My study abroad experience was one of the best experiences of my life. For my semester, I studied at Copenhagen Business School in their International Study Abroad Program (ISUP), a business administration program that ran from June 22 to August 4. This was a six-week shortened program with classes 2-3 times a week, with each class culminating into either a final report or a 4-hour exam. As a Finance major, I took Financial Modeling, a rather intensive course with a tough final exam, in concurrence with Consumer Behaviour and Social Marketing, a lighter course with a final report to ease my schedule. It was important to keep up with content regularly as not to feel panicked leading up to final exams. The lecturing style is similar to that of SFU but with a bit more emphasis on discussion aspects rather than just listening. It isn’t, however, mandatory to attend all classes as long as one can keep up with uploaded notes from professors and the textbook readings. I found it much more useful to attend classes on days with key material, and to spend other days exploring the beautiful city of Copenhagen and meeting new people instead of being confined to a lecture hall.

Experiencing Copenhagen is a once in a lifetime opportunity, especially with terrific attractions like Copenhagen city center, Kromborg Castle (shown left) and their many beautiful beaches.

As living requirements are relatively straightforward in Copenhagen, one doesn’t need to pack anything necessarily unique. Copenhagen is a terrific place to live with access to just about everything one has access to in Canada, so it’s only necessary to pack essentials such as clothes, hygienics, laptop etc. One thing to consider is that Copenhagen is one of the most expensive cities on Earth, so it will be necessary to have plenty of reserve funds stored up in the bank and have money readily accessible. The program offers those living in dorms a package that includes
sheets, a pillow, duvet, tea towels and bath towels so there’s no need to bring your own. The dorms also include dishes, cutlery, and other essential kitchenware so these are avoidable expenses too. Items that you do need can easily be purchased by credit card or from withdrawing cash from an ATM. Be sure to check the premium charged by your credit card company on ATM withdrawals before leaving.

Upon arrival at Copenhagen Airport, you’re greeted by an enthusiastic group of volunteers who guide you along Copenhagen’s terrific metro system to the main campus in smaller groups. Each group is divided based on the building they will be living so this also offers a chance to identify the route to get to class. This also offers some time to meet your neighbors and to form early friendships. I stayed in Porcelaenshaven (or abbreviated to PH), a building with single person dorms with personal kitchens and rooms with either a personal bathroom or one shared with another person (depending on room size). Other residence buildings include Nimbus Park, a newer residence with great open kitchen common areas, and Katherine Kollegiat, a building further from campus with a mix of single and shared rooms. PH is the closest dorm to the main campus (shown above) being just a 10-minute walk. Biking is also a good option to take in Copenhagen as the summers are generally warm and the bike lanes compared to other countries are simply the best. There is a program offered where students can rent a bike for the entire term at a reasonable price, and if one plans to explore all of Copenhagen then this is a highly recommended option. However, I wouldn’t say it is an absolute necessity, especially living in PH, as the metro is easily accessible and runs 24/7. Further, many of the
social events take place in the building next door to PH, and other key facilities such as grocery stores, gyms and other Campus residences are very easily walked to.

CBS has a fantastic social program that offers students plenty of value. This should be purchased right away upon being offered by the CBS volunteers at the airport. This package includes activities such as a Welcome Day BBQ, bowling, Danish movie night, folk dancing and many club excursions. Most day-time activities are usually followed up to a trip to many of the bars or clubs of Copenhagen, so one will become very familiar with the hottest local spots. The Drunken Flamingo in particular was a favourite of many and will likely be visited multiple times as their management has a great ongoing relationship with CBS volunteers. Through this program you will meet people from all over the world and engaging in these activities will be the best way not only to expand your international circle of friends, but to gain a new perspective on cultural norms and unique values.

As with any new experience, many challenges will come up that will test your abilities to adapt and persevere. One of the main challenges I faced early was to do with my SIM card. I hadn’t realized that my phone plan was locked with my Canadian carrier company, and upon arriving in Copenhagen and using the SIM card provided by CBS I realized it wasn’t working for me. I had to communicate the situation back home and sort out the problem over the phone while also struggling to find Wi-fi from external sources because the residence Wi-fi is only activated by receiving a text message. At one point, I had to walk over to a 7/11 just to use their free Wi-fi to send emails. Many of my other smaller issues were solved by simply getting into a routine, such as buying the right amount of groceries so you don’t throw anything out or buying the right ticket on the metro. It’ll all come together with practice and good judgement.

An easy thing one can do to smooth over some of these problems is to connect with as many fellow students as possible. Most of them will be in the same situation as you: far from home, confused, and a bit lonely. Being friendly and initiating conversations will generally be easier than back home because you will be dealing with similar scenarios and obstacles, so it should be relatively easy to bond quickly. If you want to talk with Danish natives, they’re a bit more reserved than people in Canada, but they’re quite friendly and speak English just as well as
Canadians. There’s also the international emergency number readily available should there be a situation that is truly dire, but I never had to use it myself. Overall, there is a great network of support available to help guide you through these new experiences, and it should be exercised often.

Through the challenges you face and the rewarding experiences and friendships you create along the way, studying abroad at Copenhagen Business School is an amazing experience that will make you a far more productive, organized and independent person. It’ll be a time where you can look back on and be incredibly grateful you took the leap of faith and went out to try something new.