



Aalto University
School of Business

EXCHANGE REPORT

AALTO UNIVERSITY



CHOI LAI WA
IS & ACCT Year 4
Fall 2019

MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG

AUGUST

I arrived at Helsinki in mid-August and I volunteered in a business camp in Mikkeli as an English tutor. Volunteers worked in a group to deliver two hours of English lesson for the kids. It is a unique and interesting experience that teaching English in a relaxing and entertaining way. I also enjoy the cultural exchange with other volunteers and the kids. Before the semester started, I had time to explore the city a bit and settle my apartment move-in. Also, I had gatherings with other exchange students from Hong Kong.

SEPTEMBER

It was a busy month started with the orientation activities including Aalto Party, Welcoming Event and orientation organized by the school to prepare you to adapt the life in Aalto. Since I only studied two courses this period, school life was relatively relaxing. I enjoyed cooking with my flatmates and friends e.g. dumpling night, Korean night. There was a marathon in late-September that Aalto students can join for free. Should grab this chance to experience the energetic vibe. I also visited Tallinn, Riga and the Czech Republic in September.



Outing and lesson with the kids from Russia



Hotpot Dinner with other exchange students



Aalto Party with booth of different student bodies



Dumpling night
We made our own dumpling



OCTOBER

I went to the cottage trip organized by KY-sub that you can experience a Finnish culture – sauna and swimming in the lake. Before it was getting too cold, I visited the national park in Espoo, Nuuksio National Park with other exchange students. The national park is huge with different hiking trails. If you are nature people, you should visit there more than once. October marked the end of the first period, I worked on group assignments and presentation. My courses didn't have an exam so I spent my whole exam period traveling.

Chinese restaurant lunch with
other exchange students



Travel to **Budapest**

Hiking in **Nuuksio National Park**.



Alpsee near the Neuschwanstein Castle



Travel to my dream place:
Switzerland



NOVEMBER

It was the start of another period. I was planning to take more courses in this period because I spent a lot of time traveling in the last period. However, some of the courses I chose differ from my expectations. I ended up taking one course only. It was getting colder and the weather was gloomy in November. Sometimes you will get quite depressed with having short daytime (seldom you can see the sun). Get ready to cope with that like hang out with friends or go work out to lighten up your mood. I participated in Slush as a volunteer in the meeting area. It was my first time to take part in such a huge event which is really eye-opening as you can attend the sharing of the successful business and meet people from different walks of life. The highlight of November was the Lapland trip. It is highly recommended to travel to Lapland during winter. You can enjoy a lot of activities like skiing, husky ride, snowmobile and see the aurora (see if you are lucky enough). However, I would recommend you to organize your own trip because it will be cheaper and you will have higher autonomy.

DECEMBER - JANUARY

The last month in Aalto. Apart from working hard for the course project, it was also time to farewell to other exchange students. My friend came to Finland and we started our one-month traveling.



First snow in Helsinki



Slush Volunteer



Lapland



Hotpot with local people

GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

VISA PROCEDURES

Since our study period is longer than 90 days, we need to apply for resident permit. You need to prepare:

- **Health insurance** (Since HKUST provides exchange students with travel insurance, you can apply the insurance certificate through SFAO in advance)
- **Bank statement/any other financial proof**
- **Acceptance letter from the Aalto University** (The University will send the letter to you approximately 3 months before the exchange and with more instruction regarding the resident permit)
- **Passport**
- **Passport photo**

Steps of the whole process:-

- Online application: <https://enterfinland.fi/eServices/> *You can choose to pay €300 online or when you visit the Finnish consulate in person (in cash)
- You need to make an appointment to visit the Consulate. I made my appointment through email. However, I think you can also call to book your time slot(read other exchange reports for more details).
- Visit the Finnish Consulate: Remember to bring all the documents you submitted in the application. The Consulate will contact you when the card is ready.

Remarks: If you wish to open a bank account in Finland, I will advise you to ask the staff for more information about the personal identity code because other exchange students had the code with them when they got the card but it was not my case.

ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES

The orientation lasted for three days. The first day was the official open day of the academic year. There was a traditional Aalto Party in the square that there were different booths organized by different student bodies. This activity is optional.

The second day was the compulsory orientation held by the Business school. The school gave us the necessary information regarding our study in Aalto. In the afternoon, you would follow your tutor group to have the campus tour and get the HSL card(transport card) done.

The third day was the introduction of University level service, for example, IT service and Library service. Also, there was a Service Fair that you can ask for more information after the introduction.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

There are two major student bodies organizing activities for exchange which are KY-Sub and ESN Aalto. KY-Sub organizes activities only for business school exchange students while the activities held by ESN is open to all students. Since I only participated in activities held by KY-sub, only activities of KY-Sub are provided. You will receive more information when you are there.

Activities	Description	Price
Welcome Evening	Introduction of Ky-Sub and the upcoming activities	Free
<u>Mursulaiva</u>	Student cruise to Tallinn	€15-20 without meal
Cottage Trip	Stay in cottage and experience Finnish culture – Sauna	€25
<u>Around the World – Sitsit</u>	Traditional table party	€15
St. Petersburg Trip	Trip to St. Petersburg with guided tour	€245
White House	Themed party	€8 - 13
Lapland Trip	Trip to northern part of Finland - Lapland	€230 Include ONLY transport and accommodation
Farewell Evening	Farewell party	Free

ACCOMMODATIONS

Aalto doesn't have their student dormitory like our university does. However, there are two organizations providing student accommodations in Helsinki – HOAS and AYY. Since the supply is quite demanding, it is highly suggested to apply the accommodation once they open the application.

HOAS

The HOAS dormitory is furnished with furniture so you don't need to spend extra time and effort buying the furniture. For fall semester, the application starts on 1st April (Finland time). You can only choose your budgeted rent range and apartment types (e.g. room in a shared apartment, shared studio apartment and studio apartment etc. You can have more information on their official website: <https://www.hoas.fi/en/>). HOAS then will assign a dormitory according to your choice. Once they assign you the accommodation, you need to sign the agreement and pay €500 deposit through bank transfer (Don't do it last minute!)

My apartment is a room in a shared apartment on the campus - Jämeräntaival 11. It takes 15 minutes on foot to the Otaniemi campus. There are a trail and a lake next to my apartment that you can enjoy nature a bit. The monthly rent is €397 per month which is quite worth it with such a beautiful environment.

Note: The tenancy period was from 1st August 2019 to 31st December 2019, so you don't need to worry about the housing if you wish to go to Finland earlier.

AYY

It is better to apply for both providers because successful application is not guaranteed. The student housing offered by AYY is not furnished with furniture. However, you can buy furniture in Ikea or second-hand furniture from other students (You can find such a channel in telegram or Facebook. You can also resell your stuff before you leave Finland). For AYY, you can choose a specific dormitory, apartment and room. However, I would suggest you to choose as many choices as you can to increase the possibility of getting a dormitory.

COURSE REGISTRATION

They have two periods in one semester which has 6 - 7 weeks per period so you have to register twice in one semester. Aalto will send exchange students the course catalog in advance so you can plan your semester. WebOodi is used for course registration which is simple to use. Major course usually constitutes 6 ECTS (which is equivalent to 3 Credits course in UST). There is no specific add/drop period. Once you realize that the course doesn't fit you, you can email to professor and drop the course at any time.

TEACHING & ASSESSMENT METHODS

I have taken three courses in the exchange period. The teaching and assessment methods are a bit different from UST which is less tense but highly requires your self-discipline. There is a special policy that Aalto has re-exam for students who fail in the first one.

- **LC-7004 Survival Finnish 1 (1 ECT)**

It is a language course that teaches you basic Finnish including numbers, food, basic conversation etc. The class is quite interesting but the pace might be a bit fast. If you wish to master Finnish better, you need to put more effort in your free time. There is no examination. You need to complete some tasks outside the classroom like interviewing a Finns, recording Finnish conversation in pairs and writing the learning journal etc.

- **21E00030 Strategy Work (6 ECT)**

This course is conducted in a case-based method that learning and applying different framework through cases. Before the case discussion, we need to submit individual assignments regarding the upcoming case. It is quite useful to prepare for the case discussion. The workload is relatively light that there are some individual assignments, group assignment and presentations.

- **25C00100 Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management (6 ECT)**

The workload is quite light that there is only one lecture per week. The content is not difficult and the lecture material is quite comprehensive. The assessments include group essays and online exam (only MCs).

SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES

Unlike our university, the sports facilities are provided by Unisports (cheaper alternative) or Esport Aalto and subject to a subscription fee. I subscribed service in Unisports for one month for €31 which was a good deal as you can attend different sports classes including yoga, dancing and fitness class for free. Also, it is quite convenient that they have gym rooms in different areas.

FINANCE & BANKING

The currency in Finland is Euro. E-payment is very common in Finland that most of the shops (even for market stalls) accept credit cards/ debit cards. At first, I planned to open a bank account because of the convenience and service charge of foreign credit cards. However, I failed to have a personal identity code in applying for my resident permit, so I can't open a bank account. Fortunately, I still can cover all my expenses with €4000 I brought.

Expense Summary:

Expense Items	HKD
Plane Ticket	6,733
Permit Application	2,660
Accommodation	14,100
Living Expense	20,000
Travel	50,000
Total	93,493

SOCIAL CLUBS & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

As mentioned in the 'International Services & Activities', there are quite a lot of networking opportunities. There were some networking parties that you will get more information in the Aalto exchange students group or International Student Festival Facebook. What's more, if you are interested in technology or volunteering, it is highly recommended to participate in Slush which is a huge technology conference. You can meet a lot of awesome people there!

HEALTH & SAFETY

Finland is quite safe. It is safe even walking on the street late at night. Since there are quite a lot of drunk people at night, you need to pay attention to that. Also, you need to take care of your belongings when you are in a crowded area especially in clubs because I heard someone's phone got stolen in the club. Even though the pharmacy is quite accessible in Finland, it is better to prepare your usual medicine.

FOOD

Dining out is quite expensive and the quality is not guaranteed. For example, set meal in fast food restaurant Taco Bell is about €9, Finnish dinner at Restaurant Kuu Oy is about €40. Therefore, I seldom dine out (except for the school canteen which is quite inexpensive. Prices range from €2.6 to €4.95) and cook most of the time. There are 3 major grocery retailers including the K-Group (e.g. K-market, K-Supermarket), S-Group (S-market, Alepa) and LiDL (usually cheaper). If you wish to buy Asian food, you can visit Asian markets in Hakaniemi which they have whatever you want.

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation in Helsinki is operated by HSL which includes metro, train (excluding VR train), tram, bus and the ferry to Fortress of Suomenlinna. The transport is very comprehensive and convenient. There are 4 zones (Zone A: Helsinki city centre, Zone B: Aalto Otaniemi Campus, Zone C: Helsinki Airport, Zone D: Outskirt Area). Even though I lived on campus, I still purchased the seasonal ticket with student discount till the end of my exchange because it is definitely worth it than a single ticket. (The cost of the seasonal ticket (AB zone) for 4 months is about €121). In the orientation day, the tutor will give you the relevant document for the student discount. Then, you need to go to the HSL service center to buy the ticket. Usually, the tutor will go to the service center together to settle that on the orientation day. Noted that taking transport without a valid ticket will be subject to €80 penalty even the staff only inspects randomly.

CLIMATE

You need to expect coldness in Finland. However, don't worry too much cause you will get used to it. The temperature ranged from 20 degrees Celsius to -3 degrees Celsius during my stay in Helsinki (Aug to Jan). Fall in Helsinki started from Sept to Oct. Winter started near the end of Oct. Owing to the global warming, there was so little snow in Helsinki this year. Since there is a central heating system indoor, it is highly suggested to dress in layers to cope with the temperature difference (indoor and outdoor).

COMMUNICATION

You don't need to worry about the communication in Finland cause generally Finns' English is quite fluent. However, it is still good to learn some Finnish to easily get close to local people.

CAUTIONARY MEASURES

Since the day time is quite short in winter and the weather is always quite gloomy, it is easy for people to feel depressed. It is normal so just take some vitamin D and find ways to cope with that like hang out with friends or go work out to lighten up your mood.

**ENJOY YOUR EXCHANGE.
TIME REALLY FLIES.**



ITEMS TO BRING

- Warm clothing (e.g. Heattech, water-proof jacket)
- Water-Proof Boots
- T-shirt/ short-sleeves clothing (for layer dressing)
- Gloves
- Medicine
- Adapter, chargers, extension unit (if you don't want to bring so many adapters)
- Cash and credit cards
- Swimsuit (for sauna)

USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

- Residence permit online application: <https://enterfinland.fi/eServices/>
- Housing:
 - HOAS: <https://www.hoas.fi/en/>
 - AYY: (info) <https://www.ayy.fi/en/housing>
(application) <https://domo.ayy.fi/en>
- Aalto University exchange information:
<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enuudet/Incoming+exchange+students>
- WebOodi(Course registration): <https://oodi.aalto.fi/a/etusivu.html>
- MyCourses (Course material): <https://mycourses.aalto.fi/login/index.php>