# DEPARTURE ORIENTATION: DESTINATIONS OUTSIDE EUROPE

# DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

The agenda of this departure orientation is that you stop for a moment to think about your expectations for the exchange and orient yourself in the everyday exchange country with other students and with the help of your tutor. You also get to know what the University of Helsinki expects from your exchange.

Schedule:

- Before the exchange
- During the exchange
- After the exchange

# FEELINGS AND EXPECTATIONS

Things to reflect on (now or later):

- Do you expect to experience a change in your life during your stay abroad?
- Does change stress you out, excite you or something else?
- Expectations are necessary, they can motivate and excite you
- You may also feel anxious – it’s normal

# SET LEARNING GOALS FOR THE EXCHANGE

- Goals help you track your own learning and analyze what skills you have acquired, and how your attitude towards the world around you may have changed.
- Examples of goals

  → Improving academic expertise

  → New interactions and networks with experts in your study field

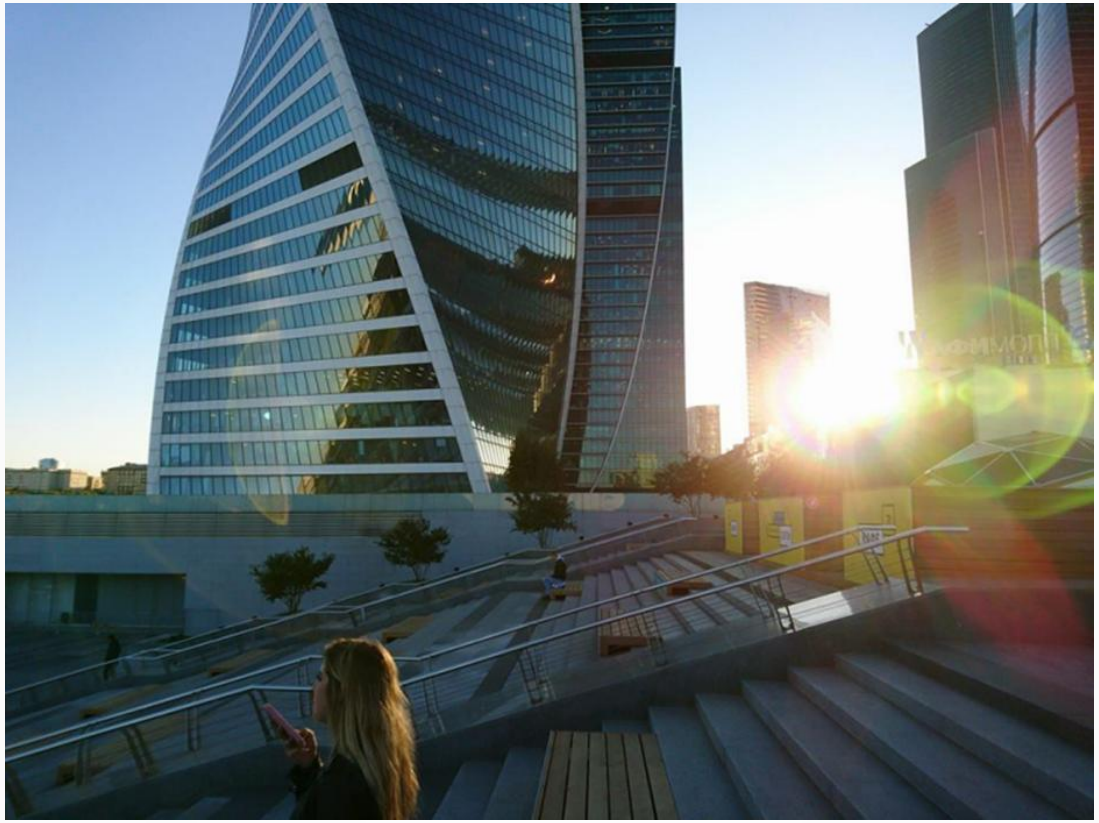
  → Development of language, interaction and cooperation skills: you know how to work in a multilingual and cultural environment

  → Increased self-awareness, confidence and flexibility

  → You have developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills

  → You can follow your progress, for example, by keeping a learning diary. Be sure to start the process before leaving for the exchange and continue after returning!

# PART 1: BEFORE EXCHANGE



# INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS – STUDY ABROAD

## AFTER BEING SELECTED FOR AN EXCHANGE

### Before your exchange - checklist after you've been selected for an exchange
Before you can embark on your exchange journey, you must complete a number of important tasks. The checklist provided on this page includes the most important tasks regarding participation in an exchange.

### Sustainability and student exchange
On this page you will find useful tips for sustainable travelling for both as incoming and outgoing students.

### Intercultural Competences
If you want to seize every part of the process during your international studies, this section is for you. Here you can find a guide to reflect on your experience, which will aid your professional, personal, and intercultural growth.

### Culture Shock & Homesickness
Experiencing culture shock or homesickness while studying abroad? Whether you're dealing with culture shock, homesickness, or both, the stages, experiences, and how to respond to them are all relatively similar. This page provides information on and tips for dealing with culture shock and homesickness.

### Changes during the exchange
Things do not always go as planned. If you must suspend or cancel your exchange, read the instructions on this page. This page also provides instructions on extending your stay and revising your learning agreement as well as on other special situations and challenges.

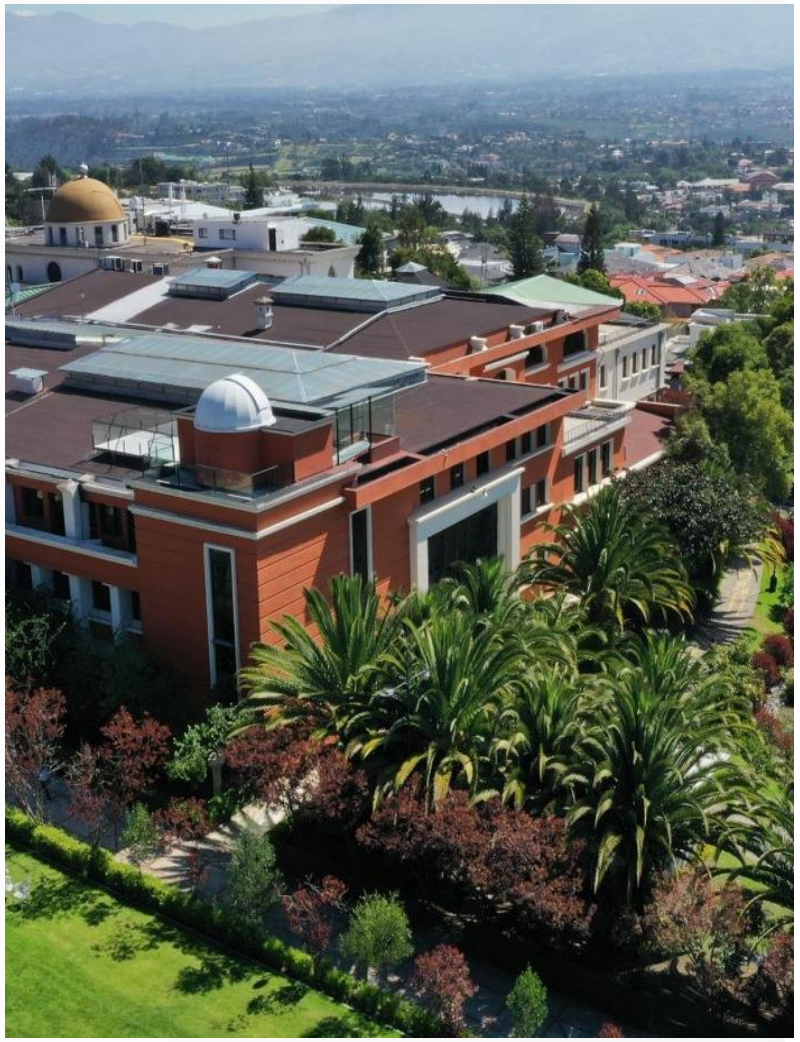
### Checklist for returning exchange students
You should prepare for your return to Finland even before the end of your exchange studies. This page provides a checklist for returning exchange students.

# APPLYING TO YOUR HOST UNIVERSITY

- Application information has been emailed to you or can be found on the exchange university's website (be also sure to check your **spam folder**)
- If you need international exchange services' signatures on the application documents, make the request in good time before deadlines
- Transcript of Studies / Certificate of Student Status: you can download these yourself from Sisu, or ask for an official one from the student services

# ACCEPTANCE LETTER

- The letter of acceptance usually comes via email → Remember to check the **spam folder**!
- If you have applied correctly and on time, it is very likely that you will be accepted
- Sometimes approval information may be delayed if course choices are still being negotiated
- If you have not received a letter of acceptance about 2 months before your exchange starts, please contact both the international unit of your exchange university and studentexchange@helsinki.fi
- Host universities usually don’t give information about the progress during the application period



# BEFORE YOUR EXCHANGE

**Checklist:** Before your exchange - instructions for those chosen for student exchange | Instructions for students (helsinki.fi)

- **Accept the terms of the grant at Mobility Online** no later than 2 months before the exchange. Fill in the bank account information to receive the grant.

- **Student Exchange Certificate** = The exchange certificate is an official document that includes the name of your exchange program and the time of the exchange. It states that the exchange is part of the degree.

  → You will get it after updating the exchange dates and accepting the terms of the grant.
  →If you are entitled to Kela student benefits, Kela may provide benefits for the exchange period specified in the exchange certificate.

# ALSO REMEMBER

- Notification of temporary move abroad to Kela (social security) and the Digital and Population Data Services Agency
- Notification of change in study grant (Kela)
- Register as an **attending student at the University of Helsinki** for the duration of your exchange
- Let us know if you have graduated with a bachelor's degree
- Make sure you have a secondary way to authenticate yourself (university and banking) in case your device is stolen or lost
- Full checklist after you have been selected for an exchange

# INSURANCES

- Purchase a comprehensive insurance for the duration of your student exchange! The required insurance coverage depends on your destination.
- Acquire a comprehensive travel insurance already before purchasing airline tickets and other payments related to exchange costs. When you get insurance, also check the crisis coverage provided by the insurance.
- The University of Helsinki does not provide travel or health insurance for outgoing exchange students
- Compare and check out the prices from different insurance companies on Migri website

# FUNDING YOUR EXCHANGE STUDIES

- An exchange based on an agreement is tuition-free at the host university (does not exempt from tuition fee to UH).
- However, keep in mind other expenses such as: insurances, vaccinations, language tests, possibly laboratory or field courses, etc.
- You receive a scholarship as part of your exchange from UH, no separate application is needed.
- Read more about funding for exchange
- If you are entitled to KELA student benefits, you can also receive them during your exchange abroad. Remember to inform Kela if you study abroad. See the Kela site for more information.
- Tips on other grants or travel grants providers (foundations or organisations)

# STUDENT EXCHANGE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By accepting the Student Exchange Terms and Conditions you agree:

- To study full-time
  - You are required to complete the amount of academic studies

  on our Destinations page (English version) (NB! ECTS used only in Europe)
- To study within the agreed period of time
  - as stated in your student exchange certificate
  - If you cancel your exchange (or shorten from full year to one semester) you will pay back (a part of) the grant accordingly.
  - Failure to enter the host country is not considered force majeure (you cannot keep the grant)
  - After the exchange: fill in a student exchange feedback form in Mobility Online

# HOW DO I FIND ACCOMMODATION?

**Some universities offer help in finding accommodation:**

- Fill in the ”housing application” form
- Follow deadlines and instructions
- Pay the deposit in time
- You may need to pay your rent in advance
- You may be asked to sign a fixed-term agreement.
- Don’t sign any agreements before you receive an acceptance letter from your host university!

**Make use of:**

- tips and advice from students who have already been on exchange at that university.
- different sources of information; family and friends, acquaintances, local advertisements, online platforms, Facebook groups, social media, etc.

**Private Market:**

- Always ask for a written rental agreement.
- If you can, find someone local to go through the agreement with you.
- Find out what is included in the rental agreement.
- Find out your rights for terminating the agreement (when can you terminate it at the earliest and how?)
- Be aware of fraud!

It is advisable to take care of your accommodation before starting your studies so that you can focus on studying properly. If necessary, book temporary accommodation in advance.

# COURSE FOR STUDENTS GOING ON EXCHANGE TO AUTHORITARIAN OR ILLIBERAL COUNTRIES

- It is essential to recognize that each nation's academic landscape varies significantly. As you prepare to embark on your academic journey abroad, understanding these differences becomes paramount.
- This course caters to students (and staff members) who are venturing to countries with distinct political and legal systems. Its purpose is twofold: first, to equip you with essential knowledge relevant to your destination, and second, to provide additional resources for further exploration.
- **Mini-course open on the** DigiCampus platform
- The course has been developed in collaboration between the UH and the University of Turku

# QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE TOPICS?

- Applying to your host university
- Before departure
- Mobility grant and funding your exchange studies
- Insurances

# PART 2: ABROAD

# "GEOGRAPHICAL PLACES BECOME HOMES THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS"

# EXPERIENCES DURING THE EXCHANGE

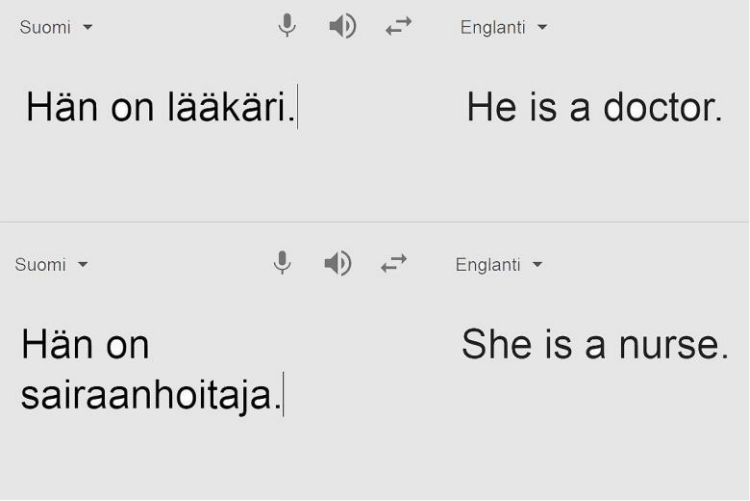
1. **Honeymoon stage**: The excitement to experience everything from an outsider's perspective. A foreign culture is being viewed in a positive light, dismissing the negative parts.
2. **Distress stage**: Small things start to annoy and the negative sides and practical problems surface. Tiredness, depression and feeling home sick is common during this stage.
3. **Adjustment stage**: You will become better in getting through different situations and understanding differences between people. You will start to have less communication problems. Level of stress decreases.
4. **Adaptation stage**: You are getting used to how things work and are starting to call this your new home.
5. **Reverse culture shock**: While we often hear about culture shock when being in a new place, however, 'reverse culture shock' is also something that can occur when you return to your home after a period abroad. It can be worse than the culture shock in the beginning. Readjustment to your own culture can take time because of new experiences and possible changes in your self image.

You can read more about cultural shock on the Instruction for students pages

# COMMUNICATION AND SELF REFLECTION:

You will get to know your destination thoroughly, but what about where you come from and who you are?

- Know your country - where are you coming from? What is your own cultural background? What types of thinking patterns do you have? What do you think of Finns?
- Know yourself – What are your hopes and dreams? What are you nervous about? How do you deal with changes? What would help when you are feeling home sick?



# EMBRACING CULTURE SHOCK

While culture shock may initially be challenging, it presents numerous benefits as well. Embracing and overcoming culture shock leads to:

- Personal growth, self confidence
- Increased cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Enhanced communication and language skills
- A broadened worldview and perspective: A global mindset
- Increased adaptability and resilience, skills for coping with change and uncertainty

# STUDYING ABROAD: PART 1

- Be prepared to change your learning agreement, follow the instructions from the university closely.
- Notice that retaking exams may not be possible during your exchange.

  - If you have problems with your studies:

- The language or difficulty of the course are not acceptable reasons to drop a class and fall behind on the credit goal.
- **Always contact your host university's coordinator and us if something unexpected happens.**
- Try to be prepared for changes and make arrangements ahead of time.
- You can read more about changes during the exchange on the Instuctions for students pages

# STUDYING ABROAD PART 2

Be prepared that while studying abroad you will face different ways of learning/studying, e.g.

- active participation
- many group assignments
- more extensive courses
- all exams may be during the last two weeks of the semester or academic year

But don’t worry too much! Of recent students on exchange overseas, only 15% felt the workload was more demanding than in Helsinki. Also, you will not get numerical grades in Sisu from the exchange, only Pass marks.

# EXCHANGE AND HEALTH

- If you use prescription medication, make sure to have an EU prescription with you in English, and that you have enough medication for your stay. However, countries may have limits on how much you can bring so find out if your medication is available in your host country. Check e.g. Fimea's website on what you can bring abroad.
- If you are seeing a therapist or a psychologist on a regular basis, it is usually not best to discontinue your treatment entirely for the duration of your exchange. Contact your therapist or psychologist to discuss your treatment plan for the exchange.
- Remember to take the vaccinations required in the destination area in good time.
- If you get sick during your exchange so that it affects your studies (also mentally),

➢ visit a doctor immediately. Get a medical certificate and contact International education services.

# EXCHANGE AND SAFETY 1/4

- Visit the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland website for current travel information

- From the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' web pages you will find information on location-specific travel bulletins.
- Make a travel notification. It allows the Ministry or Embassy to get in contact with you in the case of crisis or emergency.
- Take care of your travel documents. Before you travel, check that your travel documents are in order. You can check the passport and visa regulations at the mission or consulate of the destination country.
- Get travel insurance. It is important to take it already before first travel payments.

# EXCHANGE AND SAFETY 2/4

Before you are familiar with your exchange city, please remember to be extra cautious.

- Take care of your things and ID -> remember insurance
- Do not carry more cash with you than you might need at the moment
- Get to know the traffic rules and laws of your exchange country. Find out how they deal with public intoxication, alcohol, drugs, etc.
- Follow the political situation. Stay away from unsafe areas.
- If you travel within your destination country, make sure someone (for example another exchange student) knows where you are and when you are coming back.

Find out where the nearest Embassy of Finland is and follow them on social media.

# EXCHANGE AND SAFETY 3/4

If something serious happens in your exchange destination:

- Follow the instructions of local officials and your host university.
- Contact the Finnish mission or consulate.
- Contact University of Helsinki exchange services as soon as possible. You can also ask your friend or family member to inform us: studentexchange@helsinki.fi.
- International exchange services will contact you if there is a crisis in your exchange destination.
- Save your loved one's phone number on your phone to your ICE information. A person assisting you in case of an emergency will have access to it even when your phone is locked.

# EXCHANGE AND SAFETY 4/4

- Everyday safety: what places are safe after dark?
- Witnessing a violent situation: what to do?
- Demonstrations on campus / political demonstrations
- Changes in the start of the semester or breaks during your studies
- Make sure you can use strong authentication and access your bank account even if your phone is stolen/lost

# COUNTRY-SPECIFIC NOTES: NORTH AMERICA AND OCEANIA

## USA

- New visa social media requirement
- Safety around town and on campus. Be aware of gun laws and sheer amount of guns
- Campus safety issues such as sex crimes on campus party nights; know your alcohol limits
- Social problems, large amount of homeless people, opioid crisis, post-pandemic challenges
- Public transport limited or non-existent
- Without proper insurance, one night in hospital e.g. $10 000

## Canada

- Despite similarities with Finland, it’s still a North American country with issues of city and campus safety

## Australia and New Zealand

- Be mindful of extreme weather: heatwaves, forest fires, flash floods
- Apply for the correct Australian visa

# AREA-SPECIFIC NOTES: LATIN AMERICA

- Listen to what locals  tell about **unsafe areas** and avoid them especially at night
- In some destinations public transportation might not be safe to use at night- take a taxi or an uber when it is recommended by locals
- Don’t carry your **valuables** openly – pickpockets and even violent robberies do happen
- **Vaccinations:** Iif you plan to travel around check the recommendations of all planned destinations (neighboring countries or certain areas in your exchange country (rain forests, countryside) might have different recommendations
- **Chile**: Risk for demonstrations turning violent, especially around Plaza Italia/ Plaza Baquedano
- **Colombia**: Avoid travel to border areas and worst-affected areas of August’s earthquake.
- **Ecuador**: Currently 60 day state of emergency with nighttime curfews in several areas, also in Quito. Avoid travel to provinces near Colombia’s border. Exchanges have worked during state of emergency. Follow host university’s rules and guidelines!
- **Mexico**: Several states have hightened security risk (e.g. Chiapas, Jaliscos, Michoacan) Also volcano Popocatépetl is showing signs of activity.

# AREA-SPECIFIC NOTES: ASIA

Mainland China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand

- In general, Asia is a safe and stable destination. However, the situation may change rapidly and unpredictably:
  - Natural disasters - Under normal circumstances, the greatest risk is associated with these
  - Political situations
- Penalties for violating public order, drunken behavior or anything related to drugs are more severe than in Finland
  - Also littering and spitting are prohibited and can be fined in some countries
- Traffic: use extreme caution and care when walking, driving, or riding a motorcycle
- Air quality is at times remarkably poor in certain areas

# AREA-SPECIFIC NOTES: AFRICA

- Stay away from townships and slum areas.
- Don’t keep your valuables in the open. Also, keep your valuables in your hand luggage during the flights.
- Don’t move alone, especially in the dark or in unfamiliar areas.
- If you use a car, keep your car doors locked and windows shut.
- Make sure that you have all the necessary vaccinations.

Egypt: The general situation in the Middle East may cause and increase the risk of terrorism. Please exercise general caution and be aware of their surroundings throughout the country.

# KEEP IN TOUCH DURING YOUR EXCHANGE

- During your exchange you can ask for help in exchange related questions from your host faculty and international exchange services.
- Read the emails and instructions we send to your helsinki.fi email
- Follow us on Instagram: uhgoabroad
- Use #wearehelsinkuni – hashtag when you post about your exchange
- Instructions for students will help you get started if you face problems during your exchange.

# SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES ON INSTAGRAM

- You will receive a request from us to post on our Instagram @uhgoabroad
- If you are asked to tell about UH during your exchange, there's plenty of information and images you can use available in Instructions for students.

# QUESTIONS SO FAR?

- Experiences and emotions during the exchange
- Studying abroad
- Exchange and health
- Safety during the exchange

# PART 3: RETURNING HOME

# BEFORE RETURNING HOME

**Bring home from your host university:**

- Your official transcript of studies from the exchange university (it might also be sent later or directly to International exchange services)
- A copy of course descriptions and syllabus
- Information concerning your credit points and grading scale
- Copies of your written work
- You must hand in a copy of the transcript you receive from your host university to the international education services that indicates that you have completed the required number of credits. You must submit it within 2 months from the end of your exchange.

**After Returning Home:**

- Transfer your credits in your study track/study program/faculty
- You are responsible for transferring your credits (application in Sisu not Mobility Online)
- The progress of your studies will be checked from Sisu in mid-September.
- Instead of a grade you will receive a Pass mark
- Please make sure that the studies will be located in the right academic year in your transcript.
- Read the returning home instructions.
- Give us feedback Mobility Online

# MOBILITY ONLINE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Last name | | Country of the host institution (1. choice) | |
| First name | | Host institution (1. choice) | |
| Date of birth (dd.mm.yyyy) | | Stay from (1. choice) | |
| Country of the sending institution | Finland | Stay to (1. choice) | |
| Sending institution | HELSINK01 - HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO | | |

| Necessary steps | Done | Done on | Done by | Direct access via following link | 12 / 18 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Stay from : 27.08.2025<br>• Stay to : 09.05.2026<br>• Duration in months : 8<br>• Duration in days : 256 | | | | | |
| Decision about the allocated exchange placement | ☑ | | | Accept/Decline | |
| Personal data completed | ☑ | | | Complete personal data | |
| Student exchange terms and conditions read (and saved/printed as pdf) | ☑ | | | Read student exchange terms and conditions | |
| Student exchange terms and conditions accepted | ☑ | | | Accept student exchange terms and conditions | |
| Application instructions uploaded and sent to student | ☑ | | | | |
| Scholarship payment processed | ☑ | | | | |
| • Payment date : 31.07.2025 | | | | | |
| **During the mobility** | | | | | 0 / 1 |
| Local phone number during exchange added | ☐ | | | Add phone number | |
| **After the mobility** | | | | | 0 / 4 |
| Transcript of Records from the host university uploaded | ☐ | | | Upload Transcript of Records from the host university | |
| Feedback form | ☐ | | | Enter the feedback questionnaire | |
| Number of completed credits at the host university | ☐ | | | | |
| • Number of completed credits : | | | | | |
| Stay marked as 'complete' | ☐ | | | | |

# MAKING USE OF THE EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

- Join HYY & ESN activities
- Share your exchange experience, for example, by writing an exchange report and / or becoming a tutor
- Identify your hidden skills with the EDUFI materials linked below

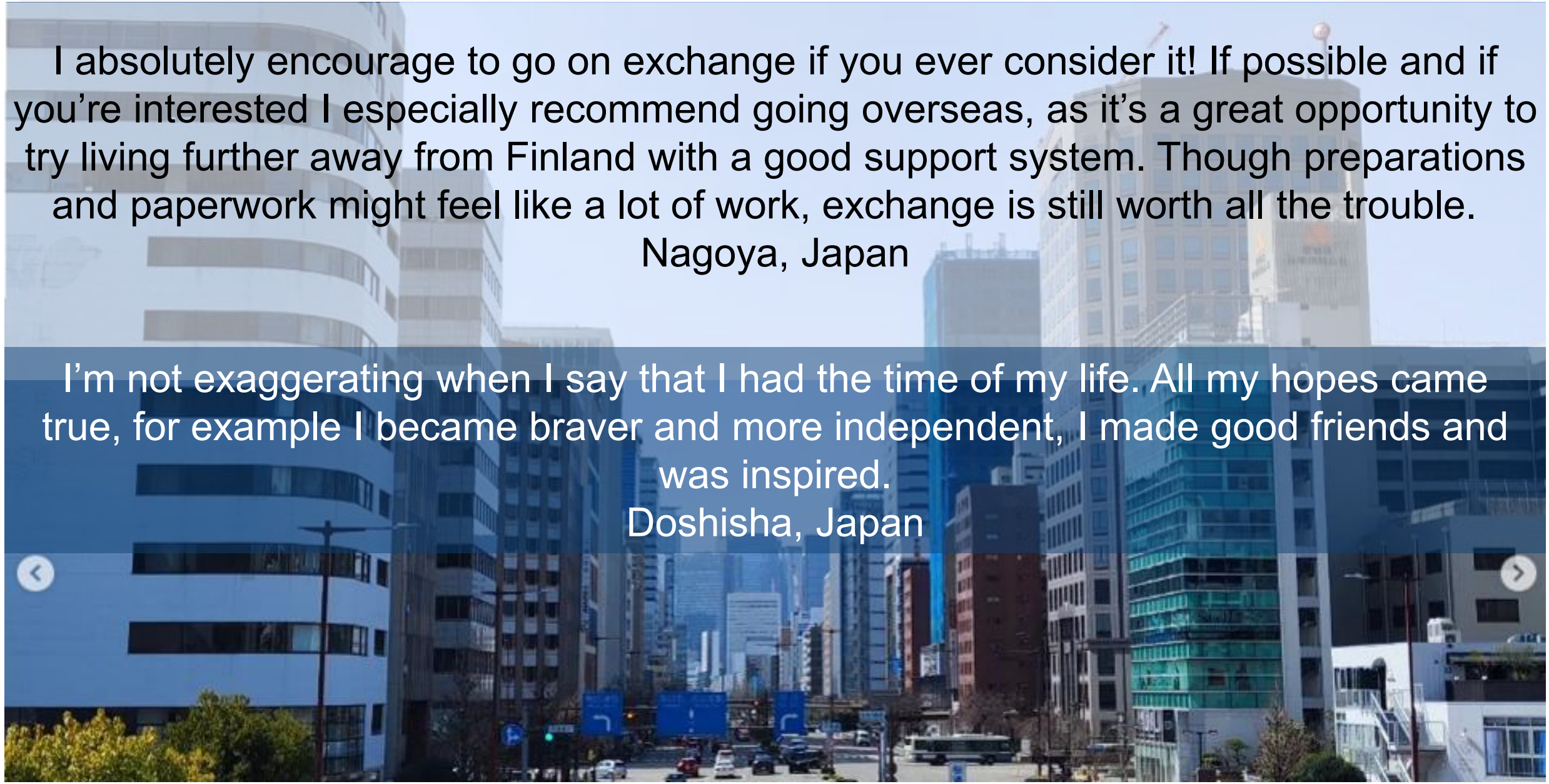
Source link: https://www.oph.fi/en/development/hidden-competences

# QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

International Education Services:

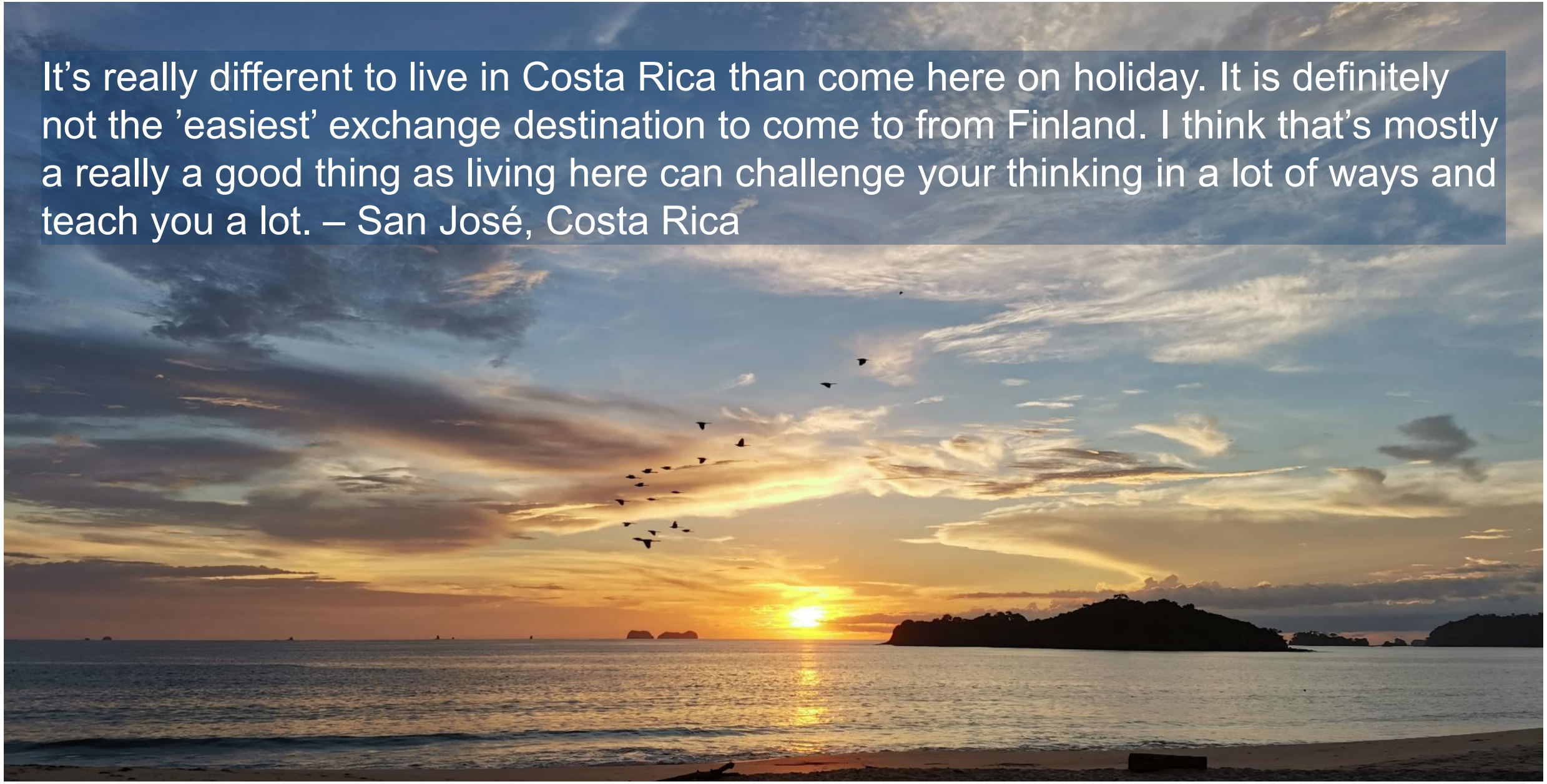
- E-mail: studentexchange@helsinki.fi
- Online individual appointments: Booking Service Vihta
- Tel: +358 2941 22401 (weekdays between 12:00-13:00)
- Drop-in services on different campuses

I’m so happy that I dared to go on exchange and especially to New Zealand. Though the last 5 months have not been the easiest, and I have been very homesick, student exchange was still one the most amazing experiences of my life. I learned so much of myself, gained confidence in my English skills and gained new perspective on my studies, and got to know amazing people. I can strongly recommed student exchange and University of Otago as a destination.



I absolutely encourage to go on exchange if you ever consider it! If possible and if you're interested I especially recommend going overseas, as it's a great opportunity to try living further away from Finland with a good support system. Though preparations and paperwork might feel like a lot of work, exchange is still worth all the trouble.
Nagoya, Japan

I'm not exaggerating when I say that I had the time of my life. All my hopes came true, for example I became braver and more independent, I made good friends and was inspired.
Doshisha, Japan



It’s really different to live in Costa Rica than come here on holiday. It is definitely not the ’easiest’ exchange destination to come to from Finland. I think that’s mostly a really a good thing as living here can challenge your thinking in a lot of ways and teach you a lot. – San José, Costa Rica