

Gudrun Harpa Palsdottir

Gudr0784@stud.kea.dk

Coordinator: Selma Crosby

Exchange Semester

September 2021 – January 2022

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts



I chose Lucerne, Switzerland as my exchange location for my fifth semester abroad. I am studying Business Economics and IT, and in Switzerland I studied at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, at the campus in Rotkreuz.

The list of the classes I chose is:

Digital Creativity:

This class was about using machine learning/Artificial Intelligence/Deep learning for artistic and design purposes. We were working in Google Collab notebooks. The project of the course was very open, we could do almost whatever we wanted.

Business Intelligence:

This class was about business intelligence and the most important methods such as linear regression, clustering, decision tree, etc. We coded in R studio. There were group works and an exam. For me, I didn't like the way the teacher taught this class, it was hard to follow him when he was showing R codes.

Intercultural Business Project:

This course was mainly about cross-cultural management and the conflicts of different cultures in an organization. This course was interesting as the assignments of the class were different from normal assignments I am used to, we did for example a movie review, photography competition and ethnography task. For the final project we had to write a paper and come up with an intercultural concept for Rotkreuz, the town of our HSLU campus.

International Law:

The course was about legal principles and systems in an international context, how the laws apply in regards to international businesses. There were no mandatory assignments during the whole semester, only a final exam.

Project Management Professional Communication and Teamwork:

This whole class was a group work about coming up with a solution for retailers, with things to consider such as new technologies and the pandemic. We had to make a presentation, poster, and

concept paper for our project. In my opinion, I think I did not gain a lot from this course as this class was for first semester students and it was mainly basic introduction to project management.

Ecology:

This class was mainly about environmental problems and ecosystems, climate change and environmental economics. This course was a block week course, which means it took place during one week, 5 full days and with an exam on the last day. I really liked the teacher of the course, he was engaging and made the lessons interesting. But the downside of this block week class was that it was happening at the same time as the ESN introduction week, which made it a very busy week with long school days as well as ESN events every evening.

Service Innovation:

The course was about service innovation, how delivering service differs from delivering products. During the classes, I did a lot of group work and with the group we had to make a final project together, which was about the problem and solution for the school canteen. In addition there were 2 papers to write during the semester, and then a final exam.

Academic English IELTS Preparation:

This course was to prepare students for the IELTS Academic Test for the target level C1. The classes focused on reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The final internal exam included the reading, listening and writing part.



This is the campus in Rotkreuz I was studying at. It is very modern and new.

Academic Experience

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

HSLU was very helpful in the process of choosing classes and settling in. I could always ask my Exchange Programme Coordinator if I had any questions. She also helped me build my class timetable, but it was not easy as many of the classes were overlapping but with her help I managed. The same with settling in, I got all the information about housing and other necessary information.

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

I really liked Ecology, Service Innovation and Intercultural Business Project. All of them were very interactive, and I think a big part I liked them the most was because of the teachers. These classes had group works and assignments that were interesting and made it easier to follow the classes during the semester.

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

I thought the Project Management class was the least relevant as it was more suited for first semester students, like for example they were teaching how to structure a report and find literature, and in the end the final report was 5 pages for the group, and in KEA I was used to more advanced and complex. Also, the class had many teachers and I felt it was unorganized and the teachers were sometimes giving contradicted information. In addition, I think the Academic English was irrelevant, as I have been studying in English the last years, I only had this course because there were not many other options of classes to choose from. However, this class was fun and if you are to take IELTS or TOEFL or similar it is a good preparation.

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

I think International Business Law is useful, but I had a hard time following up in that class as it was mostly just the teacher giving lectures. Otherwise, I also recommend Service Innovation and Intercultural Business Project. I also regret not taking the Swissness class, as that is a good way to meet other exchange students and they had many trips together on weekends.



Cultural/Personal Experience

1. What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

I have travelled a lot, as well as on my own, so for me it was not difficult to settle in. Most people in Lucerne can speak good English. However, I sometimes encountered people that did not speak English at all. I spent most of my time with other exchange students, so I didn't really make a lot of connections with local students.

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

The school was very helpful and gave us all the information we needed. We also had a zoom introductory meeting that was helpful. If I was unsure in some situations, I just sent an email and then I got the information I needed.

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

I enjoyed the most meeting new people from all over the world, and everyone is so open and friendly. I really like being out in the mountains, so for me it was a dream place as Lucerne is

very good location and every weekend I could go hiking. As well, it is a central location for taking trips nearby, for example Milan is three hours away. Lucerne is a really nice city, and I visited many cities in Switzerland, but I always liked Lucerne the most. I also liked experiencing being in a new country and new school, you a get a new perspective on things.

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

I recommend taking a part in the ESN events, and very important to participate in the ESN introduction week, as that is where you first meet everyone and easy to get to know the people. The first weeks is where everyone is very open and making connections, after that it gets more difficult, and also more schoolwork starts loading.



Practical Experience

1. How was the application process?

The whole process wasn't that difficult, at first it seemed a lot of work, but once you start it wasn't as difficult. I think the most challenging was in the beginning, when you have to choose a school and write the motivation letters. The whole process took place on the online mobility platform, and there you could always see what next steps have to be taken.

a. What did KEA help you with?

KEA helped me with the whole process, with all the practical stuff and documents. If I had any questions I always got fast reply and helpful answers from my exchange coordinator Anne Dibbern.

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

I received all the help I needed, they were very helpful in all ways.

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

No not really, everything ran smoothly for me. Before the introduction week and school started, I was already in a discord channel group with the exchange students, and there everyone was even meeting before all the ESN and school related activities started. Everyone is on the same boat so of course everyone is open to meet new people.

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

They helped me with everything, and I never had any difficulties.

2. Where did you live?

I lived in a student accommodation in Emmenbrücke. I liked that it was located by the train station, and the train to Lucerne is only 6-8 minutes. Also, supermarkets are in short distance. However, the housing itself is not the greatest, old building and it lacked a common room like a living room, there was only a kitchen. I lived with 4 other people, but the people I lived with were not social, but it just depends on who you live with as in other apartments in the same building there were more social ones. The exchange people in the building were often doing

something together. But in overview it is a fine place to live in. I recommend trying to get a place at Steinhof, that is known for being the best place to live among the exchange students.

a. Was it difficult to find accommodation?

No, through the online mobility platform you could just choose which one you wanted.

b. Was it expensive?

It was around 450 CHF a month, which is the cheapest you can find I think.

3. What kind of expenses did you have in general?

Most of the expenses are just for food, alcohol (most exchange students drink at home, so not that much was spent downtown) and for the trips like train tickets and activities.

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

I did not plan any fixed budget, but I don't think it was as bad as I thought it would be, considering being in Switzerland where everything is expensive.



All in all, I am very happy with my stay in Switzerland, I really enjoyed the nature of the country, it is so beautiful everywhere you go. The train system in Switzerland make it easy to travel around. It was nice to experience summer to winter, during the summer and autumn you could go hiking and as soon as the winter starts, you can go skiing and eat traditional food fondue, raclette and alpemagronen. The ESN made a lot of events, every weekend I would go hiking or city trip with them, I met a lot of new people.

