



2013-2014 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

Host University: Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design

Host Country: Israel

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Fine Arts

Semester: Winter 2014

Date of Report: August 11, 2014

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 was choosing between Queensland CA in Australia and bezalel. I chose Bezalel because it has an international reputation for being challenging and elite. Israel also poses a unique environment to learn about and create art

What was the most meaningful thing you learned while studying off campus?

A close to impossible question. There's so much to learn off campus in Israel. In my experience I learned almost everything I will take home and with me through out life off-campus. You're forced into a culture that is rich with tension around social, cultural and political history. Do not go to Bezalel intending to 'just do art'. Israel, especially Jerusalem, is too complex of a place to have that kind of stand point. You need to be open and take in everything around you.

Please share three of your most positive experiences and three of the biggest challenges you faced.

Challenges: 1. Administration works VERY differently in Israel. This was the basis of two major challenges registering for classes [nothing is done online... all in person. Gets really hectic. The rep you deal with in fine arts is horrible and you need to swallow your tongue constantly. SECOND challenge was getting the bus pass. Also done in person, customer service is terrible and requires more than 1 trip to the crowded bus station. 3. Fine arts is really loosely structured. It was really difficult getting used to a curriculum that's catered mainly towards mature students who are extremely directed.

Positives. 1. Class mates, both local and international. You can learn so much from them. 2. Living in Jerusalem is amazing. There's so much to learn, do and see transportation technically is good but schedules aren't so good. Transport is also cheap everywhere in the country. Also you

can really get anywhere you want from Jerusalem. Travelling is easy. Also things are super casual in Israel, dressing fancy is weird. 3. Learning "off campus"

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?

Getting the visa is easy in Toronto if you have ALL the documents ready. Its all listed online and you have to make an appointment. Israel is expensive so you really have to be careful about finances before and budgeting.

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

Supplies are expensive so if you can fit your own supplies and tools I would.

3. ARRIVAL

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

No but getting into Jerusalem from the airport is super easy. Just catch a sheirut (shared taxi) outside to Jerusalem. They'll take you exactly to where you need to go. 65 shekel

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

You don't need more than a week. Explore the city, meet people and you'll be good.

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

Orientation was ok. Standard like any other school... They give you the low down on the city and campus and make some familiar faces.

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. The coordinator is kind of snippy but generally helpful when you need her. Not helpful during registration which will be the hardest time of your semester.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in the student residence. It was fine and convenient... if you have a rav kav (bus pass) its super easy getting into the city so a non issue if you don't mind commuting. The main campus is outside of the city centre.

I would recommend living in the city centre; Nachlaot, Rehavia, german Colony, Musrara... Its beautiful and not crazy expensive (rent around Toronto rent or cheaper). You'll have a better time off campus.

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

Yeah they send you listings and stuff if you don't want to live in the res. There's also a lot of facebook groups for Jerusalem Living and posts are in English and Hebrew a lot of the time

If you lived on-campus, which residences would you recommend? Are there any that should be avoided?

You'll be in kfar hastudentim/student village. Apartment style res.

If you lived off-campus, do you have any recommendations for future exchange students? For example, does rent include hydro and other utilities, or are they extra? Which location in the city is ideal for exchange students?

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 & Challenge: Fine Arts Faculty – Completely open curriculums. If you're creative and passionate it is challenging but not in an academic way.. you'll be pushed to excel... Professors and other students aren't so concerned with marks.. you may go though the semester with out seeing a single grade. Design faculty's are much more challenging... I know from friends that were going through it

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 15

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 8

Oral presentations (Individual and Group): it happens

Written assignments: none for me in Fine Arts

Studio-based work: all

Interaction between students and professors: very good

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?

Events between students were planned by us. There are other things for students Jerusalem wide. You get a free membership to the student union and their prices. They can help you out.

What were the libraries and computer facilities like?

Pretty good

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 paid out of my own savings. I've been living at home and saving for years.

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

Cost of living is slightly higher. Going out is much more expensive but if you're smart and budget it's not much different from Toronto.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 3.4

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): 02/2014 – 08/2014

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

Probably less. Excluding other travels

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:

1. **Tuition and general fees (paid to OCAD U):** \$3000 ~
2. **School supplies:** \$100 (paints...)
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$730/month
4. **Rent-related expenses:** exchange students in residence to pay these bills
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month
 - D) **Other (specify) internet** 50shekel/month (split 5ways)
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$200 ~
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$you buy once... bring your own if you can fit. Its expensive
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$15
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ Student Rav Kav \$200~ for the SEMESTER
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$100

10. **Travel health insurance:** \$1.00 a day
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ none
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1000-1400
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$5000~ (croatia 2wks, spain 2wks, within Israel...)
14. **Student visa:** \$60
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$12000-\$15000

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?

Definitely!!! There's very little customer service as we know it in israel. You need to learn to be confident, not take things personally because things won't be made easier for you and workers, some of the time, wont go out of their way for you. It will take getting used to but everyone goes through it. Try and do things with a partner or in groups at first...

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?

There was! talk to people in your classes. Ask them for help. The Israeli students are really excited to get to know the internationals and want to show you the best time in their city.

Did you have any unforeseen problems? Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected? If so, is there a way that you could have prepared yourself?

No customer service!! But I got used to it and did really well by the end. Wasn't forseeing the difficulties with registration and TRANSCRIPTS. Take it upon yourself to make sure and check that what you need to get done gets done. Don't be absent from any administrative processes. I got screwed a few times...

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

email me and well have a chat about it. I'd love to talk in person because its such a hard experience to put in to words, mind you into a word document...