

# Aalto University

2017-2018 Fall

## Exchange Report



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## Monthly log

### September

I arrived Helsinki in early September and to give myself a bit a challenge at the start of the term, I participated in the 5K campus run organised by Espoo Rantamaraton. Enjoying the natural scenery and the morning breeze while running around the campus in Espoo was one of the best memory I had. Apart from joining activities organised by the school, I went to an ice hockey game between Latvia and Helsinki. My friend and I got the tickets from ESN exchange community and they always organise all kinds of activity that welcome everyone to join. I really recommend non-sports lovers like me to experience this Nordic tradition.

In September, I went to Stockholm and Oslo with two friends. With the sales going on Norwegian Air and the student discount on SAS Air, the trip was unexpectedly an affordable one. I also recommend visiting other Nordic countries by ship as there is always promotion going on and spending a night or two on the ship was quite an interesting experience.

### October

As I said traveling by ship is common for Scandinavia, I went on a day trip to Tallinn by Eckero Line which occasionally offer trips for only 1 Euro. People who love to drink will find good deals there too.

During free time, I went to some museum in Helsinki and I learn from a Finnish tutor that museum offer free entry on a particular day in a month.

A day at the Helsinki Zoo is also what I love to do in Helsinki as they got a good diversity including tropical and Nordic species as well as good walking paths on the island.

There were also big sales going on in the city during the month, especially at the major department store, Stockmann and sportswear and equipment shop, XXL where you can find parka and snow boots for good value of money.

At the end of October, I visited Denmark for three days and had one of the best time there.

### November

A lot of travelling was done in November. I went to Porvoo by OnniBus, a historic city in inner Finland and Lapland where you get to meet Santa Claus (Don't have high expectation on Santa Claus village though) by VR train. I also joined a trip to St. Petersburg with KY Sub. We took a cruise and was guided by Russian tour guide from Times Travel. In late November, I also got to visit the Baltics with really good flight ticket deal from Wizz Air.

During the weekends, my friends and I decided to go to SuperPark, an indoor activity park. But we regretted so much when we arrived because of the size and we all agreed that we would be way more appropriate if we were 10 years younger.

### December

As I took an art course during the second period, I spent some times on filming around the city and getting a lot of editing work done in early December. After that, I was handling a few exams and final group projects. Classes ended in around mid-December and I spent the remaining time explore the other parts of Europe with my friend.

## Application

### 1. Housing application

I highly recommend you apply for housing once you got an exchange offer as it's very competitive.

HOAS and AYY both provide student housing services. The application procedure can be quite confusing from my experience because you won't get any progress update until HOAS or AYY gets you an offer. On the application form, you get to set some housing requirement and the company will do the matching for you. In other word, you don't get to choose the exact location for the place to live. My advice is to choose as many description as they provide and don't set unrealistic budget range (I think the normal rent is around 400-500Euro/month). After submitting an online application, you will receive an email saying something like your application will be on hold until they get a checklist of incoming exchange students from Aalto.

Basically, your part from housing application is done after filling in the online form and you just need to wait patiently for the offer which will usually come... Usually, HOAS will release their offer before AYY. If you have no luck on HOAS application, you may still have chance from AYY.

For me, I rented the apartment through HOAS and the exact location is Junailijankuja 5B in Pasila which is only one stop to Helsinki by train. The rent is 410Euro/month and the apartment is shared with 5 other girls who are all studying in Aalto Biz school. I got my own room which is 10m<sup>2</sup> and shared the kitchen, bathroom and toilet with the others. I highly recommend Pasila for living. There are supermarkets (Lidl and K-supermarket), public library (Chinese books are available and you only need to apply for a free Helmet card thereto borrow anything you want), and large green spaces (Good spot for running and catching the aurora if you are lucky enough) nearby. Commuting between the city and different campuses of Aalto are also very convenient by train, tram and bus.

### 2. Visa Procedure

Here are the steps for applying the resident permit (These steps are valid at the time I apply but you can always get the most updated info on the Finland consulate website)

## Steps

1. Prepare (1) Passport (2) certificate of acceptance from Aalto (3) clarification on income/bank statement (4) a clarification on tuition fee or scholarship, if applicable (5) certificate of health insurance\*.

\*Get a copy of Insurance Certificate and the summary of Coverage from student insurance department at [sfaoins@ust.hk](mailto:sfaoins@ust.hk) (**Make sure that the insurance covers the whole period of you stay. Otherwise the embassy will require another insurance plan from you.**)

2. Fill in an online application form and attach the document required which you can find on CONSULATE GENERAL OF FINLAND official website.
3. Call Finnish Embassy to make an appointment (**Beware of the short opening hour!!**)
4. Bring (1) Fee (2) Passport and other documents submitted online (3) Photo to the embassy

## More about Aalto

### 1. Orientation Activities

The four-days orientation were held one week before classes started. The first two days were held in Toolo Campus and you will receive general information and a goodie bag (a DNA pre-paid card was given!) from Aalto. The last two days were optional and was held in Otaniemi campus. You will get a campus tutor with the KY sub tutors and a welcoming pre-party, party and of course an after party on the last day.

### 2. International Services & Activities

Apart from KY Sub, a society that holds events and oversea trips for exchange students, you may also join ESN exchange community on Facebook. Just press request and tell them the school you are studying in will do. They also organise trip to Lapland and many other places.

### 3. Course registration

Fall semester is divided in two 7-week periods and spring for three 7-week periods. Most of the business courses are 6 ECTS and last for one period only. Full workload of the semester is 30 ECTS so you can choose e.g. 2 courses for the first period and 3 for the second or other way around. Normally students complete 2-3 courses in one period. Course registration is done via Weboodi system and you will get further information from Aalto exchange program manager.

### 4. Teaching & Assessment Methods

Fall semester was divided into two periods. On the first periods, I took 4 courses and one of them lasted for 2 periods. On the second periods, I took 3 courses including the one from first period. Below are the courses that I took.

LC-7009 Get to know Finland  
 37E00300 ICT Enabled Business Process Development  
 37C00400 Programming  
 UWAS-C0003 Creating Stories and Narratives  
 35C00200 Purchasing and Supply Management  
 25C00100 Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management

## 5. Sports & Recreation Facilities

If you are keen in doing sports and going to the gym regularly, you may join Unisports membership which costs a fee. I didn't join the membership but I do recommend the running path near Pasila. Even if you are not living near Pasila, I don't think you will have any problem finding a park or exercise places near your accommodation.

## 6. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Many exchange students joined Slush, a huge volunteering event held in Helsinki. You will get to meet different people and see many leading startup and tech group in Europe.

## Life in Finland

### 1. Finance & Banking

If you wish to open a banking account in Finland, Nordea charges 2 Euro/month for opening a bank account and another 2 Euro/month for the debit card. 3.5 Euro/month will be charged if you wish to activate the online banking function. You may need a Finland bank account for transferring money from Hong Kong or paying the rent.

It is impossible to withdraw money from your Hong Kong bank account with a union pay debit card. (Remember to check with your bank before departure.)

| Category                   | Expense        | Remark  |
|----------------------------|----------------|---|
| Flight                     | 8010 HKD       | Open jaw, direct flight student ticket (Finn Air)   |
| Accommodation              | 410 Euro/month | Laundry, electricity and furniture are included.  |
| Transportation             | 45 Euro /month | Two-zone HSL travel card was purchased. You may also choose to pay per journey which is usually less than 2 Euro with student discount. |
| Grocery                    | 100 Euro/month |   |
| Mobile voice and data plan | 10 Euro/month  | DNA and Telia both provide affordable data plan. HOAS provided one Telia pre-paid card and Aalto provided one DNA pre-paid card         |

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|  |  | upon arrival. I didn't join any plan but i topped up the cards which save me a lot. |
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## 2. Food

### Restaurant

1. Burger place: Friends & Brgs (~11 Euro/set)
2. Sushi buffet: (~12 Euro/person)
3. Chinese hotpot: Happy Food Garden (~26 Euro/person)
4. Cheap lunch: UniCafe (2.6 Euro/meal)
5. Finnish restaurant: Konston Molja (I didn't eat there but it was recommended by a Hong Kong barber I visited)
6. Soup: Hietalahti Market Hall (~10 Euro/meal)

### Asian Market (cluttered in Hankaniemi)

1. DFH Asian Market
2. JIAHE Asian Market
3. Aseanic Trading Oy

## 3. Transportation

It is very convenient and easy to travel around the city with a HSL card. KY sub tutors will bring you to the HSL ticket office in Kamppi metro station on the orientation day to get your student HSL card. Before that, you may buy and top up a temporary card. I was told that you will be able to turn your temporary card to a student HSL card when you get your student certification from Aalto (it's given also on the orientation day). When you apply for a student HSL card, you can choose the number of regions you will be travelling to and the duration. You can extend the duration from any Kioski store afterwards.

## 4. Climate

The weather was surprising quite tolerable during my stay and I didn't experience many days below 0°C. In September and October, I normally wore three layers, a heat tech, thin long sleeves and a jacket or sometime a thin down coat. Starting from late October onwards, I also wore three layers but this time I need to wear two layers of bottom and a thicker parka that is better wind and rain resistant. You also definitely need a pair of thicker boots or sneakers.

## 5. Things to bring

You can easily get packing lists online but below are things that I think you may be grateful to have upon arrival.

1. Thick Parka and water proof boots
2. Swimwear
3. Bed sheets
4. Internet router

5. Power strips and plug adaptors
6. Sufficient cash (Money withdrawn from HK bank account is impossible for union pay card holder and the transaction fee for transferring money from HK is quite high)

## **6. Health & Safety**

As you may all know, Finland is regarded as one of the safest country in the world. Social trust is rooted deeply in Finns and one of the typical example you may encounter is that students will leave their belongings and coats at the rack outside the classroom unattended. But still, beware of the surrounding when you are alone or travelling. (I was told that a Hong Kong tour guide got pickpocketed in a hotel in Sweden.)

## **7. Communication**

You will be completely fine if you don't speak their language as Finns are normally quite efficient in English.