



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

Student Name:

Host University: FAMU

Host Country: Czech Republic

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Film/New Media Art

Semester: Winter 2016

Date of Report: June 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 chose FAMU because I wanted to visit central Europe as well as be in the environment of a film school.

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

After a week of classes, I switched programs from the International Erasmus film program to a Czech only program that specialized in new media art. The head of the department was from Montreal and knew of OCADs name in the North American art world so he brought me into the program (without having to pay.) It became challenging to work alongside other media artists that don't speak the same language as me. It was also challenging being on your own, academically...there were never set deadlines for anything, you were just to work on your own projects and present them at the end of the year (they had a show for my work.)

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?

You have to apply for your visa right away. FAMU has to send you your official letter of acceptance... make sure you email them about this as soon as you are accepted. You will also have to get a handful of papers signed and such, just stay organized. I got a youth mobility visa, it was valid for 5 months I believe. The most difficult part was my visa application requested a

letter from my bank, in Czech. And it couldn't be google translated, so I had to find a Czech person to translate, while I was still in Canada and didn't know anyone.

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 you have a special diet it's a good idea to bring speciality foods. You will be able to find speciality food shops here but EVERYTHING is in Czech. So it's hard to find out what's in products. Also, if you're a film student at FAMU you cannot rent any equipment, (as an art student I had access to it though) so bring all necessary filming equipment.

3. ARRIVAL

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

I taxied to my apartment, my landlord was in Texas but her brother met me at the flat. I had to wait for him outside for about an hour and he only gave me the keys and I was left to figure out everything. The internet didn't work for the first week and I had no idea how to get anywhere, but it's pretty easy to figure things out. I've still never met my landlord haha.

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

I arrived two weeks before classes started and it was ideal for me. Arrive earlier if you want to travel.

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

Yes, we had orientation of Erasmus students on the first day of school. The dean and head of International students told us how to apply for our metropass, how to sign up for classes, how to get an isic card, where the schools canteen is, etc. It was helpful.

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?

Jitka Hejtmanova is in charge of international students. She is really helpful.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I got a place off AIRBNB. It was really hard to find a place without actually being here. I can offer you a list of websites to check. You should start looking 2 months before. I was happy with my flat. It was 20 mins away from school, in Prague 10. It was really small, but I was living alone so it was fine.

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

The host institution will send you links for student residencies but I preferred living in a flat than a shared student space.

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

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

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 10 hours a week (this is for the art program, the film program is much much more relaxed.. maybe 3 hours a week)

Studio-based work: 15 hours a week

Written assignments: I only had three written assignments. They were all from my film electives and very short (max 5 page essay)

Interaction between students and professors: It is very relaxed; they are like your friends.

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 is a weekend away called Cinema Dance, where you go up to the country for 3 days and make a film. We have to recite a pledge that we will never talk about what happens inside of Cinema Dance. There is also a cultural topography class that shows you a lot. I went up to the Czech countryside with my class for 3 days to have an intensive critique workshop.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

Non existent really, better off working at a café.

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 had help from my parents for my flights and then I paid for my own living/expenses on my own.

In general, was the cost of living in your host country higher, lower, or similar to that in Canada? Please explain. Much lower than Canada. Food, drinks are much much cheaper. Living is still pretty expensive for a one bedroom flat.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 1czk is equal to 0.053 cad

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): Feb2016- June2016

Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution? I was in a program with only local students so I attended just as much.

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):** \$ my ocad tuition
2. **School supplies:** \$0
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$800
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /included
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /15 bucks a month with t-mobile prepaid
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /no
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /internet, heating, water, etc was all included in my rent
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = 70-100
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = 5
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$ 0, included in flat
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ 50 for a 5 month pass
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$50
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ ocad tuition
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$0
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$800 or so, I went back to Toronto for a week for the images festival and got a round ticket for 600. Depends on the time
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$300-400
14. **Student visa:** \$300ish I think..
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$5000 including rent and plane tickets..roughly.

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?

Just know that you will become comfortable in the environment with time

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?

You will mostly become friends with other international students. There may be events and stuff for Erasmus students, go to meet people.

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?

My passport got water damaged and I had to apply for another one. You have to keep your passport on you at all times in case the foreign police ask to see it. Get a passport protecting case. I was also at the Brussels airport during the attacks, and got held in Brussels for two days. It was really scary and unforeseen.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Contact me if you need anything to do with Prague, it is a beautiful place and FAMU is a great school.

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