



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

Student Name: I

Host University: Edinburgh Napier University

Host Country: Scotland

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Design

Semester: fall 2016

Date of Report: Jan 29th, 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?

When applying, I wanted to get an experience in design education in Europe, so I eventually chose Scotland since it has had a large design influence as well I wanted to experience what design was like in the UK

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

The education experience was very different as I accepted, many of the programs included assignments related to different design contest brief which was something nice and surprising. The biggest challenge I would say was trying to get the same amount of attention non-exchange student received from their professors.

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?

Preparation was pretty easy, as a Canadian citizen, you can study in the UK without a visa for up to 6 months. For banking, I checked with my bank to see if they had a partner bank in the UK and they did, so I was able to take money out at the partner bank without getting charged.

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

You will need your acceptance letter to enter the country as well as the address of where your staying. Take as much small supplies as you would need if you don't want to buy more when you arrive. Sometimes finding the cheapest option is difficult to do some research before you go out to buy supplies.

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 when I arrived but it was very easy and simple arriving into the country. I had a lot of bags, I took a taxi to get to my flat, but there is a bus that takes you to the city for 5 pounds, so around \$8

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

I arrived about a week before classes began, this was a good amount of time to explore my area and the city before classes began.

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

There was an orientation and a fresher's week which made meeting people very easy and fun, there are also events held almost every weekend for exchange students. This information session is very valuable and explained everything you needed to know, including how to get medical services while abroad.

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?

There were a few people there to guide you, it was mainly the head of the design department that will answer and questions you might have. If you have any questions about the school or program or anything, if you went to the iPoint, they would be able to help you with anything really.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I stayed in a student residence call Ziggurat Student Living. It was in the heart of the city and was an amazing accommodation and the only student accommodation that offered semester living,

although it was extremely expensive and I would say to maybe look for a flat rather than student housing.

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

The host institution was not very helpful in finding accommodation for semester students which made things a little more difficult, although after doing some research I found my student housing.

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: 6/10 if OCAD was 10/10

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 20 hours a week

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 4 hours a day

Studio-based work: 85%

Written assignments: 15%

Interaction between students and professors: between 5 to 20 minutes per class

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?

International students often did a lot more traveling, even within Scotland and I would really recommend it. The school had organized trips but I would recommend a few different things that are much cheaper. For only 30 pounds, you can take a train to Loch Lomond and climb Conic Hill which is in the highlands, and it is the most beautiful view of the highlands you will ever see. There is also the Hairy Coo tour, which is a free tour of the highlands I would strongly recommend. The highlands of Scotland are probably one of the most beautiful natural sceneries that everyone must see.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The computer access was very new and so very good, although printing for design was difficult to find. The library was also a great one but was rarely needed for the design classes.

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 received a student bank loan for this as well as help from my partner and family and a small amount of savings I had before leaving

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

In the UK, the cost of living was much higher than in Toronto for sure, and the Canadian dollar was slightly weak when I arrived, but fortunately it had gotten better while I was there, but it was still very high.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 1 pound to 1.76 dollars

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): September 2016- December 2016

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

I would say I spend slightly more, my rent was much higher than I would have liked it to be as well as higher than the average price range, but unfortunately it was a rush decision, I would say research a lot when looking for a flat because that is where most of your money will be going. It was also slightly more since I was paying OCAD instead of my host institution which, if I were a local, would have been nearly free.

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):** 3500\$
2. **School supplies:** 200\$
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = 1500\$
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = 120\$

6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$

7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = 20\$

8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = 90\$

9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** 400\$

10. **Travel health insurance:** 0\$

11. **Medical expenses in host country:** 0\$

12. **Round trip plane ticket:** 1300\$

13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** 250\$

14. **Student visa:** 0\$

15. **Other expenses (please specify):** I would say I had the mistake of not keeping track of my budget, and that I would have been better to prepare more financially

Estimated Total Expenses: \$ 15,000

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?

The city was much smaller than Toronto which made things much easier to adapt to, as for culture shock, there wasn't too many things that made things difficult to adapt to. Mostly small things like some Scottish accent were very strong and difficult to understand, but these are things that are easily adaptable. Crossing the road became surprisingly challenging since in the UK they drive on the left, so be very careful until the instinct to look in the opposite direction kicks in.

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?

Exchange and local students stayed very separate for some reason, but developing friendships with exchange students was very easy since everyone was in the same boat, and meeting people from around the world doing the same thing as you was very exciting. I made friends from Quebec even that I probably would have never met if I had not gone to Edinburgh.

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

The design program was very small so professors had close relationships with students, which is nice but made things difficult as an exchange student to get the same attention and feedback as local students.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

This exchange was an experience that I will never forget, when you arrive, make sure to talk to people and make friends, it will make the times there so much better. Also although your there to study, your also experience a new country for the first time, so make sure you balance school and leisure equally. Edinburgh is a beautiful city that has so much to offer, and the rest of Scotland is beautiful and full of culture, so experience it to the fullest.

Please email your report to International Student Services at international@ocadu.ca.