

FINAL REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA (UTAS), SEMESTER 1

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INTRODUCTION

It was in the fifth semester of my bachelor degree in computer science when I decided that it would be a good idea to do an exchange semester in a foreign country the coming semester as this would be a great opportunity to gain a lot of new experiences and impressions of other cultures. After doing some research on the partner universities of AAU I soon came to the conclusion that Australia (i.e. Tasmania) would be the perfect destination for my purposes. After that choice had been made I applied for the exchange program via the BIB (Büro für Internationale Beziehungen) and went through a quite long bureaucratic process which basically consisted of writing a motivation letter, applying for UTAS, select courses, apply for accommodation and obtaining a student visa. Eventually, I completed all of the above steps and soon I found myself travelling to Hobart, Tasmania which would be my home for the next few months.

ACCOMMODATION

When studying in Tasmania one has the opportunity to choose between the following options for accommodation: You can either choose to rent a non-campus based house or apartment, or you can live on-campus at the university apartments or at one of the three colleges which are Jane Franklin Hall, John Fisher College or Christ College. I chose to apply for the latter two and finally got accommodated at Christ College.

The college which is located near the top of a quite large hill consists of five main buildings and every student gets a single room, equipped with all necessary furniture, but without a fridge as they were currently facing problems with the power supply (The main transformer was defect and they had to switch to a backup transformer with smaller capacity). Further, the college also provided facilities like a large self catering kitchen which is cleaned every day, a large common room, washing machines and even a gym. There is also the restaurant 'Pepperz' which is located directly in front of the college and provides meals at very fair

prices – a good thing since the next supermarket is not really what you would call around the corner.

LIFE AT CAMPUS

If you stay at one of the before mentioned colleges you will soon find out that there is a quite strong but healthy rivalry between them which is expressed not only by several chants but which is also noticeable at the many intercollegiate sport events. The main sport in Australia is rugby but there are also other sports like cricket (which I personally, just don't get), soccer or – my personal favourite – tennis. Within the colleges there is a quite strong sense of community and thus there are always interesting events/parties, etc. Every now and then which are welcome breaks from the academic everyday life which I want to focus on in the next point.

THE UNIVERSITY

UTAS was founded on 1. January 1890 and is the oldest university in Australia. It consists of three campuses which are spread out over Tasmania. They are located in Launceston, Cradle Coast and Hobart where I stayed. Currently there are about 22,000 enrolled students at UTAS.

Now I want to focus on the way the units at UTAS are taught. After the first week I noticed that all the units are extremely organised. In the first lecture everybody receives an information sheet about the unit where the content of every week of the semester is described, which assignments are to be done and how they contribute to the end result as well as the learning outcomes and the overall objectives of the unit where clearly specified. I reckon that this is extremely helpful especially for first year students which are not familiar with the way units are taught at a university as it's a very good guidance for the whole unit. The teaching pattern of the units usually is that there is a two hour lecture and a one hour tutorial every week. The tutorials at UTAS are not the same as at AAU where the tutorials are usually held by fellow students but they are more similar to the practicals (PRs) in Klagenfurt. However they are less formal than PRs and usually attendance is not mandatory (I did try to attend every tutorial though, since they were very helpful). In the tutorials students have

time to solve practical tasks which can be found in the online learning platform, MyLO (My Learning Online) and complement the theoretical content of the lectures. It doesn't get checked if you complete those tasks but it's definitely helpful to complete them as they contain all or most of the concepts needed for the assignments/projects.

One very positive aspect of the lectures which I would like to point out is that one of the university's policies is that there has to be a ten minute break after every 50 minutes of teaching which made the lectures extremely easy to follow. Another is that the exam period is decoupled from the rest of the semester which means that after the last week of teaching and when all assignments and projects have been finished and handed in there is a long break (for me it was about five weeks which was almost too much time) before the exams start. Hence the students have enough time to study for exams without having to worry about assignments at the same time.

All in all I would say that the units I took at UTAS very much easier than in Klagenfurt as neither the assignments nor the exams were any problems for me. All this made me realize that if you study computer science in Klagenfurt you receive a really good education.

MY UNITS

ADVANCED COMPUTER SECURITY

This unit consisted of a weekly two hour lecture and no tutorial. In the lectures we looked at three main topics, which were *Operating System Security*, *Cryptography* and *Network Security Protocols*. We also had to do two assignments, the first one being a group work where we had to investigate any topic related to computer security, prepare a written report and give a presentation while for the second assignment, which had to be done alone, we had to compare two security protocols and hand in a written report.

ADVANCED DYNAMIC WEB DEVELOPMENT

This unit consisted of a weekly two hour lecture and one hour tutorial. In the theoretical lectures we looked at several web technologies like *PHP*, *JavaScript*, *AJAX*, *Databases* and *CGI Scripts*. In the tutorials we were provided with practical tasks and further explanations of the above mentioned topics which we needed to complete the assignment. The aim of the assignment was to develop an online chat application where users can create accounts and "chat" with the web server by entering questions into a form field. After receiving such a

request the application had to look the question up in a database and see if it can answer to that entered question.

GAMES FUNDAMENTALS

In this unit we also had a weekly two hour lecture and a one hour tutorial. In the lectures we learned about the history of computer games, game programming paradigms, artificial intelligence, game controversy and game dynamics. At the end of the semester we had to hand in two assignments, which were a game review of a computer game of our choice and a flash game which we had to develop. The name of this unit may suggest that it might not be very serious but in fact it was very interesting and even a bit challenging.

BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEMS

In this unit, which also consisted of a two hour lecture and a one hour tutorial per week we learned about several types of information systems and how they changed the way a business works and how they can be used to increase an organization's market strength, efficiency, etc. The four assignments we had to do for this unit were based on a real case study and the goal was to prepare a business proposal for a small Tasmanian organization which is currently planning on expanding their market and integrate modern information systems into their business. While the unit was very organized and the support from the staff was very good I have to admit that I just didn't like this unit as the assignments as well as the lectures were very repetitive.

LIVING IN TASMANIA

Tasmania is an island which is located south-east to the mainland of Australia. It is 68km² big and has a population of about 500.000 people. The two largest cities in Tasmania are Launceston and Hobart, where the famous Salamanca market takes place every Saturday morning. The living costs in Tasmania are a bit higher than in Austria but with good budgeting skills that should be no problem. If I had to compare the daily life in Tasmania to Austria I would say that most of the people seem to be a bit friendlier and very helpful. Other than that I found the daily life in Tasmania to be quite similar to Austria.

To conclude this report, I would say that spending this semester in Tasmania was definitely worth it as I gained a lot of new experiences, friends and of course my English skills also have improved a little bit. I encourage everyone to apply for an exchange semester, even if the idea might seem a bit intimidating at the beginning.