



Exchange Experience Report: 2011/2012, 2 semester @UNSW, Australia

Yulia Besplemennova_764434
2LM Product Service System Design, PS1
yulya-besplemennova@ya.ru

Arrival

As I am Russian it was not easy for me to get to Australia at all. They required ridiculous health examination and the visa process took me more than two months with a lot of my nerve cells damaged. I got my visa just a week before I had to be in Sydney. But since my arrival to the country everything was perfect and my experience of getting to know the new life was much better than in Italy.

First of all they met all arriving international students at the airport so there is no stress of finding the place in the beginning. The only problem was walking to my residence with the suitcases as I was stupid not to take the taxi.

All the registration procedures took just one day. You don't even need the photos to give them, they take photos right at the place and everything is digital there, no real paperwork. Also in the first week there is the perfectly organized orientation week, where you can find all the needed information about the campus and facilities and any other help and guidance. Besides the information lots of the clubs offer to join them so newcomers can find friends very fast and easy.

Accommodation

Together with my Politecnico classmate we applied for the accommodation before leaving Italy. We chose the selfcattered off-campus accommodation at Mulwarree apartments. It's a nice place and perfectly situated. It's in a walking distance to the main Kensington campus – about 15 min along the Royal Racecourse, bus stop is right in front of the door and with the bus you can get to the beach in 15 minutes, to the Paddington campus in 10 and Circular Quay in 20-30 depending on the route and traffic conditions. Also there is market street in 10 minutes walk and the park just nearby.

We lived in the 5-bedrooms flat, everyone having single room and sharing kitchen, bathroom and common area. Frankly speaking the facilities itself were not the best ever, my old room in Certosa in Milan was much cleaner and nicer, but the location saved the situation. Plus the price was very low comparing to everything in Australia - \$183 per week excluding electricity though.

The real problem there is that it's getting very-very cold in the winter. The outdoor temperature drops to +3 at night and none of the houses have heating and the insulation is very bad, so it's cold inside. Therefore you need an electrical heater which causes electricity bill increase.

City and Lifestyle

Sydney is a beautiful and very diverse city. You can find anything you want here. They have incredibly beautiful coastline full of the beaches suitable both for swimming and surfing, green parks, quite suburbs, nice old artistic and design neighborhoods, even “red lights” district and of course the CBD with its running crowds and skyscrapers. There you can find any food you like any activities for the spare time and people from all around the globe, but of course it goes for some price.

The place is very expensive. Fruits and vegetables sometimes are 5 times more expensive than in Italy eating out can be twice more and so on. But at least you can get food there at any time of day or night, not like in Italy, where all shops are closed on Sundays and after 9PM =) Which is a bit strange as all the people are getting up early and very active and sportive there. The environment is mixed of all the cultures together.

Education

The system on the whole is completely different from the Italian one. The most of the work is done individually and at home. My timetable consisted only of 12 hours per week class-work, but each hour in class requires 2-3 hours of preparation at home. Sometimes it's easier to plan your own time in this way, but on the other hand there could be problems with contacting professor for the consultation, especially in the session period. But that wasn't actually such a trouble, most of the tutors are willing to help. Actually they are very supportive. I haven't heard any tough critics for anything done not exactly along the given guidelines. They always try to understand student's way of thinking and help develop his own approach to design. Also it's interesting how they never announce the marks for the whole class, everyone gets his mark confidentially by the email.

The huge difference is in the requirements for the projects. They are always interested not only in the very result of it, but in the concept and the process. So everyone has to submit the additional paper for each task, either website or design project, explaining his way of thinking and the mark is based on this as well as on the presented result. Once I didn't understand that we had to do that and it affected my mark in a bad way.

Campus

There are two campuses of UNSW where we had the classes – the main is at Kensington and other – College of Fine Arts Paddington campus. Actually I had all my courses from COFA department, but because of the temporary renovation there they have to move some people to the main one. They have the shuttle bus services running between. Kensington is a huge territory for the all faculties together. It has the main library, sports centre, and all administrative facilities. There are general education rooms and temporary COFA labs.

But nevertheless of the construction works and the fact that COFA campus was further and I had to take bus there I just fell in love with it. It is situated by the Oxford street in Paddington – the main design- and queer-friendly part of the city with the beautiful old “Victorian terraces” houses and even very special people around. It has that beautiful art-college vibe, very different from Politecnico with its engineering attitude. Even though it’s sometimes noisy and seems unorganized because of the renovation, it has perfect facilities. Their library has all the books about arts and design which you would want to find there. There are computer labs with huge Macs, where you can work not only during class hours, but in your own time. And other labs for sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, jewelry, wood and metal working, and huge tool-store to take anything you need to make a model or artwork. And the artworks are all around – there are exhibitions in the galleries on campus, but also some pieces in progress are occupying the corridors.

Additional services

Besides the main educational function you can find lots of things to do on campus. Most important that they have their own medical centre, which I had to use once and got very happy with the service and the fact that everything was covered by my insurance.

Also finally there I learnt swimming well in their Aquatic and Recreational Centre.

They have lots of the clubs offering different activities. For example I attended the sketching meetings, meditation and yoga classes and everything was for free.

And if you don’t want to participate in anything still you can hang around the campus, as they have different “commom rooms” for each department. At COFA’ you can spend the whole day on the sofa, drinking free tea and studying or just surfing the web with their wifi.

To summarize I want to say that this semester in Australia was a great experience for me from all the points of view. I would love to stay longer than just one semester there and definitely would recommend it to anyone. Although you have to plan your budget as it is much more expensive than Milan in general.

Portfolio of my works done at UNSW:

http://issuu.com/yulyabesplemnova/docs/unsw_portfolio