

1. Arrival/Orientation

- a. I arrived the day my student housing accommodation was available, so I never had to stay in any other place. I would definitely recommend doing the same. It was available a couple weeks before school started so I still had enough time so I was able to get out and see the city and orient myself, but never had to worry about a temporary location. If you decide to come earlier, I would recommend a hostel because hotels are expensive and don't allow you to meet as many people.
- b. Orientation for Stockholm University took place over three days after I arrived. The first day was a guided bus tour of the city for a couple of hours. It was free and it was nice to be able to see the important parts of the city (especially in a bus, which is nice change from the underground where you don't get to see the outside world!). The second day all I had to do was stand in line for a really long time and wait to pay the mandatory student union fee. The third day, the most important day, was 6 hours of presentations and practical information (and free lunch!). They gave you the basic information about how things operated and what you needed to do get your experience started here. Do not miss this day! Not only is the information incredibly useful and essential for the first couple of weeks, but it's also a great day to meet all the other students in the same boat as you!

2. Academic

- a. During my time in Sweden, besides the horrible winter, I had the most complaints about the academic system here. I felt that I was thoroughly unprepared about the basic structure of how things functioned here and almost the entire year, I was incredibly frustrated by how everything functioned, or, in this case, didn't function. The school year is broken up into two semesters at SU. However, unbeknownst to me, the semester is also divided into periods as well. From what I found out, it is common to take one, maybe two classes at a time, for any more than that is incredibly overwhelming. The class schedule and length varies for each class, unlike UW. Spring semester I took (3) 4 week courses, (1) 10 week course and (1) 15 week course. They end and start at different times and overlap in weird ways; it's difficult to get used to. I found that the standard method is to take four 4 week courses in one semester from the same department; however, for exchange students taking courses in English, this is difficult and you have to carefully plan this out to fit your individual needs. Also, it is very important to register for your classes AGAIN. I was not told this and was not registered for any of my classes when I first got to Stockholm, even though I had received acceptance letters into my classes. After you have been accepted, you must then bring your acceptance letters to each department and then register for them again before classes begin. Instruction is similar to that in the US. As most people know, it just depends on the class and class size. Most of my classes, besides the really small ones had a lecture class and then a seminar class (like a quiz section) for discussion, usually with one English option and one Swedish option. I found that, except for my one large class, the teachers were incredibly engaged with the

students. They were interested in the student perspective and really did want them to succeed. It was more about the student forming their own opinions, not just soaking up the "right" information the teacher gave them. I really, really liked every single one of my teachers (I had 8 for the year) and thought that they were all so helpful and accommodating. Although the academic system in its entirety is lacking here, the teaching staff is still great. I found that most of my grades were based completely on one final exam, which was usually a take home essay that reflected the literature from the course. Some classes also required mandatory attendance. I did find that grades are low. A student should not be surprised to receive grades lower than what they are used to. Before I came to Sweden, I had an overall GPA of 3.6 and the first semester I was shocked to get a C (they have letter grades) in my first class. However, this is because not only do I believe the teachers grade more critically, but it is also on a 7 point scale, not a 4 point, so they will be adjusted upon return back to Seattle. The libraries are pretty good, but the open hours are a far cry from the 24 hours Odegaard. Like most things in Stockholm, the library closes early. However, it is a nice library that provides a lot of places to study, which is nice. The printers often break, so I would recommend the print center on campus. It's open slightly later as well, so I often chose to study there, instead of the main library.

- b. Honestly, like any class you take at UW, the quality varies. I had some incredibly excellent classes and some not so great ones. Although the teachers were really nice, they often did not provide the same structured guidance that you might receive from UW teachers. This definitely isn't like home. You must be self-motivated and free thinking; no one will guide you a specific way. I had some problems with this method because I wasn't really used to it, but I can see how it is beneficial.
- c. I know I might be biased because I am an Anthropology major, but the two courses I took from Helena Wulff (Communications and Aesthetics) and Annika Rabo (Changes in Kinship) were really, really excellent. I would definitely recommend them. However, the archeology class the Viking Age in Northern Europe and along the Eastern Routes with Nanouschka Myrberg was also great. It's directed towards English speakers who may not have any background in archeology, so it's a great class for exchange students, although there were Swedish people taking it also. Although I wasn't particularly interested in the subject, the Nanouschka was, by far, one of the nicest and most accommodating teachers I have ever had in my life. Plus, the expedition was fun!
- d. As a Swedish and Anthropology major, I tried to take as many classes as I could to relate to either. Unless you're a Swedish or Scandinavian studies major, it may be difficult to fulfill your requirements since it is often difficult to find numerous classes in English, if need be, from the same department. I was lucky to find a great set of Anthropology classes, in addition to my Swedish language and culture classes for my Swedish major. However, there are a few classes that I'm not sure will be useable for my Anthropology major.

### 3. Housing

- a. I was able to apply to student housing and, although highly unlikely, I also could have looked for an apartment on my own.
- b. I chose to live in student housing. The Stockholm housing market is ridiculous. It is outrageously expensive and most people have to wait months, if not years, for

an available room. And even if I was able to find something, it, no doubt, would have been farther away from the university and/or the center of town. Student housing was a cheap, easy alternative.

- c. I would definitely recommend the student housing! Even though it's not guaranteed, as a US student, you have a much higher chance of getting it. I lived in Lappis and it was a nice student community close to campus. It is definitely one of the best places for a student to live.

4. Program/Exchange site

- a. Stockholm University's campus is very different from UW. The main campus is set about 10 minutes (on the tunnelbana) outside the city center and there are 6 buildings that are all connected. The majority of classes and administration are within these units, including the main school library as well, but there are also various buildings surrounding the main campus area and around various parts of the city. Because it was so different from UW, it was weird to get used to, but it's an easy adjustment to make because everything is mostly located in the same place. There are also really large, gorgeous lawns around the main campus that are a favorite place for Swedes and foreigners alike to soak up all that vitamin D that is so dearly missed in the winter. The main campus is also a very short, direct walk from the Lappis housing area, which is incredibly convenient.

5. Health and Safety

- a. Stockholm, by far, is the safest place I have ever been in my entire life. Never once did I feel threatened or thought I was going to get robbed and as a young female who tends to stay out late, that's saying something. One afternoon I lost my wallet with all of my cards and some money in it and it was returned to the Police a couple days later with everything intact, which is something that would rarely happen anywhere else. However, there are some suburbs, such as many farther out on the blue line that may be a little sketchier than the city itself. For health concerns DO NOT go to the doctor's office or hospital unless you want to pay a very, very, very large sum of money. Because US residents are not included in EU agreements, it's very expensive to get treated. Instead, use the student health clinic provided by the Stockholm University.

6. Cultural Aspects:

- a. Since Stockholm University is mostly a commuter school, residence was a crucial factor in meeting people; I met the majority of the people I knew from the connections established living in student housing. At the start of the year, I took classes with other exchange students, where I met a number of people, and then established a solid community of people via arranged international student activities as well as various student residence halls. This includes international students and Swedes.
- b. Gender equality is important. No one should expect to be treated differently based on gender. It's crucial to give Swedes personal space because the majority of people tend to keep to themselves and like it that way. This may account for the stereotype of a "cold" exterior that various from American idea of polite. However, this is somewhat inaccurate. As stated, Swedish people do prefer to keep to themselves, but they are incredibly nice and if help is needed, they gladly aid you with things such as directions. They may appear to be "cold", but it's mostly assumed that it's polite as they prefer not to present a fake "niceness" that

seems superficial. Swedes prefer to be genuine, or drunk. They do drink a fair amount, so going out, whether you choose to drink or not, is an excellent way to meet people and to get to know the culture. Also, always ask for the check at a restaurant, otherwise, it will take hours! In addition, fika (coffee breaks) are a crucial part of the Swedish culture. Fika and embrace the booming coffee culture; it's an excellent way to get to know people better.

7. Financial:

- a. I am unsure about the "best" way to access money from the U.S. When abroad, I used my American debit card. It allowed for my parents to put money in my account when I needed and they were able to do it easily from home. However, being away a year, I was charged a hefty fee with every transaction, which, in the end, totaled a very large sum. If a student chooses to open a Swedish bank account, the bank Forex may be used to transfer money. In addition, Forex is the best place to pay any bills in Sweden (i.e. student housing, internet, etc).
- b. It's hard to say the exact amount of spending money needed for a stay in Sweden. However, it can be certain that it is a lot. Since everything is taxed so heavily, everyday expenses are pricey. The majority of the money I spent was used for food and alcohol, since transportation and rent were paid in chunk sums at the beginning of each semester. For student housing, you pay approximately 17,000 SEK (about 2300 USD) per semester. For transportation, they have an unlimited student card for all public transportation that I highly recommend. The cost is about 2200 SEK (about 300 USD) per semester. I would recommend about 1400-2100 SEK (200-300 USD) per month for all other expenses. Sweden is expensive after all.
- c. I think the biggest unexpected expense was the tax on everything because it really hikes up the prices on just about everything. It also cost a pretty penny to enter clubs as well, which I was also not expecting. Other than that though, the expenses are pretty standard.
- d. I attempted to use Financial Aid, but was not granted anything, despite my appeals for the large financial burden this amazing experience would require. There were no complications because there was no Financial Aid. Thanks for nothing!

8. Program/Exchange Administration

- a. I had a direct exchange through the IPE office. Honestly, they weren't terribly helpful and didn't provide a lot of service. However, since it was a direct exchange, there wasn't a lot of service for them to even provide. I thought Annie did a good job of setting up meeting beforehand, but the new lady in charge of Scandinavian exchanges was unfamiliar and was not as helpful. I wish I had been a little bit better prepped to understand the school system though. No one told us anything.
- b. N/A

9. Program/Student Type

- a. It is of the utmost importance that the student be prepared to really let go of ties at home and be open to not only the Swedish culture, but also hundreds of other cultures that you will have to live beside as well. A person should not be afraid to strike up conversations with unknown persons and must have enough confidence and security with themselves to withstand long periods of isolation. A student

must be motivated to get involved on their own, for there will be no one there to help them along through the process. In order to fully enjoy the experience, a person must be prepared to be alone and to suffer because if they can get through the worst part, the good times will prevail.

10. Overall Experience

- a. I think I had semi-realistic expectations, but, overall, they were completely different from what I actually experienced. However, I think my academic expectations were incredibly unrealistic, even after the adjustment to the grading scale. It is incredibly hard to get a good grade at the university and A's are often impossible. It's important to keep this in mind and to not be too disappointed if the grades received are lower than your average for your home university. Anything above failing is decent! My experience expectations were reasonable. I went into this adventure knowing that this would be a VERY tough year. However, I was unprepared for how tough it would be, due to some unforeseen circumstances. With 3 months off for winter break (could have been prevented) and an abnormally terrible winter with endless months of snow and darkness (out of my control) on top of that, it made for a very rough period. Despite times of seeming hopelessness, I had somewhat prepared myself for it. I knew that, if I survived, I would benefit greatly. And I did survive and my expectations were exceeded for how great things turned out to be. I didn't think it was possible, but Stockholm became my **home**, even more so than Seattle by the end of it. And, as it turned out, leaving that beautiful city was one of the hardest things I had to endure throughout the whole experience.



**Stockholm University Exchange (Spring Semester, 2015)****IP&E PROGRAM EVALUATION OUTLINE:****1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:**

a. I highly recommend students arrive as soon as their housing is available through SU, but not before. There is a window of time (open office hours) that students need to go to the housing office, collect their keys and sign off on the leasing agreement. If your flight is delayed (like mine was) you might find yourself needing "alternative accommodation" until the office reopens. Hostels and hotels in Stockholm are usually more expensive than elsewhere in Europe, especially if booked on short notice. If you can, your first stops should be the housing office and then your new home!

b. The first day that my housing was available was the first day of orientation. Really, the whole first week is a series of short optional orientation events. I definitely recommend attending as many of these events as possible and asking any questions you have. Most students' courses begin the following week, so you are able to get acclimated to Stockholm and the university this first week. Tours, presentations, fikas (short social coffee breaks), and much more explains what to expect. These events give you a lot of useful information, but they also help you meet a lot of other exchange students.

**2. ACADEMICS:**

a. Instruction at SU compared to UW is very different and often confusing. I took two 15hp (15 credit) courses, then a third 4.5hp Swedish language course, all from different departments. 30hp/semester is "full time", and courses are usually 30, 15 or 7.5hp. You can take any combination of courses to get to 30hp, but often the courses overlap in weird ways so you need to find a time schedule and compare. Further, the IP&E office only wants exchange students to take courses from a maximum of two departments. Compound that with needing first level (Bachelor's) and only English taught courses, and it can make options scarce.

Instruction itself is very relaxed. Swedes don't have traditional hierarchical teacher-student views, but rather promote ongoing dialogue and self-teaching. Courses are comparative to a UW quiz section in size, usually 20-50 people. In my courses, no attendance was taken and the only graded assignment was a final take home essay (or two smaller essays for the whole course). Grading was generally harder, but the amount of work for each class was much less than at UW. The SU library is very helpful and computer facilities are available during open hours, but it is definitely not on the level of Odegaard. However, I usually studied in a café or in my apartment and didn't need to utilize it.

b. The quality and content of instruction often depends on the teacher(s) and students that make up the class. There was an emphasis on communal discussion and group works/projects; a little different than the individual nature of UW. In my experience, I often had group presentations and assignments with an individual essay (giving you an individual grade).

c. Unfortunately, I was pretty disappointed in the actual courses I took. The course content was good, but the presentation (often by a different lecturer each lesson) was poor. I do recommend taking a Swedish language course at SU. My instructor (Sten Magnus Petri) taught course 1 very well. He's a kind old man with a



real interest in what he teaches. Studying the language was incredibly helpful (though nearly everyone speaks English). Speak Swedish! Tala svenska!

d. Often when studying abroad the limitations don't allow you to take all courses that will relate to your major. Accepting that, the electives you might take let you explore other areas of interest. After the credit conversion upon my return, 5 out of 27 awarded credits went into my actual major (History). The post-exchange credit conversion can be hellish, as you are at the mercy of the departments and your conversion coordinator that control how your entire academic experience will transfer back with you. But more importantly, my courses allowed me to explore Swedish culture, education and language. The experience abroad is much more important than the academics.

### **3. HOUSING:**

a. Housing through SU is guaranteed for UW exchange students as long as the application deadlines are met (carefully review all the documents fully or you might miss a deadline like I almost did). Student housing is fantastic. I could have also tried finding an apartment on my own, but I never had a desire to.

b. I chose student housing facilitated by the university, it was closer to the university, cheaper, more simplistic to get, and allowed me to meet other exchange students. I stayed in Kungshamra, which is a collection of student buildings one metro stop from the university.

c. I fully recommend getting housing through SU. I recommend Lappis as a first choice and Kungshamra as a second. Both are the same "corridor-style" and are very similar, but Lappis student housing is closer to the university, cheaper, and has a better student environment. On the housing application, you make multiple ranked choices and then are granted housing at one with only an accept/decline option.

### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:**

Frescati campus is the main campus at Stockholm University and is set apart a little ways from central Stockholm to the south. It is easily accessed by metro (tunnelbana), bus and taxi. The main building is a collection of six adjoined very tall buildings collectively called "Sodra Huset" (South House). There is a great central lawn and many smaller buildings scattered throughout. Close by is the Natural History museum and Lappis student housing. There are also a lot of trails and a few small lakes near the university, which is much more nature-oriented and quiet than UW.

### **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

I had very little or no experience with any health or safety concerns while in Sweden. Scandinavia (particularly Sweden) is incredible safe in comparison to much of Europe. I never had any problems with safety even while alone downtown near 1AM. This was common amongst nearly everyone I talked to. Have common sense and it is very unlikely you will ever feel unsafe here. Also, of course you are required to have the study abroad insurance for medical or other emergencies, but I never used it.

### **6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:**

a. The easiest places to connect with others were on my apartment floor, orientation events and courses. Initial meetings are crucial and friend groups form very quickly amongst students. Unfortunately, I did not meet many native Swedes but I met exchange students from all over the world to compensate. Always take the chance to start up a conversation with someone and pursue a relationship. I met two of my closest friends



abroad by just starting conversations at the bus stop. However, this is very difficult to do with natives, as they are often quiet, reserved, and have headphones in constantly. Take a chance!

b. Swedes are infamous for being cold-hearted. Actually, this isn't true but they dislike superficial niceties that are common in the States. Swedes will commonly avoid eye contact (especially with strangers) and smiling at someone as you cross paths is rarely ever done unless you are familiar with each other. Even "thank you" and "you're welcome" are used more sparingly. Swedes are very independent, so don't expect anyone to hold a door open for you. They are often indirect and specialize in conflict avoidance (Swedes love neutrality). Underneath this, I found that Swedes are incredibly willing to offer help to those in need and are very kind (especially to foreigners). Sweden is one of the most gender-equal nations in the world and the common person prides themselves on fairness and equality. Stereotypically, they are quiet and reserved until they begin to drink. These subtle things may feel very different (even wrong), but keep an open mind. Realize and enjoy that you are immersed in a new culture.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

a. Luckily, I was never charged at any ATM (Bankomat) for a withdrawal or a transaction in Sweden. Swedes have almost completely switched to all electronic payments (online and with card), cash is rarely used. The ATMs, restaurants, and all the stores I went to never charged me for using a foreign card or bank. However, your bank might. I bank with the credit union STCU and was only charged 1% for any foreign transaction. My advice is to consider opening an account with a credit union to get lower fees. Keep in mind you will also need to do international wire transfers (I did twice for rent) and local credit unions rarely do those, so you'll need to have access to another account (like Chase).

b. On average, I spent \$140 USD each week (\$560/month). I found that Sweden was expensive, but not as expensive as the Study Abroad office's estimations are. For example, one semester of rent was estimated to be \$3,500, while I only paid \$2,075 for a semester (better than in Seattle!). Be smart, budget and keep track, shop at larger grocery stores, don't buy textbooks (use the library to rent), sneak into museums; you will be surprised how much you save!

d. I used Financial Aid to fund my exchange. The only complication I encountered was finding housing for Autumn quarter before my exchange in Winter and Spring. Since UW would not accommodate me (I cannot commute, apartments don't like 3-month leases, and no sublets found), I was forced to withdraw from Autumn quarter. This can seriously mess with your Financial Aid if not done right, luckily a girl in the FA office was very helpful and I was able to maintain 2/3 aid.

## **8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:**

a. The IP&E office services were very minimal. It is incredible how many steps, how much paperwork is needed to study abroad. There is a constant dialogue needed between the IP&E offices (at UW and abroad) and the student. I found my coordinator was often vague, sometimes unhelpful or absent. I would occasionally get needed documents from the IP&E office late or even after I had needed them. Negotiating office hours, availability and holidays was often an issue. Katherine (for Scandinavian studies) is very patient, but can be brisk. Your program relies upon you. The IP&E office is more of a tool than a guide.

## **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

This program is best suited for a student that has a hunger for the world abroad; a student that wants it badly enough to face all kinds of constant hardships. More so, the student needs the diligence to overcome those

challenges. If you “kind of” want to study abroad, don’t bother. You have to be completely committed to put the work in, to navigate many (sometimes complex) steps, to persevere, to engage. Then you will reap incredible rewards that you keep with you for a lifetime.

#### **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

My expectations were realistic. I found I was so easily impressed and content abroad. It has been a life-long dream to travel, and this exchange was just the beginning. I met many amazing and interesting people from all over the world, delved into a unique culture I knew little about, and learned a lot about myself along the way. Students have to be prepared for the best of times with the worst of times. You must be okay with yourself, and to be alone. There were very homesick moments when I realized just how far away I was from everyone I’ve ever known my whole life. I accepted that all the relationships I left behind would change while I was gone, some little, and some dramatically. The people you leave behind will never be the same, you will never be the same, and the way you look at the world or have a cup of coffee won’t ever be the same either.