

## **Experience Report – University of Stavanger, Norway**

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My Erasmus+ semester at the University of Stavanger, Norway, was nothing short of life-changing. It was an incredible period of academic, personal, and emotional growth, filled with unique experiences, enriching discussions, and a profound sense of belonging. From the very first day, I was welcomed with open arms by the professors, the coordination team, and the entire university community.

What struck me most was how human and dedicated everyone was — not only to the academic success of their students but also to their well-being, both physical and mental. The professors were not just knowledgeable experts; they were genuinely passionate about teaching, creating an environment where learning became a joy rather than a chore. The coordinators were consistently available, supportive, and responsive, always ensuring that all international students, including myself, felt safe, guided, and respected.

As a student with autism, I had some concerns before arriving in Norway. I wondered if I would be able to keep up, if people would understand my limitations, or if I would be seen as “difficult” when I needed accommodations or certain adjustments. But my fears were quickly dissolved. From the beginning, the staff and professors truly saw me — not just as a student, but as a whole person. They never pressured me to do anything that made me uncomfortable, and they never made me feel guilty for my limitations. Instead, they listened carefully, adjusted expectations when needed, and made sure I always felt included, integrated, and respected.

The classroom environment was one of the most positive and engaging I have ever experienced. The classes were highly participatory and inviting, designed to spark meaningful discussions and to encourage critical thinking. It was not just about sitting and listening passively — every lecture felt like an intellectual adventure, and every seminar left me excited to dig deeper. I often found myself wishing that the assignments had larger word limits, because the topics were so fascinating and the materials so rich that I wanted to write more, research further, and explore additional perspectives.

My classmates were equally amazing. They came from diverse backgrounds, bringing unique experiences and insights to every discussion. Despite cultural and language differences, we quickly formed a tight-knit community, supporting and learning from one another. I felt encouraged at every step — not only by the faculty but

also by my peers — to push my boundaries, sharpen my skills, and develop new abilities I hadn't even imagined before.

This semester was a time of immense personal growth. I achieved dreams I never thought were within my reach, and I surpassed limits I once believed were impossible to overcome. I learned to navigate not only the academic demands of a rigorous program but also the emotional and social challenges that come with living abroad, adapting to a new environment, and building new connections. Through it all, the University of Stavanger provided a safe, supportive, and inspiring space where I could thrive.

The coordination team deserves special recognition. They were incredibly organized, clear in their communication, and always ready to offer help. Whether it was about administrative processes, housing, academic procedures, or simply adjusting to life in Norway, they were there for us — and they always approached each situation with kindness, patience, and a sincere desire to help.

I also deeply appreciated the university's commitment to student well-being. It was clear that they valued us not only as learners but as human beings. There was a strong culture of respecting each student's needs, encouraging a healthy balance between work and rest, and promoting inclusivity at every level. As someone who sometimes struggles with sensory overload and social exhaustion, I never once felt left behind or excluded. My needs were understood, respected, and accommodated without question.

Academically, the experience was phenomenal. The program was challenging yet deeply rewarding, pushing me to think in new ways, to engage critically with complex topics, and to contribute meaningfully to academic conversations. The professors were always ready to provide feedback, offer additional resources, and encourage independent exploration. I found myself genuinely excited to attend every class, and even more excited to continue reading, researching, and reflecting afterwards.

One particularly memorable aspect was the way the classes encouraged dialogue and exchange. We weren't just passive recipients of knowledge; we were co-creators, building understanding together through debates, group projects, and collaborative learning. It was this atmosphere of shared curiosity and mutual respect that made the academic experience so fulfilling.

Looking back, I am filled with gratitude for everything this experience has given me. I grew as a student, as a researcher, and as a person. I discovered new strengths,

gained invaluable insights, and formed connections that will stay with me for years to come. I felt empowered, inspired, and supported every step of the way.

In short, my Erasmus+ stay at the University of Stavanger was one of the most enriching and transformative periods of my life. I cannot recommend this experience highly enough to other students. It is not just about studying in a new country; it is about stepping into a community that truly cares, that invests in your growth, and that helps you become the best version of yourself.

To future students: embrace this opportunity wholeheartedly. Ask questions, join the discussions, share your ideas, and don't be afraid to be yourself. You will find people here who see you, who value you, and who will help you flourish — both academically and personally.

Thank you, University of Stavanger, for welcoming me so warmly, for supporting me so generously, and for helping me realize dreams I didn't even know I had. This experience will stay with me forever.

Stavanger 26 May, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karoline". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial 'K' and a long, flowing 'e' at the end.