



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

Host University: Emily Carr

Host Country: Canada

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Critical and Cultural Practice

Semester: Fall 2016

Date of Report: January 18, 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?

As a member of the BA program I had limited choices for schools that I could apply to. I had narrowed down my choices to either Emily Carr or NSCAD and based on the weather and the surrounding areas, which I was going to be able to explore I picked West Coast over East Coast.

Please share a few of your most positive experiences and a few of the biggest challenges you faced. This exchange was a life changing experience for me. It sounds cliché but I made a lot of great friends on the trip, both exchange students, students of Emily Carr and just people of Vancouver. I learned a lot about myself and what I need to be inspired and a lot of that had to do with the freedom I had while studying at Emily Carr. My teachers were extremely kind and understanding and ensured that we were always happy and felt calm and confident about whatever it was that we were doing. There was not as much of a focus on precise academic standards (I did not see a single rubric or fully-detailed project description the entire time that I was there).

As far as the application process goes I am still highly disappointed by the level of disorganization I witnessed both at Emily Carr and at OCAD. The main exchange co-ordinator at Emily Carr was fired or quit right during the middle of class registration, which meant that I was not able to register for courses when I should have been able to. I was put onto a waiting list in every course because of this after I had been assured that I would be able to get into all the courses of my choosing. I spent multiple hours on the phone with various members of Emily Carr's administration staff trying to sort out various issues and I was either put on hold for half an hour, never received a call back, or was given different information from each different source. I can only imagine how difficult this process must have been for students who also had to worry about transferring from another country.

At OCAD no one seemed to know anything about the BA program and what courses I would be able to take in order to ensure that I was getting credits towards my major. I was told on multiple occasions that I would be able to take multiple classes towards one of my minors. I was so sure of this that I had originally planned to apply to universities where I could take 5 courses towards my minor. I was not informed that I could not do this until a week before the final applications were due and I happened to attend a meeting on the exchange program, which was not mandatory.

The one positive aspect of the application process was how willing and helpful my teachers were when it came to writing letters of recommendation. Both teachers that I approached wrote wonderfully detailed, glowing recommendations and were able to complete them quickly so that I could copy them and send them out to each institution in a timely manor.

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?

N/A, I did not leave Canada.

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

N/A, I did not leave Canada.

3. ARRIVAL

Was anyone at the airport, train station, etc. to meet you? Did you experience any difficulties upon arrival? Another student from OCAD and I went on exchange together and she had previously arranged to have her friend pick us up from the airport. The airport was small and straightforward, there were no difficulties upon arrival.

When should students plan to arrive at the host university? When did you arrive? Would you have benefited from arriving earlier? I arrived 3 days before the orientation day, which was plenty of time to adjust to the time difference and living in a new city. There was no need to arrive any earlier

Was there an orientation session offered at your host university? If yes, did you attend and what did you learn? Yes there was and yes I did attend. Seeing as I was not in a new country as most of the other students were, not much of the information was helpful for me as it pertained mainly to issues with banking and setting up cell phones in Canada. The rest of the orientation and the tour were geared strictly towards studio students, we did not visit a single lecture hall or even the library. The person who led the session and the tour promised that they would send out an e-mail with all the important information from the session which never happened even after both Meagan and myself inquired about this on multiple occasions.

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 but the person in charge, Justine Speedie, will no longer be in charge for the upcoming semesters.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived within a 20 minute walking distance of the school, in Fairview. I was very happy with my accommodation. The guy we lived with was super friendly and sociable and the neighbourhood was extremely safe and quiet.

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

I did not encounter any difficulties arranging accommodation. We found our roommate of craigslist a month before departure. The host institution had lots of helpful links and resources that allowed us to start looking for places to live.

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 courses and material were stimulating but the assignments were neither difficult nor challenging

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 10-12

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

Studio-based work: (no studio classes were attended)

Written assignments: Every assignment was a written either with or without a basic visual component as I did not attend any studio classes

Interaction between students and professors: All of the teachers were extremely friendly and welcoming and curious about my experience as an exchange student. The students were equally as friendly and sociable.

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 was a facebook group for the exchange program that I was not made aware of and thus missed the first exchange outing but two other events were planned: a pub crawl and an improv night, neither of which I attended. I made friends with several of the exchange students outside of these events and we were able to plan our own social outings.

What were the library and computer facilities like? Never visited either. I was able to complete all my research using course packs that were provided or using online resources.

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 worked two jobs all summer and throughout the previous school year in order to save up for this trip. I received a bursary from OCAD for the exchange, but only upon returning from the exchange. I was able to pay for the entire experience by myself due to my savings.

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

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: N/A.

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): 4 months

Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution? More. The entire trip felt like a 4-month holiday at certain points and therefore I spent money as if I was on holiday. I had lots of free time to explore and try new things which is what most of my money went towards.

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):** \$3,500~
2. **School supplies:** \$15
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$655
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month - included
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month – N/A
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month - included
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month – N/A
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$130
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$50
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$2.50
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ (included in tuition fees)
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$1,500

10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ N/A
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ N/A
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$900
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$700
14. **Student visa:** \$ N/A
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$ (see above)

Estimated Total Expenses: \$9575~

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? N/A.

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. The classes typically had students from all over the world without taking into account the students who were on exchange. Emily Carr is a very diverse university and everyone seemed happy to show me around or answer any questions I might have had about Emily Carr or Vancouver.

Did you have any unforeseen problems? Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected? The only unforeseen problems I had were with the administration on both ends of this trip. The amount of stress that applying for the exchange program caused, almost persuaded me to give up on the idea of participating in an exchange altogether.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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