

STUDY ABROAD IN LONDON

Westminster University
September-December 2011
by Ilona Davidoff
Marketing Management

“By seeing London, I have seen as much of life as the world can show”
Samuel Johnson (English poet, critic, and writer 1709-1784)

In the summer of 2011, I went abroad for the first time to attend a summer course in Advertising & Sales Promotion at Middlesex University in London. Some of my fellow students went to Malaysia over the summer period when I decided to take a chance and apply for a course in the busy city instead. As Business Academy Aarhus did not have any agreements with the universities in London at that time, I had to work out most of the application on my own but it was all worth it.

The course I attended was really exciting as advertising is something I have always found very interesting. It gave me some tools that I can use in the future and furthermore, I met new and different kinds of people. When my stay was coming to its end, it was sooner than expected and I was not ready to leave as I was really enjoying my stay abroad. Spontaneously, I decided to embrace a challenge and applied for a study semester abroad at Westminster University in London.

Before my departure

I was still in London when I decided on sending an application for an entire semester abroad. Westminster University has seven study departments with a wide range of different courses within media, social sciences, business, architecture, computer science, law and life sciences. The coordination of composing the courses in order to be connected with the courses on the 3rd semester of the Marketing Management programme at the academy was prepared in cooperation with Hanne Engelgreen, who is responsible of giving credits for the courses. With help from the responsible study abroad staff from Westminster University and the responsible staff at Business Academy Aarhus (Rikke Nielsen, head of International Affairs and Kristoffer Mikkelsen, coordinator at International Office) the application was completed and within few weeks I had my unconditional offer despite the past deadline for applications for the fall semester of 2011.



One big challenge that abroad students face is housing; the rooms at campus were already filled up by students, most of them by students who already are studying and continuing at the university. The study abroad department at the university is always ready to offer help to abroad students to everything from information about housing, student oyster card for transportation, insurance, etc. Luckily, I managed to find a room in Canada Water in South-East London, Zone 2 (it took me approximately 20 minutes to go to school from home + bus + tube) in a 5-bedroom shared apartment and with a weekly rent of £110 (≈970DKK) including bills + internet. Housing is a bit expensive but to find a proper room is a challenge. You want to find something that is clean, close to the university that you are attending and close to the central of London but at the same time to not be too expensive. As many of the landlords are private persons that lend out rooms, you have to be careful as many of them can be scammers or take a higher price. Many landlords from agencies require that a contract is signed for at least a 6 months stay and with a need of a guarantor as a proof that the expenses can be paid.

London is a big city that is always busy; the city is represented by all types and kinds of people and personalities. My expectations for the stay in London were first of all to be challenged academically and personally and to build more on the experience I already had gained from the summer stay. I found it very interesting to meet people from different backgrounds and countries as this made me understand and learn more about people and myself.



My life as a Londoner

My schedule for school did not look that busy; in total the week consisted of 12 hours where half of them were lectures and half was seminar classes. Despite the few classes, school work can take a lot of time because many of the projects require additional research and to be made in groups. The teaching and learning methods in England are much alike the Danish way of teaching at the universities. As a student at a university you have most of the responsibility in your own hands to take control of your own learning and effort. The four courses that I had were Macroeconomic Analysis, Organisational Analysis and Behaviour, Brands/Branding and Marketing Communications.

As the exams at Westminster University only take place once a year, namely at the end of the school year (before summer) it is impossible for study abroad students to attend the final exam unless they are attending the last semester of the school year. Instead, alternative assessments in the form of essays or closed book exams are taking place. It is a requirement to attend the in-class reports and assignments in order to be able to attend exam. One of the challenges is of course that people are different and the working effort varies. It can be a challenge to arrange group meetings where everyone is able to attend and make the project together. One thing I especially noticed is that people tend more to delegate parts of the project among them and work on their part individually. Some of the lecturers even believed that group meetings were a waste of time. Either way, it is a good experience where you get to learn more about people and yourself.



At the university there are plenty of societies that meet up and share a hobby together; music, sport, politics, dancing, art, etc. It is very important as a student abroad to put yourself out there and get to meet new people. It can be a challenge to travel to a new (maybe unknown) country away from the usual and accustomed circumstances at home with friends and family around you all the time to stand by yourself. One of the initiatives I took after joining a group of Danes in London on Facebook was to

arrange an event where we could meet up and share our experiences; to my big surprise, many Danes felt exactly like me. When being away from home for a longer period, sometimes you will be missing and appreciating even the smallest things (for instance Danish food). This of course, is the same case no matter which country you are coming from. As long as there is a balance this is a good thing to do; one of the main reasons of going abroad is to meet people from other cultures and countries and you do not want to stick to the usual and safe.

London is a big city that is in motion 24/7. There are always plenty of events to attend no matter which day and what time of the day it is. When going to a bigger city like London, you have to go sightseeing - at least once. Go and see Big Ben, London Eye, and Buckingham Palace; only to mention few. What I did was to see it as an adventure. Sometimes I jumped on the tube and went to an unknown area just to spend an entire day on looking around and embracing whatever came in my way even though I sometimes could get lost, not knowing where I was. It is amazing what kind of discoveries you make! The good thing about the transportation system in London is that no matter how lost you get you can always find a tube station and easily find your way back home.



I'm home again... until the next adventure

If you have been abroad you will always be in a stronger position when it comes to finding a job. As the world is becoming more global and international every day, experience from abroad gives you an advantage. When going abroad there are always plenty of impressions all the time so sometimes it feels more like a long vacation than a school semester. Whether you will be happy with the results from the exams or not and think that you could have put more effort into the study itself, a study abroad is not only about spending one semester at a different university; it is also a chance to develop and challenge yourself personally.

To me, going abroad (twice!) has given me a lot of benefits. Besides a good-looking resume and experience, I have learned a lot about other people and myself. Meeting so many different people from all over the world makes you see the world through other eyes than what you are used to. You will have a better understanding of what is important in life and learn to appreciate things that you maybe used to take for granted.

I am so happy I went abroad that even after doing it twice, I haven't had enough. For my internship in my final semester, I am going abroad again - this time to Los Angeles, USA.

If you ever get the opportunity of going abroad you should take the chance, no matter how intimidating it may seem. In the end you will not regret; to me this is the biggest experience I ever had in my life.

"Sometimes you have to get lost to find yourself"

Thanks to:

Westminster University and its staff

Hanne Engelgreen, lecturer, BAA

Rikke Nielsen, head of International Affairs, BAA

Kristoffer Mikkelsen, coordinator at International Office, BAA

Bjarke Tinten, lecturer, BAA

Danish Ministry of Education

