop a website for a flower delivery service consisting of a front-end and back-end. The module covered HTML, CSS, JavaScript, PHP and databases (MySQL)

Practical interaction design

This module was mainly about methods, academic approaches and prototyping. Throughout the module we had to develop a prototype of an application in the software Axure, where knowledge of sustainability had to be gamified. The module covered: research methods, web standards and conventions, UI, UX, testing, gamification and prototyping.

Academic Experience

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

Unfortunately, the University didn't offer a lot of different options for choosing modules.

I could choose between four different packages with three modules in each and then I was allowed to switch one module with one from any of the other packages.

I had a lot of difficulties finding suitable and interesting modules, but luckily the University staff was very helpful and I actually ended up taking modules from three different packages, one of them a postgraduate module.

Although I started out being a bit disappointed about the selection I actually ended up with some very good modules and I found the staff at Napier University to be very helpful and flexible! It was clear they tried to do as much as they could to accommodate my wishes.

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

I found the module "Scripting for cyber security and networks" really good and very educational. The module was very well structured and taught by talented lecturers. I found this module particularly good because the material was of a high level but taught in a practical way so it was made understandable. The lecturers came up with interesting and very relevant projects and were very good at explaining it when help was needed.

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

The module "Practical interaction design" unfortunately covered some of the same things that I had already been taught at KEA so some of it was more repetition for me. Although, if I had not had a multimedia design background but came from computer science instead this could have been a very good and relevant module to obtain a better understanding of UX and UI design.

What classes would you advise other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I would definitely advise students studying web development at KEA to take the module "Scripting for cyber security and networks". The "Web design and development" module was also very good, but it is a postgraduate module so it isn't certain that it will be possible to take it; it has to be arranged with the international coordinator upon arrival.

I wouldn't advise students with a multimedia design background to take "Practical Interaction Design" because some of the content is the same as from multimedia design.

Cultural/Personal Experience

What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad? How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

Scottish culture is in some ways different than ours but it wasn't hard to get used to and settle in, so I didn't experience a lot of challenges. Some of the things I really noticed in the beginning was that Scottish people in general are more polite. When you take the bus for example there is a clear queue and you can't just skip up front whereas in Denmark people just try to squeeze in at the same time. It is also considered impolite if you don't say "hello" to the bus driver and "thank you" when you get off. In Denmark people rarely say "thank you" when getting off the bus.

Another difference between Denmark and Scotland is their infrastructure. In Edinburgh they don't really have any trains or subways, so to get somewhere you always need to take the bus. Before arriving in Edinburgh my plan was to rent or buy a bike, but when arriving I noticed that they don't have any bike lanes and I only saw maybe five to ten people cycling, so I decided to buy a bus card instead. This was very different for me because I'm used to cycle to everything in Copenhagen.

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

I think the best experience I had abroad was all the new friendships and things we did together. I was so happy that I signed up for different societies so I got to go on some small trips and see more of Scotland. Amongst others we went to Glasgow, Sterling and the highlands and those were some of the most beautiful places I have ever seen.

Besides the trips the student association also held a lot of events, such as pub crawls, learning Scottish dancing, tours (Harry Potter tour, Ghost tour etc.), themed parties and a lot of other things. I really enjoyed all of these events and it led to some very good friendships!

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

I would advise future students from KEA to stay at the student accommodation or in a flat with other students from Napier. It was a lot harder to get engaged socially because the classes are huge and everyone is split up into different modules. In each class there are only a couple of international students so you don't really stay in touch with all of them. It would have been nice if the school had held some kind of event for international students so all of us could get to know each other.

Even though the school didn't do much the student association had a lot of different societies and sports you could sign up for – most of them fairly cheap. I signed up for climbing and the international society. I would definitely recommend to sign up for at least one or two sports or societies and just try to engage and be social. The student association also organised an introduction week with a lot of events both during the day and in the evening. I participated in as much as I could and during that week I met a lot of nice people and most of them I stayed in contact with for the rest of my stay.

Practical Experience

How was the application process?

The application process was actually easier than expected. Before applying I thought the application process would be very time consuming, but it turned out that there were only very few steps to go through – this obviously depends on the university you apply for.

These were the steps I had to go through:

- Application for KEA (1 page) + CV
- Online application Napier University + selecting modules
- Erasmus English test before and after stay + this report

a. What did KEA help you with?

KEA was very helpful and notified me about deadlines for applications and where to apply. They also made sure I got my Erasmus scholarship.

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

The University was very helpful and flexible when it came to choosing modules. I was even allowed to take a postgraduate module because it was hard for me to find suitable modules within the options offered for exchange students.

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

I didn't have a lot of difficulties settling down, the most difficult part was actually getting to know people in the beginning. Since I didn't live in the dorms the social part was a bit harder.

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

In regards to accommodation I had wished that the receiving school had informed me about the dorms so I had that option, I only found out about that after arriving in Edinburgh when I already had a place to stay. I think it would have been easier to connect with people in the beginning if I had lived in the dorm rooms.

Where did you live?

I lived in a really nice flat just outside the centre of Edinburgh. We were three girls sharing the flat, me and two very sweet Scottish girls. The flat was around 110m² and we all had our own room and then a shared kitchen, living room, dining room and two bathrooms.

a. Was it difficult to find accommodation?

It was a bit difficult to find accommodation especially because it was hard to know who to trust. I would recommend to get in contact with several people about a room and then take a weekend trip to Edinburgh to see the rooms and make sure you don't get cheated.

Otherwise the dorm rooms are always an option if you don't want to stay in private accommodation. There is an online form on Napier's website that you can fill out to apply for student accommodation, but remember to do it fast the only have a limited amount!

These two pages are good for finding private accommodation in Edinburgh:

<https://www.gumtree.com>

<https://www.roomster.com>

b. Was it expensive?

Housing in Edinburgh is quite expensive. I paid £650 which I would say a little bit more than average for renting a room. The dorm rooms are even more expensive they are £700 a month.

What kind of expenses did you have in general?

My general expenses were:

- Bus card (£48 = 410 DKK)
- Rent (£650 = 5550 DKK)
- Food
- Climbing club (£8 = 68 DKK every week)
- Eating out and drinks
- Trips and travel expenses

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

I spent approximately what I had budgeted with.