



2015-2016 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

Student Name:

Host University: FAMU International

Host Country: Czech Republic

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Film

Semester: Winter 2016

Date of Report: May 2 2016

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.

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

I've always wanted an educational experience directly geared towards film. FAMU is regarded as one of the top film schools and seemed like a good choice. I could have also studied in the US, Ireland or Australia but the Czech Republic was more appealing because it was not an English speaking country, and is much cheaper to live in.

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

Biggest challenges were finding a place to live because I attempted to do it solely online through an agency, which I definitely do not recommend. Best option would be to come here first, stay in a hostel or hotel for a week while you search for a place to live. It's cheaper and easier to do it this way. Another challenge was preparing all the documentation for the visa. Being here has been amazing though, the challenges are just in preparing to come, being here has been the greatest experience of my life.

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?

Banking: I kept my Canadian bank account, it works internationally, just inform your bank of travel plans. It's pointless to open a foreign bank account. Travel documents are based on the host country, just find their VISA application online, fill it out and mail it, relatively simple, just tedious.

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

Nothing needed, just passport, the paper work your embassy sends and ensure your health insurance is sorted.

3. ARRIVAL

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

I arrived a month earlier than when school started but no, no one from the institution comes to meet you, which is completely fine and shouldn't really be expected. I took a cab from the airport to my flat that I had arranged ahead of time. Navigating in any host country is relatively simple.

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

I arrived a little over 3 weeks in advanced. The first few days I arrived I felt a little regret coming so early but eventually I met up with a friend living in the Czech Republic and felt good coming early, might've been a little over kill though with 3 weeks. I spent 2 weeks in the Czech Republic and 1 week travelling before classes started. I think 1 week in advanced is the max you should come early.

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

Yes there was a little of a lecture style orientation. They helped us figure out how to arrange getting our bus pass (Which is super cheap here compared to Toronto) and how to register for courses.

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?

The staff to talk to was Jitka, but yes, essentially FAMU is completely made up of international students and they're very accommodating and helpful (albeit, at times slow) with any questions you have.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I arranged a flat before I moved to Prague. I lived in a small studio apartment alone. I would not recommend using an agency to help you find a place. You shouldn't pay more than 10,000 czk per month if you're planning to live alone and not more then 7000 czk if you want roommates.

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

School provided some suggestions for places to look and places to book.

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:

If OCAD difficulty is 10 on a scale of 1 – 10 then FAMU would be about a 5.

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

Most classes are 1 hour to 1 and a half, unless they screen films. Time in a week spent in class is around 18 – 20 hours.

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

4

Studio-based work:

None, all liberal studies

Written assignments:

Moderate amount

Interaction between students and professors:

Moderate, based on own effort. Small class sizes, so it's easy.

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?

Not really events, but FAMU has modules, which are short workshops that you can take to earn credits, they can be interesting at times. Such as FAMU's 4 day getaway workshop entitled Cinema Dance

What were the library and computer facilities like?

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?

Apply for OCAD's mobility exchange bursary, I received a lot of money from that. The rest of the money was savings I accumulated over 2 or 3 years in anticipation of doing an exchange.

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

Cost of living here is much cheaper. I made a bad decision on rental, and paid way too much but food and transport is so much cheaper here. Items like clothes and things like that are the same as Canada.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

20 Czech crowns is about 1 Canadian dollar.

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

January 12 to June 12

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

Probably spent slightly more than average, solely based on my high rent cost, if it weren't for that I would've spent less.

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):** \$2991 (approx., it might've been a few dollars more or less)
2. **School supplies:** \$0
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$700 (roughly /month = approximately \$3700 in the end for 5 months)
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
all expenses were together, don't know the breakdown of water and internet individually.
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 50/month = \$300
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 10/month = \$60
7. **Laundry:** \$0/month (There was a machine in my apartment to use for free)
8. **Transportation:** 5 month bus pass for \$60
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** approximately \$10 per week
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$0 (Through my mothers health insurance plan)

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

12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$480 to Czech Republic, approx. same amount to go back.

13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** Too much to remember

14. **Student visa:** \$140 (approx.)

15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$8000

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?

No real culture shock. Everyone is friendly; it's a very safe country, tons of English speakers. It's definitely different than Canada, but nothing major. You'll do fine here.

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?

Mainly met fellow international students, made some really good friends but not so much with local students because they don't share classes with international students.

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?

Not much, it all went well. All problems were so minor that I do not remember them

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Do the exchange, you'll love it! Just be proactive, make friends and don't be afraid of new experiences. You're in a new place where no one knows you. You can be whom ever you want and live experiences you couldn't at OCAD. Plus it helps that everything is cheaper here, less regret on spending money.

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