International Student guide, ECTS
Østfold University College, Høgskolen i Østfold

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1 Welcome to Norway and Østfold University College

This guide is meant for potential international applicants who are not permanent residents of Norway. It has been made to help you plan your studies at Høgskolen i Østfold - Østfold University College - and to help you organise your stay here in the best possible way to get the most out of it personally as well as academically.

We hope that present and future foreign students and partner universities, as well as anyone else interested in becoming better acquainted with Østfold University College, will benefit from this guide.

1.1 International relations and programmes

Østfold University College participates in a number of international co-operation programmes: NORDPLUS - SOCRATES/ERASMUS - LEONARDO DA VINCI.

In addition, we have a number of bilateral agreements with European, American and Australian universities.

Provided that there is a suitable offer of study at Østfold University College, exchange students and self-financing students are welcome to apply to our institution. For further information on courses offered to international students please see our website http://www.hiof.no/index.php?ID=3&lang=eng.

1.2 Contact persons for foreign students

If you have questions not answered by this guide, please contact the International Co-ordinator or the staff at any of the six faculty offices; please refer to page 2. They will all be happy to help you.

1.3 The European credit transfer system (ECTS)

ECTS provides common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies throughout Europe. The European Credit Transfer System builds bridges between European institutions and widens the choices available to students. The ECTS system makes it easier to transfer the results of courses taken in another country.

This guide has been developed in accordance with the principles of the European Credit Transfer System.

2 Østfold University College

Østfold University College is a medium-sized Norwegian university college with approximately 4000 students. We offer a wide range of bachelor's degree programmes and a large number of credit courses. In addition there are advanced courses, master's degree programmes and supplementary courses in various fields. We prepare students for professional careers in the public sector – within health and social services, education, management and the arts – and for technical and economic/administrative occupations in trade and industry.

Østfold University College is the product of a merger in 1994 when five state colleges in the region joined forces to form a polytechnic offering a wide range of studies.

2.1 Study locations in three towns

Østfold University Colleges is located in three towns, on five different campuses.

Halden, a border town with a population of 27,000 and a student population of 2,000, is a centre for higher education and research. Its famous fortress Fredriksten rises over the Iddefjord overlooking beautiful surroundings and a special mixture of history, culture, and modern industry. For further information, see http://www.visithalden.com/indexeng.html.

Fredrikstad (70,000 inhabitants) is a bustling commercial centre in an intimate seaside setting with adjacent islands. Tourists and residents alike love "The Old Town" - a complete, well-preserved fortified town, home to a number of arts and crafts shops. You can receive more information on the website:
http://www.opplevfredrikstad.com/category.asp?id=240&mainid=34

Sarpsborg (48,000 inhabitants), located on the Glomma River, is known as the capital of the timber industry. It is the county's administration centre and the home of the county museum. The surrounding landscape has rich historic roots and a wealth of ancient monuments from the distant past. For further information see http://www.visitsarpsborg.no/

2.2 Six faculties

Altogether, Østfold University College offers 50 study programmes at six faculties:

- Faculty of Business, Social Sciences and Foreign Languages in Halden
- Faculty of Computer Sciences in Halden and Sarpsborg
- Faculty of Education in Halden
- Faculty of Engineering in Sarpsborg
- Faculty of Health and Social Studies in Fredrikstad
- Norwegian Theatre Academy in Fredrikstad

Our programmes are of high quality and may be combined with studies at universities, and they qualify students for graduate studies at universities in Norway and abroad.

3 Academic matters

3.1 The academic calendar

The Academic year is divided into an autumn and a spring semester.

Autumn Semester: from mid-August to mid-December
Spring Semester: from mid-January to mid-June
Vacation period: Christmas (ca. 2 weeks) and Easter (11 days)

International programmes may follow a slightly different calendar and will normally offer a special introduction programme, partly in co-operation with the International Students' Group.

3.2 Degrees and qualification

Østfold University College offers educational programmes leading to degrees at college candidate (*høgskolekandidat*), bachelor and master levels.

The Høgskolekandidat (College Candidate) degree is obtained after 2 years of study. This degree may be built upon to obtain a bachelor's degree.

The Bachelor's degree is obtained after minimum 3 years of study.

The Master's degree is obtained after 2 years of postgraduate study. An important part of this degree is independent research work.

3.3 Tuition fee

Østfold University College does not charge tuition fees. Students are required, however, to pay a registration fee of approx. NOK 750 each semester. ERASMUS, Nordplus and Bilateral Exchange students are exempt from paying the semester fee.

3.4 Credit system and grading scale

Courses are measured in "studiepoeng" corresponding to the ECTS standard.

Grades for undergraduate and postgraduate examinations are awarded according to a graded scale from **A** (highest) to **F (**fail), with **E** as the minimum pass grade. A pass/fail mark is given for some examinations.

3.5 Teaching and examination

Teaching is carried out in various forms such as lectures, seminars, group work, laboratory work and independent studies. The teaching stresses the student's responsibility and individual performance, and the grades obtained generally reflect the entire participation in the course, not only the final examination.

3.6 Academic culture

The relation between students and teachers can be described as informal. Students do not use their teachers' titles, and they are also encouraged to ask questions both in and out of the classroom, as well as comment on things they disagree with. The dress code is informal.

3.7 Norwegian languages courses

Students at special programmes (e.g. the International Business Programme) taught in English, and exchange students at other programmes, are offered a language course in Norwegian for foreigners. The language course does not involve full-time study and is taken in addition to other courses.

3.8 Students with special needs

Contact person: International co-ordinator
Contact person for accommodation: The staff at the Student Welfare Office

3.9 Letter of admission

Students who are admitted to Østfold University College will receive a Letter of Admission. In this letter the student is asked to confirm acceptance of the place of study he/she has been offered at the college.

3.10 Libraries and reading rooms

All Østfold University College faculties have their own libraries, which have been built up around the study programmes at the different campuses. The libraries are networked, with CD ROM services and on-line search facilities. All faculties also have reading rooms and rooms for study groups, with user-friendly opening hours.

Norwegian students enjoy a great deal of freedom in their studies. The emphasis on independent study and individual planning does, however, place a responsibility on the students to organise and plan their days. The libraries can offer extensive literature services, and the staff will always be happy to assist you.

3.11 Computer facilities

The computer centres have excellent facilities and all students have access to Internet/e-mail. Our Internet address is http://www.hiof.no

4 The student welfare organisation «Studentsamskipnaden»

Halden: Violgt. 3, N-1776 Halden
Tel. + 47 6917 2350 Fax. + 47 6917 2360
Email: studentsamskipnaden@hiof.no
Homepage: http://www.siost.hiof.no/index.php?ID=4810&lang=eng

The Student Welfare Organisation runs campus services such as cafeterias at all faculties, accommodation services, social and psychological counselling, and the Student House, which hosts a number of cultural and social activities and is a meeting place for discussion, socialising etc. The organisation is responsible for extensive welfare work, and can also offer cabins in the mountains and at the seaside at a very modest rent. All students with a valid student identity card are members of the Student Welfare Organisation.

There is a wide variety of societies at the college where students can meet. International students are, of course, welcome to take part in the many social or sports activities, or join the clubs and societies that are open to all registered students at the college. The International Students' Group is open to all international students and Norwegian students with international interests.

4.1 Accommodation

A room will be guaranteed at one of the residence halls owned and operated by the Student Welfare Organisation and within walking distance of study locations, provided that you apply for accommodation within the deadlines. If you fail to apply within the deadlines or you arrive after the date you have indicated, the college does not guarantee housing in one of the residence halls. Students who are admitted will receive the application form along with their Letter of Acceptance.

Application deadlines: 1 June/15 November.

Contracts are issued by the Housing Division of the Student Welfare Office and are normally sent to the address given on the application form. The acceptance deadline is stated in the contract and must be observed (application procedures).

Single rooms are arranged in units. Each unit includes a kitchen and a bathroom with shower and toilet. The rooms and kitchen are furnished. This includes desk and chair, bookshelf, sofa/bed and table, chair, lamps, curtains, linen and duvets (for international students), and a wardrobe also containing shelves. The kitchen has a stove and a refrigerator. Kitchen utensils are included for international students.

The monthly rent varies with the size and standard of the room. At present the normal price is around 2200-3100 NOK. The rent includes electricity and heating. As a tenant, you may also use the common rooms and facilities, such as the TV-room, laundromats etc.

Residence halls:

Stadion Studentboliger, Peder Ankersgt. 9, N - 1771 Halden
Remmen hybelhus, Remmen, N - 1783 Halden
Bjølstad studentboliger, N - 1671 Kråkerøy (Fredrikstad)

More information about accommodation can be obtained from the Student Welfare Organisation, http://www.siost.hiof.no/index.php?ID=4810&lang=eng.

4.2 Do you need someone to talk to?

Studentrådgivningen is a consulting service for students. Our consultants are professionals who are experienced in listening and talking to you about difficulties regarding your situation as a student or other problems that are bothering you.

We try to suggest different ways to solve your problems and inform you about your rights and opportunities. Sometimes we try to help you finding out where to go for help in the public service-field with legal, economic, psychological, medical or practical problems in need of solution.

Maybe you feel lonely and isolated? Please don't hesitate to contact us.
It is better to act quickly than wait for the problems to "grow above your head".
Our service is free of charge, and professional secrecy is of course guaranteed.

You can find us in the college buildings in all three cities. You can reach us by e-mail or telephone, or come to see us at our offices.

Here are the addresses and telephone numbers:
Halden:
Faculty of Education, Remmen, 1783 Halden
Tel: 69 21 57 29, mobile.: 92 69 50 65
Sarpsborg:
Faculty of Engineering, P.O. Box 1192 Valaskjold, 1705 Sarpsborg
Tel: 69 10 40 09, mobile.: 90 99 38 35
Fredrikstad:
Faculty of Health and Social Studies, P.O. Box 1409, 1602 Fredrikstad
Tel: 69 30 31 32, mobile.: 91 82 36 32

5 Residence permit

Students from EU/EEA countries staying more than three months are required to apply for a residence permit from the police authorities after arrival in Norway. Students from EU/EEA countries who plan to stay in Norway for a period of less than three months, and students from the other Nordic countries do not need a residence permit.

All other candidates accepted by Østfold University College must apply for a student residence permit in their home countries through the nearest Norwegian embassy or consulate. Students are advised to start this process as early as possible.

The Norwegian embassy/consulate can answer questions concerning what documents to enclose with your application, normally:

- A valid passport
- A letter of admission from Østfold University College
- Documentation of sufficient funds for the period of time to be spent in Norway (approximately NOK 80,000 per year)
- Documentation of satisfactory accommodation

The Norwegian Foreign Mission, where you filed your application, will notify you directly about the outcome of the application. Applications generally take about 8-12 weeks to process. A student residence permit is issued for a maximum period of one year at a time.

5.1 Registration at the aliens office upon arrival

All international students, with the exception of students from EU/EEA countries who are staying in Norway for no longer than three months, and students from the Nordic countries, must report to the Aliens Office at the local police station within 7 days of their arrival in Norway.

6 Cost of living

In spite of low inflation during recent years, foreigners still find Norway an expensive country, especially in terms of food prices. But foreign students will soon find their way to the supermarkets offering the best buys. Eating and drinking in restaurants will also cost considerably more than in most other countries. Tobacco, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages are heavily taxed.

The rent at the residence halls is relatively reasonable, and travel is also reasonably priced. Clothes are found at all prices, and the shops often offer good bargains. So in spite of the general high cost of living you can actually manage on a tight student budget.

The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund estimates average expenses for students to be approximately NOK 8,000 per month covering accommodation, transport, food, clothing, medical and dental care, semester fees and other necessities. It is of vital importance that all financial matters are well planned before you arrive in Norway.

Although foreign students may be granted work permits according to Norwegian immigration laws, part-time work and holiday jobs are difficult to find. Therefore, you should not plan on partially financing your studies through paid work.

7 Insurance

It is the students' own responsibility to make insurance arrangements for any accident, illness, injury, loss or damage to persons or property resulting from, or in any way connected with, the study period in Norway.

A general travel, luggage and accident insurance is recommended during your stay in Norway.

7.1 Health insurance and health care

Students from EU/EEA countries must bring a medical insurance certificate, The European Health Insurance Card, valid for the whole study period in Norway. This document will, upon application, be issued by the relevant health insurance authorities in the student's home country before departure. If this document is not available, you must present alternative documentation to show adequate medical insurance in your home country.

International students from other parts of the world apply for voluntary enrolment in the Norwegian National Health Scheme after arrival.

There is no special health centre for students at Østfold University College and the students may therefore consult any medical doctor they wish. The European Health Insurance Card should be presented at each consultation. You should note that the insurance is limited to the cost within the public insurance scheme and will not cover additional expenses for the few private doctors/clinics that are not attached to this scheme.

For all categories of students the insurance covers regular medical consultations, except for a nominal fee to be paid by the patient. However, for registered students this fee will be refunded at the Student Welfare Office upon presentation of the Health Receipt Card, issued by the doctor, and the student card. The insurance also covers hospitalisation in Norway. Medicines and dental care are not covered.

8 Drugs

The Norwegian laws concerning drug abuse are very strict. Import, possession and use of narcotics, including hashish, marihuana and ecstasy, are illegal. Drug dealing carries a heavy prison sentence.

9 Arrival in Norway

Most students arrive by train.
See Norwegian Railway timetables.
Students from Northern Europe may find it convenient to travel by train via Copenhagen and Gothenburg to Østfold, with train stops in all three campus towns. There is also a long-distance coach service along the same route if you prefer to travel by bus.

If you arrive by plane at Oslo Airport Gardermoen, you can either take the airport express train, a regular train, or the airport express bus to Oslo Central Station. From Oslo Central Station you can travel by train to Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg or Halden. You can also go by bus directly from Oslo Airport Gardermoen to Fredrikstad.

You are advised to inform Østfold University College about the exact time of your arrival, so that you can be met and taken to your accommodation.

9.1 The student office

The staff at the local college administration will be glad to assist you in matters concerning registration, student identity card, e-mail address, registration for examinations, issuing of academic transcripts, and any other general academic or practical information.