



IT University Travel Report

Host University: Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

Study Programme at IT University: MSc in Software Development

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Study Abroad

Courses studied abroad:

- Neuroinformatics
- eSystems Design and Development
- Digital Forensics Tools and Techniques
- Natural Language Processing

Exchange Period: Spring semester of 2017 (February - July)

My stay abroad

What was it like to study at AUT? (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

There was a not large selection of relevant courses for me to choose from, due to me being a master's student and the fact that I was going to AUT in the spring. I had already had a few courses at ITU that overlapped with some courses at AUT and their number of spring semester's courses seemed to be fewer than their fall's number of courses.

One of my course wishes, Geocomputation, did not run due to a lack of participants, and I was forced to take eSystems Design and Development instead.

The quality of the education at AUT is not comparable to ITU's level: Most of the lecturers are not good teachers and the educational level of your co-students make it very hard to produce an "ITU level" assignment when working in groups. This is acceptable at AUT however, as the expectations for the standard of deliverables are low compared to ITU.

My co-students were 95% Indian and Chinese (this seemed to be the case in most IT-related courses at a master's level), who mostly kept to themselves and their own groups, making it quite hard to socialize with them - especially with the Chinese, as their English skills were very poor.

Aside from the negative parts mentioned above, I had a really great semester in Auckland - but not because of the academic aspects of the trip.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

My motivation was to gain some experience working with a wide variety of students from different cultural backgrounds - and I did get that, to some degree. AUT's promotion material made it sound like there would be a more mixed student group, than I actually experience. To be fair, there was many students from other countries than India and Asia at AUT, just not in the IT-related master courses. Furthermore, the amount of group work in my courses were very limited.

In that sense, I did not gain a lot of experience working with other cultures, but I got a lot of other cultural experiences.

My greatest meetings with other cultures came from the Wellesley Student Apartments (WSA) where I lived for the entire stay. It was quite expensive, but was located in a great part of Auckland. A great amount of the other

residents were also international students, and were very eager to socialize and experience New Zealand.

After reading the travel reports from former foreign students at AUT, I did not expect the academic level to be very high, so I was not surprised to find that to be true.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

To be honest, I did not learn a lot while studying at AUT, despite my grades: Two A+'s and two A's. I did the same amount of work for those grades at AUT as I would have for below average grades at ITU.

Culturally, I did learn a lot when traveling around New Zealand: I travelled with people from Japan, Norway, Denmark, Germany, India, Hong Kong and many other countries, making it a very fun and culturally eye-opening experience.

I did also learn a lot about Indian culture however, as three of my roommates were very friendly Indian guys. The vast majority of my great experiences came from staying at WSA, not from studying at AUT. WSA is the place where I made some new great friends for life from all over of the world.

The things that I have learned academically while being at AUT will not help me a lot in my further studies, but my many new cultural experiences have prepared me for working in global companies with a mix of different cultures and nationalities.

Personally, I have had a great time while being in New Zealand. It is a beautiful place with so much to see, and I saw it with some awesome people from all over the world.

If you're going abroad for having a great time, AUT, WSA and New Zealand will not let you down. If you're going abroad for even better quality of education than at ITU, I would look somewhere else.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

The process of arranging the stay was very easy, as ITU's exchange coordinator (formerly Rikke, now Eva) is very helpful.

I decided where to go by reading a lot of travel reports and simultaneously browsing through the universities' catalogs of course (those catalogs I could find - they are not always easy to locate). As I was late in checking my options, my best option was to apply to one of ITU's partner universities.

I chose Auckland as the travel reports seemed to be great, there were some courses that sounded exciting and relevant.

After deciding to make Auckland my only priority, I wrote a letter of motivation, packed that together with the required documentation and send the documents to SAP.

After some time, I received an email telling me that I was offered a place at AUT.

The pre-approval of my courses was straightforward - I just followed the guide found in the Study Guide. As I went on the 3rd semester of the SDT masters, I had three "free choices" of courses and the "Thesis preparation" course, meaning that I had to apply for an exemption for the thesis preparations and talking to Marco about it. This was also a very unproblematic part of the process.

After being nominated, I had to apply for AUT and their courses online as well, which involved some unforeseen fees (about 1000-1500 DKK, as I recall).

Upon being confirmed as being enrolled at AUT with the courses I had wished, I had to pay for the tuition fee and the WSA room around the same time. This mean that I had to pay 60.500 DKK (the tuition fee) and around 30.000 DK (the WSA room), which I was not prepared for, but fortunately found a way to pay.

Through the SU stipendium, around 47.000 DKK of the tuition fee was refunded to me, but only two months after my payment.

After I arrived in New Zealand, I was informed by AUT that my Geocomputation course was not running, and that I would have to choose another paper. I found one with the help of AUT, and a new pre-approval request was sent to SAP, which was granted within very short time.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

The travel reports, the Study Guide and ITU's exchange coordinator were of great help, as already stated. Furthermore, AUT's website contains a lot of practical information about being an exchange student in New Zealand, which, amongst other things, helped me create a realistic budget.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

AUT helped me find accommodation at WSA, own of their own accommodation facilities. I was offered to me through email upon applying.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

As already stated, I paid around 30.000 DKK for staying at WSA (a standard room). I had the room from the 13th of February to the 23rd of June.

The flight ticket down there cost me 5.300 DKK - it was a one way ticket.

My everyday expenses down there were slightly more expensive than Denmark - 10-15% more for groceries. Traveling around New Zealand was quite cheap - a weekend trip in a rental car with 8-9 other people and staying at a hostels would cost around 800 DKK, all inclusive. Flight tickets to the southern island (Queenstown) was 500-1000 DKK, depending on how early they were booked.

I had no expenses — besides the already mentioned fees — connected to AUT or WSA after arrival. The reading material for the courses were either given for free or were available through AUT's online library.

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

I did apply for the Nordea grant and the Dansk Tennisfond grant, but received neither. I heard from some of the other Danish students got both though, so they are definitely worth applying for.

Recommendations for other students:

My best recommendation for someone on the same line of study as me would be to stay in WSA, despite the pricing. This will be where you'll initially make most of your new friends!

If you're deciding to stay at WSA, here are some recommendations and heads ups for you:

- Be aware that the full price of a room at WSA has to be paid **before arriving** - this means that you'll have to be able to pay around 30.000 DKK for the housing in a single payment.
- Opt for the smallest room possible (they are not that small) and try to get on the highest floor possible - the view can be great from the upper floors, and they tend to be less noisy.
- Don't be intimidated by the very elaborate descriptions of harsh penalties for breaking the ridiculously strict social gathering rules at WSA - they are rarely enforced, so great parties are very definitely happening in the apartments.
- Don't buy the linen pack they offer when paying for the room - the price is outrageous. Buy it when you arrive.

Some more general recommendations for studying abroad at AUT and/or New Zealand:

- Expect to use 10-15% more on groceries down there - it is just more expensive.
- Apply for an 18+ Card shortly after you have arrived, so you won't have to carry your passport

everywhere when going out (they check at every bar and nightclub).

- Get out and experience all of New Zealand while you're there - flight tickets, rental cars and high-quality backpacker hostels are quite cheap. Group up with your friends from your housing!
- Go abroad - you won't regret it!