

**2016-2017 Student Mobility/Exchange Program**  
**Returning Undergraduate Student Report**

**Host University:** BTK

**Host Country:** Germany

**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Communication Design/

Photography **Semester:** Summer 2017

**Date of Report:** Wed, Set 13, 2017.

## **1. OVERALL EVALUATION**

**How would you rate your exchange experience overall?**

**Poor**

**Excellent**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (10)

**Why did you choose this host institution? What key factors or issues influenced your decision?**

I chose BTK because its in Berlin. I also heard good things about the school and city from a student who presented about exchange at an info session at OCAD.

**Please share a few of your most positive experiences and a few of the biggest challenges you faced.**

One of the most positive things was the exposure to the German language and the history of Berlin. One of the biggest challenges was finding a place to live- without getting scammed, getting registered in Germany, and setting up cell service.

## **2. PREPARATION**

**Please describe your preparation for the exchange, including banking, travel documents and student visa application. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?**

I saved money all year before I went so I could spend a lot on rent if needed, I left my visa too late which was kind of stressful, but it worked out ok because I was able to register upon arrival. My travel documents were sorted and I prepared way in advance so that everything would work out. Next time I'd do the visa earlier.

**Are there any important items (e.g. art & design supplies, documents, specialty foods, health items) that a student should take to your host country?**

Not really to be honest, all I brought was a carry on backpack and bought/found on the street/at school lots of clothes or art supplies that I could use short term. I liked that I was able to travel light.

## **3. ARRIVAL**

**Was anyone at the airport, train station, etc. to meet you? Did you experience any difficulties upon arrival?**

No-one was there to meet me, but I did have an air-bnb host waiting. Navigating the bus system to get from the airport to the apartment was smooth, but as soon as I got there I didn't have phone service so I was actually stuck outside with no way to contact my host for about an hour.

**When should students plan to arrive at the host university? When did you arrive? Would you have benefited from arriving earlier?**

I arrived early, about 10 days before the semester formally began. I'd recommend it for sure. It was nice to have time to get organized, figure out transit and cell service and sleep off the jet-lag. I also attended helpful orientation meetings at school before the semester.

**Was there an orientation session offered at your host university? If yes, did you attend and what did you learn?**

Yes. I attended. I learned about rules and guidelines, how the semester would go in terms of courses and expectations, they also helped me register and fill out german paperwork. They were very helpful- if a little disorganized.

**Is there a coordinating office for international students, including exchange students, at your host university? Is there a staff person you would recommend students approach with their questions?**

Yes there is an office. The people who worked there changed during my stay so I can't recommend anyone with too much confidence, but if Sebastian Gongora is there-he is good.

#### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

**Where did you live during your exchange? Were you happy with your accommodation?**

I lived in four different airBnB apartments. The shared ones were uncomfortable, especially one that was messy and had a loud cat, but the two apartments when I had a whole place to myself, I was happy.

**Did you have any difficulties arranging accommodation yourself? Did the host institution assist you in finding accommodation?**

I booked it all way in advance through AirBnB so it was pretty easy. I was even able to cancel and re-arrange reservations because I had booked flexible spaces as opposed to ones with moderate or strict cancellation policies.

#### **5. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION**

**To better understand the similarities and differences between academic studies at OCAD U and at your host university, please comment on the following:**

**Level of academic difficulty and challenge:**

Less difficult than OCAD in terms of content, but more structured, more classes/class hours, and strict attendance and cel phone policies.

**Time spent in class (# of hours per week):**

18-20

**Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week):**

5-10

**Studio-based work:**

(all-I took no theory courses)

**Written assignments:**

very few- just one page write-ups, power points, descriptions of artwork

**Interaction between students and professors:****6. SERVICES**

**Were there any extracurricular activities/events scheduled for exchange/international students at your host university (cultural visits, trips, workshops, etc.)? Which ones would you recommend?**

Yes. There was a campus party and a trip to Documenta in Kassel. I'd recommend both.

**What were the library and computer facilities like?**

The computer labs were great, tons of giant desktop mac computers and nice windows, the library was tiny and crowded.

**7. COST OF LIVING**

**How did you prepare yourself financially for your exchange? Did you pay for the experience entirely out of your own savings? Did you receive student or bank loans? Did you apply for / receive any financial awards (scholarships or bursaries)? Did you have help from parents / family / friends?**

I worked extra hours and saved up money. I also sub-letted my room in Toronto which is in a house my parents own. They also helped by paying for my flight there.

**In general, was the cost of living in your host country higher, lower, or similar to that in Canada? Please explain.**

I'd say it was about the same. I pay less rent in Toronto because I have three roommates, but I spent less on food, clothes, other expenses because things were cheap in Berlin and I was trying to live frugally. I was concerned about running out of funds. I also got a job while there so I had some spending money.

## 8. EXPENSES

**Exchange rate with host country:**

1 Euro is 1.49 CAD

**Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):**

March/2017-July17

**Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution?**

Probably more.

**Please complete the following budget to give other students an idea of what they can expect to spend in the host country.**

**Basic Expenses in Canadian Dollars:**

- **Tuition and general fees (paid to OCAD U): \$ 6000**
- **School supplies: \$ 150**
- **Rent or university residence: \$ /month = \$ 1200**

4. **Rent-related expenses:**

A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month ?

B) **Telephone:** \$ /month 35

C) **Cable:** \$ /month ?

D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month tourist study, museums and restaurants \$200

5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$ 200

- **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$ 15
- **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$ ?
- **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ 60

9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$ 15 (intramural)

10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ 190

11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ ?

12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$ 900

13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ 700 (Rome for 11 days)

14. **Student visa:** \$ ?100?

15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$ approx. 7000 (excluding tuition and plane ticket)

## 9. ADAPTING TO YOUR HOST COUNTRY

**Did you experience any “culture shock” during your exchange? How did you deal with it?  
Do you have any advice for students on how to adapt to life in your host country?**

yes. I think you just have to wait it out and go slow and sleep off the jet lag and explore at your own pace. I had dinner with a friend who lives there so that helped.

**Was there a lot of interaction between local students and exchange/international students?  
What is the best way to develop friendships with students from your host institution?**

Yes. There was a cafeteria and a courtyard. Everyone was very nice and social. I'd recommend attending events and parties even if you don't feel like going.

**Did you have any unforeseen problems? Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected?**

My boyfriend came and stayed with me for two months. We didn't always get along because it was a bit stressful to be living together for the first time. Other than that it was a very positive and smooth experience.

**10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

I'm so glad I went, even though I was apprehensive and I'm a nervous traveller! So thank you so much for facilitating this program and being so helpful throughout the whole process. You both deserve raises! ;)

*Please email your report to International Student Services at [international@ocadu.ca](mailto:international@ocadu.ca).*