

IT University Travel Report

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Host University: University of Technology Sydney (UTS)  https://www.uts.edu.au/

Study Programme at IT University : Bsc. Digital Media and Design

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange Agreement


Exchange Period: 5th semester, autumn 2014

Your stay abroad

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

First of all, studying at UTS has been an incredible experience both on an academic and personal level. UTS is known as one of the leading universities in Australia and I had the chance to experience their innovative approaches regarding teaching and learning. The classes I attended at UTS were a lot smaller than at ITU, as we approximately were about 15 to 20 students in each class. Therefore, the classes were a lot more interactive and personal, which I enjoyed. Furthermore, the classes were a lot more practical and filled with hands on knowledge. For instance, the subject ‘Integrated Product Design Digital Communication’ consisted of tasks such as creating 3D drawing with SolidWorks, rendering iPhones in Photoshop and drawing technical illustrations in Illustrator. ‘Introduction to Photography’ and ‘Research and Inquiry’ were two subjects I enjoyed a lot as well, as the combination of theoretical knowledge and practical exercises was balanced perfectly. However, I found the academic level of ‘Academic English’ too low, why I would not recommend this class.

The university itself is located in the heart of Sydney and consists of more than 10 buildings. Compared to other Australian universities, UTS is still a quite young university. Therefore, the process of expanding is still ongoing and new buildings, designed by famous architects such as Dr Chau Chak Wing, are being built every year. The social life at UTS is comparable with the social life at ITU. In every single building there are cafes, where you can grab a cup of coffee before class with your
fellow students. Furthermore, they also have a bar called ‘The Loft’, where students can meet after class and enjoy a drink and few times a year, volunteers organize big parties and festivals. As about 40,000 students study at UTS, the opportunities regarding social life are a lot bigger as well. Students have the opportunity to join different sport clubs, wine clubs and many more. I personally joined the UTS volleyball team, which was a lot of fun.

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

Ever since I started studying at ITU, I had plans to study a semester abroad in order to add an international dimension to my education. Furthermore, I wanted to experience a new culture and a new way of living and at the same time improve my academic skills.

My stay absolutely exceeded my expectations. The university itself was very modern and organized and the subjects I attended were some of the best and most interesting I have ever had. Sydney as a city impressed me as well. The city itself is filled with great restaurants, beautiful architecture and a huge nightlife. As Sydney is located close to the beach – surfing, snorkelling and beach volleyball is only a quick bus or ferry ride away.

**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?**

Academically, my semester at UTS has given me both practical and theoretical skills. For instance, I have learned how to work with typography and photography in a professional way and we also learned how to use programs such as SolidWorks, Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign for specific design tasks. The subject ‘Research and Inquiry’ has taught me the foundations of qualitative and quantitative research, what a researcher has to consider, and how results are presented and communicated in an academic way. Furthermore, I have also learned a lot from the feedback I got from the different teachers. At UTS, they spend a lot of time on giving feedback and one single grade consists of several grades, which again are based on different factors. Due to this evaluation system, it was very clear, where I had to improve myself and what I was good at, which I finally learned a lot from.

Personally, I think that I grew a lot within my stay in Australia. Living in a different country, building a new social network and starting at a new university was definitely a challenging experience at the start, as everything was new to me. However, I had the chance to meet so many amazing people, which I still am in touch in. It would not have been the same experience without all the Australian, Dutch, English, Swedish, South American and other international people I have met. These friendships have taught me a lot about different cultures and different approaches to life, which I have learned a lot from.
Arranging your stay

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

I underestimated the amount of work related to arranging my stay. Writing the application and filling out forms did not take too long. However, I spend a lot of time on finding the right courses and waiting for pre-approvals from both ITU and my university in Australia. I started looking for courses in April and I sent my first application for pre-approval to ITU’s office mid April. Mid July, I had sent about 7 applications for a pre-approval to ITU’s office, and I was still waiting for the latest answer. This resulted in that I had to start my semester at UTS, without knowing if I would be able to get my credit points transferred or not. Therefore, I would recommend anybody, who is arranging an exchange stay to start early with finding the right courses and making sure, that ITU approves the courses and that you are able to take them at UTS as well.

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

As I was on of the two first ITU students to spend a semester at UTS, I did not have that many resources. UTS has quite a lot of helpful tools and guides on its homepage, which I used a lot. Furthermore, I also found travel reports from students from University of Copenhagen and other universities quite helpful.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

I decided to apply for a room through the universities accommodation service, UTS housing. This housing service consists out of five different buildings located within walking distance to the university. Students can choose between different rooms, kitchen and bathroom facilities. Personally, I have heard great things about one of the residencies called Geegal. Geegal is the smallest accommodation UTS housing offers, as only about 50 people live there. It is not at close to the university itself as the other residencies, but I would describe it as the most fun and social ones of them all and I would definitely recommend applying for a room at Geegal.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

All in all, it is pricy to live in Sydney. The rents for rooms in Sydney in general are quite high. I paid around 5000 kr a month, which is quite cheap for Sydney standards. The expenses for living such as groceries and other supplies are comparable to the ones in Denmark.
Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

I applied for several scholarships and I received two. I would recommend applying for ITU’s travel pool and getting your hands on ‘legathåndbogen’ as soon as you are planning your stay.

Recommendations for other students:

If you want to spend half a year abroad, and both gain something academically and personally, Sydney is the place to be. I had a really good experience studying at UTS and I would have loved to study there one more semester, as it was truly amazing. Sydney itself is a city filled with opportunities and I wasn’t bored a single day. Furthermore, Sydney is relatively close to other cities such as Brisbane, Melbourne and Cairns. Therefore, it is quite easy to travel around and New Zealand is only a 4-hour flight away as well.

Ultimately, if you would like to spend a semester in a city where the sun almost always shines and study at one of the leading universities in Australia, Sydney might be the perfect choice.