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Report of International Exchange Traineeship

Autumn 2018



REPORT OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE TRAINEESHIP

About the exchange

Finnish nursing education consists of theoretical studies and practical trainings. These go in cycles of one to two months, which is the reason why long academic international exchanges are hard to fit into our curricula without belated graduation. Project BWS+ Network Nursing and Healthcare enables short-term-exchanges for students. In my case, I carried out three practical trainings in two different German hospitals during my exchange of three months.

During the exchange, I gained 18 European Credit Trade System points. Combining it with three ECTS points from orientation to student exchange, a total of 21 ECTS points was gained to my degree program from international exchange. This means ten percent of my complete degree has been done on international exchange terms.

My international exchange began at a quite intensive pace, since I arrived in Stuttgart one Saturday evening in September and the next Monday started the first practical training. The first two weeks of traineeship is always getting oriented to new the ward and right after you have gotten used to the way things work there, you are already switching to the next ward and traineeship. That's just how it is. Nevertheless, I did receive a warm welcoming at each of the wards and the co-workers accepted me as part of their team. Without being a fluent speaker of German, we did share some great moments on the wards and I can confirm having learned much.

Scope of work and main learning outcomes

Each of the practical trainings had patient-group-specific-objectives to learn and master during the traineeship on the ward. This said, I practiced nursing of children and youth, nursing of adults and nursing of women. Having two years of studies behind me, clinical skills such as making infusions, measuring vital parameters of the patient and giving injections are already required to be mastered. Instead, the objectives of traineeships are more about learning what factors are affecting the well-being and treatment of special patient groups. How does nursing of children depend on a given

patient's physical and cognitive stage of development and what kind of factors should be considered when giving treatment to gynaecological patients. This is where I've made the most progress during the exchange.

Working as part of a team, taking responsibility and situation awareness are playing an important role in working as a nurse. These things, among other aspects of leadership, are constantly developing in work life, but they are also things that I have learned during my stay in Stuttgart and that can take into practice.

Pros and ~~cons~~ challenges

As keenly fond of languages as I am, one of the best parts of international exchange is to learn a new language intensively. As you're working eight hours a day, the progress is made without you even noticing it. Put this together with professional experience gained during traineeships, international exchange really pays off.

Living abroad widens the way you see life. Your experience is something that cannot be acquired any other way than participating in an international exchange. Writing about a personal development, I do see myself more independent and self-confident than before. Applying for international exchange means a lot of paperwork to be done, but consider how much it gives you in return. I do see working abroad as an option in the future. After all, international traineeship is a safe way to experience work life without being in such a responsible position as a hired post-graduate-worker.

The linguistic barrier is unavoidable, but it is possible to overcome. Carrying out an exchange traineeship, your supervisors at work may either be fluent speakers of English or not be able to speak a word of it. Sure, there are ways to get through the day without common language, but this is something you should be aware of when applying. Being motivated for the traineeship and trying your best to learn the language spoken in your receiving country will help you overcome this possible challenge.

Advice for future exchange students

Learn the basics of the language spoken in your receiving country. I highly recommend you to have a little notebook with you at work to write good words and phrases you hear. Working in a foreign language environment eight hours a day may be exhausting, so make sure to have some time for rest.

There are good and bad supervisors no matter where you do your traineeship. Know your right to be supervised and do not hesitate to bring an issue up when you think it necessary. Theoretical and practical skills are important, but it is the attitude which counts most. With an open mind, you can pull yourself through anything and find always something to learn.

Stuttgart, December 17th, 2018