Study Programme at ITU
Digital Media and Design (6th semester)

Studying autumn 2017 at University of Technology Sydney (Australia)

Courses at UTS
Communication for IT Professionals
Interactive Media
Innovation and Entrepreneurship

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Travel Report: UTS
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My Stay Abroad

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

First of all, the decision to go abroad for a semester was probably the best decision of my life, and I think UTS is an amazing place to choose. Sydney is incredible, and the university is located right in the center of the city. If you choose to stay at the housing on campus (something which I can recommend highly no matter where you choose to go abroad), you can walk to the opera house in 30 minutes, and it’s a really beautiful walk by the water. The area where the university is located is really great; very alive but without the touristy feel that is around the harbor and the opera house. The university is quite large compared to ITU, there is about 40,000 students enrolled there, and there are several buildings in the area owned by UTS. The facilities are incredible; it’s a very modern university that is concerned with being at the forefront of both the academic level and the social. It has been voted best university for young people in Australia, and it definitely lives up to this. The courses were generally good, but, in my opinion, not that challenging. However, it is a very professional academic atmosphere, with a big focus on creating students who will be ready to attract businesses’ attention when graduating.

I’ll tell you something though, you are not going abroad because of the academic aspect. If you only aspire to elevate your academic level/profile, I really suggest that you look for something to challenge yourself in Denmark. I say this both because it is very expensive to go on exchange, and also because 80% of the experience is social, 15% is travelling to amazing venues, and about 5% is academic. At least this is my insight, and I believe that you will find it to not be too far from the truth. I don’t say this because you aren’t going to spend time studying, you definitely will, but that part isn’t too different from what you’ll be used to. The real experience is the personal journey that it is to go abroad on your own. To build a life in a city full of strangers and unknown territory, find friends, get into a rhythm where you feel comfortable enough to call this new place home. This is the true value of going abroad. You will learn a great deal about life and about yourself, and make great friends from all around the world. UTS is especially huge when it comes to exchange students, and if you live with UTS housing, you will meet tons of people from around the world. UTS Housing might be expensive, but all of the city is, and they organize social gatherings/events and parties extremely often, so you won’t ever have to worry about not having opportunities to make some friends. UTS can be especially recommended for people who are social of nature, of at least has the aspiration to be so. Otherwise, it’s going to feel like an awful big distance to home, unless you make Sydney your new home.

If you are a bit skeptical and think that it can’t really be as big an experience as everyone says it is, I can relate. I felt like that before I went and I even didn’t feel like leaving! But it is really indescribable how huge of an experience going abroad is.
My Stay Abroad

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

My personal motivation to go abroad was that I felt like I needed to shake the bag so to speak. I believe that the times in my life where I have progressed the most have been when there has been a change of scenery: starting high school, starting at ITU, moving out from home. I felt like I was ready for a bigger challenge, to be truly independent and explore a new place, and as I said earlier, to build a life and a new home in new conditions. It really is a challenge to move to the other side of the globe, but if you really want to challenge yourself, of just try out a big change in your life, then going abroad is definitely the thing to do.

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?

I think it is very difficult to put word to what I got out of my stay personally, because it will be very individual what you take with you home from your stay. However, I believe that more independence, endurance, courage are definitely some attributes that you will develop on your stay. It really depends on what your focus is. It is very easy to become more extrovert and social, as it is very necessary when going to a completely new place. In relation to my further studies, I think that it is mostly a strengthening of mentality that I can use to become a stronger asset when I go on to a workplace. If nothing else, you will for sure get some perspective on what you would like to focus on in your further studies. Thus, the 5th semester is quite a nice time to go abroad.
Arranging My Stay

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

Chaotic! I am not going to lie to you; it can be a very messy situation to arrange a stay abroad. There will be a lot of time where you are waiting for one confirmation that is needed to get another confirmation to send another application etc etc. It really is important to be out in very good time, and don’t expect to get any help given, you will be responsible to do everything yourself.

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

The people at UTS will be sending you tons of material that can prepare you for life at the university, and when you arrive there will be taken good care of you. Again, UTS housing does a great job of making you feel busy when you arrive (a good busy!), and you will definitely need to keep busy, especially at the start of your stay. Do everything you can to get out of your room, even just take a walk around the city on your own!

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

As mentioned I stayed with UTS housing, which has accommodation on campus which is prioritizing exchange students, so you have a good chance to get a room with them. In general, always check for official campus accommodation before anything. Otherwise, look for places to live with other students. If you choose to stay in Sydney, feel free to write me on my ITU mail (see first page), and I can recommend areas of the city!

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

As mentioned it is very expensive to go abroad, but especially Sydney is an expensive city. However, do not hesitate to spend money on travelling, and opportunities to experience stuff when you are there. The experience of going abroad should be unspoiled by economics, as it is a unique chance. I saved money by cooking myself approximately five out of seven days a week, but otherwise I rarely let it stop me. I personally took an SU loan, and I can strongly recommend to doing that.

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

Scholarships are a jungle to find your way around, and unfortunately, the jungle didn’t offer much for me. See if your local area (where you grew up) have any scholarships, I got one from my old high school e.g. If you have lived in Copenhagen Municipality for 3 years (I believe) you can also apply there. And of course the travel pool at ITU. It is pretty scarce with scholarships for bachelor students in IT unfortunately.
Recommendations from moi!

To quote Nike; **Just do it.** You won’t regret it that’s for sure. Australia is an amazing place to go on exchange because it offers a great social life, amazing opportunities for travelling, and a fairly high academic level in a western society where everyone can communicate with you.

**Explore** as much as you can while you are there. Before you know it you are back home and it feels like you have never been gone. I tried to go for a walk or to a park on days where I had no plans. Don’t be afraid to be on your own for a bit, and make sure to go places you don’t know (don’t worry Google Maps will save you).

**Expand your horizon.** Don’t be afraid to try new stuff, or to introduce yourself to strangers. People in Australia are in general very friendly, and more open than in Denmark. Other exchange students are easy to be around, because everyone is on the same conditions. **Everyone are looking to make friends, so don’t hesitate!**

Find **social events** where you can. UTS has a lot of initiatives that are made specifically to activate students after school hours. Together with UTS Housing they will offer you stuff to do on a daily basis, including BBQ’s (Aussie’s love barbequing!), trips to the beach, trips to national parks, games night, cultural events (often with free or cheap food!). Finally, **if you enjoy football/futsal**, make sure to join UTS Housing in playing futsal once a week, and participate in their semi-annual competitions. At ITU we now have two reigning double Futsal World Cup champions! There are also a lot of different sports to explore at UTS, but some will cost you money.

Expenses and Financing

That’s what I have to say for now, but don’t hesitate to contact me on my ITU mail: **magv@itu.dk** for more information!

Best Regards,

Magnus Villumsen.