



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

Host University: Jiangnan University

Host Country: China

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Design

Semester: Winter 2017

Date of Report: 23/08/17

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 have never been to China and Jiangnan University was the best choice in my field (Design)

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

Positive experience, I learned immensely from Chinese students who have a different ways of focusing on projects.

Negative experience, I realized that the students are scared of being innovative as the teacher has total power over their grades. It is not as in Canada where the student can contest by notifying the chair of their field, if they believe that their grade was unfairly given.

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 would strongly recommend to take not only a travel insurance with the university but also an external insurance.

For me I used a credit card for emergency only and a debit card to withdraw cash in China and then I opened a bank account with ICBC a Chinese bank, to be able to make transactions with Wechat and Ali pay. If you decide to study abroad in china I would highly recommend that you google Wechat pay and Ali pay. It is the primary method of transaction in China.

For the Visa I prepared it one month in advance, it is very important to make sure that your visa is, if possible, a student visa so that you can have various entries to China, if you would decide to travel in other Asian countries.

It is extremely important to invest in a VPN before going to China, this allows you to use facebook, instagram and google in China.

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

I strongly recommend that you buy all the medication needed, as they mainly take antibiotics and herbal medication.

If you are a big fan of coffee as myself, buy a little coffee machine and coffee as you will notice that coffee is rare and expensive.

3. ARRIVAL

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

I had the pleasure to meet a fourth year Chinese student at the train station to help me settle in at the student residence. She was very helpful with setting me up a student card that works a bit as a bank card in the campus, a telephone number and a bank card at the ICBC bank.

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

I would recommend to arrive a week before the classes start otherwise you are going to get bored as the campus is mainly empty and almost no one speaks English.

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

Yes there was, however for some reason it was given to us one month after we started school, which seemed unnecessary, I did meet some exchange students who came from Korea and not speak much English.

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?

Her name is Sara Xiangjie Chen, is the equivalent of Susan Kemp, also very kind and helpful.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived at the international student residence, the accommodation includes a desk, single bed, TV toilet and shower with heater. However, the heater is quite useless during the winter, therefore I would recommend to buy an external heater.

I was strongly displeased with the attitude of the employees working at the International residence, as they do not speak one word of English, make no effort in trying to understand you, are very rude and ignore you. I had an argument with them at the end of my semester as they were supposed to pay me back for the rental of the water dispenser, and refused as they claimed that the water dispenser was not the property of the residence.

I would therefore recommend you to keep all your receipts as proof of payment made to the residence.

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

No problem arranging my accommodation myself, as my host institution was very helpful.

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:

Jiangnan students are experts in Photoshop, Adobe illustrator, Indesign, Rhino, Keyshot, Power Point etc. However when it comes to innovation they seem to be blocked by the teacher's homework requirements, and do not seem to look into exciting ideas.

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

Around 3 hours per class, given twice a week. Unlike the Canadian system, the courses do not last the whole semester they last a month and a half, which allows you to focus more on each course.

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

Depends on your group project, project and the teacher.

Studio-based work:

I did not take any course that required a studio based work.

Written assignments:

Are similar than the Canadian system.

Interaction between students and professors:

The interaction is the same.

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?

Yes there are, depending on what you like to do you can ask Sara about it.

In my case I spent most of my time visiting areas around Wuxi, there is a lot to see.

Shanghai is also an hour away by speed train, therefore there are many concerts, design exhibitions etc to see.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The facility is bigger than OCADU as it regroups all the programs of the campus, therefore not only design. However the system is similar to the Canadian only that it is in Chinese.

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 during the summer before I left for China and managed to save up enough money to live in China. My parents also helped me financially, also keep in mind that the Canadian Dollar has higher value than the Chinese Yuan.

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 China is lower than in Canada.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

1 Canadian Dollar = 5.30 Chinese Yuan

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

I have spent 6 months in China

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

I spent the same amount than local students.

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):** \$

You pay your Canadian tuition fees not Chinese tuition fees while you are on your exchange.

2. **School supplies:** \$

In my case I mainly use the computer therefore no school supplies.

3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$

1500 Chinese Yuan for the 6 months that I was living in the residence

4. **Rent-related expenses:**

A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month 150 Chinese Yuan

B) **Telephone:** \$ /month 160 Chinese Yuan

C) **Cable:** \$ /month Did not watch TV

D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month

5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$ 300 Chinese Yuan canteen

6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$ 150 Chinese Yuan

7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$ 4 Chinese Yuan
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ speed train to Shanghai cost 50 Chinese Yuan; The taxi to the malls cost 20 Chinese Yuan; the taxi to the bars and restaurants cost 30 Chinese Yuan, the metro to the closest mall cost 5 Chinese Yuan.
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$ Cinema cost 40 Chinese Yuan, Night Club free, Concert in Shanghai 100 Chinese Yuan.
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ I do not remember
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ Medical check up cost 350 Chinese Yuan
12. **Round trip plane ticket to China:** \$ 1200 Canadian Dollars
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ Flight from China to Vietnam 350 American Dollars
14. **Student visa:** \$ 250 Canadian Dollars
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$ Around 2500 Chinese Yuan per month

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?

There are a lot of Chinese culture shocks, the main one is that people stare at you and take picture of you all the time. People spit on the floor constantly, are very loud but however they are not screaming they are talking. Children do not wear diapers, the food has a lot of oil and is most of the time spicy.

If you see someone that is pointing their phone at you, it’s mostly because they are shy and have never or rarely seen a foreigner, just ask them if they want a picture.

If you do not like spicy food you can try another dish or ask them for a less spicy dish.

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

Yes, there is a lot of interaction, however they are very shy therefore you must be the one to go towards them and present yourself. If you do that you will make a lot of friends, no problem.

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

In class is the best way to make friends, especially during group projects.

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

The Chinese hospitals are extremely different from the Canadian ones, I strongly recommend that you do not get sick or have an accident. You are required to pay before getting treated even if it is a matter of life and death, that is the Chinese system.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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