



Exchange Report | 2019/2020 Spring

Copenhagen Business School

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COGBM Class of 2021

I. Monthly activity log

January 2020

After months of anticipation and excitement, I was really thrilled to finally arrive in Copenhagen in late January. It was freezing when I landed, and I was glad to be quickly picked up by my exchange buddy, who helped me move my stuff into my dorm and took me out to dinner. As I arrived slightly later than other students, I only had a little bit of time to get settled and finalize my courses before the term started.

My exchange buddy and the CBS International Office were extremely helpful throughout this process and gave me lots of advice and tips on getting set up in the Danish capital. During the orientation, my buddy even organized some extra activities with some of her friends who were also buddies to give us an in-depth tour of the city. I applied for my CPR number, attended the official orientation week, selected my courses, rented my bike, and familiarized myself with important locations across campus and near my dorm.

February 2020

In February I was nice and settled into the spring term and classes were proceeding quite smoothly. I took a total of four courses during my time at CBS, and when selecting them I tried to aim for courses that weren't offered at HKUST. I wanted to experience some regional-specific courses like Danish and European history and culture, though this eventually proved to be slightly problematic when I was arranging my credit transfer.

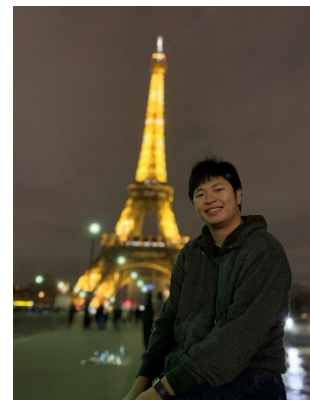
An interesting thing to note is that unlike HKUST, where courses are generally filled with mandatory quizzes, assignments, in-class participation points, and various other forms of assessment, CBS courses rarely have any "hard" requirements throughout the term at all. Instead, the grade for the entire course often depends solely on the final examination, which is a method I really enjoy. It means that I can study the course entirely on my own pace, and allocate my time as I see fit. Even better, a large portion of final examinations at CBS are "take home", which are open-book examinations that you can complete over several days, typically a week.

During February, I also took several trips around Europe, most notably a week-long trip to Iceland. It ended up being one of the most memorable experiences ever, with breathtaking views found around almost every corner. I also went on a solo trip to eastern Europe for a few days, and really enjoyed the food and museums there. In hindsight, it was really fortunate that I started doing my trips right away instead of waiting for the later months when it was warmer as most people recommend, as my stay in Europe proved to be much shorter than planned.

March 2020

March was, unfortunately, when things all started to go downhill. Amidst a growing number of coronavirus cases in Denmark and also other regions of Europe, I began to plan for worst case scenarios where my exchange could be cut short, or even worse, if I became trapped in Denmark due to sealed borders. As the news each day showed even more discouraging news, and as various other exchange students started getting recalled to their home universities due to rapidly rising cases in Denmark, it soon became clear that my much-anticipated exchange was about to come to a disappointing end.

The axe finally came down on the third week of March, and I booked my flight home shortly afterwards. This was not an easy task either, as many of Europe's airports were shutting down and no direct flights remained. I eventually had to transit first through London, then through Paris to finally board a plane home. Though I did not have the chance to fully complete my exchange, it was still an extremely rewarding experience, and I would definitely jump at any chance in the future to complete this journey.



II. General exchange info

Visa Procedures

I acquired my visa through the Danish visa processing center in Taipei. Clear instructions were provided by the CBS International Office on what documents were required and what the process was, so everything was quite straightforward. Though the instructions warned of a possible 2 month wait time, I got my visa after only two weeks. In addition, I was told that it was possible to enter Denmark first on a tourist visa, and head to the local government office to update the study visa once it was approved.

Orientation Activities

Official orientation activities lasting one week were arranged by the Exchange Team and the International Office. These activities are designed to kick-start the exchange term and get you familiarized with CBS and Copenhagen in general. You could either buy the entire week as a package, or purchase separate modules individually. The orientation is highly recommended, as you can also meet some new Danish friends.

Accommodation

Rent in Copenhagen is super expensive, and while CBS does provide student dorms, they are not extremely budget-friendly either. However, they are probably still your best bet as the vendors have been pre-screened by CBS and the process is also more user-friendly. It is crucial to attend the dorm selection exercise as soon as it opens in the system, to get the best value rooms. In my case, the system managed to crash a few minutes after I sent in my application, and CBS somehow decided to invalidate the whole selection exercise and reassign everything themselves. So unfortunately, I eventually ended up with quite an expensive dorm that was quite low on my priority list – Holger Danskes Vej. The dorm itself is quite nice – single occupancy rooms with a shared bathroom, an nicely located close to CBS, but the price was actually higher than other options you could find in the vicinity.

Course Registration

Course registration is quite simple through the CBS online system designed especially for exchange students. You basically are expected to take exactly four courses during the exchange term, and you are allowed to indicate several preferences and backup options so that CBS can optimize everyone's choices based on availability. One thing to note is some of CBS classes have very similar names, so be sure to double check the course code to make sure everything is correct.

Teaching and Exams

CBS courses have an excellent structure in my opinion – there are usually no hard requirements of assignments, quizzes, group exercises, and other stuff like that throughout the term. The grade is determined exclusively by performance in the final examination, so all you need to do is make sure you handle that well. Generally I think it's pretty rare to fail a CBS examination, and even if it does

come to that, there are two opportunities to retake the examination. So overall it's an absolutely awesome arrangement for exchange students.

One thing to watch out for is that some examinations, particularly or courses in Q4, can take place quite late, and create time conflicts with your flight back or your summer internship plans. So it's important to either avoid these courses right from the start, or negotiate with the professor on some alternative arrangements.

Sports, Clubs, and Recreation

CBS is actually quite limited in terms of on-campus facilities. There is no gym, no pool, and no basketball/ tennis courts available on any of the main campuses. Usually, exchange students can purchase monthly gym memberships at clubs located close to CBS campuses. Student discounts are usually available, and membership isn't too expensive.

For recreation, by far my favorite was to hang out with newly met friends at one of Copenhagen's thousands of bars in the evening. In fact, there is even a bar directly on campus called Nexus, which holds some regular parties.

Finance and Banking

I personally chose not to open a bank account in Denmark, as I wanted to fund most expenses through a credit card, but plenty of tips and advice on how to open a bank account will be provided by the International Office upon arrival.

As the Danish currency DKK was not available in my home country, I was forced to bring over some EUR cash instead. Thankfully, there are some exchange kiosks near Copenhagen Central Station that offer an excellent rate, so this is a doable strategy if DKK is not easily accessible to you.

However, I still conducted the bulk of my purchases through credit cards, where the rate is usually the best. If that is also your plan, do try to use a card that has either no foreign exchange fees or a rewards card where the international spending rewards outweigh the 1-2% fees that they charge.

Food

Copenhagen has plenty of food options, though eating out is generally super expensive even compared to Hong Kong. The cheapest way to eat would be to buy stuff from the supermarket and cook them yourself in the dorm, some of which come with fully equipped kitchens. Prices in supermarkets are roughly equivalent to those in Hong Kong, and if you have a craving for some Asian flavors while you are there, some Asian supermarkets can be found near Copenhagen Central Station.

I personally cooked most of my meals, though I also ate quite a bit at CBS canteens. The canteen food is better than in HKUST in my opinion, but I also heard plenty of people that disagree, so it really depends on your personal preference. At CBS canteens you pay for your food by weight in a buffet style setting, which works quite well for me. Prices are much cheaper than eating outside, and only a little more expensive than self-cooked meals.

Health and Safety

Free healthcare is provided to all with a Danish CPR card, which is really nice though I personally never went to a hospital during my short stay. Upon registration of your CPR you will be assigned a local doctor and get his or her contact number, and will also be shown the closest hospital to your residence.

In terms of safety, Copenhagen is one of the safest cities in the world with very low crime rates, so I found it perfectly comfortable to be out alone late at night. One crime that is very common, however, is bike theft, so make sure you either lock your bike properly or rent one that doesn't look like its really worth stealing. I personally went for the second option, which worked out great for both the local crime rate and also my wallet.

Transportation

All you really need for public transportation in Copenhagen is the all-powerful Rejsekort, which is essentially the Danish version of Octopus, though only for use in transportation. The details of fares can be quite complicated, as there are lots of "zones" and other complex terms involved, but you'll get the hang of it after a few trips. If you live in a dorm where you need to take the metro daily to campus, it may be worth investing in a monthly pass.

Aside from public transport, most Danes actually utilize the bike much more often. Copenhagen is super flat, so biking is relatively low-effort and an excellent alternative to walking. Bike parking spaces are widely available across the city, though it's important to safeguard your bike as bike theft is common.

If you are looking for transportation around Europe, the rule of thumb is to plan and book ahead. This holds true for boats, buses, trains, and of course flights.

Climate

Climate is basically really cold during January and February, and begins to warm up from March onwards. However, I sadly got recalled before it began to warm up, so all I got to experience was the really freezing version of Copenhagen :(

Communication

Data plans are really cheap in Copenhagen, and even Europe in general. For 99 DKK a month you can expect virtually limitless data and calls, and even a few GB of data to use around Europe. A free SIM is provided by CBS upon your arrival, and you can top that up with a credit card once you deplete it.

Cautionary Measures

I can't really think of any additional cautionary tips to add here, except maybe if you have a magical way to avoid annoying little things like global pandemics blowing up all your plans, it would be a good time to utilize that skill during exchange :P

III. Items to bring

- Cash (EUR or DKK)
- Clothes for both very cold and a little cold climates
- Shoes, preferably waterproof
- Adapters for EU plugs (the 2-pin kind)
- Large backpack or small suitcase for your intra-Europe trips
- Personal medicine
- Travel documents and photos to get the admin processes done

IV. Useful links and contacts

CBS Exchange Home Page – basically covers everything

<https://www.cbs.dk/en/international-opportunities/internationalstudents/questexchange-student>

CBS International Office – super helpful one-stop-shop for all your problems

support.intoff@cbs.dk