Travel Report: University Of Hull, UK

Fall 2013

k93651
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1. Preparing for the exchange

After accepting the exchange position to Hull, I shortly received an e-mail from the host institution’s international office. This e-mail contained attached all the required forms for the official application and some general information. The documents to be returned to Hull were:

- Transcript of results
- Reference letter
- Application form
- Copy of valid passport
- Evidence of English competency
- Preliminary learning agreement
- Accommodation application

The deadline for all documents was May 31st 2013. All the applications were quite straightforward and the biggest concern was to get all the necessary grades to Oodi in time to be applicable for master’s exchange. This might require some negotiations with teachers and the Aalto exam office. Usually the teachers are able to speed up the grading process but for some reason getting the grades to your transcript can take some time. Thus, if the deadline is closing in and the necessary grades are nowhere to be seen, a personal visit to the Aalto exam office might be advisable. Usually it’s just a matter of pushing a button.

For the preliminary learning agreement a (postgraduate) student must select 3 modules based on the following criteria:

- Postgraduate students may study level 7 OR levels 4-6 modules if no suitable level 7 modules are available, but you must not mix Undergraduate and Postgraduate modules (e.g. if a student picked level 7 module all his modules must be level 7 only OR if a student selected any modules from levels 4-6 he can’t take any level 7 modules).
- Modules must start with code 26xxxx OR 56xxxx for UG / PG courses respectively.
- Modules must be taught on the campus relevant to your application
- Modules must be limited to 13/14 S1 selection
- Modules must be full-time taught modules only – you cannot choose any part-time, distance taught or executive modules

Basically postgraduate students can study modules of any levels. Moreover, the module selections can (and probably will) be altered during the first weeks at the host university so one shouldn’t stress about the modules too much at this point. The Aalto outgoing office will provide the reference letter and evidence of English competency. In the accommodation application a student can list wishes and preferences concerning the accommodation. The exchange students are usually accommodated with each other in university owned housing and there’s not much room for personal modification. There are also other possibilities e.g. private leasing but I was happy to let the host university sort out my housing problems. This way you can be quite sure to be located near campus in a low-priced apartment.
The University of Hull arranges delivery services from selected airports and train stations on certain arrival dates. If you are unsure of how to make your way to the university, it might be a good option to adjust your arrival to these dates and times. Hull doesn’t have its own airport and the closest one, Humberside is quite small. The best way to get to Hull is to fly to London, Manchester or Leeds and take a train to Hull. The train tickets in England can get quite expensive close to the travelling date so early booking is recommended.

2. Studying in Hull

Semester dates for F2013:

**Semester 1: 30 September 2013 – 31 January 2014**

- Teaching starts: 30 Sep 2013
- Teaching Ends: 20 Dec 2013
- Christmas break starts: 23 Dec 2013
- Christmas break ends: 10 Jan 2014
- Assessments start: 13 Jan 2014
- Assessments end: 24 Jan 2014
- Marking/feedback starts: 27 Jan 2014
- Marking/feedback ends: 31 Jan 2014

As you can see, the semester dates differ from those of Aalto so the exam period may require some schedule planning if a student is going to attend courses in the 3. period in Aalto. The exams must be taken at the host university but Aalto courses can usually be studied without attendance.

Before the modules actually start in September there are two weeks to sort them out officially. This was done by going to the business school’s international office with your (possibly) modified learning agreement to get it officially approved and to get you registered for modules. During the first weeks there are several module fairs and workshops to help with your selection.
2.1. My selected modules

As instructed I selected topics that I hadn’t studied in Aalto before. Below you can see a brief overview of the modules I selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>UG/Level</th>
<th>ECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26160</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
<td>UG/Level 5</td>
<td>10 ECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26314</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship and the Small Firm</td>
<td>UG/Level 6</td>
<td>10 ECTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**26160: Corporate Social Responsibility**

**Module leader** Gianluca Andresani

**Overview** An exploration of the nature and significance of values, ethics and moral concerns in the theory and practice of organisations and organisational management. The Module is aimed to provide a practical understanding of how corporations strive to be socially responsible.

**Assessment**
- 30% - Group presentation
- 70% - Individual Essay, 3000 words

**Comments** The focus was on current CSR issues faced by companies in modern business. The module was taught through lectures and tutorials. Very reflective approach, not necessarily "right" answers to problems.

**26314: Entrepreneurship and the Small Firm**

**Module leader** Steve Johnson

**Overview** The module will work with students to develop a critical understanding of the economic and social role of entrepreneurship and small firms within different regional and national environments. This understanding is crucial whether students aspire to start their own business, to work in the small firm sector or to enter occupations and sectors that interact with entrepreneurs and small firms, for example finance, professional services or public policy.

**Assessment**
- 50% - Individual Essay, 2500 words
- 50% - Exam

**Comments** This module focused on the relationship of entrepreneurship and economic growth. Also, the differences of entrepreneurs as humans were assessed with a very international focus. Interesting topics that I hadn’t explored before. The module was taught through lectures and tutorials.
The usual way to complete modules is quite similar to that in Aalto. Each of my modules contained weekly lectures and tutorial sessions that were held weekly or every other week. Neither lectures nor tutorials were strictly compulsory, but tutorial sessions were highly recommended since they covered crucial topics of the module through small cases, discussions or presentations. Each module had one or more course books that were considered useful to acquire. However, one can pass the modules quite easily without the books with excellent grades. Given the price and availability of the books, I can personally recommend the latter option.

Compared to Aalto, the workload was a positive surprise. Each module contained the same amount of assignments in a whole semester that Aalto students are used to doing in a week. The exams were also easier than in Aalto. For the essay questions a student must choose two topics from six alternatives. One of the exams also involved lots of multiple choice questions with no minus points from wrong answers.
3. Leisure activities

Given the relatively easy level of the modules and the full-time-student status, exchange students usually get a lot of free time. The campus of the school was large and in addition to the library and other self-study facilities, offered e.g. shops, cafés, sports facilities, lounge areas, bars and a nightclub. The city centre is located 10 minute drive away from campus.

For sports enthusiasts the University of Hull offers a wide selection of different sports clubs to join. During the first weeks all the sports clubs host free introductory sessions to demonstrate their sport and to attract new members. I highly recommend joining some club since this is a great way to meet new people and network with the locals. For football fanatics, Hull offers the opportunity to see premier league football live at KC stadium. The tickets for the games can be bought online and the prices vary between 10 and 20 pounds. For “big” games, tickets are usually sold bundled with other, least interesting games. Still the prices are only a fraction of those in bigger cities of England.

Despite football and rugby, there’s not much going on in Hull to be honest. It is a relatively small city and is very much a “student town”. During the breaks the city is said to be nearly a ghost town. Thus it is advisable to travel a bit during the exchange. England itself has many interesting cities that are easy to visit by train. When booked in advance, traveling by train is cheaper than in Finland. Flying is also relatively cheap which makes trips to Europe a worthy option for free time activity. The international student association (ISA) arranges several domestic and international trips for exchange students. These trips and other ISA events are a great way to meet new people and socialize.

A small city with roughly 20,000 students naturally also means quite a lot of nightlife. The campus nightclub is packed every Wednesday and Saturday and the city has multiple English-style pubs with great ales. There are also bigger clubs in the city centre with parties going on all the way till morning. The price level is much more forgiving for a thirsty student than in Finland and you rarely have to pay more than 2£ for a pint.

The overall cost of living is cheaper than in Finland. The accommodation in my case was around £1400 for the whole semester. The price of the groceries had some variation. Some products like fruits and vegetables could be surprisingly pricy but meat was relatively cheap. The biggest difference to Finland was the price of alcohol which was substantially less in Hull. For travelling within the city, I recommend sharing a taxi with a few people. The starting fee is £3.30 day and night and the meter rarely goes over £5.
4. Concluding words

The University of Hull wasn’t my first choice for exchange destination but I really enjoyed my time there. The exchange semester felt like a long vacation. If you are looking for sunny beaches and exploring the jungles, England is not the place to go. However the weather wasn’t as bad as one could think. There was surprisingly little rain and a lot of sunshine even during winter months. I didn’t see snow the whole time. The people in Hull are very friendly and social. Be prepared though to spend most of your time trying to understand the local dialect. The northern English is quite fast and strong and was quite hard to understand at first. The school administration was functioning well and the international office was more than helpful if there were any problems.

All in all I’m very happy I took the change to study abroad. In my experience the location isn’t the biggest factor of a successful exchange; it’s the people. I strongly suggest joining different clubs, travelling, socializing and trying things that are not possible in Finland to make the most of your semester abroad.