

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

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VT2019

Exchange university

Aalto University

Degree programme

-

Coldness, celebrations and chill

Before departure

I applied for an exchange semester at Aalto for many reasons, firstly I wanted to improve my Finnish, secondly I really wanted to live in Finland and lastly I wanted to explore the Finnish student culture. My mother is from Finland and therefore I already master the Finnish language to a certain extent, but I wanted to improve my language further and saw the chance of doing so by going to Finland during my master studies. I spent a lot of time in Finland as a child since I have a lot of relatives living there and therefore I've always felt an urge to live in Finland at some point in my life. I also knew that the Finnish student culture is similar to the Swedish but I was really interested in experiencing it and understand the differences.

I didn't prepare much before going to Finland except for accommodation, I didn't need any visa or anything like that, although I prepared my studies a lot and checked all the possible courses etc. The exchange coordinator in Finland was very helpful with all my questions and that helped a lot.

Upon arrival

I arrived in Finland on the second of January since the mandatory Arrival days was during the 3rd and 4th of January. The semester started on the 7th of January. This was kind of stressful since I had my exam period from KTH during these 2 weeks and this made it hard to socialize and make friends in the beginning. The arrival days contained all the necessary info for the exchange which was nice. The student culture is a big deal at Aalto and there is a lot of clubs, guilds and the union that you can become part of and these were also introduced during the arrival days.

Financials

I did not receive any scholarship from KTH. Everything was a bit more expensive in general but I think that was because of the weak Krona. The student union fee was mandatory and was 59 euro, it also cost if you want to be a member of a guild but it was around 20 euro I think.

Accommodation

I rented an apartment through HOAS, it's like SSSB here at KTH, and it's a housing company for Students. I applied on their website during the fall and hoped for the best. In the application form you fill in your preferences of for example if you prefer to live alone, your maximum budget etc. I didn't live close to campus but I lived close to Helsinki which was nice anyway. I lived in Pasila and the apartment was very nice and fresh, I think it was renovated in 2015 and the rent was 600 euro (30 square meters).

University and studies

Aalto is a multidisciplinary university with programs in engineering, economics and arts and there are great possibilities to take multidisciplinary courses as well. I think the workload is a bit lower than at KTH. If the course is on fulltime you have 2 lectures every week and maybe an additional homework. The courses are normally 5 credits and the school year is divided into 5 periods, 2 during the fall and 3 during the spring. This means that you should (in average) take two full time course in each period. This means that you have in average 4 lectures each week which is kind of chill. But this is an ideal case, there are very few courses in the 5th which means that you study over 100 % in period 3 and 4. This worked fine for me and it was kind of nice to take it chill in the 5th period and explore a sunny Helsinki before going home. The master courses are in English and then I also took language courses in Finnish. Normally you are not allowed to study Finnish courses (language courses) at the university as an exchange student because of the high number of students but since I took more advanced courses (with less students) I was able to study Finnish anyway. There is also an opportunity to study Finnish at the Open University at the campus but then you have to pay a bit for the course, but not much though.

Courses

LC-7003	Survival Finnish Online	1	VT2019, Period 3	grundnivå	val
LC-7341	Finnish 4A	2	VT2019, period 3	grundnivå	val
LC-7342	Finnish 4B	2	VT2019, period 4	grundnivå	val
LC-7326	Finnish Conversation course 3/Suomen keskustelukurssi 3	1	VT2019, period 5	grundnivå	val
CHEM-E8115	Cell Factory	5	VT2019, period 3	avancerad	rek
CHEM-E2155	Biopolymers	5	V2019, period 3-4	avancerad	rek
CHEM-E8105	Enzymatic and Biomimetic catalysis	5	VT2019, period 4	avancerad	rek
NBE-C2201	Physiology/ Fysiologia	5	VT2019, period 3-4	grundnivå	val
CHEM-A1610	Design meets Biomaterials	3	VT2019, period 4-5	grundnivå	val

I have summarized my courses and their info in the table above, if you want to get more information about the courses you can go to oodi.aalto.fi and write in the course code. I wanted to read as much Finnish as possible and at the same time take bio-related courses. As one can see I did not take any course that was directly related to my master (except maybe Physiology but it was a first cycle course) but that was okay anyway and my plan is to get all of the credits transferred to KTH.

City and country

Since I'm already familiar with the Finnish culture I did not have any major culture shock arriving there, but one thing I wasn't counting on was that a lot of the social events was parties. Personally I was kind of tired when I arrived in Finland because of a stressful semester before going abroad and I was not in the mood for partying which meant that it was harder to find friends. One thing to keep in mind is that Finland has a different alcohol culture than I was used to in Sweden but it was not a major shock for me.

Leisure and social activities

I had a lot of free time since I found the studying kind of easy and therefore I tried to spend as much time as I wanted and could on taking walks and exploring Helsinki and its surroundings. I went a lot to a park called "Majstads Strandpark" and looked at all the cute dogs haha. I wanted to be more active in the student activities but what I found was that all non-alcoholic events were sport events, and since I'm injured I can't play sports which meant that I didn't find that many friends *sad face*.

Other recommendations and observations

I recommend going to some museums in Helsinki, like the national museum, Kiasma, Rex etc. And also just walk around in the parks!