

Exchange to Aarhus University, Denmark

There are many English-taught courses available for exchange students at Aarhus University. Some courses will be available only during the autumn/spring semester and some will be offered all year round. All of the courses are at Masters level and mostly worth 10 ECTS. However, as an average bachelor student at RuG, I found that I was well prepared to take on courses of that level. Therefore, do not be discouraged whatsoever.

As previously stated, I decided to follow Drafting Commercial Contracts and two other intellectual property law courses. I based my choices on my interests. You will find that many RuG students take the Drafting Commercial Contracts course due to their passion for private law. In my case, I have read that our students had pleasant experiences with this course in the previous years and I thought that it would prove convenient to take this course in order to learn about how to draft contracts. This course lived up to its reputation. The professor was very enthusiastic, the course was well structured with each week of lectures covering one topic without working groups. I found out that commercial law is not what I want to specialise in. Regardless, if you are interested in commercial law, this course will be very interesting to you. The second course I took was Advanced International Intellectual Property Law. I chose this course because I have never encountered IP law at RuG and I wished to explore this area of law. This course was mainly taught by the way of tutorials where students are encouraged to discuss the relevant topics through assignments, debates in the classroom and discussions. Therefore, a lot of focus is on critical thinking. When compared to RuG, I found this course to lack structure and clarity. Then again, this made me step out of my comfort zone and learn to work individually more than I am used to. Please keep in mind that every student has different preferences in terms of teaching styles, so this criticism may as well be considered as nit-picking. Nevertheless, I loved the course and found IP law very interesting. My final course was International Copyright. This course was by far my favourite course because it included many examples from real life. Classes resembled our working groups and students were encouraged to make presentations which would include the application of theory to real life examples. The professor was very inquisitive and he challenged students to bring forward their own thoughts into the class. When that was lacking, the professor called for a break, ran out to the supermarket and brought in chocolate bars for everyone (Although that happened only once, it was a very welcoming gesture). I loved this course and would definitely recommend it to anyone who is interested in art, music, literature, architecture or any kind of expression.

After 14 weeks of lectures, you choose a date of your exam. All examinations were oral exams (with an addition of writing an essay on the topic of your choosing for Advanced International Intellectual Property Law for instance) consisting of 20 minutes of you assessing a case example and showing what you have learned. As scary as that sounds for an introvert like me, I actually liked it. The professors made sure that you feel comfortable and are well aware that you might be scared. The main benefit is that the exam takes less time and you receive your grade immediately. Grades in Denmark range from -3 to 12. In order to pass, you need to obtain at least 2. I ended up taking all my exams in the span of 10 days in December so that I could have Christmas and January care free. This required a lot of work. However, if you keep up with the lectures and the materials, it should not present a problem.

In terms of language preparation, I was well prepared for classes in English. Since not all exchange students come from English speaking programmes, professors tend to be quite understanding. As for Danish language, I did not find it necessary to learn it as everyone spoke fluent English.

Finances might be slightly troubling. Denmark is a bit more expensive than the Netherlands and your monthly grant will not be enough. Since I am an EU citizen, I have not incurred much costs for any registration procedures. Books for courses were quite expensive; however, one can be quite

resourceful and simply work with the books from the library or scan the chapters needed. Since I am not much of a party person, I did not spend much on going out. Depending on your preferences, I would estimate an average cost of €1000 for living expenses (incl. rent, food, outdoor activities) per month.

I had no issues with preparation and contact with the faculty abroad.

Housing is always a problem in every student city. Therefore, I highly advise you to begin your search early! I got my housing through Aarhus University housing office which basically puts you in contact with other students at Aarhus who are going abroad just like you and are looking to sublet their rooms or apartments. Unfortunately, not everyone will be so lucky to be offered housing this way. Since I went on exchange with my partner, I think that increased our chances of obtaining housing through the University. Alternatively, private market and Facebook groups are always the way to go. The rent for me was approximately 400EUR per month for a room and I lived 20 minutes walking from the main campus – where my classes took place.

The International Office at Aarhus University was very welcoming. During the introduction week preceding lectures, you get to meet other exchange students from your faculty, eat good food for free and everything you need to know is concisely explained. This included a guided tour through the campus, a welcome party, organised registration for the municipality and a welcome package which included leaflets, goodies and a free Lebara sim-card. University will be helpful for anything you might need.

Now a bit about living in Aarhus. Aarhus itself is a beautiful student city slightly bigger than Groningen. Just like in Groningen, a bicycle is a must. Your classes will take place at the main campus on a hill and almost each building comprises a cafeteria with freshly cooked food for eaters of any kind. I cannot overstate how beautiful this campus is. Block buildings are forming a circle around a big park with a few streams and a lake. It appears very serene and the greenery can be enjoyed when the days are warm. Danish universities place a lot of emphasis on the social aspect of studying and students. To this end, each week student parties are organised by other students called ‘Friday-bar’s. You are welcome to attend any faculty’s Friday bar (apparently, the best one by far is that of anthropology students). Moreover, did I mention there is an entire relaxation area in one of the libraries? Well, there is and it offers free massage chairs, a restaurant, cosy sofas, a kitchen for students, boxing bags and a ping pong table. This is a perfect place to spend your time between your classes. Aarhus also accommodates nature lovers. Thus, you can visit a beautiful botanical garden not far from the campus, the old town adjacent to it, take a bus or cycle your way to one of the forests surrounding Aarhus and end up walking at the beach (yes, straight from the woods). For anyone enthusiastic about museums and/or art, there is also plenty to visit. One bus-ride away is the Moesgaard museum – an archaeological museum where you can explore how humans lived in the prehistory as well as the Viking age. This is one of the best museums I have visited by far because it is very interactive thereby allowing you to try things for yourself (e.g. pulling a bow or observing things with VR goggles on your head). Of course, one cannot speak of Aarhus and not mention the great ARTIS art museum with a rainbow walkway on the rooftop. The art gallery was impressive as it is, but this walkway is the main attraction. I definitely recommend at least one visit there. If you are more into shopping and relaxing with a pint of beer or a cup of coffee, city centre has plenty to offer. Danish Starbucks is called Barresso and they have really good coffee that you can drink in a cosy space. This is, inter alia, a way to familiarise yourself with the concept of ‘hygge’ – a way of cosiness very valued amongst Danes.

Overall, if anything, I have learned to appreciate University of Groningen even more than before. Although I had a good experience in Aarhus, nothing feels like home as familiar hallways of Harmony, UB and Academy building.