



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

**Student Name:**

**Host University:** Edinburgh Napier University

## **Host Country: Scotland**

**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Interior & Spatial Design

## Semester: Winter

**Date of Report:** August 13, 2017

## 1. OVERALL EVALUATION

**How would you rate your exchange experience overall?**

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

I chose it because of the small program size and school reputation. The fact that English is the language spoken there and that the country is in Europe giving me travel opportunity was also a major factor.

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

Met lifelong friends, saw the world (11 countries and 21 cities), had the opportunity to learn new techniques and gained a new perspective on the world. Didn't really face any major challenges.

## 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?**

The only thing I did before I went was unlock my phone and buy travel insurance. I got my visa when I arrived at the airport (just make sure you have your letter of acceptance from Napier).

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

The school had its own art store and there were others in the city. I brought copies of my passport, drivers licence, visa/debit card and other documents. Also brought some basic supplies like pens, pencils, sketchbook, xacto etc. But basically everything we have here, they have there.

### **3. ARRIVAL**

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

Someone from the school met me at the airport and a driver took me to my accommodation. It was nice because it gave me the chance to meet other exchange students.

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

I arrived the day before orientation and didn't have any issues but a few days earlier would have been nice in terms of settling in a bit more before classes began.

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

Yes, I attended. We learned a bit about the school and the city and they gave us a few tips on making our stay easier/better.

**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 was but I didn't use it much. They got back to me via email quite quickly and were helpful when I asked questions.

### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

Private accommodation, a flat with a friend also on exchange from OCADU. I absolutely loved the place and the neighbourhood. It wasn't the absolute cheapest place but it was similar in price to what I pay in Toronto and was worth it to have a nice home away from home.

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

My friend and I stayed in an Airbnb for the first two weeks while we looked for accommodation. I think seeing a place in person is important before agreeing to stay there. We didn't seek help from school but they did have assistance if we needed it.

### **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:**

Easier than OCADU just because we only had 3 courses vs the 5 we take here. The courses were on par with here in terms of challenge level.

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

18 (3 courses of 6 hours each)

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

The time spent in class was work time so I probably only spent a few hours outside of class working on projects.

**Studio-based work:**

I liked the amount of time we had in class with profs and peers around to comment and assist. Gave me the opportunity to ask questions as they came up instead of creating a list for the next class.

**Written assignments:**

I took no lecture based courses so didn't have written assignments

**Interaction between students and professors:**

Similar to here.

## **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 few student union events a few of which I attended and had fun. I would also recommend international student day trips too. They let you meet more people and see a bit of the country.

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

Great computer facilities, although there was a lack of computers that had the software I needed. I was told that the school was in the process of fixing this.

## **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?**

Worked a full time and part time job the summer prior to leaving plus part time during the year. I also had OSAP money saved that I ended up having to dip into (only for my travels). Received a bursary from the school as well which was very helpful.

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

Similar to Toronto.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:**

\$1 CAD = 0.61 GBP

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

January/2017 – April/2017 (travelled afterwards until mid-June)

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

Probably a bit more just because I was visiting attractions and going on trips as well as eating out a decent amount. Also short term accommodation is more expensive than a 12 month lease.

**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:** \$800 /month = \$3200
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** included in rent
  - B) **Telephone:** \$ 45/month
  - C) **Cable:** none
  - D) **Other (specify):** none
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 300/month = \$1200
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 20/month = \$80
7. **Laundry:** there was a washer in my flat
8. **Transportation:** \$50 /month = \$200
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$700
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$0
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$900
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$3000 (two months of travel after courses were completed)
14. **Student visa:** \$0
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses: \$ 13,000**

## **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?**

Extremely similar culture to here so I had no trouble adjusting. Obviously there were small things that are different (built in tax, restaurants stopped serving food after 9:30 ish etc....) but nothing difficult to adjust to.

**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?**

Yes, I made lots of friends with people in my courses. This was helped by the fact that there was only 20 people in each year of my course and we all work in the same space. Definitely go to events so you can meet more people. I also had a school trip to Berlin a few weeks after arriving so stayed with a group while there and became very close with them.

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

No

## **10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

It was honestly the best 7 months of my life. I made amazing lifelong friends and found a new home in Edinburgh which I hope to live in again soon. I learned about myself, became more independent and confident, and yes its cheesy but it was a life changing experience, one I believe everyone should have.

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