



2014-2015 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

Host University: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (ENSBA)

Host Country: FRANCE

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Pole Numérique (Digital Department)

Semester: Fall 2014

Date of Report: 1 February 2015

1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

Poor **Excellent**
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please explain your rating.

I had a wonderful time, though more information about the way the school operates would have been helpful to have beforehand. For example, your time at the school is governed by projects you come up with on your own (rather than curriculum to work through) and you find teacher to suit your needs. Also, the necessity of finding a studio (atelier) to be part of as soon as possible could have been better supported or explained.

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

I chose ENSBA because I wanted to be in Paris, speaking French, exposed to French ways of living, and educating oneself.

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

My own personal strength and to make good use of all of my time.

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

I always felt particularly rewarded after spending a lot of time walking around the city, taking photographs and making notes, reading and enjoying. I also always felt great when I practiced my French, and was very satisfied with my progress throughout the term. Travelling outside of France was also amazing. I think that it isn't so much the schooling that makes such an impact, but the fluidity with which you can adapt to a new place and the amount you can learn from this process.

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 would have started a lot earlier, because government offices are extremely particular and almost always useless. I spent a lot of time preparing with my parents, but more time going back and forth from offices because the paperwork was always confusing and usually required an additional task or signature or form. Also, the insurance the school suggested was insufficient (according to the school and according to my roommates – insurance is very specific and extensive in Paris).

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

Anything you need is already in Paris, it just often costs more. Wine and cheese and bread are extremely cheap, and I can't think of much else you would need. Pharmacies are well stocked and everywhere, markets are fresh and can be cheap if you can find the good ones (Place d'Aligrès).

3. ARRIVAL

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

No and no. The metro is really easy to use from the airport, look for RER ligne B.

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

I arrived in mid September, so I had two weeks to myself before school began (October). This was sufficient time.

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

Yes, I attended, and I met all my friends and learned about school.

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, Laurence Nicod.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in the 12e arrondissement and it was magical. It was the best place I could have lived. An hour's walk along the Seine to school, right next to the best market in town (as mentioned earlier, Place d'Aligrès) and plenty to see and do nearby. The 11e is also good (and right next door).

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

I had to apply to live with a student at the Beaux-Arts, whose information was given to me through the school. She was an excellent roommate.

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:

Completely self-directed. This was challenging for me at first, as North American universities are much more like businesses than schools, and little attention is paid to individual progress or interests. At the Beaux-Arts, if you don't want to do anything, you don't have to. But if you want to make meaningful art, you can and will be supported by all those you seek out to support you.

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

10-30 (depending on the week - I took workshops which would sometimes be 15 or 20 hours).

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 10

Studio-based work: Mosaic, digital practice.

Oral presentations (Individual and Group): n/a

Written assignments: Inter-media Writing (a book of poetry and animation)

Interaction between students and professors: In all classes and in my studio (Atelier Bruguera).

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?

No, it's up to you to make plans with the other exchange students, and even better to try to make friend with French people.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The library is literally the most beautiful room I have ever seen in my life, but has a really squeaky door, which I found to be a constant source of amusement. Computer facilities are good and up to date. The leader of the digital department, Vincent Rioux, is a very nice man and quite helpful.

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 used all of my savings and had a lot of help from my parents.

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

Higher, because there are always unpredictable expenses, and the exchange rate adds a little extra. Not to mention you often feel like it's your only chance to do something like fly to Berlin for the weekend.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 1 EURO = 1.43 CANADIAN DOLLAR

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): 09/14-01/15

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

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):** \$6000
2. **School supplies:** \$100
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ 813/month = \$3255
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month (included)
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ 30/month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ 0/month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month n/a
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 150/month = \$800
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 30/month = \$135
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$ (included in apt)
8. **Transportation:** \$ 30/month = \$135

9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$100
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$300
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$80
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1600
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$600
14. **Student visa:** \$0
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$ n/a

Estimated Total Expenses: \$13,240

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 felt completely at ease in Paris, except a little loneliness. There isn't much to say to prevent this, except to anticipate it and know you'll make it through. To walk everywhere and never be afraid to try, always be yourself, speak your mind, be curious and careful and excited to be where you are.

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 is plenty of interaction as long as you are participating equally. There are regularly scheduled parties for students (through the student union) and very frequent gallery shows at the school. The best way to develop friendships is to be active and open.

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?

I had the best time of my life. I did not foresee that.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Thank you for sending me to Paris! I can't wait to go back.

Please email your report to Susan Kemp, Student Mobility/Exchange Coordinator, at skemp@ocadu.ca