

Exchange Students Experiences from Finland and Kajaani University of Applied Sciences

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Babtiste, Olivia, Dimitri and Pablo are exchange students who spent an academic year at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. They enjoyed their experience in the “middle of nowhere” where life was calm and relaxed. All four of them say that it is definitely more beneficial to stay for the whole academic year instead of one semester. *“During a whole year it is easier to adjust to the life in a different culture and country. If you stay only for one semester, you easily spend the time thinking of going home soon and not even trying to benefit from the stay abroad –experience.”*



At Kajaani University of Applied Sciences you can study in a family-like atmosphere. The hierarchy in Finland is low thus communication with teachers is easy and they do their best to help you with any problems. *“Finding any information is easy, and whenever you don’t know from whom to ask, there is always International Office to help you!”* comment Babtiste, Olivia, Dimitri and Pablo. *“Within a small UAS, everyone knows each other and teachers know you by name. At Kajaani UAS you’ll not be just another number!”*

The students find that studying in Finland includes more group work and more team building spirit than studies at home. Email is the foremost means of communication and it works well. There are several computer classrooms available for students’ use, but also printers and scanners are easily accessible.

It is expensive to live in Finland, but the life is nice and quiet, say the students. The student accommodation is available right on campus and mostly, the exchange students live there. It’s mixture of different cultures! The apartments available are newly renovated, thus the quality is good.



There are excellent sports facilities nearby; the UAS offers free use of two gyms and a sports hall. In addition the Sports students arrange various sports exercises for their fellow students. The campus is close to nature, surrounded by a forest where you can find a track suitable for jogging and for skiing in winter. There are also a sports field, indoor ice- skating and ice-hockey rink and a tennis hall close to the campus.

Living in a small town like Kajaani is safe. *“People are so honest here; if you lose something you can actually expect to find it afterwards!”* says Babtiste. *“The long darkness might feel a bit difficult in the winter, but the cold is not so bad – even with -20 degrees Celsius the air is dry so it is not unbearable. It is even possible to ride your bike in the winter as the roads are kept so clean from the snow.”* Olivia comments.

When the exchange students arrive, **tutoring students** meet everyone on arrival to give their keys and help the students to get settled in their new home. The support from the tutoring students is welcomed and appreciated amongst the exchange students as they also arrange free-time activities and trips, for example, to meet Santa Claus in Rovaniemi and go hiking in Ruka. At the beginning of the studies, there’s a bus tour which takes students to see the nearby holiday resort Vuokatti. They also visit the lake Ruuhijärvi where students can row a boat, try fishing and grill some sausages on an open fire. This is a good opportunity for students to get to know each other and bond.



Photo: Mario Konrad