

# Personal Experience Report for ERASMUS+ Semester Abroad

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Sending University: Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU)

Host University: Högskolan i Halmstad (Halmstad University)

Country: Sweden

City: Halmstad

Degree Programme: Bachelor's in Environmental and Resource Management

Semester of Study: 5<sup>th</sup> Semester (Semester Abroad)

Since the beginning of my third semester at BTU in October 2018, my classmates and I used to discuss the upcoming semester abroad and discuss our preferred destinations and universities. During these times, I was not yet sure of where I wanted to go but I knew the semester abroad provided me with a chance to experience a new environment and culture.

Since the information event in December 2018, a lot of documentation had to be completed at BTU. The month of January was stressful, and I wish I had done the paperwork well in advance instead of leaving it to the end. But nevertheless, I completed the paperwork and had applied with Halmstad University, a medium-sized university in south Sweden, as my first choice.

As the winter slowly came to an end in Cottbus, and the summer semester began, I received the good news that I had been accepted as the BTU candidate for my first-choice university, Halmstad University. I had maintained a relatively high average grade in my modules, and this helped me to secure the spot despite many people vying for it. I was also happy to note that Irene, who was a good friend of mine, had gotten the other spot and would also be coming to Sweden. It was nice to know that there would be at least one familiar face in Halmstad and we could help each other in times of need.

After the end of the summer semester in July, I went back to India for a quick vacation and then returned to Cottbus. At Cottbus, after packing my luggage I took the train to Berlin and from there I took the bus to Halmstad. It was a memorable journey as I got to ride on the ferry from Rostock to Copenhagen as well as enjoy the beautiful lighting of Copenhagen at night time.

I arrived in Halmstad at 1 A.M. on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. I was then taken to a room by the helpful university pick-up service and made contact with a nice French guy at 1:30 A.M. That was to be my temporary room for a few weeks until I moved to my permanent room. Initially, I struggled to get into my routine and found myself wasting a lot of my time. I also participated in the famous Swedish Nollning or Fresher's week, but I didn't like it much since I was too much of an extrovert to enjoy spontaneous singing, dancing and games.

Later, I moved to my permanent room and had four other Indian roommates. Sharing a room with 2 other roommates was difficult and our preferences and lifestyles did not match well. I also got into a personal rut and was whiling away my time. But after a few weeks, we started to talk about our difficulties and came to some compromises. Also, after one roommate moved out, there was more room and space for me to live comfortably. I soon started to get my life in order and began to build better habits that greatly improved my mental state and physical health. These habits helped me enjoy my stay in Halmstad, perform well at university and have helped provide some structure and discipline in my life till today.

I am a bit ambitious with my studies and take difficult courses on purpose so that I can learn new skills and improve my own level of knowledge. Similarly, at Halmstad University, I took 2 master's level courses even though I was studying my bachelors. Initially, I had difficulty with a programming course, since I had little background in the subject, and decided that dropping it would be the best way forward. After this change, my studies at Halmstad University went more or less smoothly. I received the highest possible grade in all my courses at Halmstad University.

Compared to my sending university, I felt the academic load was lighter at my host university. There were lesser class hours per week and the courses were not as deep or complex as I had hoped and only skimmed the surface of a topic. This left me with the feeling that I was not learning much at my host university. Fortunately, the master's level courses were slightly harder and I did learn some new concepts during those classes. Also, I started delving deeper into topics, out of personal interest, to develop my own knowledge.

My everyday life at Halmstad involved a lot of time devoted to personal duties such as cooking, cleaning, paying rent, doing the laundry, buying groceries, fixing my bike and so on. The time at Halmstad where I had to completely take care of myself made me more independent and helped me to schedule and manage my time more effectively. I also spent a large part of my day devoted to course-related work such as assignments, exams and presentations. During my leisure time, I also got involved at the Fablab in Halmstad and became exposed to 3-D printing and played badminton on Sundays. I also participated in events organized by the student union including visits to the city library and the nursing lab.

My time came to an end at Halmstad University on 25<sup>th</sup> January, when I was set to take the flight back to my home country. My time in Halmstad was quite special as it involved a lot of personal transformation, from being lazy and listless to being disciplined and structured. Also, being in a new environment exposed me to new ideas and possibilities and I will carry my experience in Sweden for the rest of my life.

I am grateful to the ERASMUS+ exchange program, Brandenburg University of Technology and Halmstad University and all the people involved in making this study abroad possible. I would also like to thank my parents for supporting my studies abroad.