IT University Travel Report

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**Host University:** University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

**Study Programme at ITU:** Bsc. Digital Media and Design (DMD)

**Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad:** Study Abroad

**Courses studied abroad:** Communication for IT Professionals, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Interrogating Technology: Sustainability, Environment and Social Change

**Period:** 5th semester, autumn 2017

Your stay abroad

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

First of all, studying at UTS and living in Sydney for the past six months has been an unforgettable experience. I am so thankful for all the people that I have met along the way and all the beautiful places I have seen in Australia.

The University of Technology Sydney is ranked as Australia’s #1 young university and the study environment is acclaimed for a culturally diverse campus life with a highly recognized international exchange program. As this is quite a reputation, I had high expectations for this promising study environment at UTS. What was great about the social life as an international student at UTS was the university accommodation service called UTS Housing. The housing service consists of five different student residencies located very close to Central Station in Sydney and within walking distance to all of the university facilities. UTS housing is full of international students from all over the world, and the housing team had planned daily activities throughout the whole semester ranging from futsal, running, and boxing classes to food festivals, pub-crawls and sightseeing events. Attending these events made it very easy to meet other students from UTS and strongly motivated me to take part in the study environment at UTS.

Studying at UTS was different from back home at ITU. The structure of classes and grading is similar to high school in Denmark, in which your final grade in each subject varies from your score in participation in class, weekly assignments, and individual or group projects. Personally, I enjoyed this way of studying as it requires students to attend and engage in classes and presentations in which increase the learning outcome for everyone. In my case, I had to choose three specific subjects at UTS to get credit transfer according to my study plan at ITU. The academic workload in these subjects was not too demanding, and I had plenty of time to explore what Sydney had to offer me outside Uni. Another great thing about studying at UTS was the resources and facilities available to me at the university. From the design labs and library to the renovated buildings. Specifically, I was excited about the new faculty of engineering and information technology (see image) that opened in 2014 and where I had two out of three classes.
IT University Travel Report

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

To be studying in Australia has been on my bucket list for a long time. Sydney is a fascinating metropolis with its famous opera house, harbour, sandy beaches, national parks, and suburbs, which might be the reason why the city is rated as the 4th most liveable city for students in the world. For very long I had heard about how wonderful Sydney was by friends who also have been on exchange in the city. Looking back, it exceeded my expectations which is why I can recommend everyone to consider studying abroad in another country and to explore the world, make new international friends while learning more about your studies and yourself.

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?

Studying abroad at UTS has broadened my academic, personal and professional horizons on different cultures, people and other educational perspectives. Specifically, I have learned a lot from the evaluation-based approach at UTS as the teachers spent much time on grading every written assignment and providing individual feedback to ensure continuous improvements in class. One of the advantages of this evaluation-based approach is that you will learn what you are good at and know what to improve in the upcoming assignments. Australia is also a native English speaking country in which I have developed my level of English language. The global perspective of the international exchange program has also prepared me for a career in an international context by offering a view into the processes of working theoretical, collaborative and practical with other students.

Arranging your stay

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

In short, the process of arranging my study abroad was a long and frustrating process. In my case, ITU and UTS only had one available spot in their exchange agreement and to get this spot you compete with other applicants on who has the highest average grade regardless of bachelor programme at ITU. Besides applying for the exchange agreement, you also need to find specific subjects at UTS that corresponds to the study activity and the study programme curriculum that you are enrolled in at ITU to get full credit transfer on your official diploma. Note, that both ITU and UTS needs to approve your applied subjects. If one of the institutions reject your application, you will need to find another subject. Also, the time you have to wait for pre-approvals from ITU is not coordinated very well with other deadlines related to your study abroad including the purchase of the overseas student health cover, payment of tuition fee, application for UTS Housing and the application for student Visa. I underestimated the amount of work related to the pre-approval process, and I highly recommend everyone to start early and find subjects that are both pre-approved by ITU and approved by UTS as well.
IT University Travel Report

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

Unfortunately, I did not get the exchange agreement spot between ITU and UTS meaning that I needed to apply as a free-mover student and arrange my study abroad by myself. Thus, I contacted EDU-Danmark which is a private Danish organization representing several universities in Australia, including UTS. EDU helped me through the application process free of charge and advised me about the application procedures, financing, accommodation, Visa and all other questions about studying at one of their partner universities. If you don’t get the exchange agreement spot from ITU, then I highly recommend EDU to help you through the obstacles that may make the self-planning process as a free-mover student seem overwhelming.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

Regarding accommodation in Sydney, I was lucky to get a room in a two-share apartment (see image) in one of the UTS housing residencies called Yura Mudang. Yura is by far the largest housing among five UTS Housing residencies and also the most popular one. Most of the UTS Housing events starts from Yura, pre-parties on the amazing rooftop every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, sightseeing trips departure from Yura and there are great barbeque facilities and an excellent common-area to play pool and ping pong. I would definitely recommend applying for a room at Yura Mudang. Note, that you can only apply when you have your UTS student number ready, and you have to be very quick to apply for the most popular type of apartment. The six-share apartments. Living in one of UTS housing accommodation options was a wonderful opportunity to socialize, party, study, relax and play by living with other international students from all over the world.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

In general, it is pretty expensive to live in Sydney. I paid around 7500 DKK each month to live in a two-share apartment at Yura Mudang for one semester (6 month period). The living expenses such as groceries, takeaway, and other supplies are comparable to Danish prices. The Australian student Visa and MediBank OSHC is also quite expensive and cost about 3000 DKK (Visa) and 1700 DKK (OSHC). I also had to pay a tuition fee as a free-mover student, which were about 36000 DKK equivalent to the costs of three subjects.

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

I applied for 10+ scholarships, and I received just one. I also applied for the 'udlandsstipendium' from SU that resulted in a refund of almost the total amount of the tuition fee. Again, I would recommend to start early in this process and to buy the ‘legathåndbogen’. I started looking for scholarships at the end of March, and by that time it was already too late to apply for several relevant scholarships that I have found. However, it is surprising how few IT-related scholarships to apply for.
IT University Travel Report

Recommendations for other students

I see every reason in the world for taking a semester abroad during your studies. By reading this and researching about your chosen university you are probably more motivated than ever to study abroad heading to new adventures leaving Copenhagen, friends, and family for six months. Just do it.

Here is a short bucketlist that you must see or do when you are studying abroad in Sydney.
[x] Bondi beach
[x] Morisset Park (kangaroo park)
[x] Blue mountains
[x] Jervis bay
[x] Wedding cake rock
[x] Figure 8 pools
[x] Surf Camp
[x] Harbour Bridge Pylon Lookout
[x] Sydney Opera House
[x] Nation Night Run
[x] Bar Luca - order Blame Canada (best burger in Sydney)
[x] Via Napoli - order 1 meter pizza (best pizza in Sydney)
[x] El Loco (best mexican food in Sydney)
[x] Spice Alley (six Asian eateries in Sydney)
[x] Ivy Pool Club

Blue Mountains, NSW, Australia