

SEMESTER ABROAD

EINDHOVEN 2019

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INTRODUCTION: WHEN, WHERE, WHAT?

Where and when did you study abroad?

Eindhoven in the Netherlands for my 2nd semester, the fall semester, September 2019 – January 2020. Eindhoven is a small city (same size as Aalborg) in the south, known for Phillips which is also why they call it the city of lights. With good reason, but more about that later!

What KEA program did you attend at the time?

Web Development. I graduated in Multimedia Design and Communication at UCN, Aalborg, before moving to Copenhagen. I work as a graphic designer and I like front-end development, but none of the top-up/specializations was exactly what I wanted. I decided to go for Web Development and during the study I have tried to make it fit what I want in the future.

What classes did you take during your semester abroad?

Since I am a designer, I was so excited to discover the minor Digital Experience Design, at Fontys University of Applied Science (ICT English Stream) in Eindhoven. Going abroad for a semester would give me the opportunity of working with Design instead of the

subjects my classmates would do at home.

A minor is a compilation of different courses they put together for you. Dutch students also choose these minors, which in my case was really cool. I ended up in a class with 26 Dutch students and 4 Exchange Students. In general, the Dutch school system is made well for receiving Exchange Students, and here is why:

You do not drop into a class where everyone know each other already, you get to experience how Dutch students are (instead of only being around other Exchange students), and the content is suited for you to only be here for half a year – they don't expect knowledge from previous semesters, and you do not work on projects that you cannot finish within the 5-6 months you are here.

About each of the courses

The name of the minor, Digital Experience Design is a bit misleading. Not only for me, but also for the Dutch students. We all expected to be challenged to DESIGN EXPERIENCES... but I will break it down for you, what we actually did (see next page):

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE DESIGN: COURSES

Critical Design: you work with a critical mind, trying to create digital or physical designs, that creates awareness about a problem of your choice.

Pro: We got to go to the World Press Photo Exhibition

Con: I don't think this will ever be valuable in my future work.

Media Theory: pushes the way you think about media, both how it affects us, and how we affect the media and the usage of it. Really interesting, if you like a more philosophical approach to media.

Pro: You really start to think about the product you design and put into the world

Con: You realize how addicted you actually are to technology.

Intercultural Communication: Really useful when you work across cultures. Through articles, videos and discussions you learn to adapt to other cultures.

Pro: You learn to benefit from diversity and change your cultural glasses

Con: Can't think of any, I loved this class and all the material the teacher gave us.

Story Creation: learn to create a character with emotions and how to show them through a media of your choice.

Pro: You learn to understand the basics of making movies and creating the characters

Con: This course was the least valuable, I'm not really into Story Telling.

Human-Centered Design: This course is mainly a part of the minor, since you need it in the Design Challenge.

Pro: The teacher in this course is really skilled, learning from her is a good opportunity

Con: I personally do not like working with this method

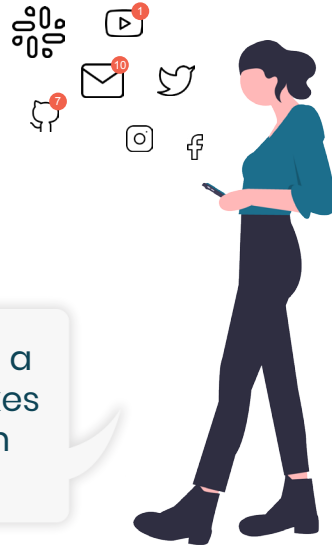
Design Challenge: I guess this change every semester. Our challenge was to either create a Conversational Agents, that would help students at Fontys or cancer patients. I chose to work with the Student Bot.

Pro: If you put the effort into it, you can create something really cool. Next page has a poster I made.

Con: The period of the project is too long, and you work with the same group for 5 months

Chadbot

Conversational Agent for Students

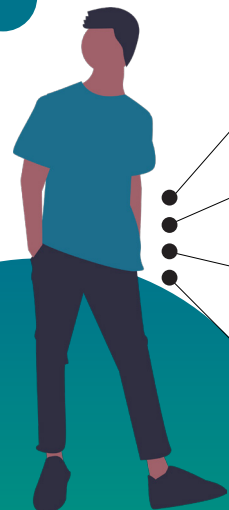


Students spend 6 hours a day on their phone. It takes 20 minutes to get back in the zone, after a break.

10:31 AM

Time to be efficient!

16:31 PM

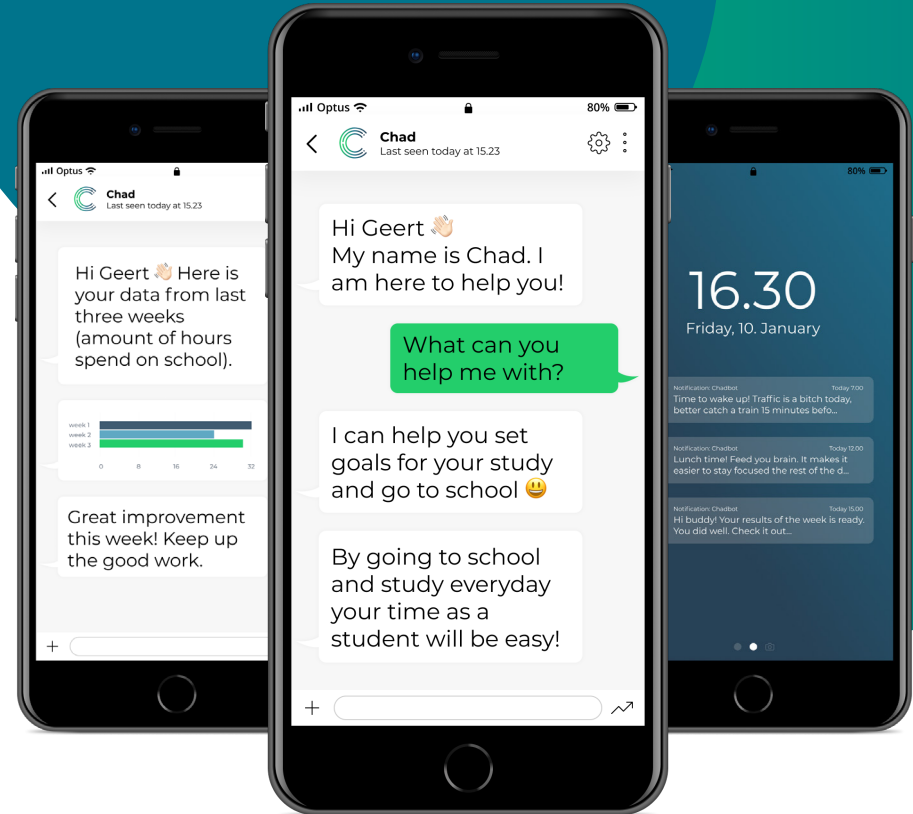
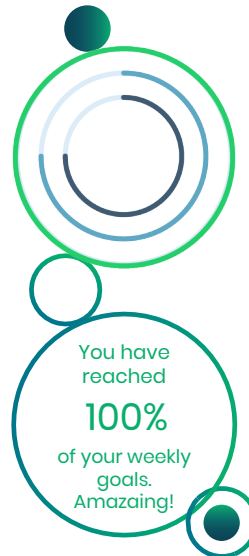


1st year student

Procrastinator

Study at Fontys

Wants to improve



Become more efficient

- Whitelist apps so you don't get notifications
- Use the NS build in so you are on time – always
- Set goals by week, month or semester
- Get data on your progress and acknowledge yourself

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

You cannot pick your own courses in this minor, so all of the courses mentioned is mandatory to do. That also gave me an easy beginning. Other students I met in the first week had to attend intro classes and courses, and had to pick the ones they wanted.

The first day of school the coordinator of the minor, Suzanne came to me and asked if had access to the platforms I needed, and we went through it together.

I will say in general; if you follow the steps in the emails you receive through your process, it is easy to get started.

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

I really enjoyed Intercultural Communication, both material and the practical use of it. It was essential for me to be able to work well with my group. I struggled in the beginning, I was frustrated all the time and I didn't know how to approach this.

As I mentioned, the group you get in the Design Challenge is the people you work with through the entire semester.

You pick this group after knowing each other for 2-3 days. There is no realistic chance of knowing if people are as motivated as you, have the same work ethics, if they are dedicated or just here to socialize.

I ended up in a group where socializing was the first priority and if we could get some work done it would be fine as well.

By using the things we learned in Intercultural Communication in our group work, we found a way to communicate better, and I started to except that students work in a different way here. Most Dutch students travel 1-2 hours to school each day and 1-2 hours home also. So at school they spend time to socialize, while they do school work in the train or at home.

Secondly I really loved the articles we had to read in Media Theory. Mainly because I enjoy reading philosophical texts, that can change the way you think about things.

In this course we had to deliver an essay, based on theory from Daniel Pink. We also did some challenges, like not using your phone for 1 day, and using Replika (chatbot), both which made me think.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

Story Creation has been of least value for me. It is not something I am interested in, and I do not want to work with this in the future. The course was also a bit rushed, because the teacher had to leave because of maternity leave.

This doesn't mean that the teacher is not skilled, on the contrary they have a huge knowledge. Our teacher in Story Creation, Judith knows a lot about Story Creation, so if you are into this, the course might be something for you.

If you choose the Minor Digital Experience Design you do not have the options of putting courses / classes together yourself. If you are super picky about your courses, you should pick something else.

Most of the classes is workshops, where you work on your own and get feedback. I have not learned as much, as I would in UCN or KEA, where most of the semester is you learning new things from your teacher, and in the end you create a project based on your new knowledge.

Learning Agreement vs. Reality

I am sure that my expectations for the academic experience was too high. I left Copenhagen feeling ready to explore a new type of designers, with different backgrounds and motivated to create the next great digital experience.

In general I thought this semester would help me fill my toolbox with "How to make design an experience", or that we would study "The biggest trends from 2019", maybe learn how to make catchy posters or combine colors so it looks like explosions.

The semester was nothing like this. Some courses were better because they are so different and really push my way of thinking of design (like Critical Design), while others turned out to be a lot of reading and writing, and not about visual identity, graphic design and color theory.

That being said, I learned a lot of other important things, that I wouldn't have if I had stayed in Copenhagen this semester.

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

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

The Netherlands are not that different from Denmark, honestly it is really easy to adapt to the culture here.

I think what was the biggest change, is the way teachers and students interact. Most studies have WhatsApp groups with their teachers, which creates this casual tone between them.

The teachers also ask you personal questions and are genuinely interested in your well-being. For me it was a bit weird, that my teachers wanted to know things about my private life.

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

I don't know where to begin with this question. I have collected experiences for 2 years, even though I have only been abroad for 5 months. But overall it is the friendships I have made. If you have not lived abroad, I think it will hard to imagine how intense friendships feels.

In the introduction week I met Daniel (Sweden), Maurici (Spain), Peter (Austria), Simon (Austria) and

Ulrich (France), Julia (Germany) and later on Charlotte (Belgium) and Nisha (India). They became my closest friends and in short time felt like my family abroad.

We have done everything together, all weekends spend together, most evenings also, so basically if we were not in school, or during homework I would be with them.

This is also because Fontys did a full week of introduction for the ICT students, so we had time to get to know each other.



My Erasmus Family in Cologne (December 2019)

THINGS TO DO IN AND NEAR EINDHOVEN

STUDENT SPORT CENTER

In our introduction week we walked around Eindhoven. Close to Fontys main Campus you will find the Student Sport Center. They told us about all the activities you can join. For 60 euros you get a membership for a semester and you get access to so many things: Swimming pool, Squash, Badminton, Gym, Bouldering ect. You can join classes like: Salsa, Yoga, Fusion, Golf, you name it! Also outside sports like Beach Volley, Football and Tennis. We all joined the Student Sport Center, which allowed us to hang out and do activities for "free" together (you have access to everything when you pay your membership).

I learned how to play squash (which we did alot) and finally got back to swimming.

EVENTS

We went to the Purple festival in Tilburg. The Maker Fair, where we tried a lot of new technology. The Dutch Design week, which is cool! We got free tickets from Fontys. The Light Festival, you can start at the PSV stadium and walk the light route for free!

PARTY

In Eindhoven you will find a street similar to Jomfru Ane Gade in Aalborg. The locals call it Stratum. It has a lot of bars, a Silent Disco, Karaoke and Spin-the-Wheel bars. If you like going it out it is super easy.

They also have event places like Effenaar and Dynamo where we have been to a few concerts and party events throughout the semester.

TRAVELING

We traveled to Brussels, it is only a 2-hour drive from Eindhoven. We had a lot of fun with being together without talking about school. Traveling is just a great way to connect. In the Fall Break we went to Scotland where we did a road trip, and this is one of the best experiences in my life. Before the Christmas Holidays we went to Cologne to see the Christmas markets.

COOKING TOGETHER

Peter was the first to have his birthday, so he and Simon and made Snitzels. In December I made a traditionally Danish Christmas Dinner, and for New Years Eve we all cooked Swedish food together. For my birthday Ulrich made Caribbean food.

GENERAL ADVISES FOR GOING ABROAD

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

I definitely recommend to not make too many plans with people from home. Of course, it is nice to have family and friends visiting, so they can see where you live, meet your new friends and so on (I also had a lot of friends visiting). But **keep your weekends open**, so you can travel and experience things with the other international students.

Bring things from your culture: It makes it easier and more fun to explain things about your own culture. I brought a mini figure of the Royal Guards.

Get the accommodation through Fontys / receiving school if possible – we ended up staying in the same building, which made us a true copy of the TV show FRIENDS, going to each other apartments all the time, to hang out, help each other with school work, borrow things, cook together and so on.

Bring a bike if you can, or add money in your budget for buying one! Everything is by bike here.



This lifeguard was the 1st price for the "Pakkespil" we did for the Christmas Dinner.

It could also be something else that is really danish, like things we eat or say.

We had a lot of fun with translating sayings from our own language to english, like:

Rosinen i pølse-
enden = the raisin
in the sausage
ending..

Doenst make sense

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

How was the application process? What did KEA help you with? What help did you receive from your school abroad?

It was pretty easy. As long as you start when KEA present the option of going abroad, by looking at the different universities, and talking to the International Coordinator, you get the help you need.

The process is kind of long, because in between what you have to do, KEA and the receiving school has to approve things, like your application, your health insurance, your Learning Agreement and so on. But it does not really influence you, as long as you do fulfill the requirements.

I will advise you to fill out all documents as soon as you get them, do not postpone until right before the deadlines. This also increases your options of getting all the advantages, e.g going to the school you want, get the Erasmus Grant and finding accommodation through the school.

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

Yes. In the Netherlands you have to register at the City

Hall upon arrival. The school made the appointment for me, so that was not the problem. But they ask for your birth certificate. I knew this, so before leaving Denmark, I got a copy from Borgerservice.dk, in both Danish and English. Sadly this wasn't good enough, they wanted the original, which I could not provide.

I was lucky, that the person that helped me at the City Hall was very kind to register me temporary – which mean I would have to provide the original birth certificate February 10th the latest (I told him that I would leave no later, because my semester ends February 7th). He could have given me a date before, but was lucky. There is a chance that you will get a fine, so it is important to have the documents prepared.

Where did you live? Was it difficult to find accommodation? Was it expensive?

I booked my apartment through Mobility Online, so Fontys found a place for me. The company I stayed with is called Holland2Stay, and they are not really service minded, but everything is very clear, you do not risk getting scammed, and they give you all the information you need. I was a bit unlucky with the building I stayed

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

in: Phillips Bedrijfsschool.

We were supposed to move into our studio apartments on a Friday. I had arranged a car here, to move my stuff. But the day before the check-in, they send an email saying that the building was not approved by the fire department, and that the check-in day would be moved, but they did not say for how long.

They relocated us to different houses (Holland2Stay have a lot of apartment buildings in Eindhoven), and I got a rommie, Julia. She was really nice, and because of this I got a friend from Fontys Business. All my friends so far was from the ICT, where I had to go study.

The stupid thing was, that I had to go book a car and pay for the extra costs (55 euros or something like that). And live in my suitcase, since I could not unpack. Others like my friends Daniel and Ulrich where relocated to another city 20 minutes by bus from here.

Because the building is new, our check-in date was moved, but we have also experienced loss of heat for a week and no internet sometimes. And Holland2Stay do

not compensate for these things. I could not access the site where we book laundry if I'm using the WIFI, and I cannot refill it with my Mastercard. Holland2Stay to not help you out with this.

There is a solution to everything and I have been lucky having friends that helped me out. Even though this sounds like a long complain letter to Holland2Stay, I am still happy that I booked the apartment here.

The rent - because of construction work - was 600 euros a month instead of 1200. And the apartments are pretty awesome! Plenty of space, nice view, all the things you need + more (like a dishwasher), and a really nice caretaker, that helps you out if needed.

Some of my friends decided to stay at the Student Hotel (800 euros a month). It is literally right in the center. You step right out to the shopping street and are 1 minute away from the Central Station, my apartment is 10 minutes by bike to the center. I prefer our building though, because we have an apartment, while the guys at the Student Hotel has a room and a shared kitchen.

EXPENSES AND BUDGET

What kind of expenses did you have in general? Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

I spend more than I had in my budget, because we decided to travel a lot, and I have participated in all events and parties there has been. I did not want to come home regretting to not have done the things I wanted, just to still have money in the bank.

The Netherlands are also quite expensive to live in, but when the good thing is, when you come here as a student, everyone around you is also up for finding cheap solutions. I had a small savings, and got the Erasmus Grant, but you can also apply for other grants before going.

I especially spend money on traveling, eating out, beers and events, plus a onetime fee on 60 euros to get access to the Student Sports Center.

I made a budget from home, so I knew in advance how much I could spend in a month, and I also decided from home, that I didn't want to work (even though I had the option of working as a freelancer). I wanted to be present, and not miss out on stuff because of work.

Budget 2019 / 2020							
	Indtægter 1. juli	Indtægter 1. august	Indtægter 1. september	Indtægter 1. oktober	Indtægter 1. november	Indtægter 1. december	Indtægter 1. januar
SU	5.805	5.805	5.805	5.805	5.805	5.805	5.805
SU lån	3.155	3.155	3.155	3.155	3.155	3.155	3.155
Løn Uniqkey	5.185	6.366	5.000				
Feriepenge							
Depotrum	200	200	200	400	400	400	400
Erasmus			11.062				
Penge Michael							
I alt	14.345	15.526	25.222	9.360	9.360	9.360	9.360
	Udgifter 1. juli						
Husleje København	777,5	777					
Husleje Eindhoven			4.500	4.500	4.500	4.500	4.500
Mad	2000	1000	1500				
Ulykkesforsikring	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
Depotrum	399	922	773	773	773	1048	1048
Mobiletelefon	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Findroomate	299						
Itunes	99						
HBO	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
Tv2Play	79						
Adobe Creative Cloud	275	275	275	275	275	275	275
Tøj	1800			1600			
Depositem Holland2Stay		7850					
One time booking fee 5. juli	1300						
Paris							
Opsparing			12.000				
I alt	7.373	11168	19.392	7.492	5.892	6.167	6.167
Tilbage til forbrug	6.973	4.358	5.830	1.868	3.468	3.193	3.193
	Opsparing 1. juli	Opsparing 1. august	Opsparing 1. september	Opsparing 1. oktober	Opsparing 1. november	Opsparing 1. december	Opsparing 1. januar
Nuvarerende	3.000	3.000	4.500	10.980	8.236	5.492	2.748
Efter	3.000	3.000	15.000	8.236	5.492	2.748	4
Opsparing fordelt				2744	2744	2744	2744
Til forbrug hver måned i Holland				4.612	6.212	5.937	5.937

It helps a lot to make a budget from home, so you have a realistic overview on you income and expenses.

Buuuut, to be honest, everyone spends more than first calculated. It is pretty hard to stay within the budget when you are away from home. In the beginning you eat out a lot, by stuff you need and in the end you do a lot of stuff together, to enjoy the last few weeks before everyone back home.

CONCLUSION

You never know what to expect when you jump into new adventures. If you are considering going abroad, do it! It will be of value in so many ways, not only because you get to work across cultures, but because you will grow as a person.

I started missing things like living in a country where I speak the language, where I can read what is on the groceries, where I understand common courtesy etc. On the other hand I got to experience what role other people can play in your life. How they can change the way you perceive things, affect your way of thinking, and how you will find a family away from your family.

I have learned a lot about how to be in a group, how to work with nationalities that think differently than me. This experience has made me a larger, more caring, kind, and loving person, appreciating what I have and left me excited for what is yet to come.

That is why I have also decided to continue to travel and do my internship in Vienna, Austria. I cannot wait to see what lays ahead and what interesting people I will meet and learn from. - Josephine

