

University of the Sunshine Coast: A Study-abroad report

I spent one semester in Queensland, Australia, studying at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), and I had a great time there! For anyone who is considering doing the same, this report will talk about preparation and application, as well as studying and day-to-day life on the Sunshine Coast.

Preparation

You apply to the USC through the international office. Applying through Viadrina was a relatively easy process, and involved filling out an application form and supplying an English certificate. USC has a steep tuition fee of \$8,550 (€5,953). In addition to this, the USC requires an English language proficiency of C1 or higher. If you do not have documentation of your English skill, you can get this at the Sprachenzentrum.

You can apply for a student visa after you have received your confirmation of enrolment. I applied about 90 days before departure. I received my visa within 24 hours of applying. At the moment, visas are \$550 (€383). You can get a cost estimate [here](#).

The only way you are going to get to Australia is by plane. It can be hard to guess when it is cheapest to book tickets, so you might as well sign up for a price alert on [SkyScanner](#) right now. I did not use this service, and booked the tickets two months in advance. I paid \$1710 (€1,190) one-way.

Orientation week took place the week before the courses began. It is as eventful as you want it to be. There is one mandatory informative event for international students. I highly recommend taking part in the non-mandatory offerings as well, such as academic skills workshops, Aussie Environment and Surf Safety orientation, and introductions to the many facilities on campus. Orientation week can be a gateway to establishing connections for the rest of your stay if you want it to be. There will be stands with information on the many student organisations, sports teams etc.

Accommodation

There are three big student accommodations on campus. Living there is expensive, and so is living anywhere else on the Sunshine Coast. If you are comfortable living in a shared accommodation, you might be able to get a deal on a private apartment.

As a European, I expected to be a minority coming here. That did not turn out to be the case. The student accommodations closest to the university are filled with Germans, French, Scandinavians and other Europeans. Most people you are going to meet here are not Australian.

The supermarket is half an hour away on foot. You can order groceries from there online and they will deliver it to your apartment. At the moment, they have an offer where if you order a big enough amount on a Wednesday, delivery is free. There are no buses. Some of the accommodations have an arrangements where supermarket employees regularly come pick up shopping carts that are left at the accommodation, so you can just bring them home with you. It also seems a new supermarket is going to open up around 16 minutes away from the student dorms in 2017.

There are other housing options. If you choose to live further away, I've seen there are some shuttle bus arrangements in place.

The University

[This website](#) shows you the courses offered to international students. Courses that start with one hundred are generally not accepted by the International Office. You can only choose courses from the Faculty of Arts, Business and Law. Courses that have prerequisite courses may be available to Viadrina students, depending on which courses you have already taken at the Viadrina. You should find the courses that are the most interesting to you and ask the International Office if you they will acknowledge them, and which module they would be acknowledged in. I chose the following courses:

- ENT221 New Venture Growth, where you learn about achieving high growth in a business. One assessment task involved operating a simulated business with a team and competing against four other teams. This was easily my favourite course.
- HRM221 Managing Workplace Relations, where you learn about the legal responsibilities of Australian businesses as applied to the topics of workplace discrimination and harassment, workplace health and safety and similar issues. One assessment task included writing an Anti-discrimination policy for a hypothetical business.
- HRM321 Managing Organisational Change, which teaches you the toolbox of a Change Consultant. As this course concerns consulting, expect a lot of academic English and business lingo. One assessment task involved analysing a case study of organisational change and writing a report about it.

- IBS220 Cross-Cultural Management, which deals with issues of doing business with different national cultures. For example, what issues are likely to occur between a German and a Chinese team doing business? Two of the assessment tasks involved students picking a country and using models of national culture to analyse the consequences for doing business with members of that culture.

Both HRM-courses required written reports on a very high level and penalized grammar- and formatting mistakes very harshly. They also gave out false or incomplete information about assessment tasks. ENT221 and IBS220 seemed very fair in terms of assessment, and very forgiving of international students' grammatical errors.

You can use the website that displays the courses and click the courses you are most interested in. You should be able to access the course outline, which contains all the information you need on course content, course materials, grading procedure etc.

If you sign up for the recommended amount of four courses, you will probably have classes three or four days a week. Coming to classes is not usually mandatory. Lectures are usually recorded if you want to watch them at home. Coming to tutorials, however, is highly recommended. Tutors have been known to make important announcements in tutorials only.

Semesters at the USC are slightly different from those at the Viadrina. Instead of one final exam, students are typically graded on three assessments tasks in one course. The first happens around week four, the second around week ten, and the third is usually the final exam after week 13, which is usually worth no more than 50% of your final grade.

I do not believe English courses are offered, as students are already required to have advanced English skills. The courses you take at the USC can be used to document your English skills at the Viadrina.

My overall impression of courses offered at the USC is very good. I especially like the teaching style where you get tasks along the way during the semester. I found they help keep you on track with the material. Professors and tutors were very approachable and friendly. Materials were generally available in the library, although they were harder to come by closer to the assessment task deadlines.

Please note that most of the courses I took were also offered at South Bank – USC's campus in Brisbane! You might want to consider staying there instead of on the Sunshine Coast. Brisbane is one of the biggest, most interesting cities in Australia with a population of 2.3 Million, versus the main campus in tiny Sippy Downs, population 9,000, where the store is a 30 minute walk away and you basically live

in a tiny village 'on the country'. If you are interested, inform yourself on the [USC website](#).

Day to day life, spare time

[Living expenses for a student on the Sunshine Coast is approximately \\$380 \(€267\)](#). However, take this with a grain of salt. I found myself spending a lot more in spite of my best efforts.

The situation as an international student on the Sunshine Coast is something in between student and tourist. The on-campus student accommodations are privately owned and do come off as overly expensive at times. Most students I talked to felt like they were being taken advantage of. For example, the student accommodations charge €126 for second-hand bed linens that they received by previous tenants for free. Most students have to accept this as they have just travelled 30 hours with little sleep and do not see any options.¹

Many international students buy used cars during their stay in Australia. I did not choose to do this, as it sounds like an expensive and time-consuming thing to do for a half-year stay. I can recommend the bus service. Bus tickets come at a discount when you buy a \$10 bus card. Unfortunately, there is no additional student discount for international students – that is just for the Australians. Bus tickets will not be a significant part of your living expenses in any case.

USC students have a rich offering of organizations and clubs, if this interests you. Australians are particularly passionate about their sports, so if you are an athlete, you will have a lot of options at the USC. The following link contains [a quick overview of social communities at the USC](#), most of which will introduce themselves during orientation week.

Conclusion

My favourite thing about the USC is the climate. Temperatures are comfortable all year – in 2016, it went no lower than 9.4 ° C in winter and no higher than 29.2 ° C in summer, even though there are rainy days and thunderstorms at times. You will see all kinds of animal on campus. The kangaroo families that graze on campus are the most obvious. There are also all kinds of birds. Every night at sunset, parrots fill up the trees on campus and make a spectacle. Ducks walk around with their kids between the lecture halls. If you walk over to the sports arena when no one is playing, you might see pink cockatoos foraging. When you spend every day

¹ For anyone interested, the best option is probably to order bed linens online and have them delivered right before you arrive. Packages are usually stored at the office until you come pick them up. The items accommodations charge €200 for, you can buy online for around €90. I cannot recommend any specific online stores in this report, but feel free to contact me.

among animals and palm trees and the sun is shining, you will start to feel good for no particular reason.

My worst experience from the USC is just all the expenses. With the tuition fees, it would already have been bad enough, but living expenses are also higher than in any European country I have been. Financing a stay here is very difficult and you definitely need to figure this out before you apply.