

## Student Exchange Questionnaire

**Name:** Heather Tribe

**Massey Degree:** Bsc Environmental Science

**Host University:** Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

**Semester and year of exchange:** Semester 1 2015

### **Why did you choose this particular university and/or country for exchange?**

As an environmental student I wanted to study in a foreign country of environmental initiatives, of which Sweden is one. I knew I wanted to study in a country with a foreign language/culture, and I knew I wanted to be in Europe somewhere as Europe has so many cultures to travel through in a small geographic space. I chose SLU as they do the environmental monitoring for the Swedish university and embrace the sustainable culture. They also had papers which seemed interesting for me. The university was small which I thought would suit me better than a huge university with lots of people that I would get lost in.



### **Did it meet your expectations?**

It beat my expectations ten-fold. At first it was a lot to get used to, living in a park with no more than 900 students. In some ways it was like being back at highschool. But because of the small population on campus I managed to get to know a lot of them and felt right at home.

### **What papers did you study while on exchange? Would you recommend them?**

I took Sustainable production systems in a global perspective first, then Urban agriculture and social interactions. I would highly recommend the first course – it was a little unorganised but it is part of the farmers masters programme as well as the agroecology masters (which is a mainly international programme) Because of this there is a high level of knowledge and differing perspectives. The class discussions were incredible! The second course was really good also, I was really unfamiliar dealing with social aspects of everything at first, but it is really good practise for considering all sides of the story.

### **Were there differences in the teaching methods and academic environment at your host university, compared to Massey University? If so, what kind of differences?**

The Scandinavian education system is nothing short of AMAZING. You take papers one at a time, and they are worth twice as much as NZ papers. You do the exam (if there is one – i had none) at the end of the course, before you start the second course, this means no exam blocks with four exams in two days type scenarios. The work load was lighter in my opinion but the topics were based more on self education. You would earn a lot in classes but it would inspire you to study it more in your own time, without an assignment being due. This is something I don't have the time to do in the New Zealand education system. Overall there was less stress around study, so I found I was able to retain the knowledge a lot easier.

**Did you stay on-campus or off-campus? What was the accommodation like?**

I stayed on campus, upstairs from the pub. It was 20 seconds walk from the library and I got free wifi from the restaurants as well! The rooms were incredibly huge! I stayed with 8 other students, one other girl who was on exchange and 7 Swedish boys of varying ages. Students tended to stay on campus for all of their degree.



**How did living expenses compare to in New Zealand?**

Sweden is one of the most expensive countries in Europe for living expenses. Compared to New Zealand though it was not too bad, especially if you knew to shop at the discount food shops such as Lidl.

**What extra-curricular activities did you participate in at the host university?**

There was not many, which was it's downfall. There was floorball in the winter (Which is like hockey but without rules...) and then football in the summer.

**What's one thing you learnt about your host country or culture?**

Lagom. This is a Swedish phrase for just the right amount. This describes my trip. I learnt that the Swedish people are very generous, they share what they've got, they're also very timid though and hate public speaking or speaking to strangers, you've got to be the one to make the first move.

**What were some of the highlights of your exchange experience?**

One has to be my trip up to Lapland in the Arctic circle. It was five full on days of northern light hunting, riding on the dog sleds, meeting Sami people, rolling in the snow in our bikinis and woolly socks, ice climbing, and 18 hour bus rides!

I think the quiet times, the evening hanging out with my house mates when we would try to write poems or discuss deeply philosophical topics (while struggling with a language barrier) or the weekends when most of the Swedes would go home and the exchange students would have the whole campus to do with as we pleased.

The great hiccups that came with misunderstanding one another's accent.

**What did you find challenging?**

Time difference. For sure this was my hardest challenge. A few things happened whilst I was away that really made me want to come home, it was hardest when I needed someone who knew what was going on, and they were all asleep. Also getting up to Skype my family at 6, before class, was always a challenge!



**What do you feel you have learnt or gained from going on exchange?**

I gained a lot. I have the confidence to mingle with other cultures. I've learnt to handle myself appropriately around people a lot older than I. (All the students there were much older than myself) I learnt to raise my arguments appropriately during class discussions. I learnt that I can manage myself in a foreign country without the immediate contact of my family should I want it.

**Do you have any tips for future students intending to travel to the same country or university?**

Firstly, DO IT. Also, try to integrate as much as you can with the Swedish people. The internationals formed somewhat of a clique, and whilst its nice to have that comfort of people in the same boat as you, and its a great way for same minded people who also want to travel in Sweden, they aren't the Swedes! Its only half of the experience, once you integrate with the locals of the country you earn so much more about it, the stories, the food, the humour, the music!



If you ever get a chance to try the pickled fish, do it. It is most definitely the worst thing you will ever eat in your entire life.

**Do you have any comments on the support provided to you by Massey University and/or by the host university before/during/after your exchange?**

I dealt mainly with Craig Lyons, he was a super support and believed I'd make it to SLU from the start. The exchange coordinators at SLU were frequently hard to get a hold of, though to be fair I didn't interact with them much, only when all the students needed something and they were overwhelmed by us all!

