

My exchange period in Linköping on Spring 2021

My exchange period in Linköping was a marvelous experience and I would love to do it again. Exchange period truly opens your eyes and changes the way you think about others - at least it did for me. It also teaches you things about yourself and how you react to new situations. It also shows you that you can do it - whatever the "it" represents for you. For me the "it" was meeting new people and getting along with English and Swedish without the possibility of asking things in Finnish.

1. Pre-work

My exchange started at LiU (Linköpings Universitet) on Monday 18th of January in 2021. But before the actual starting day, I had to do some pre-work to be able to get there and start my studies. My exchange process after admission started by sending the needed documents to the destination university. In my case with the Nordtek program, I needed to send my transcript of records from my studies in Aalto and also the study plan showing the courses I was going to study. I also sent a picture of my passport. For Nordtek exchange, the amount of the needed documents was pretty small because of both Finland and Sweden are Nordic countries and they have some special agreements with each other.

2. The studying in LiU

The spring term started on the 18th of January and ended on the 11th of June. At least now due to Corona, there was no orientation week in the winter. There are two periods per one term and always before the exams, there is a break for students to prepare themselves for the exams. This was different than in Aalto and personally I liked this arrangement more. Also it was mandatory to sign up separately for the exams which was okay but still one thing more to remember.

Generally about the courses, they were well organized and informed in the beginning of the course. Also the search tool for the courses on the LiU's website was nice and easy to use. One thing that is good to mention is that the courses at LiU needed more hard work than courses I had had before in Aalto. Meaning that there were a lot of big assignments that you really needed to do to be able to pass the course.

I would say there were many courses to choose from but not exactly the ones I needed for my major. I wanted to do some of my major studies at LiU but it was not possible. Of course the studies are now going to be my elective studies but this is a good thing to check before you apply.

It was possible to choose both bachelor and master courses and I also chose from both levels. The program was the electrical engineering major which the local students are also studying. So it was nice to also have some Swedish speaking students there asking the questions in Swedish too. It was also possible to choose courses from the other programs which was nice. There is a quite good freedom when choosing the courses. Most of the courses were taught in English but there was also a possibility to choose courses in Swedish. I took one math course (TATA82 - Discrete mathematics) in Swedish.

3. Courses I took

In LiU there are 6 ECTS courses instead of 5 ECTS as we have in Aalto. So I had to choose five courses for fulfilling the 30 ECTS for the Spring semester. My courses changed from the original plan and finally I took these five courses:

TSKS13 Wireless Communications (master) 6 ECTS

The course had a project work and an exam. The project work was an individual report about a chosen topic and a 10 min presentation of it. The course was about wireless communication techniques and how to calculate the signal propagation etc. For example Bluetooth and WiFi were studied in this course. I think the course was useful and I could recommend it. Personally I do not like presentations that much but when we did them via zoom, it was okay.

TSFS03 Vehicle Propulsion Systems (master) 6 ECTS

The course had three individual project works to complete. The project works on this course were computer labs, which means three huge assignments that are completed by using Matlab and Simulink. No exam. For better grades, even more assignments like these three have to be accomplished. The course was very good and interesting and I absolutely recommend it for everyone who is interested in cars. It however needs time so be prepared for that. The only negative side for this course is indeed the amount of needed time to complete the mandatory assignments.

TGTU64 Nordic History of Technology (bachelor) 6 ECTS

The course was very different from the other courses I took. This course had two mandatory literature seminars where we discussed a book and our thoughts about it. Then we also had a group presentation from the freely chosen topic and also an individual 2500-3000 words long text where we had to summarize the course content. No exam. I can say that this course was not so nice due to the Corona situation because we were not able to visit museums or anything. The individual assignment was also pretty exhausting to write so I do not recommend this course for people that do not like to write. For history lovers this fits perfectly.

TMQU04 Six Sigma Quality (bachelor) 6 ECTS

This course had a project work and an exam. The project work was the main thing and it was done as a group of four students. The project was not done to a company which was a small disappointment for me and this course did not give the six sigma green belt certification which was even bigger disappointment. The exam was an easy five question quiz type test. This course was okay but it did not give me the certificate so it was a bit useless. Otherwise very well organized course.

TATA82 Discrete Mathematics (bachelor) 6 ECTS

This course consisted only of the weekly assignments (not graded) and the exam. The exam was on campus. This course was basically about probabilities, number theory and mathematical induction. If you like those things, you like this course. Otherwise it might be a good idea to choose something else instead of this course.

4. How did it actually go in the beginning of my exchange?

After sending all the needed documents, I began to think about all the practicalities related to my exchange. First of all I had to decide what I'm going to do with my apartment in Finland and also how I'm going to get an apartment from Sweden. I started to look for an apartment from Sweden somewhere during the summer about half a year before. It was way too early because there was a queue system where you collect points for getting an apartment and you gain one point per day. So I put myself in the line during January the year before. The website is called Studentbostäder Linköping and you should register there right away because you do not need to be admitted or anything for starting to queue. There is also a local "tori.fi" called blocket where you can rent an apartment from. Blocket is also good for furniture etc.

Finally I got my apartment via Studentbostäder Linköping only a few weeks before I had to go there, which was very stressful for me. I also decided to keep my Otaniemi apartment for the whole exchange without subleasing it because I wanted to be free to move back whenever I had to because of the Corona situation.

I moved to Sweden on Sunday 17th of January 2021, one day before my courses started. I took everything with me, including my bed, table and other necessary stuff. My car was fully packed and also the roof was loaded with my bike and some other stuff. I hosted a farewell party for my friends on Saturday 16th and I did not sleep during that night before I had to start driving to Turku. There was no traffic from Helsinki to Stockholm due to the Corona so I had to take my ship from Turku and it left at eight in the morning on Sunday. My driving went well and I was early in the harbour and got myself into my cabin where I slept almost the whole journey.

I was lucky and my friend's boyfriend lives in Linköping and he was able to get me my key on Friday so it was possible for me to arrive late in the night on Sunday. It was somewhere around 2.00am when I got everything inside and I was finally able to go to sleep before the starting day.

I must say that everything went so smoothly with the sign ups and everything. I just walked into the Student huset and right away in the lobby there was the international officer ready to welcome me to LiU and Sweden. I got my student card, so called LiU card, and also some advice for how to settle down in a new city and a new university. There were very good instructions for the exchange student to handle all the official papers and course admissions and everything. The information also came via email a few days beforehand, which was nice. The welcoming was lovely even though we did not have the orientation due to the Corona. LiU also hosted a virtual orientation session on Friday the 15th of January, which was also very nice. There on zoom they explained all the little important stuff such as that it is okay to drink tap water etc.

The only issues I faced during my arrival was the house key and the internet connection. In Sweden you have a house key and a tag. I had no idea what to do with the tag and in the middle of the night when it was dark and cold I tried to figure that out all alone. I must say it was not funny. I was not able to enter the hallway for something like five to ten minutes and then luckily a person living there came and showed me how to use the tag to get into the hallway. So the tag is for the building and the key is for your door. Then my next difficulty was with the internet. It just did not want to work and I called several different places for several times and finally it turned out to be a general problem in the whole house and they had to fix it. The house I moved in was new and I was the first tenant there. Otherwise, everything went okay.

5. Other important financial things

Sweden has somewhat similar prices for food and everyday things than we have in Finland. Electronics are a way more expensive I have to say so please do not think about buying a new laptop from there as I thought. Also rents are in the similar range as for the students in Finland. Electricity was also included, same with water and heating. The public transportation was also very cheap and I have to say it worked so much better than in Finland. In Sweden all the busses are electric and never too early or late from the schedule.

Studying at LiU was free as it is in Aalto too. Course books you were maybe able to find as a second hand version from the website "studentapan" where students sell their course books.

6. Freetime and other funny things I did

In my freetime I liked to go and see the city with my friend who has lived there for three years now. We are from the same high school. She helped me a lot when I planned my arrival and started to get to know the city and the culture. I must say that a Swedish culture is quite a different from Finnish culture. Swedish people are a way more open for new people and it is normal to greet your neighbours in the hallway and in the parking lot etc. In Sweden there are also tons of vegan and veggie food in the crouseries. Funny things: the chicken breast is in the freezer, the ready to go food is also in the freezer so no microwave oven culture and the soya groats is in the freezer too. The Swedish post services are also brilliant and so fast. I ordered my book on Tuesday and I got it on Wednesday. One thing I have to mention as a cultural shock: Swedish people are walking on both sides of the street even though the country has traffic on the right side. This is because of they used the left hand side until the year 1969.

The city itself is lovely and you could compare it to Tampere in Finland - a bit smaller than Stockholm but a very nice and old city. The city center is old and quite small but lovely. The climate there is so windy that the city should be Vindköping instead. Still it was warmer than in Espoo so I did not complain. Usually there is almost no snow at all but this winter there was some snow.

A few days after my arrival I got contacted by ISA (international student association) from where I got my little social group. We were four exchange students and one local tutor student in the group. This group was basically the only physical contact to other students for the first two months because everything was digital due to the Corona. But we did many things and visited many places with this social group and I loved every moment. After a few months we got a new group consisting of only six exchange students and then we had some outdoor activities to participate in. This was also wonderful. I also visited a few parties and they were nice but very similar to Finnish ones so no surprises there.

Even though there was a Corona going on, I was able to get to know many new people from very many countries. We also visited many nearby cities with my tutor from the first social group with her own friends. We became very close friends during my exchange and I'll visit her in August this summer.

Mostly I used my car when we travelled to other cities but once I took a train to Stockholm too. Travelling was very fun and I loved to do that. I visited for example in Jönköping,

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Norrköping and Gränna. Gränna was a real small town and it really is for tourists to visit during summer. Travelling is in the same price range as in Finland.

Here is a picture from Gränna:



One thing I also recommend is that if you want to get a backpack from your local guild, you ask for it. At LiU the guilds have the overalls but also they have the different backpacks for each guild and studyline. I got mine by sending an email to Y-section, which is the guild for electrical engineering at LiU.

My backpack:



7. Last things worth of mentioning

I would warmly recommend Linköping's University for anyone who wants to go to Sweden for a bit of a smaller town. It was a warm welcome when I came there and I loved my social group and all the people there. Everything went very smoothly.

One thing I would do differently is that I would really start to study when the course actually starts, not a few weeks before the exam. Of course this goes with Aalto courses too. I would also maybe choose a corridor room instead of a studio.

During my exchange I learnt to speak Swedish as they speak it and also I got more confident with my English skills. It was wonderful to understand that I really was able to handle all the situations I faced and I made new friends. I learnt that people are very much the same no matter where they come from.

Lastly, I would like to encourage everyone to go abroad and the exchange period in university is one of the easiest ways to do that. You will not regret that!



P.S. These signs are located on the campus Valla, the main campus of LiU. There is also one Finnish city mentioned. Maybe one of these will be your destination...?