



My study abroad experience saw me travel to the stunning city of Copenhagen, Denmark and study at the University of Copenhagen reading International Relations. My year in Denmark consisted of growth and experiences which would not have been possible had I not embarked on this journey, while simultaneously creating lifelong memories and friends. Throughout the year I was provided with the environment and opportunities to learn and develop transferable skills in many areas, personal, academic and professionally.

In terms of personal growth, I have learned to be more independent; as an outgoing person, I have always felt confident in my independent abilities, however, living abroad still provided me opportunities to develop these further. The foreign setting forced me out of my comfort zone and to not rely on the usual support systems I would at home, as a result, I was led to learn many useful but often overlooked life skills such as budgeting, registering a business and completing taxes as I undertook work alongside my studies. Secondly in the academic sense, the learning environment and subject content of the University courses pushed me to apply myself to be the best I could, learning valuable academic lessons, enhancing my competency in research methods and apprehension of political theories which I can apply to my ongoing studies at Surrey to accomplish my academic goals.

I was also able to learn and develop my transferable skill set, enhancing my employability; the most prominent example being my ability to work effectively in a group as I completed the vast majority of my assignments collaboratively with local and other exchange students. More specifically, I have learned to understand the appropriate times when leadership is required and when it is best to listen, as a result increasing the efficacy of tasks while also maintaining a high group satisfaction. This collaborative structure of written assessment was new to me and just one example of how the study abroad, through different teaching and assessment methods, has allowed me to learn alternative skills and in turn shaping me into a more well-rounded student. A final learning opportunity which I wish I was able to capitalise on more was the networking possibilities as they were unfortunately restricted by Covid, despite this, I have still amassed a global network of friends and colleagues with whom I will certainly keep in contact with.

While there are many things which I feel had an impact on me throughout my time abroad, there are two main valuable lessons I will take away from this experience. The first, is to not make judgement upon a place before visiting; Denmark was my back up choice for exchange and when my first choice was cancelled due to Covid I was left apprehensive as to what to expect. Although I had done my research, I was slightly wary as to whether I would enjoy it as much as my first choice. Having now completed the year, I could not have been more wrong, the country of Denmark, the city of Copenhagen and its citizens made my time there amazing,



influencing my career aspirations and outlook on life to be more sustainably conscientious. I would insist that the study abroad experience is not just about where you travel to, it's about the people you meet along the way, building connections relationships and memories. The second and just as valuable take away from my experience is the growth of my self-belief in my academic abilities. Although I found the year difficult at times, I was pushed to work hard and achieve my goals. I can now pursue my final year and further studies with confidence and without underestimating my abilities as I have proved to myself that if I apply myself, I can achieve success.

On my exchange journey there were a few challenges I had to overcome and accept in order to maximise my experience. The first and obvious challenge which has affected us all in different ways being the pandemic. Covid presented challenges in several ways; events were cancelled, learning was disrupted and it made socialising with locals and other students a difficult affair. Despite Covid somewhat interrupting my plans, I refused to let it dampen my experience any further; while international travel wasn't possible, my friends and I took the chance to explore the country we called home, travelling to other cities and appreciating local culture. I also engaged with locals in a more suitable setting, playing outdoor sports for a local business' team and undertaking paid work. The second challenge I had to overcome was the step up in studying ability, as the courses I undertook were at master's level. Combining this with the different teaching methods it took me a while to adjust, however, the process of overcoming this challenge provided me with the tools and knowledge base to excel in my written work and carry through to my final year.



One final thing to mention to those considering an international exchange is to research secondary options just as much as your first choice. There are many reasons why the first choice destination may not be feasible, even more so with Covid. Thus, I would highly recommend to put as much effort into researching a multitude of possibilities and would also reiterate, while the destination plays a role, the different people you meet along the journey is what really makes the exchange experience special.

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