A look at the University

**USEFUL WEBSITES**

Bulletin board for Exchange Students
http://www.oulu.fi/intl/exchange_students/index.html
Great for updates, application, contacts, ECTS guides and Finnish language courses.

Online map of city of Oulu
http://kartta.ouka.fi/
Useful to find your way within Oulu

Mailing lists
www.lists.oulu.fi
sign up for your mailing lists for notifications.

Webmail
https://webmail.oulu.fi/webmail/login.php
Student webmail account – bookmark it.

Weboodi
https://weboodi.oulu.fi/oodi/frame.jsp?Kieli=6&valittuKIELI=6
Course/exam registration tool – bookmark it.

Optima Log-in
https://optima.oulu.fi/login1?ns=0&reason=shibbolethuser
Similar to IVLE8, get your webcasts, notes and forums here – bookmark it.

OULA – Library online search catalogue
https://oula.linneanet.fi/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?LANGUAGE=English&DB=local&PAGE=First
Useful for looking for your textbooks and readings – bookmark it.

Personal Blog – Finnish Exchange
www.kangaroocoffeeoulu.blogspot.com
Interesting tales about my own Finnish exchange.

PREARRIVAL

Q1. What to look out for preparing my SEP Study Plan?
You will need to submit a tentative study plan for approval. However, take note that changes may occur at any point of your exchange. So remember to prepare more choices in case of unanticipated contingencies. However, please try to stick to your study plan if possible. As a guide, it helps to read your seniors’ study plans from http://www.ece.nus.edu.sg/students/secondyr/sep/sepindex.asp. Thereafter, you might want to check for the module information from the ECTS guides downloadable from http://www.oulu.fi/intl/exchange_students/index.html on the right-hand bar.

Consult the exchange coordinator or respective professors for the modules. As a caution, take note of the sub-semester periods as it differs for each faculty – some courses may be offered in only spring or autumn – and check if the course is offered in English.

Q2. Are the exams/courses in Finnish?
Occasionally, the modules may be offered only in Finnish but the professor may provide you personal tutoring and notes – note it is not guaranteed. Otherwise, you will be asked to self-study with English textbooks and to sit for the exams. Though most exams are offered in Finnish, questions in English will be provided upon request at your registration. Exams are usually scheduled for two to three times in the semester to allow for re-sits. Note though courses are usually held for 6-10 weeks, often overlapping one another. At any one time during the semester, you may only have three or fewer modules to study and pass, as opposed to five to six modules throughout the semester and the final hurdle.

Q3. Do I need to understand Finnish?
In Finland, the natives do not usually speak English and the signs and notices are usually written in Finnish. To get your way around easily, it certainly helps if you understand a little Finnish but you can cope with English. To help you survive better in Finland, the language centre provides basic Finnish courses, namely the Finnish survival course, and Finnish beginner’s course.

Q4. What Scholarship Grants & Awards am I eligible for?
It turns out that there are a handful of scholarship grants that you are eligible for. You should submit your application for NUS Awards for Study Abroad (NASA) and DUO Singapore Exchange Fellowship offered by MFA.

Q5. When will I receive my Acceptance Package?
Sometime in May/June, you will receive the acceptance package from University of Oulu. You should find a exchange student guide, a letter from your kummi, a tourist city map of Oulu, housing application form, kummi family application form and most importantly, your acceptance letter. With your acceptance letter, you can start making early preparations like your residence permit application.

Q6. Who is a Kummi?
For each and every exchange student, you are attached to a ‘Kummi’ – aka buddy - who will act as your Finnish student tutor to assist you upon my arrival. Your kummi will be the ones showing you around in the campus tour, and accompanying you during the orientation.

Q7. What is the Kummi Family program?
Prior to your arrival, you will be asked to opt in for the program. The program will match you to a local Finnish family which you will meet for intercultural exchange activities. It is probably the best way to discover about Finnish lifestyle and culture. [http://www.oulu.fi/intl/exchange_students/kummifamily.htm](http://www.oulu.fi/intl/exchange_students/kummifamily.htm)

Q8. Notification of overseas trip (for NSmen)
For Singaporean males, it shouldn't be unfamiliar to apply for the notification of overseas trip on [www.ns.sg](http://www.ns.sg). Exit permit is not necessary if it’s less than 6 months overseas.

Q9. What do I need to apply for the Residence Permit?
Apart from your passport, Singaporean students need also apply for a residence permit in Finland. The Finnish embassy in Singapore is located in Novena, and it pays to apply early because the process takes around 45 days. You need to submit the necessary documents ready with your passport. Thus, you ought to apply for your travel insurance early. The residence permit comes in the form of a sticker pasted on your passport at a cost of S$110. Check out the Finnish embassy website for more details. [http://www.finland.org.sg/public/default.aspx?nodeid=31587&contentlan=2&culture=en-US](http://www.finland.org.sg/public/default.aspx?nodeid=31587&contentlan=2&culture=en-US)

Q10. What Accomodation is available?
The university will help you reserve your accommodation. After you received the housing form, you should submit it before the deadline. In Oulu, they called it the "solu" or cell. In the student apartments, there are two to four single rooms, with a shared kitchen and bathroom. The rent is around 208 euros per month. Note that initially, you have to prepare an additional 240 euros refundable deposit and 10 Euros housing fee. And the rent is paid for the full month regardless.

There are abundant facilities around the apartment. Located near the university, you only need less than 5-10 minutes walk to your class, and there are shared facilities like lauderette, sauna, mess room, gym, volleyball & tennis court. Not to forget to mention the kiosks, bars, pizzerias, post office and supermarts. [http://www.oulu.fi/intl/exchange_students/housing.htm](http://www.oulu.fi/intl/exchange_students/housing.htm)

Q11. What do I need to take note for Flight booking?
Next, always apply for frequent flyer programs. StarAlliance and OneWorld would suffice, since they include almost all the prominent airlines around the world. And always buy online to avoid a $50 service fee margin at the travel shops. However, you might want to check for student offers with increased check-in baggage with STA. The best way to reach to Oulu is a flight to Helsinki and a transit to Oulu. A train from Helsinki to Oulu would require an airport transfer from Helsinki-Vantaa Airport to the Helsinki railway station. Unfortunately, there aren’t many direct flights to Helsinki and altogether there may be at least two transits to Oulu. If you are taking a domestic flight within Finland, you won’t get a boarding pass sometimes – even if you do, there’s no seat number – because it’s free seating.

Q12. What Student Card Memberships should I get?
If you wish to go backpacking in the country, it helps to register with the following bodies for discounts and privileges. 1) International Student Identity Card (ISIC) www.isic.org 2) Hostelling International (HI) www.hihostels.com

Q13. What Warm Clothes should I get?
In local context, it's hard to find a good winter clothes shop. The Wintertime and ColdWear pretty much makes up the duopoly. Try looking out for the sale, or else ColdWear also gives a lifetime membership card of 10% discount upon purchase exceeding a certain amount.

If you are new to winter, you should get at least a pair of thermal baselayers, a pair of gloves, a good winter (or even ski) jacket that is wind- and water-resistant, a warm pants and wool socks. If you haven’t got any winter boots, you can still don your good running shoes.

Q14. What should I bring in my Backpack?
Packing can be a chore. And packing cubes soothes out the headache a little. If you always have problems squeezing your stuff neatly, you might want to consider buying some of them. If you want to save some money – because food is expensive in Finland – you might want to bring some foodstuff over. And remember to bring along the stationery, electric appliances, notebook and personal care items!

POSTARRIVAL

Q15. What should I do at the Airport?
I shouldn’t dwell much on this since it is obvious. Just pay 4,30 euros for the bus to get you to the campus. It is more than half hour’s ride. The bus will pass by the main city and after crossing the bridge, a small residential town, before reaching the university after overtaking the woods.

Q16. Where do I find my Kummi?
You should find your kummi at the university busstop and he/she will have your key to the room. Remember to ask your kummi which busstop to locate him/her because there are altogether four busstops in the university vicinity. Be ready to fill out some forms necessary for the orientation before you get your sleep on your first night.

Q17. What do I need to do during orientation week? The A to Z student guide
During the orientation week, there will be hustle and bustle all over the student flats and I’ve arranged some of the important points to take note as listed below.
(a) **Student Union Fee**
This will be collected during orientation. 37.5 euros

(b) **Student ID Card**
5 euros. Application will take approximately a few weeks. In the meantime, use your acceptance letter as proof and at the canteens, you gotta use the receipt as proof of student ID for student-priced meals.

(c) **University Sports Card**
This option comes at an extra 16 euros for the autumn semester. It gets you free usage of sports facilities, including the gym.

(d) **University Library Card**
You can get yours after the library tour. It's free. The books can be borrowed for a week and renewed weekly up to a year, provided there are no requests made. Overdue fines are charged at 7 euros and additional 1 euro for each book from the second book onwards. Interestingly, the effective overdue date is one week after the expiry date. As always, textbooks can be borrowed from the university library at no cost.

(e) **Webmail’s User ID and password**
Your userId and password comes only after a week you registered. Use it to access the campus webmail for important stuff. It has a 10MB shell, with a 10MB attachment limit.

(f) **Weboodi**
Their examination registration website. Just sign in and register for your exams – no course registration unless specified – simple as that. In other words, you can take as many courses as you like, but only attempt the exams you are confident in.

(g) **Optima**
It's an online learning environment where you can watch webcasts, download notes, or discuss in forums.

(h) **Exchange Emailing List**
Sign this up to receive news or updates designated for exchange students. A few useful ones are the Finanssi (for economics student), AIESEC, foreign students and exchange students. You get notifications of field trips, parties, activities as well as important administrative/course information.

(i) **Housing Deposit and Tenancy Agreement**
240 euros deposit and 10 euros fee upon the signing of the agreement. Only after the signing and payment, you are allowed to apply for internet in the apartment.

(j) **Internet**
You need to get down to the accommodation office PSOAS downtown to apply for it. Please remember to bring along the tenancy agreement and proof of identity. Take bus 7 and alight on the second stop after crossing the bridge to the city. Also, you will need to get a LAN cable for access, available at the supermart.

(k) **Rent Payment**
The bill will come to your mailbox in a few weeks time. And you can opt to pay all
months rent at one go by informing the housing manager beforehand. It’s more convenient than having to visit the Otto (or ATM) each month. Because the Otto operates in Finnish, I had to avail my kummi of her help to enter my bill transaction. Otherwise, you could also seek help from the man behind the desk in the bank office along the university corridor.

(l) Opening bank account
The Oulun Osuuspankki Bank office is located within campus. So it’s handy to open an account there. Only your passport is needed. No minimum deposit is needed. And the VISA electron card – for your daily transactions – will be ready for collection at the city main office in 2-3 weeks time. They will mail you the collection details. In the meantime, you may go to the main office to deposit your excess money. Please check with the bank for remittance charges. Whatever you prefer, you might want to set up an account with Nordea bank in lieu of Osuuspankki.

(m) Mobile Phone & SIM Card
You can get the SIM card at any kiosk. You can find the kiosk near the Ylioistokatu residences. The Finnish SIM card works in any Singapore mobile phones. You might want to get a Sonera SIM card as your provider.

(n) Notification of move @ Finnish Postoffice
While you are getting your way to the nearby kiosk, you might also want to notify your move into the residence, so that any mail registered to your name will reach you. It's free anyway.

(o) OuluCard for Bus
You have to get this from the tourist information centre downtown. If I’m not wrong, it’s 6 euros for the card and 35 euros for a monthly bus concession pass. The bus concession is a good deal because a single return journey from campus to city would cost around 5 euros or more.

(p) VR Student Card for Rail
Get a verification form from the rail office and after having it signed by the university office, you bring it back to get your VR student card at 6 euros. That will give you student’s privileges for train tickets.

(q) E-register @ Singapore Embassy
You don’t have to do this – but I did anyway - register online at the Singapore embassy so that if there's any Singaporean fellow nearby, they'll know of my presence, or hopefully at least the Singapore embassy in Finland does. https://notesapp.internet.gov.sg/mfa/eregister/ereg.nsf/fsStartWebHITS?OpenFrameSet

(r) Kummi Family Meeting
Two weeks from your arrival, if you are successfully matched to a kummi family, you will be able to contact them for the first meeting, usually a meal over at their house.

(s) Finnish Survival Course
After signing up during the Orientation, the lessons will start right after one week and continue for 6 weeks before it ends. Upon completion, you will be asked to opt for the next level Finnish Beginners’ 1 course.

(t) Study Infomation Sessions
This will be held during orientation week. So you just have to turn up for the ones you need to go. More information will be given out during the orientation.

(u) City Library Card
You can get this for free at the city library and you can borrow music cds or books.

(v) Suomalainen Kirjakappua Discount Card
You can apply for free at any of their stores and enjoy 15% discount – because the books are expensive.

(w) Student-priced meals
Within the university, there are many student cafeterias where you can get student-priced meals. Unlike canteens in NUS, you have to queue up in single line, for the bread, milk/water, main course, and salad. The meal is priced at 2,30 euros and 1,95 euros without bread. Students usually have their lunch in university, but personally, I prepared all my meals unless I am meeting friends for lunch.

(x) ESN
During orientation, you will learn more about the ESN. It’s a student body that promotes interaction for exchange students and the rest. Remember to sign up for the exchange mailing list because you will receive lots of invitations and sign-ups for fabulous activities. Some to look out for: week-long Russia trip, Rovaniemi visit to Santa Claus’s village, Christmas (pikkujoulu) parties, nature trek outings etc.

(y) Cycling
It’s a horror to some who can’t imagine cycling on ice and snow. But the Finns and exchange students have done it. A new bike costs around 200 euros, and a second-hand bike will cost from 25-50 euros. You can get deals from subscribing the online mailing lists. The bike usually doesn’t come with a lock, bell, and handbrakes. You have to reverse cycle to brake. For myself, I rarely used the bike but whenever I need to get around, I borrowed for free from my wonderful flatmate. The city of Oulu boasts one of the most comprehensive cycling track network, so it’s handy to get one.

(z) Office hours
One extra caution to note is the office hours for the International Office. It’s only open from Mondays to Wednesdays, 9-16. Housing hours – pertaining to housing matters – are on single days per week. Check with the housing manager. So outside these times, it’s closed. During the first few weeks, you may need to go down and remember always to go during the opening times.
A stayover in a summer cottage with my kummi family