

Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

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During the autumn 2014 I did an exchange semester in Brisbane at QUT. The semester over in Australia started in the middle of our summer here in Sweden and by the time I arrived to Brisbane it was spring there. The reason why I applied for an exchange in Australia was simply because I wanted to go far away from home. Why I decided to go to Brisbane was because one of my best friends had lived there for 2,5 year and he always talks so good about it and I knew he would introduce me to some of his old friends.

As I am doing a master in sustainable technology my first choice of university was University of Queensland where they have a lot of courses in that field, but unfortunately KTH only had 2 spots there so I got my second choice, QUT. When the time came to apply for units, which is what the call courses it was a bit hard to find units I was interested in. I had although saved all my elective credits for this semester which made it a bit easier, but I had to find one unit that corresponded to a course at KTH, which I still don't know if I succeeded with. QUT is focused on business and engineering so when I first went to two of the units I had applied for, they were too focused on business and engineering management which I feel was not really for me. I had applied for 4 units so one I could simply drop and the other one I had to changes because you have to read at least 3 units to count the study as full time. I changed to a unit in Natures Pharmacy, mostly because it sounded fun and they had every week practical lab sessions which I really appreciated. The other two units were sustainable practice in built environment and engineering and the other one was in solar thermal systems. The first one sustainable practice was very basic and a compulsory unit for students doing masters in engineering management and I was very surprised how unknowing the students were in this field. The unit was very well-structured and the teachers were well engaged but the structure was strange. In the beginning of the semester we had two intensive weekends of whole day Saturday and Sunday of lectures and then only three tutorial meeting during the rest of the semester and all other time you were supposed to work on your own. I was in a group with two guys from Asia one that was working full time so we had a lot of trouble finding times to work together and we had some cultural problems with language etc. The other unit in solar thermal systems was a very interesting unit and opened my mind for a new interest and I would very much like to write my master thesis in that field. Even though it was an interesting unit the teacher was very boring and not engaged in lecturing. There was a big problem with the lectures that had nothing to do with the reports and exercises we had to submit, so there was a bit of struggle to know what to do and write in the individual and group tasks.

Over all the university is a very modern and it has a good reputation. I was surprised how much equipment we had for the lab sessions, it must have cost a lot to run that unit. Unfortunately I did not got to know many Australian students as the major part is foreigners are mostly from Asia, but it depends on which units you attend. In the nature's pharmacy unit there were some

Australians but the other two units that were for engineers the Australian students were a minority. There are a lot of things to attend from the university during your free time such as different sports groups and other social activities. In the beginning of the semester all groups and the student union are represented in booths on campus.

My boyfriend followed me to Australia and we arrived late in the welcoming period so I had not the opportunity to attend any of the welcoming activities. It was although very easy to know what to do a how to apply for units etc. as the student center had introduction sessions where they told us everything we had to do and how to do it, they were also very helpful in my change of units.

It turned out to be a bit hard to find accommodation as we were two people and my boyfriend's plan was to travel and don't stay with me the whole time. There were plenty of accommodations and I can recommend Gumtree which is like our "Blocket". Those accommodations you find there is mostly share houses which is very common and cheaper than the one you get through the university. The problem for us was that almost everyone wanted us to pay double as we were two or they did not want to have a couple. We did not want to pay double as we did not know how much my boyfriend would be around. As my friend had lived in Brisbane we knew a couple of people that we contacted directly when we arrived. They warmly welcomed us and offered us to stay in there share house as they had a spare extra bed in the corridor. First it was only temporary but as we had so much trouble finding something else we ended up living there the whole time. It was a bit chaotically at some points with a lot of people so I did all my studying at the university and the last two months there garage room in the back yard got free so we moved down there. Although it was a bit chaotically we decided to stay as we could not find anything cheaper. We were lucky only paying 70 \$ per week for both of us as the share house was old with a cheap rent and a lot of people sharing it. Average rent is otherwise between 150- 250 \$ per week per person.

Brisbane as a city is very nice if you like outdoor activities. I attended rock climbing, slackline and the city council has a lot of activities like jogging and other workouts in the parks. They were offering a lot of things for free like yoga, the jogging and workouts. Something to be aware of is that Brisbane is around 1h drive from the beach and I thought it was a beach city. The trains although goes smoothly to the beach but I had looked forward to run on the beach in the mornings but it was not really like that. They have a surf group from uni which I can recommend if you want to make friends to surf with, they arrange surf trips every now and then and it is not so expensive. I did not join them as we made a lot of Australian friend with the one we lived with and we went on trips with them instead.

My overall experience is not so much from the university and the education as I don't feel I developed so much experience and knowledge there. Even though the uni was not so good I can recommend everyone to do an exchange as you grow so much in yourself but maybe not gaining so much education. By being away from home and away from everything that feels safe you gain so much self-awareness that is impossible to gain at home. You also get another perspective of things when you experiences different cultures.