

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name****Year and term for exchange**

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2022 Autumn

**Exchange university**

Aalto University

**Degree programme**

Architecture

## Snow, wood and coffee

### Before departure

I have always been interested in Nordic cities and its culture. Helsinki is really similar to Stockholm when talking about the city context. However, there are still minor points that differentiate two cities which I would like to explore more. In this way, I chose Finland as my destination.

The architecture department in Aalto University is really famous for the wood studio. I would like to learn more about wood material and its construction process.

As a citizen outside EU, I need to apply for a study notification in order to stay in Finland for more than 3 months.

### Upon arrival

I arrived a week before the semester started. The collage prepared an orientation week and encouraged all the new students to take part in. The orientation courses help the new to be familiar with the campus and get involved in short time. There are many kinds of student unions and clubs meeting different interests. For architecture students, there is a special one that people live in a cabin in the woods for a weekend!

### Financials

I received the scholarship from Erasmus program. Helsinki is relatively cheaper compared to Stockholm. There are many discounts for students, for example, the transportation tickets and student meals. If you don't want to pay the student union fee, it is still possible to get discount at campus with the student certificate which was stamped during the orientation week. The coffee at A block is really affordable by the way!

### Accommodation

It is possible to get help from the university but it is really competitive for the exchange students. I finally solve the accommodation problem by myself. I got an AYY studio from my friend who was leaving out Finland for exchange at the same time. The studio is located Helsinki, 20 minutes from Aalto University, and has really pleasing surrounding environment (the sea and forest!).

### University and studies

Aalto is a quite large university located in Espoo, next to Helsinki. The department of design and architecture is included in the School of Art. There are also Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Science and business schools Compared to the architecture department in KTH, Aalto focused more on practical aspects rather than the design concepts. Most of the courses was taught in English. There are different kinds of language courses to choose from as well. It is really nice to meet many new friends from other departments in the language courses.

## **Courses**

I chose the wood studio as my main design courses. The 'wood in architecture and construction' is together with the design studio. I also picked the 'Health and well-being' and 'Construction Document' which focuses a lot on the construction details. However, the wood studio became quite stressful this year and the construction document courses also requires a lot of effort. I suggest don't pick up this two at the same time although they are both great courses.

## **City and country**

Helsinki is a great city with a lot of public areas. Aalto house, Aalto studio, public library and museums are great places for architecture students to visit. Finnish are kind and friendly as well.

Some Nordic home brands have really good design on those small decorations and little stuff. I am really happy to get those glass cups and candlesticks from Litala.

## **Leisure and social activities**

Compared to what I experienced in the studio at KTH, I feel like there is a more international context in the wood studio in Aalto. There are many people from different countries in Asia and south EU as well. It was really interesting to share ideas and work with each other. During the World Cup, we went to a pub and really had a great time.

## **Sustainability**

Finland really pays attention to the sustainability. For example, the project we did in the wood studio is about a modular wood structure, and most of the parts should be reversible structures. When making the large-scale models, all the materials are really carefully made use of.

## **Other recommendations and observations**

Talk to people before you make choice on the course selection. Estimating how many efforts you would put in different course is a good idea.

Aalto is really free in the course selection. For example, a chemical science student could also choose wood lecture and architecture students could select many art courses such as sculpture, comics and painting.