



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

Student Name:

Host University: Glasgow School of Art

Host Country: Scotland

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Textiles (Weave Specialization)

Semester: Winter

Date of Report: Tuesday April 17, 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?

I chose GSA based on their textiles program. I looked into every possible textiles based program that OCADUs Mobility/Exchange program offered and immediately was drawn to GSA. I had been aware of their reputation as a modern, community based art school since I was in high school, but could not afford international tuition at the time. I had been looking at their social media for the textiles department and had been very impressed by the variety and diversity of textile production.

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

I arrived in the busiest semester of third year, which was based around the Fashion Show project. In the span of 13 weeks, I had to weave 7 metres on brand new looms using different methods, pattern draft and style a complete collection for the GSA fashion show in March. It was such a learning curve but an incredible experience, in terms of how much I learned about my practise, how I connected with my classmates and friends and my capacity for hard work. Being surrounded by such talented and forward thinking individuals was a particular highlight. Getting to discover Glasgow on my own was wonderful. It's a very young city with so much to offer and containing lots of hidden gems. Its proximity through train services to the rest of Scotland was also excellent, I went on a cycling trip to Loch Lomond, approximately an hour away, and was blown away by how beautiful the countryside was.

I think some of the biggest challenges were coping with my personal mental health in a different country/climate, as well as arriving very quickly and adjusting to a new school essentially as soon as I arrived.

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?

Because I was only there for a three-month exchange, I didn't require applying for a student visa. For banking, I have used my Canadian card and had mainly no problems. I just had to alert my bank that I would be in Europe for a certain amount of time.

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 are moving to Scotland in January and are affected by depression, I would highly suggest investing in vitamin D tablets, or possibly a vitamin D lamp of some kind. I didn't realize how much living without sun would affect my mood, but I would have brought those things along had I known. I would also suggest keeping your documents in a folder, especially your acceptance letter, and bringing that with you if you take trips during your exchange. As well as that, if you are using a Canadian bank while you are over in Scotland, make sure you have some kind of credit card, because debit cards can prove problematic.

3. ARRIVAL

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

No, it was very easy to arrive at my residence from the airport. I took a £20 taxi and it was approx. a 20 minute ride.

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

I arrived a day before school started (January 8th) because I had a miscommunication in terms of when I was allowed to arrive at my residence. I think for the sake of jet lag, arriving at least 2 days earlier is optimal.

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

Yes, there was a short orientation just introducing us to the school, giving us our student cards and discussing the various forms of assistance we could receive if we needed it, as well as offering short introductions to our classmates.

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! Claire Chidgeley-Charmicheal is wonderful and very helpful.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived at Margaret Macdonald House, which was pleasant as far as residences go. Anything wrong with drains, ovens, etc, would be fixed quite fast. However, visiting friend's apartments around the city was a bit depressing, as the amount of money that they pay for a beautiful, large space is not as much as residence is.

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

No. The host institution was very helpful and arranged it through an accommodation website.

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: Definitely challenging for me, but not in a bad way.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): Approximately 50 (the average day was 9-5, or 10-6)

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 5-10

Studio-based work: 7-10

Written assignments: 2-3

Interaction between students and professors: We would have personal tutorials once a week for approximately 30 minutes to check up on projects, but were encouraged to interact with professors if we needed to. Mostly, I relied on the technicians in the weaving studio.

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 tour of Glasgow in the first week, which was a great introduction, as well as a banquet at the Art School the first day. For other students studying through a Study Abroad program, such as my flatmates, there were many trips offered to Argyll and Isle of Skye, etc.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The library of GSA burned down in 2014, but what they've rebuilt is very impressive and they have a good collection of art, design and academic literature, as well as a very large computer library.

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?

My parents paid for rent, tuition and flights to and from Glasgow, I paid through my savings/OSAP grant for living and travelling outside of Glasgow as well as accommodation. I applied for a bursary but did not receive one.

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

The pound is much higher than the dollar, but the cost of things vs what you get in Glasgow and Toronto is markedly different. Where, in Toronto, you might get a basement apartment for upwards of 700 dollars a month, the same in Glasgow will get you a third floor apartment with high ceilings and lots of windows. Groceries are much cheaper, although fresh produce is not always great quality and tends to go bad faster. Travelling within the UK via train service is very cheap, as are flights.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 1- 1.5 (8 canadian dollars is approx. 5 pounds)

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): 1/9/17-4/1/17

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

I would say less in terms of supplies as I did try to search for cheap but quality supplies, but in terms of travelling I definitely 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):** \$ 2,877.12
2. **School supplies:** \$ 500
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$approx 700 /month = \$ 2100-2500

4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** included with rent
 - B) **Telephone:** about \$20 a month = \$60
 - C) **Cable:** N/A
 - D) **Internet** \$8/month = \$24
5. **Groceries:** \$ 150/month
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 25-30 /month = \$90
7. **Laundry:** \$24 /month = \$72
8. **Transportation:** I mostly walked everywhere, but taking the Subway is approx. £1.80 each time, so about 3 dollars/use. I would say about \$100 in total.
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$250
10. **Travel health insurance:** covered under my mother's plan
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$20 (I only had to go to the dentist once)
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1,100 (please note here I am returning from Rome, stopping in London and then leaving from London to Toronto, so it would definitely be cheaper straight from Glasgow to Toronto)
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** Travelled to Amsterdam during my exchange semester for three days, in total spent about \$350.

However, I took some time to travel afterwards and travelled to several countries (Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Ireland) , which would total about \$2,000 for trains, planes and accommodation.

14. **Student visa:** Did not get one, was here for too short of a time.

Estimated Total Expenses: \$9,500 (without additional personal travel)

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?

Personally, I did not. Any kind of confusion or adaptation mostly had to do with money, for me. I would just suggest making a lot of lists.

Was there a lot of interaction between local students and exchange/international students?

Yes! They didn't really do an introduction between the local and exchange students, so I think there was a bit of confusion there, but since the studios are so open and the project we were undertaking so community based, it was pretty necessary to interact with others. Everyone was very wonderful and welcoming from the beginning and really made the exchange what it was for me.

What is the best way to develop friendships with students from your host institution?

Don't be afraid to talk to people about their work! Great friendships can stem from that. Going to local events and community workshops is also great.

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

Nothing was too different than what I expected, but I don't think I would've been able to go on the exchange without making sure that my mental health was first priority beforehand (attending therapy, meditation, etc) so I think that making sure you have resources at home or away if you struggle with mental health issues is very important, because it's a big change to move anywhere.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Below I've attached a list of places in Glasgow that I would suggest for anyone who decides to move there.

food

MONO – great vegan restaurant and music venue with a record store (monorail) inside. hosts dj nights, concerts and makes an excellent home-brewed lemonade.

TCHAIOVNA – excellent tea house near kelvingrove park, specializes in chai tea, also hosts music nights.

WEE CURRY SHOP – a very small, cheap and good curry shop right near GSA.

STEREO – music venue downstairs, really lovely restaurant upstairs with lots of vegetarian options.

COTTONRAKE BAKERY – bakery in the west end that offers incredible sourdough + baguettes for under 5 CDN.

STRAVAIGIN – a more upscale Scottish restaurant near the University of Glasgow that offers great brunch options as well as a great buck's fizz.

SARAMAGO – located in the CCA, saramago is a bar/vegan restaurant/café, open until midnight.

POMME FRITES – best chips in glasgow

ROOTS + FRUITS – small greengrocers in the west end, very good quality produce.

nights out

LA CHEETAH CLUB – right next to the GOMA, la cheetah has great dj nights. get there early for cheap admission (or admission at all, it gets very busy)

THE ART SCHOOL – located literally inside of GSA, the art school/the vic is a venue that offers halloumi fries, cheap drinks, talks by designers and artists and great disco nights.

OH141 – DJ collective featured in i-d. changes venues.

NICE + SLEAZY'S – cheap nights for students, good music and close to GSA

THE OLD HAIRDRESSERS – across from stereo, has performance art nights as well as good drinks and ambience.

parks/greenery

kelvingrove park

garnethill park (has a bread oven some Sundays, check facebook)

the people's palace

loch lomond (day trip via scotrail is cheap)

art

the CCA

the Lighthouse

GSA gallery

shops

the briggait vintage fair (happens once a month)

good press - small press and zine shop

monorail music - great record selection, in mono

tiger – cheap and cheerful household supplies

pound shop – on sauchiehall street, has very cheap yarn and house supplies

glasgow vintage co. – student discounted vintage shop with good selection

entertainment

the glasgow film theatre – cheap rates for students, arthouse films, indie films and great ambiance.

cineworld – giant cinema voted the ugliest building in the UK (but the biggest cinema)

arlington spa – Victorian swimming pool and steam room in the west end, for £10 you can test the facilities all day.

north woodside swimming pool – down the street from GSA, really lovely swimming pool in an estate.

glasgow women's library – a short trip to the east end, it's home to the archive of the national museum of roller derby, events celebrating women historic and current, book clubs and a great selection of books by women.

the necropolis – best view in glasgow.

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