



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

**Student Name:**

**Host University:** Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design

**Host Country:** Scotland

**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Design & Craft

**Semester:** 2

**Date of Report:** 2017-08-03

### 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 wanted to do a lot of travelling, so Europe seemed the place to be. Being in an English speaking country was also a factor I considered. But overall while researching institutions, the University of Dundee as a whole had a lot of great reviews in terms of student experience.

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

The biggest challenge was really getting used to the different learning environment fast enough. Everyone was extremely welcoming but in the end the environment didn't help me succeed in the way I had hoped. Finding housing, though not exactly difficult did take me nearly a month of being there. Though the friends I made who opted lived in residence did seem to enjoy it. The most positive aspect of the exchange really was the people I met. The Scottish students were amazing and the community of exchange students there was even better than I'd expected. Living near the sea was also one of my favourite things. Dundee is a great little city overall and you really can get anywhere from there quite easily. I really did love Scotland.

### 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?**

As a Canadian citizen, entering and living in the UK is a breeze. The one thing, in retrospect, I would have done was open a short term bank account there. It would have made renting much easier and would have avoided the transactions fees.

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

I found most necessary items quite easy to acquire. Though other than the university art shop there aren't many places to find art supplies in the city. So if there is anything you use a lot in your work I wouldn't count on buying it there.

### **3. ARRIVAL**

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

When I arrived to Dundee by train I had my couchsurfing host pick me up from the train station. However, I don't think the University has a program that will do that. But don't worry, the train station is very close to campus.

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

I arrived a full week before classes started. The university is pretty much closed then, but they do hold a lot of events in that week specifically for exchange students to meet each other. I also got a chance to go to the "free shop" which I would recommend asking about.

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

Because I arrived in the winter term there was not. Though I do think that new students in residence got one. There were some small welcome/social events though.

**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?**

As a design student I was assigned an advisor that I was told to go to with any issues I had. She ended up being quite helpful in my first couple weeks, as you could walk in anytime with questions.

### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived in an off-campus apartment, that incidentally was right beside my studio building. It took me over a month to find, but I was extremely happy with it. The housing options in Dundee are overall quite good.

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

I did end up going to see a student union staff who helped recommend accommodation and explained the different areas of Dundee to me. Though I didn't end up using her advice, it was very reassuring. If you're looking for an off-campus room the platform SpareRoom is very good in the UK.

## **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:**

Similar

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

40 in-studio hours

7 instructed hours

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

10

**Studio-based work:**

3 projects

**Written assignments:**

1 project

**Interaction between students and professors:**

High

## **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?**

There were a lot of social events during the first month of the term. The best of which was a traditional Ceilidh held for exchange students which was an amazing night. I highly recommend. There was also an international students club that did occasionally plan trips around Scotland. Though I did not attend any of those.

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

The libraries were really great. The computer facilities though available, had availability restrictions. All the computers were Windows only and no programs were provided outside of those. So get your laptop properly imaged before you leave.

## **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 saved up quite a bit of money through working before I left. Also I applied for the exchange bursary which entirely covered my terms tuition. I apply for OSAP every year, however this year because of my bursary they ended up making me pay back that terms loan back before I could apply again. That affected my budget quite a bit but I had enough saved that I managed.

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

Rent is considerably lower than it is in Toronto, which helps a lot. Food costs were about the same. You really have to be aware of the exchange though because some things are surprisingly expensive.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:** 1.7

**Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):** 01/2017- 05/2017

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

I would estimate I spent more, as I did a lot of travelling while I was there.

**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):** \$0
2. **School supplies:** \$150
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ 550/month = \$2200
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$0 /month
  - B) **Telephone:** \$ 25/month
  - C) **Cable:** \$ 0/month
  - D) **Other (specify)** \$ 0/month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 200/month = \$800
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 20/month = \$80

7. **Laundry:** \$ 0/month = \$
8. **Transportation:** \$ 15/month = \$60
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$170
10. **Travel health insurance:** OCAD U Health Plan
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$0
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$900
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$2000
14. **Student visa:** \$0
15. **Other expenses (apartment items):** \$70

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$6530

## **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?**

I experienced minimal culture shock. However, I found Scottish people are not quite as affectionate when it comes to say hugging hello etc. Surprisingly this did affect me negatively more than I would have thought. But spending time with my exchange friends helped counteract any isolated/homesick feelings I experienced.

**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?**

Being in a studio based program there really forces you to make friends quite quickly, as you have to spend almost every day, all day with them. However, my exchange friends in other programs said they struggled making friends with local students. I think the best way to make friends with similar interests would be to join one of their many clubs or sports teams.

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

I really expected to like having an assigned studio more than I did. I hadn't realized that it was a requirement to work in the studio from 9am-5pm every weekday until I arrived. I really found it difficult to force myself to work in that public environment during specified times. Also the whole building closes by 8pm, though if you can work on their schedule, that's probably not an issue.

## **10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

If you get the chance, go to the Isle of Skye. It was my absolute favourite place.

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