

IT University Travel Report



Host University:

- Boston University

Study Programme at IT University:

- Computer Science

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad:

- Study Abroad

Courses studied abroad:

- MET CS 783 Enterprise Architecture
- MET CS 632 IT Project Management
- MET CS 546 Introduction to Probability and Statistics
- MET AD 643 Project Leadership and Communications

Exchange Period:

- Spring, 2022

If you have any questions, feel free to text me on LinkedIn:

- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dagbjerreandersen/>

Main points in this report:

- Studying abroad at BU will be a huge experience no matter what.
- Your experience studying abroad will be purely based on luck. Like many other aspects of life, your experience with a place is dependent on whether you find some people you like spending time with.
- It seems like many students are disappointed with Boston University. At least 50% of international students I met were disappointed in either the academic level or the social aspect.
- Moving to Boston and studying at BU requires a lot of time, money, and paperwork for a very low academic output.
- Studying at BU feels like going back to high school.
- It can be really nice studying at BU *if* you find some nice friends.
- BU feels less like a university and more like a huge firm focusing on profit. Students are meant to pay an immense amount of money to get mediocre courses to get an overhyped degree that looks good on the CV.

My stay abroad

Disclaimer: It is important to say that I have not been studying abroad at any other university, so maybe the issues I highlight in this report also exist at other universities.

Reading this report may seem like I think BU is a terrible place to study. It is not. I just think you can find something better 😊

Social Life

No help being introduced to the social life

Boston University does not host an “intro day”, “intro party”, or anything like that. BU just sends you a course schedule and map of the buildings.

I ended up picking 4 very different classes, which ended up being good for my social life. I'll advise anyone to pick classes in different areas, so your classmates will overlap at little as possible, and you meet more people. This will increase your chance of finding good friends.

Social life is all about luck

I can't state this enough. You can be lucky and find some good friends that will make you stay amazing – but if you are not that lucky, it can end up being a really sad experience. I met a few people towards the end of my stay that said they never really ended up getting any friends and just looked forward to returning home. They regretted their stay.

I was lucky that I randomly talked to a TA, who ended up inviting me to a party that kickstarted my social life. I ended up in a friend group of 8-10 people that hosted parties and so on. This made studying at BU worth the effort for me.

People are generally nice

The environment is inclusive because students come from many cultural backgrounds – Most students don't know many people, so they are usually interested in making friends. This is actually a big part of studying at BU.

Course Selection

The course selection process was a terrible experience.

Selecting Certificate

Keep in mind that at BU, you are getting a Graduate Certificate! This means you will leave BU with a certificate and not just 4 completed arbitrary courses.

The list of possible certificates can be found [here](#). For some reason, the only Computer Science related certificate I could choose was the certificate in *IT Project Management*. Sadly, I do not remember why – but the point is that you should not assume anything, and you should check with the BU-contact person before applying.

Selecting courses

Before moving to Boston, I was told and ensured that I would get the 4 fixed courses associated with my selected certificate, and they would all be available during the Spring semester (even though their website said otherwise). This ended up being wrong. Only half the courses were available, and the coordinator just didn't know. I told them I needed to

know what courses would be available (or what courses I would be assigned) because I needed to get it approved by ITU. For some reason, they never understood that concept – and it seemed like they didn't care.

The process of selecting the remaining 2 replacement courses and finalizing my schedule was long and tiresome, and I ended up with courses I was not happy with.

Later I was told that one of the courses I just selected was actually an online class (which is double intensity running over only 6 weeks). So during my stay, I had a workload of 3 classes during the first half-semester – and had a workload of 5 classes during the second half-semester. My second half-semester had a huge workload, and I can definitely not recommend picking online classes because of this.

Overall, I felt like they didn't care about my academic needs or interests, but all they cared about was giving me 4 arbitrary classes, so they could move on with their lives. Super bad experience overall. I think that is a ridiculous way of treating a student that is about to pay ~\$14.000 for 4 courses.

The academic level

The academic level was low.

80% of the Europeans I met during my stay found that the academic level at BU was low. (The Americans seemed to think it was average, so maybe most American universities just have a low academic level).

Studying at BU felt like going back to high school. It is not anything near the lectures we have at ITU. At BU they have "klasseundervisning". At ITU, every lecture is strictly 2x50 minutes, where the material is covered in detail and in a structured fashion. At BU you often have no idea if the class will be 1 hour or 3 hours. The classes I had were usually focused on starting discussions and having a conversation about the topics between teacher and students. It felt like a very inefficient way to learn the topics. But on the other hand, most topics covered in the classes are fairly basic, so I guess they were not in a rush...

There is usually plenty of assignments during a course (depending on the course, obviously), but the material in those assignments does not seem to have a strong foundation in anything academic.

Instead of boring you with countless examples of this, let me just say I was pretty disappointed. It seems like there is a lack of respect for your time (compared to at ITU), because many assignments/homework are not very academic.

I had the class "Introduction to Probability and Statistics". Even though it was a master/graduate course, it was the easiest course I have ever had at a university. The first 4 out of 12 weeks/classes just covered what we in Denmark consider high school math.

Overall, from an academic standpoint, I think it is a waste of time studying at BU compared to ITU (at least if you are a Computer Science student).

Passing/failing classes

It is close to impossible to fail classes at BU. As long as you hand in your assignments you

are passing the course (it almost doesn't matter how good/bad you do in the assignments). I had a class that required I got a B (a 10 in the Danish grading system) in order to pass the course, which sounds like a high requirement – but when I asked the teacher how many students fail each semester, he almost laughed and said it was 4 years ago he failed a student and that the student only failed because he never did his assignments. This shows how easy it is to pass classes.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad?

- I wanted to try living in another country
- I wanted to meet new people
- I wanted to study somewhere that looked cool on the CV

Did your stay meet your expectations?

- As I described above, the academic level did not live up to my expectations (even though I was told from the start that the academic level would be lower than at ITU)
- I intentionally chose to have close to no expectations before I went to Boston. You have no idea if you will like it before you are there.

Please describe what you got out of your stay

- It is a huge experience studying abroad! That I can recommend. You meet so many different people from different backgrounds.
- From an academic standpoint, I am sure I would get more out of staying at ITU.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay?

- The resources/material BU sends you after admission are fairly good – but BU has so many websites (and some of them with outdated or conflicting information), so it can be a struggle to find the information you need. I don't have any tips on this.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

- Finding a place to stay was stressful. There is no housing dedicated to exchange students. BU's dormitories have a waiting list that is too long for you to get a room before your study begins. I tried applying through some of their websites but without luck. I rented a place through [this link](#) two months in advance. It is a bit expensive, considering it is somewhat trashy, but the process was fairly simple.
- I ended up living at 90 Saint Mary's Street, Boston, MA 02215. It is a great area 5 min walk from BU and close to a bar/restaurant place/area called *Time Out Market Boston*.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

- BU sends you a certificate/program cost estimate so you know what to expect to spend during the 4 months. At the time I got enrolled at BU the estimation was \$26,709, which was not far from how much I ended up paying for the stay.
- I almost got the entire stay financially covered by SU-stipendium, SU, and grants (all from [legatbogen.dk](#)).

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

- Stibo-Fonden - They provided me with the biggest grant.

Recommendations and other information

Classes

All your classes are from 18:00 to 21:00 in the evening, so your free time is during normal work hours. You are mainly studying with other international students. I didn't meet a single person from Scandinavia during my stay in Boston.

Paperwork

The amount of paperwork (especially during COVID) for getting to the US and signing up for Boston University was absolutely insane. In addition to that, you probably want to apply for a lot of grants, which increases the initial workload prior to enrolment at BU. The whole process of going to studying abroad is an incredible amount of work. Combined with the fact that it is mentally exhausting that there are so many unknown factors this is almost enough to not make it worth it to go study abroad at Boston University. This is just my personal experience.

Communicating with BU as a partner university student was a pain

Your main contact point as a student is a single person who is supposed to be your contact point for everything related to your stay at BU.

Maybe this sounds like a minor issue to highlight, but it is incredibly annoying! I think half of my frustration with going to BU came from this. With deadlines for applying for admission, courses, housing, etc., this can be super stressful. The pattern is that you send an email, and the only way you get an answer is by sending a follow-up email 10-15 days later, politely asking if you can get an answer. I had many unanswered emails I ended up never getting an answer to. In the end, I just gave up on that person and started bypassing her/him and contacting other departments at BU directly (even though we were not allowed to). Contacting any other department is super easy with nice service, so I feel like all the frustration comes down to that one contact point that rarely answers your emails. The other partner-university-students, I met during my stay, had the exact same experience. Overall super bad experience.

(Maybe this contact person will be replaced before it is your turn to study at BU, so maybe this will not be an issue for you)

BU is huge!

The total number of students studying at BU is the same as Harvard University's and MIT's student count combined. BU has 850 classrooms and 33.000 students. Some of the facilities are huge, e.g., I have never seen such a big fitness center: 2 swimming pools, 5 volleyball fiends, 5 basketball fields, a climbing wall, and a regular fitness center. They have their own police department. It seems like everything is branded with a big red BU logo.

The other students are rich

Many students do not have any jobs, but they are still living an expensive life on their parent's money. Especially the Chinese students.

Food is expensive

In my experience, groceries are, on average double the price of what they are in Denmark. Example: 1 kg oats cost around 30 kr. That is 2-3 times the price in Denmark. Keep it in mind.

The weather can be a bit extreme in Boston (compared to Danish weather)

When I arrived in Boston in January, it was -22 degrees, and when I left in May, it was +34 degrees.