University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam (HvA)
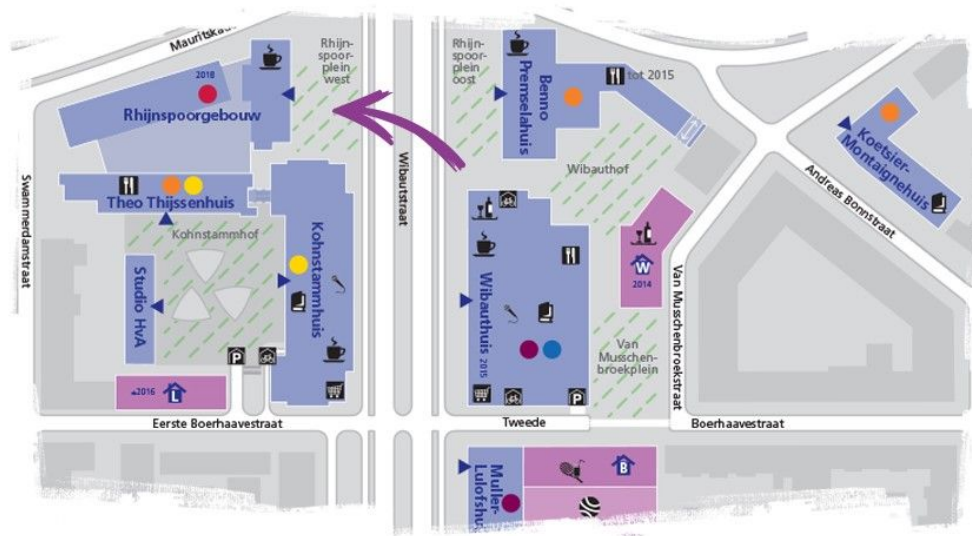# Mobile Development
Fall 2017

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HvA campus map

First of all, compared to KEA the campus of the HvA is huge! This has its advantages and disadvantages. The building looks very modern and new and offers many facilities. It's possible to receive an Android or iOS testing device for example, as they have them available for students (if you're quick). There is a library, various restaurants and probably a lot more which I still didn't discover. The main disadvantage in my opinion is that you can really notice it's a big university in terms of the educational program. I felt that there were many small assignments which has to be fulfilled separately instead of one big project where you can go in dept and where all different classes add up to knowledge that you can incorporate in the project immediately. My expectation was that after half a year of mobile development I would have gained some profound knowledge of Java Android Development. In reality there was less programming in the curriculum than I expected but I gained knowledge on a much broader spectrum, which was actually (unexpectedly) very interesting.

Academic Experience

Classes

Mobile Development Project

This project was all about creating an app in a project group for a company at their office, two days a week during the entire semester. When I arrived I had no idea how to accomplish that since I had very little experience in Java. Luckily we could choose from many different assignments and companies and there was a company that asked for an app in React Native. Even though I chose a semester Mobile Development, I still LOVE Web

Development, so this assignment was perfect. In this way I could still code in JavaScript and learn more about the React framework, but also get hands on with mobile development.

It was a great learning experience being in a real company working on a relevant case.

Android Development

These classes were about creating a basic android app. There were theoretical classes and practicals, but they were all cancelled since last semester people didn't really come to class. For me as a total beginner that was a pity, because I always learn well from others.

The live coding classes were high paced but didn't go very in depth since the classes only lasted for around 2 hours, and were given once a week. So I did a lot of self study and in that way I managed to deliver a decent app.

Mobile Design

If you are into UX design this is the right class for you. We did paper prototyping where I felt like a small kid cutting paper and coloring on it. For me personally this class didn't have a lot of value, since I'm not interested in paper prototyping and found that a lot of hours went into this class without getting relevant knowledge out of it. It was helpful to learn some key design concepts, but they would fit into one lesson.

Mobile Infrastructure & Security

The assignment was to make an Android app again, this time we focused more on security and worked with sensors which was fun and informative. The classes provided a lot of in depth background information.

Mobile Society

In this class we analysed various trends in mobile technologies. I found it very interesting even though we did no programming here. The classes gave some perspective of future trends and helped pointing me in the right direction in picking an internship.

Intercultural Skills

Completely unrelated to programming, but this course is given by a great teacher and is super interesting in my opinion. During the classes the teacher addressed various topics, concerning cultures, politics, religion and much more.

English Writing Skills B2

This turned out to be an online course. Initially I preferred real life classes, but later on the semester was so busy that I was glad I could manage my own time schedule for this class.

Guidance from the HvA

The guidance from the international office at the HvA is great, they are very open to help you if needed. They also organized some nice social events, such as ice skating with some dutch 'boerenkool' for dinner.

Most rewarding experience

The project in the company gave me some real life experience with weekly feedback from work professionals, which was very valuable. Furthermore the project was fun and it was a great learning experience to work with students from different educational backgrounds.

Least relevant class

I had high expectations of Android Development, but it turned out we had to make a out a rather small assignment: an android app with a RecyclerView, which could perform CRUD actions, connected to a database. The live coding classes were not really live coding, but rather just reading from the manual to explain the requirements every single class, and shortly addressing some pre-made code. Even though I studied Java in the summer holiday before starting at the HvA, I considered myself an absolute beginner in Java and even XML, so it was mostly online self study for me since the classes didn't give me any relevant knowledge on how to perform basic things.

Recommended classes

Since the whole semester is a complete package with not much choice for own classes I can't really make a recommendation to which classes to take. However there was a choice, but that one was rather easy for me. I could pick Survival Dutch, but since I am Dutch that didn't make a lot of sense, so I picked Intercultural Skills. A very valuable class, which I can definitely recommend.

Cultural/personal experience

Since I am Dutch it wasn't a culture shock for me to go back to my home country.
The Dutch and Danish culture is very similar, but still there are some differences. You can also notice that there are 3 times more citizens in The Netherlands than in Denmark, on approximately the same size of land. So the cities can be very crowded, also I find that big cities are relatively close to each other. Some worth visiting are Den Haag, Rotterdam and Haarlem, a city close to Amsterdam where I lived during the semester. In my opinion it has kind of the same charme as Amsterdam, but then with less people. I would say it's worth visiting, and also the nature around it is beautiful (although similar to Danish nature).

What I liked about studying at the HvA is that there were many international students. I worked together in a project group with people from Germany, Finland and Norway, which was fun, not only because of the different cultural background, also the educational background differ which is interesting and makes that you can learn a lot from each other.

Practical Experience

The application process with KEA went very smooth, they answered all my questions quick. The HvA staff was also open to help when I had some questions regarding the scheduled classes (English Writing skills wasn't on the schedule, but it turned out the be online based).

I can't really give any relevant advice regarding housing, since I was on a waiting list for 9 years, so it was easy for me to find something. The HvA did offer help regarding housing, and according to classmates it was easy for them to get a room through the HvA.

Money wise I didn't spend much, the prices in Holland are a bit lower than in Denmark, especially when you don't live in Amsterdam. Otherwise count on the same budget, maybe a bit more if you want to travel around.

Exchange program in Napier University Edinburgh, Scotland

3rd Semester – September to December 2017

Preface

My name is (...) and I study Multimedia Design at KEA. In my 3rd semester I chose to study abroad at Edinburgh Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland. If you are thinking about studying abroad all I can say is do it! It is an decision you wont regret, and it is a great opportunity to live in another country and meet people from all over the world.

In my studies I had the three courses:

1. Motion Graphics:

Focused on creating your own motion graphics with Adobe After Effects. The course was a mix between lectures and practicals. We had 2 assignments throughout the course, one where we had to create a title sequence for a movie with a specific genre, and one where we had to create a motion graphic with the theme 'environment'.

2. 3D Modelling:

Focused on creating simple 3D models in the programmes 3ds Max and Mudbox. This course consisted of mostly practicals, with high focus on self studying. The lecturer provided video tutorials for the programs, if you were new to them, and then you could work through them during the practicals. We had 3 assignments. First we had to create 7 different models, and show them in wireframes, then we had to add texture to the models and finally we had to create scenes with lightening of all of the models.

3. Practical Interaction Design:

Focused on learning about interaction design. This course was a mix between practicals, lectures and tutorials. We had 3 assignments throughout the course. The first one was to write an essay comparing three different scientific papers about sustainability, the second was to make a paper prototype of an app with the theme sustainability, and the third assignment was to make a real app prototype with the programme Axure.

Academic Experience

The course application process was a bit confusing at times, but nothing that couldn't be worked out. I had initially chosen a class called Digital Storytelling, which wasn't something for me, so I wrote Simone Dallas, the international contact person and she helped me changing the class very fast.

The classes that was most rewarding for me was Motion Graphics and 3D Modelling. It was two very practical classes, where you learn to use some cool software. In 3D modelling you learn the very basics of it, so if you wish to pursue a career in 3D modelling, you need to learn some more on your own, but it is a great course if you just want to learn a little bit about 3D modelling. I found Practical Interaction Design to be a little less relevant, but mostly because I had already learned most of the content at KEA.

Cultural/Personal Experience

Edinburgh is a great city to live and study in. I really fell in love with the city because of the atmosphere and nice people. Moving to Scotland was not much of a cultural shock. I would say that the biggest difference between Copenhagen and Edinburgh is that people are much more polite here :)
In the first week of university there were a lot of presentations of how to adapt to the Scottish culture and a lot of help on how the city works in terms of getting a local doctor, public transportation and getting a bank account if needed.
The best cultural or personal experience I had is hard to say, because I enjoyed the experience as a whole. But here are some of the most fun and Scottish things I experienced in my exchange abroad, which I would recommend for people doing exchange here.
- The Highland Games:
The Highland Games is a old Scottish tradition where you go into the Highlands, and watch competitions of old traditional Scottish games. Like hammer throw, cycling, running races, bagpipe bands, traditional Scottish dances and tug-o-war.
- Cèilidh Dance:
Ceilidh is a traditional Scottish folk dance and music. A lot of the pubs in Edinburgh have Ceilidh at least once a week, and I would recommend it of you want to feel Scottish for a night and dance with some local people in kilts.
- Going out and live music in pubs:
The are countless pubs in Edinburgh which have live music every day of the week, and it is always a lot of fun. To name a few of my favourites places to go out for a beer there is:
  • Finnigan's Wake on Victoria Street
  • The Royal Oak on Infirmary Street

- McSorley's on Forrest Road
- The Edinburgh University Library bar in the Teviot Row House. (no live music, but super nice place)
- The Monkey Barrel Comedy Club (Comedy club with a lot of cool events)

- Travelling to other places in Scotland:

Scotland is not a big country and I would recommend to travel around when you are here. There is a lot of nice cities like Aberdeen, Stonehaven, St. Andrews, Stirling, Fort William and Glasgow. And there are even more great opportunities to see some beautiful nature in the Highlands and The Isle of Skye.

Practical Experience

Application process

The application process was time consuming, because you need to figure out a lot of different things before you leave. It was a bit frustrating at times to figure everything out, but it all worked out. I think that the my KEA contact person could have been a little bit faster to respond to questions and emails. Napier was in general quite fast to replying to emails.

Accommodation

Finding accommodation was a big stress factor for me, because you couldn't really find a flat until you arrived. So booked a hostel and traveled here without knowing where I was gonna end up. I was very lucky to receive a room in a student accommodation flat in The Student Housing Company. It was a strange situation because I had applied for it months before I left (through Napier), and all I heard from them, was that there was an extremely small chance of receiving a room. But after two days in my hostel I got an email that I could move in two days later. The student flat was very expensive (around 620 pounds a month), but I was really happy to get it, because it was an easy way to make a lot of new friends. For anyone moving here I would recommend to of course apply to student housing even though it isn't a guarantee to get a flat. Other than that I used the following Facebook groups: Edinburgh Housing, Room & Flat Share, EdinRoom, and Edinburgh Napier Students Flat Finder. There is constantly people looking to rent out rooms on Facebook, and I already had one flat viewing after being in the city for just two days. Just remember to be careful, and never pay upfront for a flat you haven't viewed!

General expenses

Scotland is in general much cheaper than Copenhagen and Denmark in general. You can almost always get student discount, just remember to ask! I did spent a lot of money on going out, attending events and travelling around Scotland, but is was definitely all worth it. Time goes by quickly and I think it is important to get the most out of it. An expense I had not expected, was that there was not any kitchen utensils or anything in the common kitchen of my flat, so we had to spend a lot of money on this.

Conclusion

To sum up I definitely think you should consider going to Edinburgh, I have had the best time here, and I have met some amazing people! My advice is to be open to meeting new people, and you will realise that it is not as hard as you think. Explore the city and take some trips to other places in Scotland. Just enjoy your time abroad because it goes by very fast!