

# Exchange report University of Applied Sciences Grisons from September 2020 - January 2021



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## Introduction

My name is Sif and I study Multimedia design in Copenhagen at KEA. I chose to take an exchange semester in Chur because I really liked the subjects that they offered at FHGR. And I also heard that the nature in Switzerland was wonderful, and on my arrival I was amazed because the nature here is crazy beautiful and I felt like exploring nature in a whole new way. I was on exchange during Covid-19, so my exchange semester was quite different. I had online classes and that changed my exchange semester.

## Where and when did you study abroad?

In my 3th semester I went on exchange in Switzerland from september 2020 until february 2021. I studied at the University of Applied Sciences of Grisons (FHGR) in a City called Chur, only 1,5 hour away from Zürich.

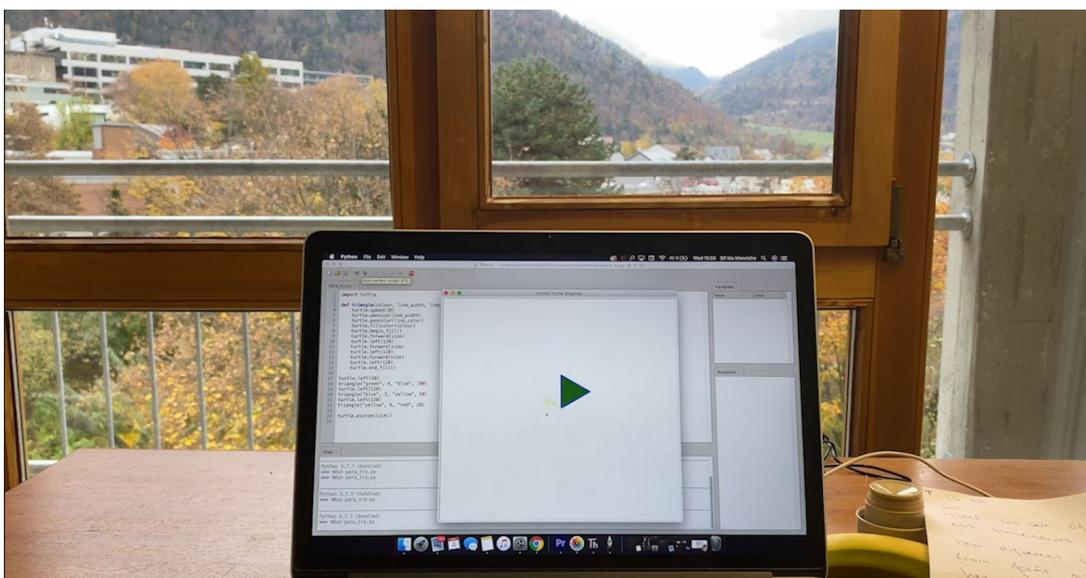
## What KEA program did you attend at the time?

I studied Multimedia Design at KEA

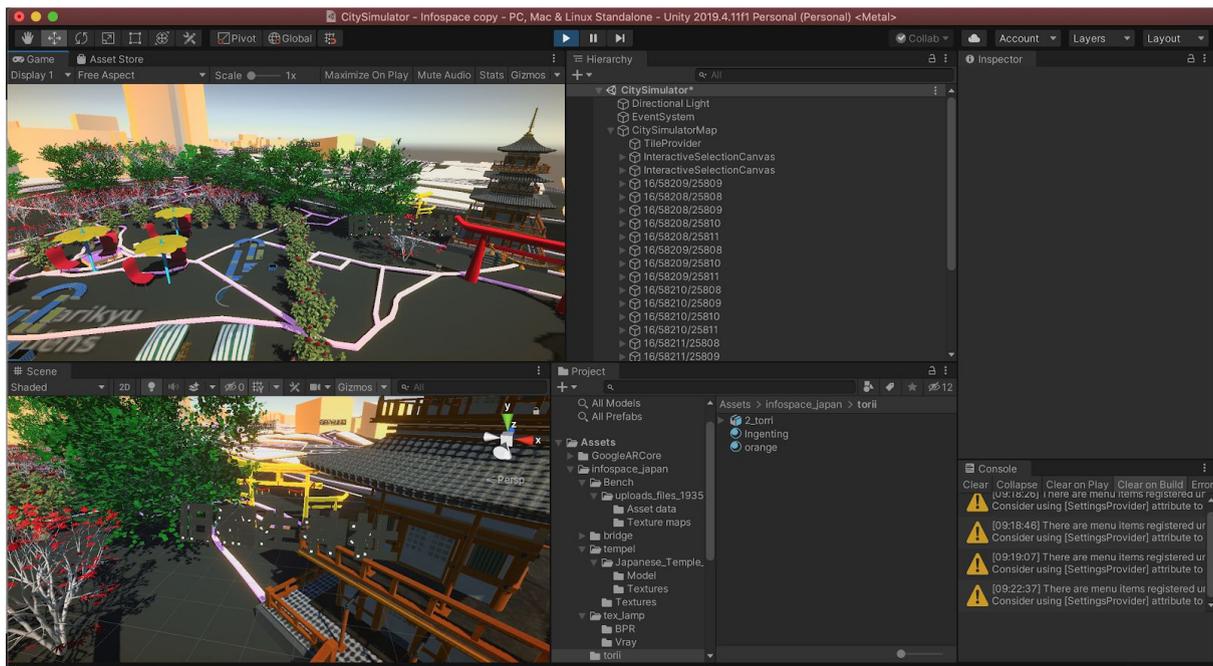
## What classes did you take during your semester abroad?

One of the reasons I chose FHGR was because of the courses. I wanted to challenge myself and improve my skills. I chose to try out different kinds of courses like *Programming*, *Infospace* and *Designing a video game* which are really practical courses like I am used to from Copenhagen. I chose *German & Business English* to improve my language skills and writing skills. I also chose *International & intercultural communication* to get more knowledge and understanding about different cultures and how to communicate better.

My specialization from KEA was programming. Therefore, I chose courses that matched my skills. One of the courses I chose was *Introduction to Programming 1* where I have learned how to programme in Python - a programming language used for many applications and websites.



I am really into 3D and therefore it made sense to choose the course *Info Space* where we learn how to use Unity and develop 3D projects. In Unity we use Mapbox SDK which means you can design a custom 3D or 2D map over different cities and customize the map with 3D objects.



In my first semester we had a short course where we had to design and develop two video games. That course really sparked my interest in video games. I chose to take the course *Designing a video game*, to get more knowledge of designing a video game and storytelling which is one of the most important parts of developing a video game.

## Academic Experience

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

The FHGR international team was very helpful before I came to Chur and while staying there. They helped me with all of the paperwork like resident permit and housing.

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

As part of my studies I had to make a Multidisciplinary project, and through this project I had to promote the exchange programme for future students.

The Multidisciplinary project was the most rewarding experience, because I had to learn how to self-study and how to keep hold of a timeframe. I had a hard time in the beginning with the project because the teachers already had expectations for the project, so I had to keep up with their expectations. I had a lot of meetings with 5 teachers and counselors, and this made me strong in having meetings. This Multidisciplinary project gave me tools to make a project from start to finish all by myself.

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

I chose International & intercultural communication which I really regret, this course was very theoretical, and the teacher was confused in her teaching. I am not used to very theoretical courses from KEA. I tried to change the course, but it was not possible.

I also chose Designing a Video Game and I thought that we were going to design and develop a video game. This course was very theoretical, we had to choose a videogame and analyse the video game and in the end we had to turn in a paper about the videogame.

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

I would suggest other students try the course Infospace and Programming 1. Infospace gave me an understanding of Unity and Mapbox SDK. Programming gave me a basic knowledge of Python and I hope it will be helpful in the future.

**A description of the teaching methods and of the teachers – anybody you can recommend?**

The school has block days which means that you have one course for two days from 9-17 and then you have the same course a month later. So it can be very intense learning in those two days.

## **Cultural/Personal Experience**

**What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?**

I was the first and only english speaking exchange student at FHGR, and the Swiss students did not like to speak English. And due to Covid-19 the classes were online, so I actually never got any friends from my courses. I now figured out that a big part of your studies is having nice fellow students and that makes it easier to share ideas or frustrations with the other students if you have a problem or need a new idea for a school project.

### **How helpful was the receiving school in this process?**

The school gave me a study buddy in the beginning of the semester. The buddy programme consists of local students who volunteer to be matched up with an exchange student, to make the exchange transition easier. I therefore chose to sign up for the buddy programme and I was assigned the nicest buddy. She has been showing me around Switzerland and shown me all the good places in Chur. She made my start easy and took me to the coolest places that I would never have seen without her. I made a friend that I would never have thought could happen without the buddy programme at the school.



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

I learned how to hike and enjoy nature in a new way. I personally became more independent during my exchange semester.

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

Have in mind that you will not learn the same as your fellow students at KEA in your exchange semester. And if you are the only English speaking exchange student it will not be possible to change a course if you think the course does not fit you.

Before coming to Chur I wish I had known how nice it would be to have a bike. In Copenhagen everyone bikes, so I am used to biking everywhere, but I didn't think it would be possible in Switzerland. But as it turns out most of the students in Chur use a bike as their everyday method of transportation. However, what I really quickly realized when biking around here was that the hills are very, very steep so it is a good thing to be a bit in shape and if you are not, you definitely will be by the end of this semester.

If you are wanting to travel around Switzerland, I would suggest buying the SBB half fare travel card for the trains. This card gives you the opportunity to save 50% off the tickets every time you take the train or bus. The card is a bit pricey, but it's worth it in the end. And it is even possible to take a train from Chur to Hamburg, so you can go there on a quick weekend get-away.

Buying groceries can sometimes be expensive, so here is a tip for what you can do to save some money: You can use the *Too Good To Go*-app. With the app you will get a lot of food but with a last sale date. If you are trying to live a more sustainable life you can buy local cheese and eggs around Chur. There is a very nice place called Hofladen Plantahof, where you can buy local cheese and vegetables, you can even see the cows and goats walking around the grassfield. There is also a Zero Waste store called Oba Aba ZeroWaste Ladencafé where you can buy your groceries without using any plastic and you can grab a nice cup of coffee while shopping.

## **Practical Experience**

### **How was the application process?**

My counselor Anne Dibbern was very helpful with my application process. First I sent in an application for going on exchange and then I made a top 3 priority of universities. Then me and Anne had a meeting with the counselors from FHGR. And after that the international office at FHGR took care of the rest.

### **What did KEA help you with?**

My counselor Anne Dibbern helped me if I had troubles during my exchange or if I had any questions she was very fast to answer and help.

### **What help did you receive from your school abroad?**

The FHGR international team helped me with accommodation, resident permit and the mobility grant.

### **Where did you live?**

The student house I moved into is called Konvikt. Konvikt has a lot of facilities and the building is newly renovated. The view is amazing and the rooms are cozy. The rooms are cleaned once a week and breakfast and dinner is prepared for us from Monday to Friday. I moved away from home when I was 18 year old, and moving to Konvikt is kind of like moving back home again, which has been very nice but I had to get used to it in the beginning.



One of the facilities which has been very useful during this semester with Corona is the study room. Here you can sit and study instead of sitting in your room all day. Other facilities are the cinema in the building and the game room that can be used in your spare time. Konvikt is very big and easy to get lost in, but you will soon find your way around. Konvikt is close to the old town but it is high up the hill, so you should be ready to climb the hill every time you leave Konvikt.

**Was it difficult to find accommodation?**

I found the student house through the school and it was an easy process.

**Was it expensive?**

Switzerland is really expensive, so it is good to have savings if you want to explore the country. The food and the accommodation was a bit expensive from what I was used to. But you get food and cleaning included in the rent.

### **What kind of expenses did you have in general?**

I pay for the adobe pack, transport, trips, food and alcohol.

### **Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted?**

I spend more money than I budgeted. But I did not like the food at Konvikt, so I cooked every day. And I went on trips through Switzerland, Germany and Italy.

### **Conclusion**

I would recommend going on exchange in Switzerland even through the Covid-19 period. The country is amazing and I have learned a lot about myself during my exchange semester. I learned a new school system and how to teach in other ways. I wish I met more students that studied the same as me, but because of the current situation it was not possible.

