KEA – Deakin Exchange Report

TRIMESTER 1 SPRING 2019

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Introduction

This report is submitted for the end of my stay as an exchange student to Deakin University Australia. During this report you can find my experiences and other things related to my stay in Australia.

My background: At this time, I was studying Top-up Software Development at Kea. Before that I've been studying AP in IT-Technology and AP in Computer Science at KEA as well.

I first choose Australia because it is a multicultural diversity country. And I have long dreamed of living there – whether working or studying. Accidentally I found on KEA Fronter the exchange advertisement and would like to take my chance. It could be a once-in-a-life-time experience, so why not?

Australia in my mind before visiting it is a mixture of New York and Copenhagen. What I mean is that the welfare system should be good, the people should be nice (yes, Danish is nice) and the city should be crowded, lively and fun like New York.

So, what did I get?

Experience at the host university

BEACH WELCOME PROGRAM

Before coming to Australia, right at the time you apply to Deakin, they've asked you whether or not you want to join the Beach Welcome trip. It's a 2 days excursion to Lorne (a city South West Melbourne) that is also lies along the infamous Great Ocean Road.

I recommend you join the program, since it is basically the start of everything:

- You can meet new friends, which can potentially be you "best" friend during your stay in Melbourne
- You can experience the Australian culture right away: surfing, hiking, biking, Australian food, Australian jokes... all in the same package.
- Reasonable price. Our place is a very nice place with a view straight to the ocean. So, it's worth it!
- Lorne is amazing!

DEAKIN EXPERIENCES

So, I mainly come here to experience the Australian educational system. I'll tell you what it's like.

Study Portal, Apps, Student Central, DUSA and so on!

So, Deakin also provide students with a study portal (similar to our Fronter). It's called DeakinSync. In there you can have access to any important things: mails, communities, fees, library, enrolment, jobs, helps...

In the first few days of your arrival you will get to know this platform and I suggest you spend some time playing around with it. And please make sure you know how to "enroll" yourself in a unit, how to set up your timetable using the "STAR" system. You should know what is different between a unit and a course, what is a seminar, what is a practical, what is a lecture and what is a class. Yes, many things to learn in a very short period.

You should also know how to get around the school, where to get help if you need something, where is the canteen, where to buy coffee, where is the nearest water fountain and so on. Deakin provides student with many apps, 2 of which are "Deakin Genie" and "Deakin Scout". They are just the tools for you to get to know more about the school, find the ways, quickly check your schedules, your deadlines... Don't underestimate it, because there will be a time when you are late for lectures, and it's a pain in the if you got lost! Having 4 units at the same time and keeping track of many deadlines also a difficult thing, so make use of them.

Deakin Cloud: each of the unit you study will have a unit site. In here you can find all of the study materials, resources, submission folder, assessment folder, quizzes... And one of the things I like about Deakin is that they record every lecture. So if you miss one of your lecture, you can still watch the video at home and gain knowledge. Magic?
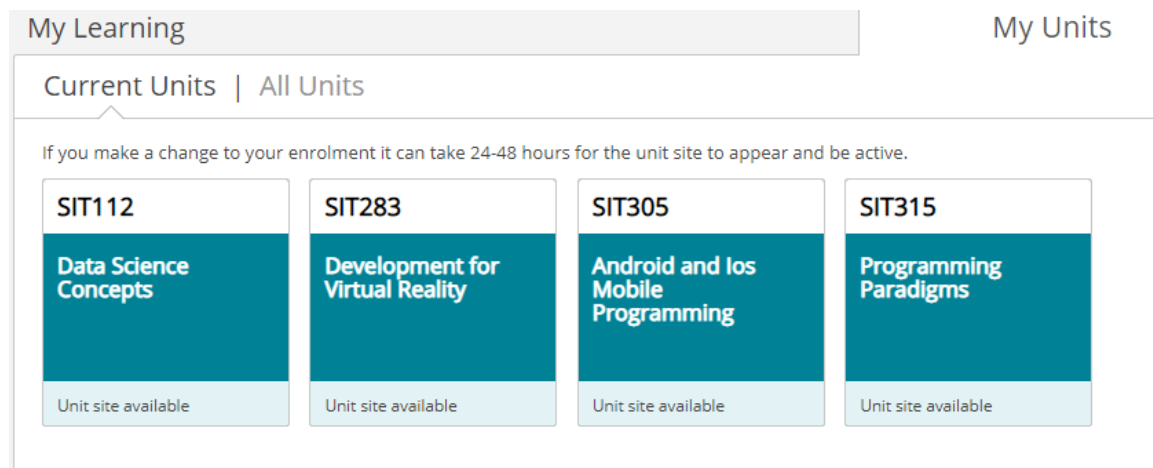

Figure 1: How DeakinSync looks like

One more important place to remember is the Student Central. You will need to visit this place to collect your student ID as early as possible after your arrival (I suggest you should do that). When collecting your student ID, you at the same time can ask them for the application form for the concession card for public transport. It will save you a big amount

of money on transportation (I pay only AUD $75 each month for transport). The detail on how to apply I will not write here, but you will get there. Just ask them for the guide.

Student Central is an important place for another reason: when you realize that the unit you are taking is not suitable for you. It is hard somehow, or you don't like it. Head over to Student Central and ask them if you can change the unit. The procedure is as follow: they will ask you to fill in a form and ask if you have approval from your coordinator (Anne). The people working there are every friendly, so don't be afraid to ask for help.

Oops, DUSA. This stands for Deakin University Student Associations. It's basically the association for student and if you join you can take part in many events run by them (all students). DUSA organize many events in a trimester, and I suggest you should join. Me personally I did not pay for joining DUSA but do really enjoy their events. They have many membership types (gold, silver, bronze) and depend on what you buy you can have gifts such as DUSA hoodie, DUSA bag, DUSA water bottle. Very popular. Everywhere around the school. You won't miss it haha. Joining DUSA also help you to have discounts on joining many other small clubs. Deakin currently has a hundred and something clubs running on, and please join one to utilize your stay. Some of my favorite clubs are JASS, DEVISE, DEC, DSEC, DSAC... I dare you to understand what they are 😊

So, unit selection! This is the hardest part so far. Deakin provide you with a catalog for selecting unit when you apply for the school (you should be familiar with the unit level – first year, second year, third year...). Reading through that catalog and choosing the suitable subject for you is vital! It can partly decide how "amazing" your stay will be, trust me. But below is what I've chosen:

SIT 112 Data Science Concepts[1]

This is a 1st year unit that is also taught at KEA as electives on your 2nd semester in Software Development. Since it's a first-year unit here, it's pretty easy to digest. I suggest you taking this unit if you are looking for something interesting, not so hard, not so easy, trending and promising field.

In this unit you will learn about fundamentals in data science, from the start to the very end. You know how to get data from, how to clean your data, manipulate, analyze, understand and at last visualize it. Part of the unit also include some machine learning topics that worth studying.

The teaching will be separated into 2 parts: lectures and practical. Sometimes your unit chair will be in charge of the practical as well, but most of the time some student assistants will sit in the computer lab and guide you through the tasks. We use Python and Jupyter notebook for this unit.

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[1] https://www.deakin.edu.au/courses-search/unit.php?unit=SIT112&year=2019

SIT 283 Development for Virtual Reality[2]

This is a 2nd year unit that is not taught at KEA. I guarantee you guys 100% fun if you are into Virtual Reality experience. Using Unity, you are guided from the start to the end the concept of Virtual Reality and how VR is applied into real life. VR is not only about games, but it helps people a lot in many more aspects.

You should be familiar with C# and Object-Oriented Development when taking this unit. Since most of the time you will learn the Unity library, being familiar with OOP is an advantage.

In the end of the unit, you have to make your own VR experience. I'm lucky to see other's work, and they are all amazing! Some try to create a fishing experience in VR, some try to do boxing training, some try to simulate public transport for disabled people... Me myself choose to simulate a café where you have to make cappuccino, latte, espresso, macchiato... (I choose this because Melbourne is very famous for its coffee culture).

Figure 2: My final project on VR development. Very very fun to work with.

The teaching is same as above: one class and one practical. My teacher is amazing guy with a strong dedication to his teaching and very enthusiastic. About the practical lab, you will have full access to the VR mounted head display and VR controllers (here we use the HTC VIVE controllers).

SIT 305 Android and iOS Mobile Programming[3]

This is a 3rd year unit that probably has been taught at KEA before. In this unit you will be developing an Android/iOs app from scratch to the publication of the app. You will work on a group of 2, collaborating through GitHub and just code. There is no lecture. The main point of this unit is self-study. But your unit chair will track your work on GitHub

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[2] https://www.deakin.edu.au/courses-search/unit.php?unit=SIT283&year=2019
[3] https://www.deakin.edu.au/courses-search/unit.php?unit=SIT305&year=2019

weekly to see your progress, and somehow you have to show him a minimum 15 hours of work (this is kinda stressful for me) per week. But I enjoyed it.

I suggest you not taking this unit if you have no prior experience developing Android/ios app. Me myself have a harsh start with this unit, but in the end we did it very well. For developing Android, I use Java.
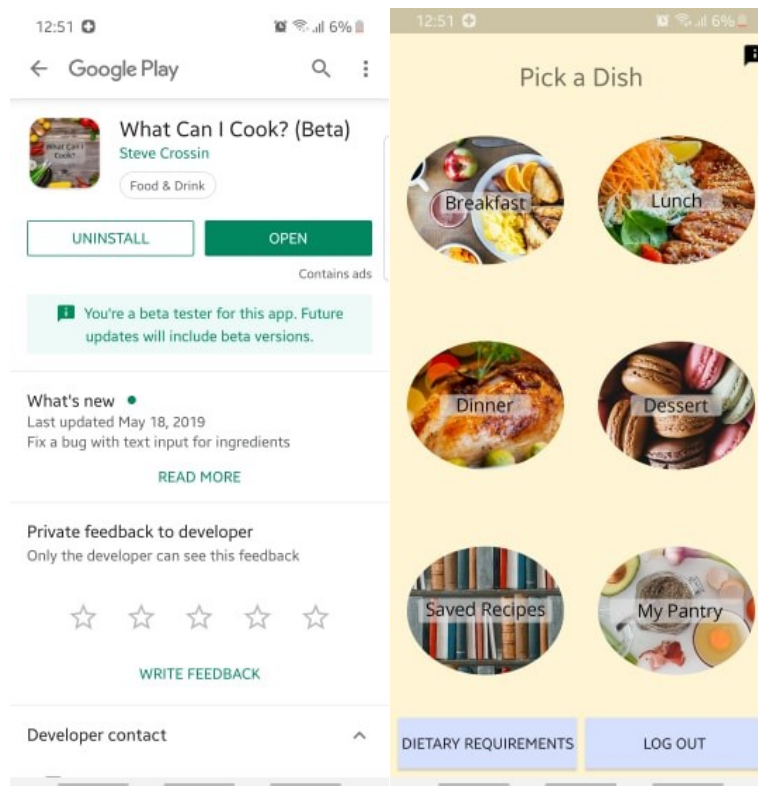

Figure 3: Our app has been published on App Store and got many nice reviews

SIT 315 Programming Paradigms[4]

This is a 3rd year unit that is extremely difficult. I don't recommend studying this unit. By the time writing this report I'm still having a big deadline for this unit that I have no idea what is going on. This unit is mandatory for Computer Science student. You must be good at C++ to live happily with this unit. There are several modules, concurrency programming, parallel programming, distributed programming and many more. Me myself finding it very hard to meet the deadlines. (actually, I have to resubmit many times).

So why I choose this unit? Just by accident I think it's cool to study something advanced and could improve my academic knowledge. Totally disappointed. The unit make use of another submission platform called OnTrack (similar concept to Deakin Cloud).

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[4] https://www.deakin.edu.au/courses-search/unit.php?unit=SIT315&year=2019

Social and cultural experience

So, here's the fun part!

Let's start with networking. When coming to Australia I got only 1 friend that I know since high school. I hope that she will introduce me to a bigger network, but not. All of my friends currently are known through school, social network and part-time work.

- I suggest you should follow all of the Facebook pages: Expats in Australia, Rideshare in Australia... Because I'm Vietnamese, I also have a Facebook group of Vietnamese in Australia that's actually the start of a lot of stories.
- To meet some Aussies, head straight to school and join some clubs. They are probably there a lot. I have made 2 very nice Australian guy while working on a project at school and while participating in an event organized by DUSA.
- To finance myself, apart from my saving, I also work part-time to earn some more money (10-15 hours a week). That's where I meet a lot of new friends, same age as me, same mind like me.

Friends introducing friends. Time by time by network grows bigger and bigger, and in the second month here I won't feel lonely any longer.

Follow your school Instagram, follow DUSA, follow any other clubs' page. They will post the events constantly so you can know what is going on <u>at school.</u> To know what is going on in the city, that's actually a little bit more work. I usually follow everyone in the Exchange 2019 group to see what they are doing. Some are travel, some stay in the city, but if you ask them, they will always answer what interesting to do and even ask you to join in.

For your first few days of arrival, I recommend you visit the museums, art galleries and exhibition centers around Melbourne while you have time. Because the longer you stay, the less time you can allocate for these activities.

For the second and third month, try to travel around as much as you can. Great Ocean Road, Tasmania, Sydney, Gold Coast, Cairns, Whitsunday... Those are the locations that many of prefer to visit. The closer you get to the end of the semester, the busier you are. At this time, I recommend you keep on exploring the city, because it's an amazing city! As I said before, Melbourne is a Multicultural city. You find every nation here: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Malaysian, Vietnamese, Greeks, Italians, English, American... You can eat whatever food you want! They are distributed to specific suburbs, so depends on what you want to eat, you will go to that area. (I can talk all night on where to eat). Some places in Chinatown even open until 3:30 A.M.

This is Melbourne! You can do many activities here: cinema, ice skating, bowling, pool, bar, clubs (oh-my-god), cruise, rock climbing... Everything is within walk distance! The suburbs around Melbourne is also very nice. If you have a car, try to visit the Yarra Valley to taste the wine and chocolate, or the Dandenong national park for some peace. Heading

west, you will find the Asian paradise in Footscray, or go south for Springvale – that's also a nice place to enjoy cheap, good Asian food. Try to visit Mornington, around 2 hours drive from Melbourne. In there you can find the hot spring where you can relax in winter!

I couldn't write everything in here, but just feel free to ask me if you want to know where to go in Melbourne! There's a thousand thing to talk about!

Practical experience

Besides enjoying, you should make a budget. For those who is curious about how much I spend in a month, here is a summary:

- Transportation: around 400 DKK
- Accommodation (including bills): around 3500 DKK for a room.
- Phone & internet: around 150 DKK
- Food and drink: 3000 DKK
- Entertainment: 500 DKK
- Others: 500 DKK

I did actually spend more than that. But just to give you some good number, that should be a very nice head start. You can actually live under that, but to maximize your experience, I don't suggest so.

For transportation, as I mentioned above, try to get a concession card from school.

For accommodation, try to find some places before you arrive. And when you arrive you just need to come and inspect it. For the locations, I suggest staying in the east side. Although east side is more expensive than the west side but travelling time from and to school is extensive reduced. I stay in an area called Camberwell, 20 minutes tram from school and 15 minutes train to the city. My other friends they choose to stay in Richmond, Fitzroy and some of them stay in the city. The closer to the city you stay, the longer it takes to travel to school.

Conclusion

I am 100% satisfied with my stay in Melbourne and my study in Deakin University. This is like a chapter in my life where every new thing just come to me in 5 months! I have changed a lot, I made new friends, new network, new knowledge, new perspective and new soul!

Appendix

Figure 4:Melbourne from Queen Vic Market

Figure 5: China town gate

Figure 6: St Kilda beach in the evening

Figure 7: Famous Deakin Sign

Figure 8: Me and Tasmania

Figure 9: This is not a kangaroo!

Figure 10: Typical roadtrip

Figure 11: Prepare to surf!!!