

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name****Year and term for exchange**

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Exchange university

Danmarks Tekniske Universitet (DTU)

Degree programme

Mater's programme in Medical Biotechnology

Half a year of hygge and amazing experiences

Before departure

Originally, I wanted to go to the Netherlands or Belgium in order to improve my Dutch, but I had a hard time finding courses that would fit into my curriculum. Thus, I started looking a bit more broadly at my options. As I still wanted to go within Europe, DTU caught my interest due to the very broad variety of courses offered. An additional advantage was the fact that DTU doesn't accept exchange students into a specific department, and thus, you aren't required to take a certain proportion of your courses within one department, and you end up having a great deal of freedom. I was a bit worried that Denmark was going to be too similar to Sweden, but in hindsight I can say that I really shouldn't have worried about that!

Upon arrival

I arrived about one and a half week before the start of the courses, on the Friday before the introduction week. I can really recommend attending the introduction week, as I met some amazing people there, and got a nice introduction to DTU. For me, as for most other people I've spoken to, the people I met during the introduction week ended up being some of my best friends during my exchange, and they played a huge part in making my semester such a great one! We ended up going on trips together, having weird theme dinners and just hanging out quite a lot. Of course I did meet people outside of the introduction week too, but it required quite a bit more effort, so I strongly recommend attending the intro week!

Financials

Copenhagen is an expensive city to live in, and especially with the Swedish crown being quite weak at the time of my exchange, my cost of living ended up being higher than at home. However, with the Erasmus+ grant my net expenses were pretty close to what they are in Stockholm, so as long as you put a little thought into how you're spending money this doesn't need to be a problem. Plus, since you can take the train to Copenhagen and there are no mandatory fees, you do end up saving money in other ways.

Copenhagen has a quite good public transport system, but it is expensive! (Tip: get a Rejsekort anonymous as soon as you reach Copenhagen. You don't need to be registered on a Danish address to get it, and each trip will be about half the price of paying for a single ticket.) The city is very well adapted to cycling, so you can save a lot of money by getting a bike. I ended up renting a bike for the whole semester for about 1100 DKK, but in hindsight I can say that Swapfiets is probably the best deal you can get (150 DKK a month).



My trusty bike, that took me almost everywhere. Denmark is very flat, and Copenhagen is really well adapted to cycling, so it was a very convenient way to get around!

Apart from that, it makes a huge difference to shop for groceries in the “right” stores. Rema1000, Aldi, Lidl and Netto are quite cheap, while Irma and Føtex are a bit more expensive, and Meny is really nice, but way too fancy for my budget. Surprisingly, the canteens at DTU are actually better priced than what I’m used to from KTH, but it’s of course still usually less expensive to bring your own food.

Accommodation

I got offered a studio apartment through the accommodation office at DTU, as did most of my international friends. I stayed at Linde Allé in Nærum, about 4 km from campus, which was a new residence that had opened just the semester before I moved in. It was very clean, spacious and nice, and since it has a mix of studio apartments and rooms, there are shared kitchens where you can meet people, even if you do have your own kitchenette. Two other people from my introduction week group also stayed there, and we ended up getting together to cook several times a week, which was a fun way to get to try food from different countries. Linde Allé mainly has international students, which I thought was quite fun, but this is not where I ended up meeting my Danish friends, if that’s what you’re looking for. :) On the downside, it was a bit expensive, at 5500 DKK a month.



Some pictures of my room and the courtyard at Linde Allé in spring. I was very happy with my accommodation!

Housing is in general quite expensive (and difficult to find!) in the greater Copenhagen area, so I was just very happy that I got offered something by DTU. The accommodation office does take a fee for the service (if I remember correctly, around 1500 DKK), which I definitely found to be worth it. One of my friends managed to find a nice apartment on his own together with some of his friends from home, but other than that I have mainly heard quite weird stories about the rooms people have found on their own, so I would really recommend you to apply through the accommodation office. Out of their

student residences, I found Hempel to be very nice with big rooms, a great location (on campus) and a good price, Nordvej is nicely located but lacks common areas, which might be a bit lonely, and Campus Village is a container village on campus which is very nicely priced, but two of my friends who stayed there really hated it, since it wasn't clean at all, and there were very few bathrooms to share with a lot of people. But all in all, it depends on what your priorities are. :)

University and studies

At 11 000 students, DTU is slightly smaller than KTH. I took all of my courses at the main campus in Lyngby, but there is also a campus in Ballerup, where mainly Bachelor level courses are taught. (Beware of the travel time in case you want to take courses on both campuses!) My impression was that DTU offers quite a broad array of courses, and as mentioned, you aren't restricted to a certain department.

The semester at DTU generally consists of a 13-week period (25 ECTS) and a 3-week period (5 ECTS), though some of my friends took 30 ECTS during the 13-week period, and this worked out well for them. You should keep in mind that it might be difficult to get a spot on some of the 3-week courses, so make sure to have some back-up plans if you want to do this! (E.g. Assay technology, the course I took in June, had 90 people registered for 48 spots! I managed to get in by showing up on the first day, and getting the spot of one of the 4 people who didn't show up.) In general, DTU has much less lecture time than KTH, but more time for studying: during the 13-week period I only had classes three days of the week, but the 3-week period is generally more intense. DTU also has a lot of group and project work, which suits some people better than others, so make sure to check this in the course base. It is also quite common to have oral exams, and most written exams are digital. For all of my written exams we were actually allowed to bring our books and notes (this is the DTU definition of "all aid" – it really is everything except the internet, while I was expecting a calculator and a pen, based on my experience at KTH).

At the Master level all courses are taught in English, while many Bachelor-level courses are in Danish. The course base is however very clear, so just make sure to check this beforehand.

Courses

I took courses in Immunology, Drug delivery, Molecular diagnostics, General medical microbiology and Assay technology, which I generally really enjoyed! Especially the Immunology course (27322) was very good, as it was my impression that it was extremely up-to-date and offered a very thorough understanding of the subject. Highly recommended! Drug delivery (33902) was also very interesting and in my impression really at the forefront of the subject. Molecular diagnostics (33334) was in my opinion a bit too focused on working on specific examples. While I found it interesting, I didn't really feel as though I learned that much about any general concepts, even though it was an enjoyable course. General medical microbiology (23258) was fun, but maybe not all that challenging. Assay technology (27101) I can highly recommend, as it had a very nice mix of lab work (various immunoassays, flow cytometry and qPCR) and lectures, connected to both academic and industrial research, but beware of the risk that the course gets full...

Something which I discovered a bit too late, but which I can really recommend, is the opportunity to take a so-called special course. These aren't listed in the course base, but if you contact a researcher at DTU you can arrange to be allowed to do a project in their group, which I think sounds like a great opportunity to get some hands-on experience within a subject you find interesting. In general, I've found that the professors are very nice and don't mind being approached, so as long as you contact them well in advance you should be able to arrange a project.

City and country

Contrary to my expectations, I found Denmark to be quite different from Sweden in many aspects. Of course you can't expect any major culture shock, but people are a lot more social and open to talking to

strangers compared to your average Swede. Danes also tend to be very serious about their work-life balance, which gave the impression that they were quite relaxed about work – to me it felt as though the evening rush hour started about an hour earlier than in Stockholm. On the other hand, or maybe because of this, I got the impression that most Danes tend to be more direct than what you might be used to in Sweden, which you might notice e.g. in group projects.

Copenhagen is a lovely city, with a great atmosphere. There are tons of great shops and food places (the food court of Reffen is really popular, Torvehallerne close to Nørreport are great, and Olioli makes the most amazing poké bowls), and many nice parks and “tourist attractions”. The botanical gardens and Vor Frelzers Kirke (a church in Christianshavn with a staircase running on the outside of the church tower) are two of my favourite spots, along with Ofelia plads, a square next to the theatre, where you can go for a swim in the middle of the city. Bastard café is a super popular and cosy board game café which is also highly recommended! Tivoli is also really worth a visit, with its dreamy atmosphere, beautiful gardens and concerts at a really good price!



View from the tower of Vor Frelzers Kirke, and Tivoli towards the evening, when they start turning on all the lights.

Leisure and social activities

I ended up hanging out a lot with the friends I made during the introduction week, but I also made some Danish friends, whom I ended up celebrating Sankt Hans, the Danish version of Midsummer, with, which was a lot of fun! In terms of sports and social activities, DTU offers quite a lot, ranging from a gym and Friday bars to a flying club and a pottery club. There really is something for everyone, and I ended up taking a bachata course, which was a lot of fun (especially since I’m not exactly a good dancer), and a great way to meet some more people.

Other recommendations and observations

If you are at all considering to go on exchange, I only want to say: do it! I ended up having the greatest semester of my life, and came back home with tons of new friends all over the world, as well as having taken courses I wouldn’t have been able to take at KTH.