



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

Student Name:

Host University: Edinburgh Napier University

Host Country: Scotland, UK

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: The School of Arts & Creative Industries

Semester: 2

Date of Report: May 30, 2017

1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

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

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

The key factor in choosing Napier to be one of my choices because it is one of the closest universities to a university my dad went to in the UK.

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

A challenge was learning to live by myself so far away from home. I didn't have friends who came with me to Scotland. Adjusting took a bit of time. But a positive experience was the friends I have been able to make, in school and out. The city is small so being able to walk everywhere makes it convenient to get around.

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?

A good thing about the UK, especially in Edinburgh, was that it was easy for me to get my student visa. I got it when entering the country, while going through immigration. I just needed to have all my documents proving that I will be studying in Edinburgh. These documents included my acceptance letter and my housing accommodations. I just need to carry these documents with me every time I leave the country and need to re-enter the country. With banking, I was able to set one up in Scotland to hold cash. However, I could not get a student account with the Bank of Scotland or the Royal Bank of Scotland because they require students to have been studying in Scotland for a certain amount of time before granting the student status. So I just got a basic account with the Bank of Scotland. With this account, I wouldn't have

to worry about currency exchange rate. In terms of doing things differently, I wish I could have researched about the account options for banking because I had to go to a bunch of different banks to learn about not qualifying for the student account. Also, this would have saved me a few trips of walking back and forth to the banks to finally set up appointments for setting the accounts. Make sure the school gets the CORRECT name for when printing the letter of approval for the bank, which is needed for setting up the bank account. The name on the letter of mine was not an exact match of my passport (missed my middle name) so I had to set up a total of 2 appointments with the bank to set up the account before I actually got it set up. Finally, beware that don't expect to just walk in to a bank to open an account. You need to make appointments!

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

If possible, bring your own pens/pencils/markers, as well as sketchbooks, utility knives and any other usual supplies you use. They can get pretty expensive. Don't forget acceptance letter(s), from the school/accommodations.

3. ARRIVAL

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

I personally did not get anyone to meet me at the airport because I arrived later than everyone else. The accommodations I stayed at had people greet incoming international/exchange students at the airports a few days before I arrived. I did not have issues upon arrival.

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

I suggest arriving a week in advance at least to get used to everything. I arrived 1 day before the beginning of the term, which was fine since I did not have any class on that first day. It would have been nicer to arrive earlier though so that I could get everything settled beforehand.

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

Yes, there was an orientation session offered to exchange students. However, I did not attend because I did not arrive on time.

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 for international students. I worked with a staff member there by the name of Shona and she was very helpful with answering all my questions. She is also the admin contact on the Merchiston Campus for the design section of the School of Arts and Creative Industries.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in the student accommodation of Edinburgh Napier University. I am pleased with it. It is a relatively new student accommodation, like many of the other ones around the city.

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

I had some trouble with accommodation because I originally didn't think I could still apply to the student accommodations at the university at this time of year. So I looked for flats but that was hard. I was lucky to have still applied to the university's student accommodation and got accommodations.

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: The level is a 3 out of 5.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): Total hours per week is 12. Each class was supposed to be a total of 6 hours, including 1-hour lunch. I had 1 class where most of the second half of the term didn't have class time since we needed to just spend time with our groups for the second project.

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): I would say total time overall was 12 but that can be less, depending on the week. Usually it is less.

Studio-based work: We had 4 studio-based projects but we were strongly suggested to stay away from the studios since the final years needed them for working on their final project to hand in and for their design show.

Written assignments: We only had 2 written projects overall, 1 essay and 1 presentation.

Interaction between students and professors: Communications with the professors were a hit or miss. Sometimes they are good at responding to emails while other times they are not. In terms of communications in person, it is a little easier and better since we spend more class time 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?

There were trips that you could take with the school but you would need to look for it. I only went to the highlands one and that was pretty cool. There are also student groups that you could join like accappella, and volleyball. There are also groups/societies that you could join where you would have to pay a membership fee like the whisky society and international society.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The library is definitely bigger than the one at OCAD with many study rooms, study spaces and computers. There is also another room/center called the Jack Kirby Computer Center that is a big room full of computers to use.

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 was lucky to have financial help from my parents and family. Getting the mobility exchange bursary also helped.

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

I would say that the cost of living is higher since the Canadian Dollar is not doing so great. The student residence I stayed at

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 1.7

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): Jan/2017 – May/2017

Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution? I feel like I may have spent 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:

1. **Tuition and general fees (paid to OCAD U):** \$3800
2. **School supplies:** \$10
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$980 /month = \$4900
4. **Rent-related expenses:** Included in Rent
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$41 /month = \$184.5
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 5/month = \$22.5
7. **Laundry:** \$17.78 /month = \$80
8. **Transportation:** \$ 5/month = \$22.5

9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$250
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$378
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$0
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1150
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$700
14. **Student visa:** \$0
15. **Other expenses (please specify):**

Estimated Total Expenses: \$11 497.5

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, there are many differences between here and Scotland. It took me a few weeks to get used to my surroundings. All I can say is to research about the country and to learn more about it through travel books and such. Buying a travel book for tourists may be the best place to start to learn about attractions, restaurants and such.

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?

I was pushed to connect on my own. I did not do much in terms of school groups but for me, I connected through a church I went to. For the classroom setting, people are segregated. The Chinese exchange students sat in their own little group. The product design students sit together and the interior design students sit together. It took me a little longer to fit and develop friendships but I made friends with all the local product design students.

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

An unforeseen problem was just not seeing everything I wanted to. I wish I had researched a bit about Scotland and Edinburgh before going. I also wish I had bought a travel guide to know ahead of time what to see, what to eat and what to do. Also, I wish I could have planned which European countries I wanted to visit before going away.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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