

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**Bianca Veronica Budulacu**Year and term for exchange**Autumn 2022**Exchange university**Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST)**Degree programme**Interactive Media Technology

Four months in Daejeon, South Korea

Before departure

Even before coming to KTH, I was interested in applying for an exchange term in either Japan or South Korea. After going through the partner universities, I felt that the application process was easier in South Korea and especially at KAIST and there were also more courses available in English which were appropriate for my study programme. Apart from applying for a D-2 visa, we had to fill out a health form from KAIST, which required a TB screening test and various records of vaccination or antibodies for MMR, Tetanus and Varicella.

Upon arrival

I arrived on 25th August in Daejeon while the courses started on 29th August, as that was the first day you could move into the dorm. Before you can check in into the room, you have to go to the international centre to pick up your student ID card and get some other useful documents, such as a student handbook. The first week mostly consisted of introductory lectures to see if you would enjoy the courses and there was also an event for joining student clubs. However, I felt that they were mostly targeted to Korean students.

Financials

I received scholarships both from KTH and KAIST. From KTH, I received a travel grant which covered more than half of my return flight tickets and a language course grant as I took a Korean language course outside of university. KAIST offered a scholarship for exchange students of 1 million WON, which was based on your marks from KTH and a personal statement. However, it took around 2 months from when I applied, to receiving the results and the money. Also, I had to open a Korean bank account for receiving the scholarship, which was a bit useless, as I had to close the account one month later. Compared to Sweden, it is a lot cheaper in terms of accommodation, food and transport. It is uncommon to cook especially as a student because you don't have access to a kitchen, but eating out is really accessible as well.

Accommodation

All exchange students receive accommodation on campus, but you can't choose the dorm you want to live in. I stayed in a double room with another person, but we had an en suite bathroom. There were also washers and dryers on odd numbered floors and a lounge with microwaves and a water dispenser on the other floors. Apart from this, we also had a small shop on the ground floor of the dorm which was open during the evening. The dorm was in good condition and you could walk everywhere on campus from there. It also took around 10 minutes to get to a popular area outside the campus where there were a lot of restaurants and cafes.

University and studies

KAIST offers a large range of courses, with a lot of options in English especially for postgraduate students. The courses are pretty similar to KTH, in the sense that a lot of them consist of group work, seminars and lectures. A big difference is that KAIST is a lot more strict on the attendance and

deadlines and overall the courses seemed less flexible. There were also Korean language courses, however they had a limited number of spots and I wasn't able to take the course in the end. I would suggest having more back-up options for courses, because there are two periods of time when you can apply for courses or change them. During the first week of lectures, you can still drop courses and apply to new ones but you should be aware of how many students are interested in taking the course. In my case, I chose a course in August and by the first week of lectures, just one more student joined the course. Because of this, the course was discontinued and we were told to find another course which was a bit disappointing. Also, the courses differ each term so some courses I was interested in when I applied for the exchange program were not available anymore.

Courses

I was part of the School of Computing, however I couldn't find any suitable courses offered by the school, so in the end I took 2 courses from School of Industrial Design (Design Entrepreneurship and Media Interaction Design) and 2 courses from School of Culture Technology (Augmented Humans and Museum Technology in Digital Era). All courses involved a final team project and none of them had any written exams. They were mostly well organised and had variable workload. For the Augmented Humans course there were homeworks every week along with reading seminars and multiple presentations, while for the Museum Technology in Digital Era course, most assignments were due towards the end of the term. In what concerns the downsides, the projects involved not only the research part, but also the implementation for which you had to use the laboratories and gather the necessary components. As exchange students, it was sometimes difficult to benefit from all the available facilities, but the teachers were helpful and understood the situation. All courses were in English and there were no major aspects regarding this. However, sometimes it felt a bit difficult to understand what the expectations were for certain assignments.

City and country

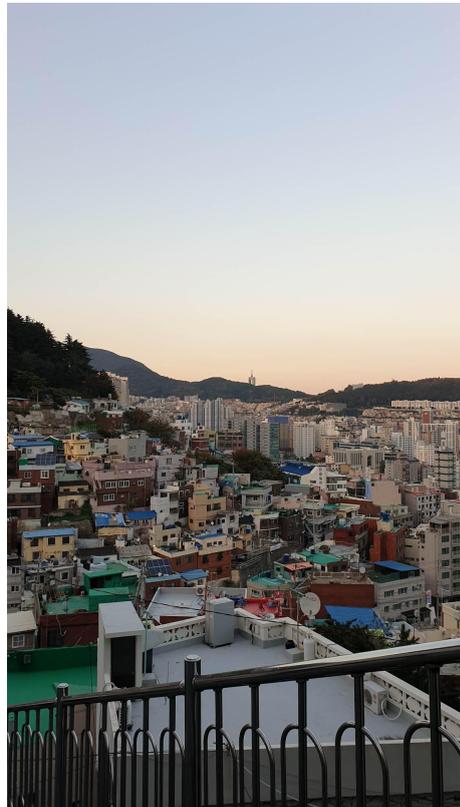
The culture is rich and there are always activities or events taking place both in Daejeon and neighbouring cities. Seoul is really close as well, being just a 2 hours bus ride away from Daejeon. I would also suggest visiting smaller cities, such as Jeongu and Gongju, as each city has its own charm and specialty.

Leisure and social activities

There are not a lot of attractions around Daejeon, but it is well known for its cafes and bakeries. I actually enjoyed that it wasn't such a big and crowded city so it didn't feel overwhelming. The international centre also offered some extra curricular courses which you could take, for example I took the Korean Painting class for 9 weeks, and every few weeks there were some day events, such as learning how to make a lotus LED light which you could take home.



Daejeon and KAIST campus



Busan



Seoul



Jeonju