



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

Host University: Griffith University (Queensland College of Art)

Host Country: Australia

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Fine Art

Semester: 1st in Australia, 2nd in Canada

Date of Report: August 14, 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 knew I wanted to be out of North America and experience a culture and people very different to home (so the US wasn't an option for me). I was accepted to both RMIT in Melbourne and Griffith in Brisbane, and Griffith offered what I thought was the best courses for Drawing and Painting. Also, after living in Toronto for 3 years, I decided I wanted a taste of something different than the 'big city' life. Brisbane is still a large city, but much chillier and smaller than Toronto or Melbourne. I also knew I wanted to experience the hot climate and be able to do a lot of outdoor activities, and Brisbane is in Queensland which is the 'sunshine state' while Melbourne is a lot colder and unpredictable weather.

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

I found the most amazing friends. I lived with two Australian girls and they were so kind and welcoming to me from the moment I arrived. I also met many other international students on exchange at Griffith also, and they were all lovely. I even travelled with some of them to New Zealand and across Australia. The orientation trip to Byron Bay was definitely one of my favourite experiences and I would tell anyone attending Griffith HAS to take part in it. The biggest challenge I faced was probably money. I was stressed about running out of money because I wanted to travel, and I did end up having to borrow money from my parents at the end so I was lucky enough to have that option.

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?

I applied for the bursary which I received and helped a lot. The student visa application can be a pain to fill out because it's very detailed but once I did it I received it back in under a week I believe.

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 going to Australia, take as many art supplies as you can because they are super expensive over there – especially paper.

3. ARRIVAL

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

Yes Griffith has the option for free airport pick up which was a life-saver! There were no difficulties, as soon as I got through customs there was someone there waiting for me.

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

I arrived on February 16th, my orientation trip (3 days) was on February 21st and classes started on February 28th I believe.

I would say that was a good amount of time to get situated and settled before classes started.

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

There was the 3 day trip to Byron Bay where you stay in a hostel with other internationals and you do things like surfing, kayaking and hiking. It was the most amazing experience and I would recommend it to anyone. Griffith also hosted a few orientation days and events which is great for meeting people.

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, I can't remember her name but she will be at the orientation. If you have any questions before you go you can email inboundmobility@griffith.edu.au and they are very helpful.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in Dutton Park (a suburb south of the city center) in a shared house with two other Australian girls who were also students at other Universities in Brisbane. I was SOsosososo happy with my accommodation, it couldn't have been any better. I found the place on flatmates.com.au which is a great site.

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

I think if I needed help they would have offered, but I was lucky enough to find my accommodation fairly easily. I found it before I left Canada so I moved in as soon as I arrived.

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:

Less stressful than OCAD

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

12

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

It varied – I spent most time on projects just before mid-semester break and end of semester because that is when everything was due. The rest of the time I didn't have many things due it was mostly in-class work.

Studio-based work:

Similar to OCAD

Written assignments:

I only had one essay the whole semester, and very minimal written work.

Interaction between students and professors:

Excellent. My professors were so helpful and engaged.

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 many international events like trivia nights and bowling nights. I would recommend going to any that interest you, you will always have someone to talk to and they are a great way to make friends.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The QCA library is small, similar to OCAD's. But the Nathan campus has much bigger facilities.

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 received the full amount of OSAP because I had been out of high school for more than 4 years at that point. I also received the mobility exchange bursary, and my parents also help support me.

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

The cost of rent is similar. The cost of groceries and things are slightly higher than Canada. Art supplies are way more expensive in Australia, especially paper.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

Pretty equal

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

February 16, 2017 – July 22nd 2017

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

I spent more because I travelled quite a bit while I was over there.

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):** \$6000
2. **School supplies:** \$500
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$800/month
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ 50/month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ 45/month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ 0/month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$300
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$100
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$0
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$20
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** it varied

10. **Travel health insurance:** I don't know, I'm covered under my parents

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

12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1360 (this was a VERY good price, typically I think it is around \$1700-2000)

13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ A lot. Probably at least \$5000.

14. **Student visa:** \$500

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

Estimated Total Expenses: \$

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?

Australia is pretty similar to Canadian culture. The people in Brisbane are so kind and happy.

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?

Attend international events. I think living with Australians made my experience even better because they could tell me all the best places to go and things to do, and I felt very immersed in Australian culture.

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

There isn't as many snakes and spiders and people tell you! Haha

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

If you can, try and do as many trips and activities as you can. There are tons of hikes and waterfalls in the surrounding areas of Brisbane. The closest beach is Gold Coast and you can get to it by train in about an hour and a half. Some of my favourite places I went were Byron Bay, Uluru, Moreton Island, and the Great Barrier Reef.

To use transit you need a Go Card, apply for concession fares online and it is a lot cheaper to take the bus/train.

Wear sunscreen, especially when you first arrive!

Have fun!!

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