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MSc in finance and accounting

The University of Texas at Austin, McCombs School of Business

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About the country and city

Austin is the state capital of Texas, great city with friendly environment. Many people from the US and around the world move to Austin every year, and this makes the city feel like home. Austin is considered very different from the rest of Texas; it's more liberal and contains many students unlike other cities in the area. The university is one of the biggest universities in the US, ranked high in many categories. The city looks completely different from the way people imagine it.



About the Host University – campus and school atmosphere, location

The campus is huge and full of undergraduate and graduate students. Looks exactly the same as a typically US university that appears on TV/movies. McCombs Business School is well known and the MBA program in particular. It's important to mention that as an exchange student you will be part of the second year classes of the MBA program. This will give you many advantages, including the option of choosing any courses offered by the MBA program and to participate in many MBA events (all incoming exchange students are part of the MBA program, no matter if you are MSc student in Israel). There is a big difference between the student life at Tel Aviv University and in Austin. The second year class includes around 250 students who take the same classes and go to the same events and in general know each other very well. The students are coming from many different countries (around 30% international + around 20% international exchange students).



Courses and professors

Before choosing courses, search the syllabuses on Google! (Probably if it's the same professor the course will be similar in your semester). You need to take between three (3) to five (5) courses. At first, I took 5 demanding courses and then removed one in order to enjoy the experience besides studying. Most of the exchange students take 3 courses. I would recommend taking 4 courses.

Advanced Corporate Finance (Professor Jan Schneider) – The course is similar to financial management class at Collier. The professor doesn't go deep into the theory and open the class for discussions. There are many small group assignments and two tests during the semester. Although it sounds a lot, actually this course doesn't require too much time.

Private Equity (Professor Ken Wiles) – interesting class, not very demanding and in some point might require high level of English since the class requires the ability to read and understand contracts. The professor is super professional and teaches great! Highly recommended. The course requires two tests during the semester and one big group assignment.

Financial Risk Management (Professor Andreas D. Christopoulos) - great class and great professor. The course is demanding but totally worth it if you are interested in the capital markets. Many materials to read, home tests, two class tests and many assignment. (Again, the class worth it!)

Financial Strategies, Energy Focus (professors Sheridan Titman and John Butler) – the course is mainly about valuation of energy fields and to understand the financial strategies behind developing an energy field. A bit demanding but not too much. Interesting class and recommended for those who wish to take a case study and develop a predictions models.

Financial Statement Analysis (Professor Robert Davidson) – Interesting class, pure accounting, very similar to the course in Israel. The course demands time during the semester. Many assignment, no exam and one valuation project.

Accommodation – dorms and other solutions-

There are many accommodation options since UT is one of the largest campuses in the US. The university will send you many details about the options. The main issue with the accommodation is the short term lease that might be difficult to find. The best shots that you have are Facebook groups and craigslist website. Rent can cost between 700 and 1600 USD. Probably, around 1100-1200 USD is enough and appropriate to live. The rent is a bit more expensive from Tel Aviv but most of the accommodations for students are in communities with pool, gym and in a better shape than the Tel Aviv apartments. Be aware that although you have the opportunity to rent a place for a full year and than to sublet to someone else, it can be difficult since the demand is higher in the fall semester.

<https://austin.craigslist.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/UTSubletRoommateFinder/>
https://www.facebook.com/groups/358828094325003/?ref=br_rs
(There are many more, just search on Facebook)

Visa

The visa process might sound complicated, but actually the university provides instructions and all the process is short and easy. In order to study in UT, the University sponsors its International students for a J-1 Visa that allows the students to study in the US. And work inside the campus. The Visa is valid for the time of the semester, a month before the semester begins, and a month after the semester ends. In order to get the visa from the US embassy in Israel, UT sends a DS-2019 form with FedEx, and instructions along the process of how to get the visa. After receiving the DS-2019 form, you can schedule an appointment at the US embassy.

Transportation

All UT students can use the public transportation for free with valid student card. In addition, the taxi fare is cheap in Austin and very convenient to use. Uber doesn't operate in the city but they have few other riding apps (such as: Fare, Ride Austin and Fasten) that operate exactly the same as Uber. Those apps, probably, will be one of your best friends in Austin (:

Insurance and Health Services

All the exchange students must have the university insurance that cost around 1,000\$ per semester. There is no way to avoid it with another insurance.

Living expenses

In general, Austin is less expensive than Israel in most of the parameters. There are few costs that you can't avoid, but certainly you can choose how much you wish to spend. Rent – between 600\$ and 1500\$. Flight – around 1200\$. Insurance – around 1000\$. Phone – around 50\$.

Food and night life

Austin is a well-known city in the food area. There are food trucks in every second corner with delish food and there are also many great restaurants. The best Mexican food that I have ever had was in Austin (better than in Mexico!). There are many cool bars in Austin, very different than Israel –you would like it! 6th street is the main street in the downtown area and most of the bars are located in that long street. There are few parts of the street which have different kind of culture. East 6th street – more like Texas style bars. “Dirty 6th street” – like a huge party, most of the undergraduate student go out there (you might feel a bit old there...). West 6th street – my favorite area, cool bars with more mature environment. Except the 6th street there are many more places to go out. At the end of the day, Austin is a kind of a college city, and you will find many different places around the city. Every Tuesday you have one-dollar beer at Cain & Abel's in the west campus for example. In Addition, every Thursday the MBA program organize events that called “Think & Drink” in different bars where you can meet your classmates and socialize – great way to meet new people and to know different



locations in the city. In addition, Rainey Street is also a great place to go - it's a street that transfer most of the houses to bars and restaurants. It looks like a regular street with big houses but actually it's a bar or a restaurant – really cool concept.

Football season-

Happens only during the fall semester. Great experience even if you are not a football fan. There is a one-ticket for all the sports events – not recommend to buy that since you will be there just for one semester and probably will not go for more than 5 games. Before each game you can buy one game ticket (student prices) online or through the Facebook groups. Most games you can find tickets less than 40\$. Really important is to buy your tickets to the student sections or even to the MBA area in order to be close to your friends. The game is around 4 hours and few hours before people start to pre-game around the stadium – also great experience, there is nothing close to that in Israel. There are many places to pre-game around the stadium and even the MBA program organize few pre-games. Those pre-games are big parties that includes drinks and food (Barbecue) and it's a lot of fun. Sometimes people come to the pre-game without going to the game!



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/381628841954441/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/277971882224550/>

Tips

I recommend attending the fall semester as opposed to the spring. The fall semester has more activities, events, and it occurs during the football season! Moreover, the weather is better in the fall semester.

Take as much as you can from this life time experience! Attend as many events as you can (at the university and outside). Be friendly and meet new people – this is the best way to reach to a significant experience.

ACL festival - The Austin City Limits Music Festival is an annual music festival held in Austin, Texas on two consecutive three-day weekends. One of the largest music festival in the US which attracts many people from outside Texas. Highly recommended!

Travel – Austin's location is in the middle of Texas and there are so many places that you can travel to in just a few hours by bus. Houston, Dallas and San Antonio are just examples. There are few companies that offers bus rides from Austin to the main cities around- very simple and great way to travel. In addition, the international office (of the all university) offers many trips and events. Probably, most of the events will not be interesting for you but you can find nice trips and events that you might be interested.



YAD events - YAD Austin is a Young Adult Division of the Jewish Federation of Greater Austin. YAD creates a community for Young Jewish Adults in Austin, ages 21-40, through social, educational, cultural & philanthropic programming; connecting Jewish students to their roots while building a Jewish community. It's a great way to meet more people and make new friends. In addition, they make great events that might interest you (including Shabbat Dinners and holidays). Just enter their Facebook group and you will see the upcoming events. They are really welcoming new people and even schedule a meeting just for the new people an hour before the events.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/YADAustin/>

Gym – There are few huge sports centers in the university which are open for all students. Those centers include gym, run track, swimming pool and more pools for fun. We for example used to play volleyball every Sunday at the university pool. In addition, if you would like to run I would recommend doing so next to the Colorado River – amazing run trail next to the river.



Career center – the career center offers many professional events and private career coaches. Whether you look for a job or not, those events open your mind and teach you about the US industries – many times shows you aspect that probably, as an Israeli you are unaware of. Bring a suit!

Feel free to contact me for any additional questions, I would like to help as much as I can. I have more recomndation to give in person: Zidkia@gmail.com

Good luck,
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