

OUTGOING STUDENT FEEDBACK FORM 09-10

Programme International Management (IM)

University Attended Helsinki School of Economics (Aalto University)

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

I found the induction/orientation programme very useful as it answered a lot of questions I had about studying in Helsinki. The programme lasted for one day and was rather intensive. The first part of the programme involved a presentation given by the head of the international department and other staff members. It included a description of subjects such as examinations, accommodation, course choices etc. The second part of the programme included the allocation of students to various tutors who then took us around the university and explained general matters and university life in more detail in a less formal atmosphere. The orientation programme finished with an introduction to the IT system and course registration.

Although the main orientation programme consisted of just one day, the tutors helped us throughout the entire first week with issues such as police registration, getting travel and library cards, opening a bank account, (which would otherwise have been very difficult and time consuming for us as foreigners). In addition tutors, together with the students union (the KY sub), organised a lot of welcome events to enable the exchange students to get to know each other as well as to teach them about life in Finland.

I found it to be very well organised and it greatly helped me to adapt to my new life faster and prevented any problems that could have arise from my lack of knowledge of the area and the language. Such great organisation stopped me from getting home sick and from getting stuck with anything.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

The style of teaching at the Helsinki School of Economics is very different to Manchester. First of all there are no separate lectures or seminars. Students attend classes which are like a mix of both lectures and seminars. Students are given new information and then are encouraged to participate in an in-class discussion about it. The level of participation varies from module to module. For example economics modules are more informative, while marketing modules involve a lot more student participation. As there is no separation between lectures and seminars the classes are considerably longer and can last up to 5 hours in some cases, which I personally found quite difficult. Lecturers quite often combine core material with case studies where students are encouraged to apply the knowledge obtained to a real life situation and then to present their work to the company that has been analysed. I found this approach very effective for gaining a clear understanding of the subject being taught. Being given such interesting tasks greatly increased my motivation levels.

The marking system is different from the UK one and grades vary from 1 to 5. At the same time the examination process varies considerably - students are given 3 attempts to pass an exam and the best result is then chosen. The examinations, however, are not the only form of assessment. In most cases a variety of assignments are presented throughout each course which contribute towards the final grade.

Access to courses is rather easy (in most cases a compromise could be found even when two subjects clashed), however, demand for courses is still high. The content of the courses themselves does not differ much from the courses at Manchester. In general I found studying at HSE demanding but less stressful due to the course and exam structure.

MBS INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

The International office were very supportive. The information that we were given before going on exchange was very useful and prepared us for the year abroad.

Whenever I had a question about the programme I could just send an email to MBS and received a very quick and detailed response. When talking about the help provided to me I should mention the great work of Susan Fidalgo.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

I believe that the MBS second year meetings were very effective in giving a general overview of what the exchange year would actually be like. I really liked the fact that meetings were held throughout the year so that that the relevant information for each stage of the year abroad application process was provided at the relevant time.

The MBS second year meetings outlined most of the terms and conditions that we had to fulfil and gave a brief overview of hosting universities, making it easier for us to choose.

From my point of view the second year meetings did touch most of the essential subjects, and because it was impossible to provide us with every single detail about the partner universities we were also given a chance to meet previous exchangers who had already been there.

Overall I believe that MBS did a great job.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

My first interaction with the host international office was immediately after being accepted, when the head of international department (Sanna) welcomed me and provided me with general information about the forthcoming semester, registration and other matters. Shortly after that I received a package that included more detailed information about the university, students union, Finland and Helsinki in general, which enabled me to prepare myself for a year abroad in a foreign country.

Once in Helsinki all the exchange students were introduced to the members of the international office during the welcome presentation. We were provided with all the

contacts that we could possibly need and were assured that help would be provided to us as soon as we asked for it.

Throughout the year I had very little interaction with the Helsinki international office, only contacting Sanna on a few occasions. The only time I communicated with the members of the Helsinki international office directly was when collecting forms of attendance for the University of Manchester and I should point out that the process was carried out very quickly due to the very efficient and friendly approach of the host international office.

I should finally highlight the excellent work of the Helsinki international office. Whilst in Finland I really had the feeling that I was being provided with as much help as possible.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance i.e. costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

As I am an overseas student (I am Russian) I had to purchase private insurance as required by the Finnish embassy when applying for a Russian student visa. The cost of the insurance was high (around 1000 Euros) as it had to cover possible incidents for the whole year. However, such insurance enables a Russian student to receive private hospital treatment if necessary. European students are not required to purchase this insurance as their university insurance is valid in Finland and so accepted by the hospitals. If European students wanted to be treated in a private hospital whilst in Finland they could arrange more expensive private insurance if they wanted.

While being in Finland I was unfortunate enough to break my arm and so have experience of their healthcare system. I had to go to the public hospital and found that their public healthcare system was really good, rather cheap and efficient. I would therefore not advise European students to purchase private insurance unless they actually require some particular treatment beforehand.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

The Helsinki School of Economics student accommodation is provided by either the students union (the KY) or by independent housing organisation HOAS. The most popular accommodation is: Pasila (Junailijankuja), Vuossari, Ida and Kamppi. The above accommodation is located in different parts of Helsinki and costs vary. Kamppi is located right in the centre of Helsinki, very close to the school. It is the most expensive accommodation and most apartments are for just one person. Pasila is the second most expensive and is located 5 minutes away from the centre by train. The furthest away and the least expensive are Vuossari and Ida. The apartments there are of a very good quality but it might take around 40 minutes to travel to the university by metro or even longer by bus.

I myself stayed in Pasila. The accommodation there was provided by the Hoas company. There was a variety of apartments to choose from. There were 6 people apartments, 3 people apartments and 1 person apartments (please note the price for single person apartments is higher). Exchange students coming to Finland for a year are usually allocated to 3 person apartments. The quality of the apartments is

average with all the basics, such as a microwave, being provided. The greatest advantage of this accommodation is its location. As it is located just 5 minutes away from the centre by train it doesn't take much time to travel to the university. Also there is quite a good infrastructure. There are 3 supermarkets, post office, swimming pool, and gym all within 5 minutes walk of the buildings.

On the negative side I should however mention the inefficiency of HOAS. Buildings are not kept in good condition and are not cleaned well. There is also no security and there were a few thefts. Also it took a while for staff to come to fix things that were broken.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Helsinki is not a very big town but it is very well organised. There are different types of transport, such as the metro, trains, trams, buses and taxis. On arrival students are encouraged to purchase a travel card, which then enables them to travel by bus, tram and train. Travel cards can be purchased and then topped up at the railway station or at the kiosks. In order to get the travel card discount, students can print out forms from the transportation system website (HSL), get it stamped at the School and then show them when purchasing the card.

The travel cards, however, can not be used when using the long distance trains and separate tickets have to be purchased for those. The long distance train tickets are very expensive, however, students who with the Helsinki School of Economics student card are offered 50% discount. The student card also entitles students to discounts at the school's cafeterias and permits entry to certain student parties so I would recommend that students get one.

Social life in Helsinki is just great. The student union organizes a lot of events for exchange students starting from very big parties to trips to Stockholm and St. Petersburg. Apart from the parties organised by the union there are a lot of parties going on around town every day of the week and there are a variety of places to choose from, starting from high end clubs and ending with pubs. I should, however, mention that life in Helsinki is expensive and so is going out as most of the clubs do not offer any discounts to students. Integrating with local students was not as easy as it was with other exchange students. This was due to the fact that not so many parties were organised together with the Finnish students.

There are various student groups, which are popular mainly among the Finnish students. I would advise the international students to join the KY-sub. Joining it enables students to help organise events for exchange students and would be a good opportunity to have fun, make a contribution and to meet Finnish students. I myself joined KY-sub in the second semester and had a lot of fun helping to organise the parties.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

The year abroad is really a best experience that student life can give!
