

Experience Report Semester Abroad



B. Sc. Business Administration

Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden

Fall Term, 2024

Courses taken:

8061 - Ideation - Creating a Business Idea

8063 - Execution - Running Your Own Company

8065 - Business Model Innovation

BE917 - Decision Making for Individuals and Organizations

Preparation

Although I knew early on that I wanted to spend a semester abroad, I didn't initially put much effort into its planning. I first wanted to take the semester abroad in the United States, but none of the universities on offer really appealed to me. After looking through the partner universities, I quickly realized that I would like to go to Sweden. Then, I chose the Stockholm School of Economics – among other reasons due to its great reputation.

Confirmation regarding my semester abroad came in February, hence approximately six months prior to the start of my stay. The first information from the host university arrived in late March or early April. Already by May, I had to choose my courses. During that time, it was also the start of the application procedure of the student accommodation via SSE. And like many other people, I wasn't selected for one of those three SSE student houses. Yet within less than two weeks, the university offered us an offer concerning a newly opened student dorm in Spånga. In fact, that is what it only required-some mails-to confirm myself a room over there.

As I began preparing to come to Sweden, minimal preparation had been made. I went through the checklists which came through via email but didn't do much more than this to start with, since detailed information-when lectures were starting, for example-came from the host university only fairly shortly before my departure. The regular emails from both my home and host universities were very helpful. They included all the necessary information and notified me about deadlines well in advance, so I didn't miss any important dates.

Since I sent in the documents for the ERASMUS+ scholarship so long in advance, I received most of the grant before the semester abroad even started. Actual planning-like booking the flight and preparing a packing list-started about a month in advance.

All in all, preparation for my semester abroad was quite relaxed. Every step of the way, both my home and host universities gave me detailed and helpful information.

Studying at the Stockholm School of Economics

In general, one semester in Sweden is divided into two terms, during which students generally enroll in two courses, each valued at 7.5 ECTS. During my semester abroad, I chose to complete the full workload of 30 ECTS.

Generally speaking, studying in Sweden is very different from studying in Cologne. In most courses, attendance was compulsory, and much emphasis was put on preparation by reading academic texts. Lectures mostly just deepened the understanding of what was read. Also, assignments had to be handed in during the whole semester, and group work was given much attention.

In three out of the four courses I attended, assignments and group work were the only things that counted for the final grade, no final exam was held at the end of the term. When exams were held, they were also significantly longer at SSE, and the tasks were generally very broad in scope.

Overall, I was slightly disappointed with the variety of course offerings.

8061 - Ideation - Creating a Business Idea

This course is taught by Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship, which is a collaboration of all five universities in Stockholm. Generally, all the courses in SSES are held twice a week from 5 to 8 PM. The aim of the course is to let students develop a business idea and also refine it in the most possible way. Application of learned concepts was directly through two graded assignments, wherein students identified and developed a business idea throughout the term. A graded group project was another key component of this course.

8063 - Execution - Running Your Own Company

SSES also offered this course as a follow-up to the "Ideation" course; it encompasses all the basic steps necessary to introduce and set up a start-up. I really enjoyed a number of interactive guest lectures by different entrepreneurs. Grading was based on a group project, which involved creating a pitch deck for an original start-up idea, a reflection paper, and attendance.

BE917 - Decision Making for Individuals and Organizations

This course was given directly by SSE as an elective and was quite different from the others. The class size was only 12 to 15 students, so it was really nice to study in this class. During the lectures several models were presented, which have been applied directly to three case studies, which were discussed in the seminars. Attendance at the lectures was not compulsory, whereas attendance at the seminars was. One of the main elements of the course was a graded group project in which we were assigned to an organization in Stockholm. We had to analyze - through interviews - the decision-making behavior of the organization in a crisis situation. Another component of the grade was a final exam at the end of the term.

8065 - Business Model Innovation

This course was also offered by SSES, but unfortunately, it left a rather negative impression on me. Most lectures were mandatory and primarily consisted of reading discussions and relatively monotonous presentations that lacked engagement. Additionally, the course's organization was suboptimal in my experience. For these reasons, I would not recommend taking this course.

Life in Stockholm

I absolutely loved living in Stockholm. The city is incredibly beautiful and very clean. Thanks to the many green parks and waterways, it doesn't really feel like living in a big city. In my free time, I often went to different cafés with friends to eat "kanelbullar" or enjoy a "fika."

The Stockholm nightlife is also worth experiencing on weekends. However, it's a good idea to plan ahead which club to visit, as entry fees and drink prices can be quite high. In general, the cost of living in Stockholm is higher than in Germany, although I had expected it to be even more expensive.

I would definitely recommend visiting the student city of Uppsala. It's about an hour away from Stockholm by train and offers several interesting sights. Uppsala is also a great place for affordable student parties and vibrant student life.

The SSE student association, "SASSE," organizes numerous smaller activities every week, as well as larger events and trips, such as a journey to Lapland. The trip to Lapland was one of the highlights of my semester abroad, and I would highly recommend it to everyone.

I was really lucky with the weather in Stockholm. When I arrived, I was still able to enjoy the summer, and even in autumn, there was relatively little rain. Until my departure, it never got really cold, and it hardly snowed at all. The only slightly challenging aspect was the relatively few hours of sunlight in November and December.

Conclusion

The semester abroad in Stockholm was an incredibly wonderful time, though unfortunately too short. In just four months, it's impossible to do everything you set out to achieve. I would highly recommend an exchange semester in Stockholm to anyone who has the opportunity. There's nothing I would change or criticize about my experience. If you have any questions about a semester abroad in Stockholm feel free to reach out to me!