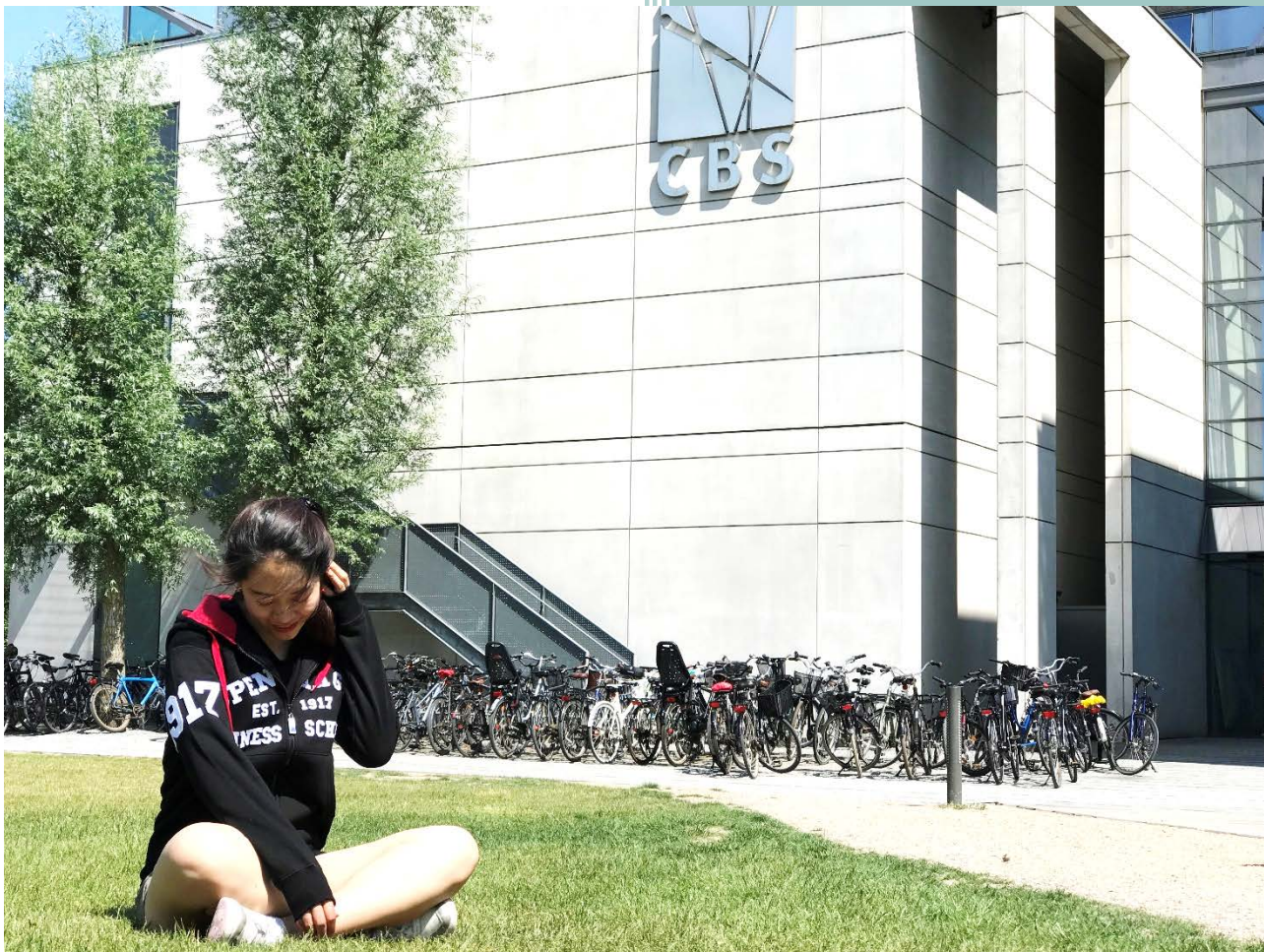


Exchange Report: Copenhagen Business School



Spring 2018

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Monthly Activity Log

January – The First Glimpse of “Hygge”

I still remember the snowy night of January 19th when I first arrived at Kastrup Airport of Copenhagen. I was greeted by my exchange buddy from CBS who had been waiting for me at the airport, holding a sign with and wearing a big warm smile. Excited yet a bit nervous, I started to set up a life in the city which was once so distant to me. The first week passed quickly with various information sessions at the daytime and social events for exchange students in the evening. It wasn't long before I got used to the freezing cold weather, the alien language and sun setting at 4:30pm every day.

Despite the coldness and the darkness, I fell in love with the Danish culture real quick. I had heard of “hygge” from some Danish friends since a long time before my exchange. Yet I didn't really grasp it until landing in this land of fairytale and happiness myself – through the windows of homes with beautifully simple interior designs, through the candle lights and blankets in the cold winter nights, and friends' laughter that lit up the night with warmth. Those tiny moments in the very beginning stayed in my memories even till months later.

The highlight of this month is definitely meeting new friends and taking a first glimpse of the Danish culture. A good way to quickly adapt to the new environment is to register for the social event organized for exchange students – including interesting events like stand-up comedy show, movie night, cruise tour, buddy dinner & party, welcome dinner and the after-party! I got to meet not only the fellow exchange students from other countries who later on became my good friends and classmates, but also local students from CBS. There was also a week of Danish Crash Course prior to the first introduction week which I didn't go to – but according to other people it was also worth going if you want to meet other exchange students.

February – School Started, So Did CBS OPEN

There are so many differences between learning experiences in CBS and HKUST, but the most important one for me is perhaps the grading regime – the result of the final exam accounts for 100% of the total grade. This high level of freedom means that self-motivation and drive is very important – there is always plenty of room for you to go further and learn more, only if you want to.

The lectures started off more challenging than I had expected, particularly for one called “Comparative Political Economy”. Lots of readings were expected before the lecture in order to keep up with the lecture's pace. Other than that, I quickly got used to the routine study life in Copenhagen, and managed to go around the city with friends on days with no lectures. I also made my first trip to Stockholm for a weekend and was greeted by heavy but beautiful snow. As this year's Chinese Spring Festival took place in this month, us exchange students from China and Hong Kong arranged a gathering at an authentic Chinese restaurant on New Year's Eve.

The highlight of February for me is attending the largest case competition in Northern Europe – the annual CBS OPEN Case Competition. I would recommend this experience as a must for those case enthusiasts as you get to solve the same case with the international case competition participants in CBS in only 22 hours' time. I teamed up with some friends from HKUST who flew here to join the challenging competition with me. I feel so proud that despite countless struggles

and sleeping for only half an hour in a whole day, we finally made it through and learned so much during the course. The event was also a great opportunity where I got to spend some quality time with my visiting friends together – this marked the perfect end for February.



March – Iceland and Essay

Days started to get longer as March came, but it was still too early to call it spring. In fact, snow still visited a few times in the month. School started to get a bit busier as courses for Q3 (the first half of spring semester) ended. I spent quite some time in the beautiful library of CBS to work on my individual 10-page essay for a course. In order to develop my essay better, I visited the professor and received some constructive feedbacks from him. It is highly advisable to make use of professors' office hours as you can learn so much beyond what's been taught in lectures.

The highlight of this month was definitely the long-expected trip to Iceland. This trip was probably the one that I spent the most time planning during the whole exchange, as it would be quite impossible to explore Iceland on one's own. My friends and I stayed at an Airbnb and either went on coach tours or hired a driver for every day. The most unforgettable and recommended activities would be hunting for Northern lights and snorkeling in the purest glacier water in the whole world – definitely once-in-a-lifetime experiences!



April – Exams Peaked, So Did Trips

April was the time when many exams of Q3 courses took place right after the Easter Break, still this didn't stop my steps for trips as the weather started to get warmer. My April began with a trip in Switzerland – a country that I longed to spend holidays in for so long. My favorite Swiss city is

undoubtedly Interlaken – with the famous Jungfrau (snow mountain), Lake Thun and Lake Brienz – words fail me when trying to replicate the beauty of the mountains and lakes.

I finished up two final exams right after my trip to Switzerland, and rested for a few days before heading Southwards to Italy. I joined a friend who was exchanging at Bocconi University in Milan, and together with her exchange friends, us four girls set off for our adventures to Tuscany. The weather was amazing and offered us the perfect summer in our dreams. We spent one and a half day in Cinque Terre which consisted of 5 beautiful villages built on the mountains by the sea – an ideal destination for backpacking and hiking. From there we carried on our trip to Siena, which was a beautiful medieval city imprinted with the charm of a rich history. Even till months later I still dreamed of that weekend when we got overdosed with gelato, pizzas and Tuscan wines. I feel so blessed to have known these girls by travelling together, and the hospitality and enthusiasm in Italian culture through the crazy adventures. This is another great travel destination to recommend – just make sure you keep an extra eye on your belongs!

I barely got to rest after coming back to Copenhagen from my trip to Italy before I headed up North to Norway. Thus I got to experience what it felt like to go from summer straightly into winter. Norway entails the feeling somewhat in between Iceland and Copenhagen – with more heritage of the ancient Scandinavian culture, but less wild and mysterious as Iceland. The sceneries are definitely worth a visit, but perhaps better in May or June when the summer kicks in and there are loads of outdoor activities to explore.



May – One Last Mega Trip, and Farewell to the Danish Summer

May was the time when I could actually sense the summer right in the corner – with prolonged daytime, blooming cherry blossoms, and more laughter from the outdoor dining spots. I spent the first half of May going on my last trip in Europe (for now), and the second half finishing an oral exam, wrapping up my exchange life, and spending more time in the simply pleasant Copenhagen sunshine.

During my two-week mega trip, I first stopped by in the Netherlands for the famous Tulip festival in Keukenhof, and was absolutely overwhelmed by the sea of tulip field. I also got to re-visit the city of Utrecht where I spent 6 weeks in the summer two years ago. Then I took a night bus from Amsterdam to Paris. While Paris did live up to its fame, I found Colmar – a town in the Northeast France, and the cities in Southern France more attractive. Following a week in France I went to Spain. Although I was already quite exhausted from non-stop sightseeing every day, I was still very much impressed by the architecture masterpieces by Gaudi in Barcelona.

After getting back to Copenhagen, I spent most of my time meeting and bidding goodbye with my exchange friends, exploring the city a bit more, as well as preparing for my oral exam. I took the equivalent course for LABU and it was quite inspiring to compare the teaching and assessing style of CBS with UST. It was such a pity that I couldn't stay longer to explore more of the Danish summer as everything was so bright and alive after months of freezing winter.



General Exchange Information

Visa procedures

** Please refer to the visa application guidelines sent by CBS for full instructions of application procedure and timeline.

For mainland Chinese passport holders, you will need to travel to the visa center in Shenzhen for application, as there is no Danish Embassy in Hong Kong. No appointment was needed at the time when I applied, but make sure you are bringing the complete set of correct materials. After around 2-3 weeks, I received the mail of my passport, new visa and instruction materials. Please pay attention to the detailed instructions as otherwise, you will find it shocking that the end date of your visa is way ahead of your study program end date. This is because this visa only serves the purpose before you acquire a resident permit card in Copenhagen after arrival.

Orientation activities

As mentioned previously, orientation weeks include info sessions at daytime – which are supposed to be mandatory, and paid social events during the evenings. Try to go to as many events as possible since this is a great way to step out of your comfort zone and make new friends.

Another special event will be the buddy dinner, where 4-5 exchange students will be grouped together and have a self-designed dinner with all the buddies from CBS. Some groups will dine out and the others will prepare food at someone's home. After the dinner a party at a night club will be arranged and you will get your taste of Danish nightlife.

International services and activities

Throughout the semester, there will be some posts for activities posted on the exchange student Facebook group. Also some trips will be organized by the CBS exchange crew around Denmark. For any questions just contact the relevant office by email and they will get back to you soon.

Accommodations

Accommodations can be applied together with the course at a quite reasonable price. CBS provide a range of student dorms, each with different characteristics so it is advisable to spend some time doing research online before deciding which one suits you the best. I lived in Kathrine Kollegiet, which was a 5-min walking distance to the closest train and metro station Flintholm. The rooms are quite spacious (even for the smallest ones), equipped with an in-suite kitchen and bathroom. As there is no common room on each floor, it might be hard to get opportunities to mingle with other exchange students unless you reach out proactively. The laundry facility was probably a drawback of this dorm as the machines broke down quite often and the dryers might be confusing to use.

The room selection is based on first-come-first-served basis, so check on the website for details earlier and stay tuned at the time when the registration link is sent (note that no prior notification will be sent and even a few minutes of delay may result in not getting a place at your preferred dorm). I would recommend Tietgenkollegiet as the facilities and design are really nice, and it offers great opportunities to mingle with local students in Copenhagen.

Course registration

Course registration system in CBS is quite different from that in UST, so do study the online instructions thoroughly to fully understand. The workload in CBS is generally not very high, especially given the grading system. So I would recommend you to consult your department at UST first and overload to 5 courses if interested. For me, I took 3 courses in the first half, 1 in the second half, and 1 throughout the whole semester. It is also manageable even if you want to take all 4 courses in the first half of the semester.

Teaching & assessment methods

For teaching, CBS has lectures, tutorials and seminars. The general style is that more discussions are encouraged during the lecture, and many classes organize in-class presentations for students to put the knowledge learned in class into practice.

For exams, there are digital sit-in exams at CBS Exam Hall, take-home written assignments, and oral exams. I experienced all these types. For sit-in exams, they are quite standard as long as you are familiar with the Exam Hall and get used to the digital format by attending the open-day of Exam Hall. Written assignments can be challenging for those who release the topic only a week before the deadline. Oral exams are said to be the easiest, but you should also make sure you're well prepared for whatever question about the course that might be asked by the examiner.

Finance & banking

Most shops take credit card and cash (Danish Kroners), hence, it is not necessary to exchange a lot of local currency in advance. Also, you can choose to open a Danish bank account in Copenhagen, such as Nordea Bank, who doesn't charge commission fee for opening up an account. However, note that they won't issue Danish credit cards to you.

I relied on my debit and credit card brought from home. Most ATM in Copenhagen would accept a debit card with Visa. If your card is with Union Pay, there's one branch of ATM called Euro Net that accepts it, which could be found at many places in the city.

Social clubs & networking opportunities

I didn't specifically get very engaged with any student club, but did go to some workshops offered by CBS Case Club, and some performance (ballet shows, musicals) by CBS Culture. Apart from student organizations, the career center also organize a wide range of talks and networking events which are also quite helpful.

Health & safety

Copenhagen is generally considered to be a very safe city to live in. So you don't need to worry too much if you walk in the city at night on your own. However, it is always good to be careful because thefts might happen occasionally.

Food

Supermarkets are conveniently located around the city and you will soon find out differences between each of them. If you would like something authentic Chinese, the Chinese Supermarket near Central Train Station are recommended. Dining can get quite expensive, so it would save quite some money if you cook more by yourself or with friends.

Transportation

In terms of public transport, there are Metro, S-Train and Bus. I relied solely on public transport during my exchange. However, you can also consider buying a secondhand bike when it's not too cold anymore.

For Metro, there are currently two lines which operate across major location of the city covering the Kastrup Airport (more lines will be constructed in the coming future). The S-Train operates in the city as well as some suburban areas. Passengers are charged according to the zones that they travel and normally a 2-zone pass will be enough. The monthly pass costs 395 DKK up while a single ticket costs 24 DKK up. It is also a good idea to buy a personal Rejsekort whether you bike or purchase the monthly pass (especially if you go to the Airport often), since it works for all public transportation as it will be significantly cheaper than buying single tickets.

Climate

The winter in Copenhagen can be rather cold and long. I didn't change much in clothing all the way from January to March as the average degree is steady at around 5-15 degree Celsius. Summer starts to kick in at around mid-to-late May, with significantly longer day time and much pleasant outdoor atmosphere.

Communication

Although communications will be much easier if you understand Danish or other Nordic languages, the English level is quite high here so communication won't be a problem.

Cautionary measures

Apart from the cautionary measures suggested by UST, CBS International Office also recommend you to send your general itineraries and emergency contact every time you travel outside, just for the purpose of emergency backup.

Items to Bring

- Personal ID documents
- Personal ID photos
- Cash, debit cards and credit cards
- Thick coat
- Adapter and convertor
- Calculators permitted by CBS exams
- Laptop
- Medicines
- Rice cooker
- Portable charger
- Cabin size suitcase and backpack

Useful Contacts

- CBS International Office: receipt.intoff@cbs.dk
- CBS Exchange Information (including all useful info): <http://www.cbs.dk/en/international-opportunities/international-students/guestexchange-student>
- CBS Library: <https://www.cbs.dk/en/library>

Please feel free to contact SBM Exchange Team for my contact if you have any inquiries.