
Aalto University, Finland

Exchange Report - Spring 2020



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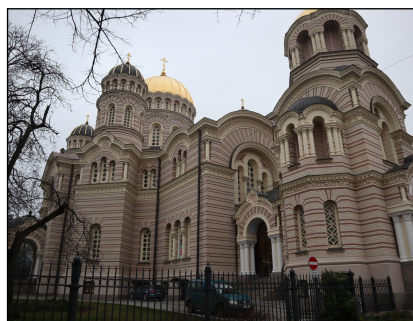
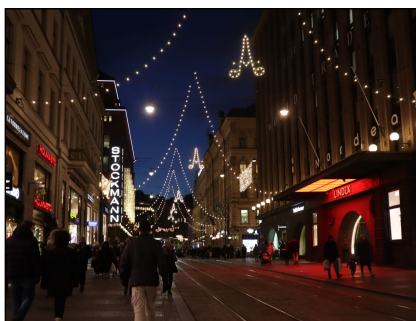
MONTHLY LOG

January

I arrived Helsinki at the end of December, lucky enough to catch the tail end of Christmas and experience the countdown events with my friends before the school orientation starts. The temperature in Helsinki was freezing, ranging from -7 °C to 5 °C, and please remember to bring enough clothing to keep yourself warm.

The orientation was held on the 3rd January, in which Aalto walked through some basic information like grading, university's support, facilities and more. While business students are also introduced to KY-Sub, the business student association in Aalto, they organised different events to help you experience Finland and making new friends. Remember to check it out if you are planning to exchange in Aalto.

Academic and school matters aside, I have been exploring around Helsinki in early January. Not only to visit the tourist hotspots, but more importantly, finding the living necessities! Sorting those in your early stage of exchange will benefit you greatly. Besides Helsinki, I had gone to the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) with my friends also on exchange. Which they are very close to Finland, and you can take a boat trip to Estonia.



February

Entering February, I have been spending most of my time in writing essays and preparing for exams. In Aalto, they have split the spring semester into three periods, and for the first period, the exam period would likely to be in mid-February. So please take this into account when planning your trips.

Besides studying, I have grabbed some free time before my tests start and go on a trip to Lapland with KY-Sub, you will be visiting Levi, Santa's Village and joining different kinds of snow activities, and the most important thing, you might have the chances to see the aurora. In late February, I had also travelled to Sweden, and went to Abisko, to extend to experiences of snow and winter.



March

After finishing my courses in Aalto, I had been travelling around in Europe, however, due to the Wuhan Virus (Covid-19), some flights had been cancelled, and the situation worsens day by day. Therefore we have to change our plans. Ultimately, we have returned to Finland and decided to go back to Hong Kong as soon as possible. We originally planned back to Hong Kong via Finnair on 17th March. Unfortunately, our flight had been cancelled just two days before departure. Lastly, we have changed our plane and fly to Singapore on 15th March and transfer back to Hong Kong.

General Information

Visa Procedures

You will be receiving emails from the Aalto's exchange coordinator, following the instructions and apply for the Finnish resident permit would be fine. It takes around a month for you to get your visa, so please do it ahead.

Orientation Activities

The details of the orientation activities would be sent to you before your arrival. Some of the events would be optional, and you can join if you are interested. In addition, you will be placed in a tutor group with student tutors to help you to survive Finland and Aalto. The tutors will help you to move into your dorm and assist you in your living matters, for example, opening a transportation card (HSL card).

International Services & Activities

There are a lot of student society and events for exchange and international students. For business students, you can consider joining the event organised by KY-Sub in which you can meet business students from all over the world. While there would be university-level activities, you will be notified by email, WhatsApp and Facebook groups.

Accommodations

There are two student accommodation platforms suggested by Aalto: HOAS and AYY. The main difference would be HOAS provide furnished apartments, and AYY doesn't. I had chosen HOAS as I think it would be more convenient to live in a furnished apartment. However, you should be aware of the locations of the apartment provided. As an example of myself, I have chosen both Espoo (City that Aalto University) and Helsinki. They placed me in Espoo, but it is quite far from city centre and not as accessible (it takes around 45 minutes for me to back to Aalto); nevertheless, it would be a big issue as the transportation systems are quite convenient.

In terms of the price, you could expect from 250-500 Euro per months, depending on the room types. It would not differ much from HOAS and AYY, and comparing to the public housing market, it is more affordable, so please priorities choosing HOAS or AYY. Additionally, their official website includes detail information like pictures and floor maps, this might help you make your decision.

Courses Registration

The course information is available online via the Aalto official website, Webdooi, and Mycourse. You can take a look before choosing Aalto as your exchange option. As an exchange student, you would not have limits on the number of courses taken, and you can also register for master courses, which have a similar difficulty comparing to the UG courses in HKUST.

After accepting the offer, the exchange coordinator will send you an email regarding the course registration. Follow the instructions will do.

My Courses in Aalto:

21C10000: Business and Society – 6 Cred

31E13000: Industrial Organization (Micro III) – 6 Cred

26E03201: Perspectives on the Multinational Corporation – 6 Cred

LC-7004: Survival Finnish 1 – 1 Cred

Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching in Aalto heavily rely on self-reading and learning; you will be spending a lot of time reading academic papers and studying the course material. However, the teaching material would not be as hard as what we have in HKUST, and the examinations are relatively more straightforward. You could get decent grades if you have study seriously.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Aalto has a sports association named Uni-Sport, you can join as a member and use the facilities there if you are interested.

Finance & Banking

Finland uses Euro as their currency, and you can choose to bring your cash and open a bank account locally, you can also choose to bring your credit card, which is widely accepted in Finland. Another option is to open a virtual banking account, for example, TransferWise and Revolut. I had been using TransferWise, and it allows me to change my HKD to EURO easily and with a better rate while providing me with a debit card to use in Europe.

In terms of expenses, Finland's living expense is higher than in Hong Kong, eating out would be an expensive option. However, cooking would be a viable option that incurs a lower cost, and you can practice your cooking skills and become a better cook during exchange.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

As above mentioned, KY-Sub will organise different kinds of activities, including trips and parties. You would be able to meet people from different parts of the world.

Health & Safety

With your travel insurance, you will be covered if you received any medical treatment in the EU. However, it is still important for you to bring your own medicine and keep yourself warm in the winter.

Finland is one of the safest countries in the world, but still, you have to aware of your safety, remember not to bring too much cash with you can take care of your personal belongings especially when you are travelling outside Finland.

Food

In most of the case, you will be choosing to cook yourself as dining out is an expensive option. Getting food in supermarkets is relatively cheaper, but the choice is limited and not much fresh meat and vegetables available. Dining on campus also would be a nice option to have as the price are low, around 2 euro per meal.

Transportation

The transportation is as similar as in Hong Kong, most likely you will be travelling with HSL, which include metro and buses. Getting an HSL card and the student ticket will be necessary for you to travel around Helsinki. Also downloading the HSL app to help you to know when the train comes, finding the path and directions between destinations.

Climate

The weather in Finland extremely differs from what you have in Hong Kong. As you may be expected, it is freezing in Finland, and it is important to keep yourself warm when you are in outdoor, as in indoor, heaters are available in every building, you will alright as you are staying inside. While the daylight in Finland is short, usually from 10 am to 4 pm. So please take care yourself when it is dark, safety always is the priority when you are on exchange.

Communication

Fins speak both English and Finnish. To survive in Finland, English would be enough.

Cautionary measures

Make sure you have warm clothes!

Things to bring

- Warm Cloths
- Snow boots
- Swimsuits
- Camera
- Routers and Internet cable
- HKID & Passport
- Stationaries and notebook
- Cash/Credit Card/Debit Card
- Acceptance letter from Aalto
- Medicine

Other notes

Have fun and stay warm!

Useful links and Contacts

Visa Application: <https://enterfinland.fi/eServices>

Courses:

Course List: <https://courses.aalto.fi/school/BIZ>

Course enrolment: <https://oodi.aalto.fi/a/etusivu.html>

Accommodation:

HOAS: <https://www.hoas.fi/en/>

AYY: <https://domo.ayy.fi>

Transportation:

HSL: <https://www.hsl.fi/en>

OMIO(EU transportation): <http://omio.com>

Finance:

TransferWise: <https://transferwise.com/hk>