

Novosibirsk State University, Russian Federation

Hi everyone, I am Nikoloz, a master student of Engineering Physics program as well as a master student of Neuroscience program in Carl von Ossietzky University. I visited Novosibirsk State University (NSU) and made the experience in both of my field studies Engineering Physics as well as in Neuroscience. I am happy to tell you about my exchange semester and hope that it will help you to see a realistic picture of what you may expect when you visit Novosibirsk State University.

Preparation – planning, organization, application for the host university

I love traveling; it is one of my favorite hobbies. I love meeting new people, learning their culture, gathering new experiences and at the same time develop myself through all adventures that I can face during my trips. After I realized that Carl von Ossietzky University has many exchange programs, I thought of combining my hobby together with studies. What could be better of having a journey abroad, develop yourself professionally and culturally? You have an opportunity to see how specialists and professors from other countries tick and work! Is not that great?!

From the beginning on, I knew that I want to go to Russia. I had two reasons, first I am fluent in Russian and second, I knew that Novosibirsk State University used to be one of the best universities for Physics during the Soviet Union and is still very strong in this field. As I study Engineering Physics, I thought that it would be a great thing to learn physics from lecturers who studied during the Soviet Union that is known for its high-level education.

My organization for the exchange semester started with checking the website of Novosibirsk State University (<https://www.nsu.ru/n/>). I checked if there are any interesting courses for me. Surprisingly, I found so many of them that could not even decide which of them should I take (the website of university is not that user-friendly, the year 2018, and it took quite a lot of time, maybe 6-7 hours, to find subjects, understand their description and write out one of my interest). To make sure that the subjects in Russia could be later on accounted for my Engineering Physics studies I contacted my coordinator of the Engineering Physics program and discussed all details regarding that question. Afterward, I made my choice of subject list. In parallel to all this, I kept in contact with the coordinator from Novosibirsk State University that helped me a lot with doing my schedule. Some subjects that had to be in the winter term were switched to summer term and this information was not uploaded online. I recommend always to double check and ask the coordinator twice regarding your subject list! All coordinators in NSU are happy to help you!

Application for the university took a bit of time. The coordinator told me that it will take around 1 to 1,5 month, but be on the safe side! It took around 2 months for me. The paperwork in Russia takes a long time, as many different departments have to look through your documents, keep that always in mind in case you will have to do any documents in Russian University. There are not too many documents to gather for the application for exchange semester to Russia, but some of the documents could be quite strange, for instance, HIV test. Forgetting student visa you will need to provide your HIV test. Depending on your house doctor, it may also take a couple a week or two.

Arrival

Novosibirsk airport is around 1 hour of drive from Akademgorodok, the part of Novosibirsk city where the university is situated. You can ask your coordinator to order a taxi for you, give details of your arrival and you will be safely transferred to the University ☑ it costs around 12 Euros and I think this is the best way to start your stay in Novosibirsk. Of course, you can also order a taxi, use for that a Taxi app: Yandex Taxi, but the price difference may be just 2 euros.

Your coordinator will tell you all the details about accommodation in advance and where you have to go after you arrive Akademgorodok. All dormitories are next to the university so you will not be lost. If you will be transferred from the airport with a university driver he will give you a small excursion around the city until you will arrive at your dormitory. Usually, rooms are already prepared and you only need to tell your name, provide some document that states your name, to the guard at the dormitory and they will give you a key for your room.

Accommodation

Your homestay will be discussed in advance with your coordinator and they always have a place for students in student dormitory so you will have a place where to stay. Student dormitory is different from the one that we are used in Oldenburg, so I will recommend having a look on the NSU website a detailed description of what you will get, also ask your coordinator as sometimes conditions may change. I thought I will live alone in the room but after arrival, I figured out that I have a neighbor.

There are three options for accommodation. NSU can help you to 1) rent a private flat or room 2) suggest a private room in student dormitory 3) suggest shared room in a student dormitory. Flats are chosen individually depending on your taste. Student dormitories for international students are quite similar, I used to live in such one. They are roughly 16 m². You will have a bed with blanket, a pillow, sheets, and towels (these you can change every week and the dormitory stuff will wash them for you), you will have a table and a chair. Every room has a private toilet and a shower. Unfortunately, there is no internet provided when you arrive, but you could switch it on after you register at university and it costs 5 to 10 Euros per month. Kitchens are shared with other floor mates, around 10 rooms use one kitchen. All toilet things like toilet paper, toilet brush or cleaning materials have to be bought on your own. The same stays for the kitchen, there are no plates, pens or cups that are shared; you have to have your own dishes.

Student dormitory has extra small, silent rooms where you can cozily study. There is also a small room for the gym as well as table tennis. If you play musical instruments, you can join an NSU band or just play on your own in their music room.

Studies at the host University (events, study results, supervision, subject recognition)

The process of study in NSU is quite similar to Carl von Ossietzky University. Depending on the course you will have lectures, seminars, and tutorials. There are always midterm exams, usually written and they will influence your final grade. At the end of the semester, you will have a final exam. Some professors also ask you to attend all seminars and tutorials and include that in your final grade, make sure you know which professors expect that and do not skip important classes ☑

I had experience that all the teachers are very nice and open to help. You will not be supervised explicitly, but you can always ask questions during the lecture as well as after the lecture whenever

you see your teacher. In comparison to Germany, teachers in NSU do not have office hours, the only possibility is to meet them during a lecture or in their teachers' shared room.

Be sure to ask your department coordinators in Oldenburg which subject will be recognized from the exchange semester and which not. I wanted to take some classes from Bachelors of Theoretical Physics that we did not have in Oldenburg, but as I am a master student I can not get credit-points for those subjects. Still, if you think these are relevant for your studies NSU has no problem with them, but you have to register to attend them.

One of the things that I loved in NSU is their external study opportunities. Almost every week I was able to attend some workshops, extra lectures, and quizzes. University invites different speakers and there are various topics discussed starting from China culture and finishing with Spaceships.

In the university, there is a department of International Student Office, that does many events for international students. Important will be to register their social network "Vkontakte" or it is also called "VK", it is similar to Facebook. All relevant events for international students will be posted there.

Everyday life and free time

The part of the city that you will live in is quite small and separated from the city. You need around 50 minutes to get with a minibus from Akademgorodok to the city or 30 minutes with a taxi. There are a couple of bars, restaurants and one club, but if you like going out it is better to go to the city. Novosibirsk is quite a big place around 1.5 Million people live there and it has many nice places to visit. Unfortunately, the city transport closes around 22:00 and after this time you can only use taxis.

In Novosibirsk, people do not speak English. It may be difficult to communicate without a good level of Russian. There are many international students who do not speak Russian but I think it is impossible to understand the culture without language.

Experience in general, DOs and DONTs

If you go to Novosibirsk in winter, make sure that you have very, very warm clothes and shoes. It may come down to -45 C degrees in January and February.

It is a good idea to travel on a taxi in Akademgorodok, it is quite cheap and fast, you do not need to wait for 10-15 minutes in cold for your minibus (never use buses, they are too slow).

For navigation use application: 2GIS, it is very useful

In Russian people never smile in the streets, but if you start talking to them they will be friendly and willing to help you, so do your step first! ☺

Pay attention to your food and dishes in dormitory kitchen, some students may borrow them not letting you to know and may bring these back in a week or maybe even in a month ☹

Do not forget your entrance card of the dormitory, otherwise, the guard may not let you in!

Get a Russian phone number. It is cheap and they have great internet!!!

Best wishes, have fun in NSU!