



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

Student Name:

Host University: LAMK, Lahti university of applied sciences

Host Country: Finland

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Design

Semester: Winter

Date of Report: August 15, 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?

- Finland is ranked #1 in the world for its education system
- The school has a great reputation
- The accommodation was arranged and provided

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

There are many other exchange students who go to this school every year from different parts of the world so the best experience for me was sharing this experience with them and making so many new friends from all over the world.

The biggest challenge was getting the hang of education system in the beginning, its very different from Canada but different in a good way when you learn it and get used to it.

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?

The most important part of preparation is the student visa. It takes 40 – 80 days for everything so plan accordingly. The first step is to make a student Visa application on www.enterfinland.fi, then all the required documents and actions are stated. These documents include proof of insurance, proof of financial security, passport copy, Flight ticket copies and etc.

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 would suggest taking your own design supplies, these do not include primary items like pen and pencil but technical equipment such as markers, marker paper. Lahti is not a huge city, it has everything you need but special art and design tools are not easily found unless you go to Helsinki which is also not so far away (about an hour).

3. ARRIVAL

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

All students get a student tutor; different tutors may offer different types of assistance to their appointed exchangers but most of them do help in your arrival. For example my tutor guided me through arriving to the city bus station and from there she picked me up with her car and drove me to the dorms.

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

Its best to arrive a week before the start of everything so you have time to settle down before everything starts. I arrived late which caused me to miss the orientation. If I were to go back and do it again I would definitely plan and arrange ahead so I arrive in time.

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

There is a very good orientation in the beginning which I missed but highly recommend to anyone who will be going to Finland for exchange. The orientation includes explanation on the course system, how the university works, where everything happens, the dormitory rules and regulations, general useful information for your stay in Finland and etc. Also it is a great place to get to know other exchange students and student tutors.

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?

LAMK has a very nice building kind of similar to ocad but smaller called Fellmania in which the exchange coordinators office is. Her name is Aleksina and she is one of the first people you will meet once there. She is also the one who will help you with your registration, transcript and everything relating to school.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in the dormitory arranged by the school itself and I had a blast. They are clean and spacious. You will have your own room but the bathroom and kitchen are shared with one or two other exchange students in your flat. Of course, you can decide not to stay in the dormitories but the rest of exchange students stay there and it is fun, plus, in case of emergency you have people to go to.

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

I had no problem with the accommodation. It was reserved by LAMK, when I arrived everything was arranged and clear.

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 is 10/10 difficult, LAMK is 6/10 difficult but the results in LAMK are 10/10 good whereas results in OCADu are 6/10 good.

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

The class system is different there its not per week or semester, its per course and it depends on the associated professor. (do not freak out it is much less than OCADu weekly)

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

2 to 3 hours per day of work is enough and sometimes more than enough.

Studio-based work:

Mostly all courses have studio based work.

Written assignments:

Not so many, depends on the course.

Interaction between students and professors:

All classes are in English and the professors know English very well. They are also all very friendly and helpful and willing to help you with everything.

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 are many different activities arranged for students. There are group sport classes, music rooms, libraries and game nights. The school also has a student party in one of the clubs every month. It also arranges trips and visits every once in a while. I highly recommend attending most of them.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

Yes, many, and very good ones.

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 exchange bursary from OCADu which was a huge help. The rest of my expenses were covered by my savings from previous jobs in Canada, Osap grants and help from my parents.

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

I have lived with my parents in Canada so I am not sure about the difference in living costs. But I believe the expense to be a bit higher than here but for a higher standard of living.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

Cad:Eur 0.6:1.00

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

January 2017 – May 2017

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

More, Finnish students get discounts on more facilities, plus, they pay less tuition.

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:

Depends on the exchange rate so I will say in euros and you can calculate.

1. **Tuition and general fees (paid to OCAD U):** \$4000
2. **School supplies:** Took most of mine, plus, € 100
3. **Rent or university residence:** € /month = €350
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** included
 - B) **Telephone:** no telephone
 - C) **Cable:** included but take router or pay €90 for a new one
 - D) **Other (specify)** none
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** € /month = €150-200
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** € /month = €40

7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$0 (provided by dormitory)
 8. **Transportation:** € /month = €60 for unlimited use card and highly recommended
 9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** flat rate €50 for gym, €50-100 /month for fun
 10. **Travel health insurance:** \$0 (Ocadu coverage)
 11. **Medical expenses in host country:** none if you don't get sick, between €20-80 if you do
 12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1,200
 13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** I did many, visited 23 cities and 13 countries, spent about \$3000
 14. **Student visa:** €90
 15. **Other expenses (please specify):** depends on how you live, if you're a shopper €100/month, the clothing stores in Europe are great
- Estimated Total Expenses:** \$10000-12000

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?

None at all, people are very friendly, mostly all of them know English and you are surrounded with other exchange students. Also Finland is very modern and in many ways it is similar to Canada. The first days could feel lonely so the sooner you find friends the sooner you adapt.

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

You will have lots of interaction with local students in your classes and also outside. You will have to group with them in your projects. They are great.

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

Do not be scared or hesitant to say hi and start a conversation. Finnish people are amazingly kind and peaceful however, they are not the greatest when it comes to starting a dialogue but when spoken to they are very friendly, helpful and kind.

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

Education system was strikingly different but in an awesome way.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Go to as many trips as you can.

Definitely see the northern lights

Take the ferry when going to Sweden or Russia (if not you need a visa for Russia)

Go to a ski jumping competition if there is one

Find a bicycle as soon as you can (very helpful)

Go to the gazebo by the lake and enjoy the sunset

Book the dorm sauna in advance, people go crazy on them

Enjoy the Scandinavian view on life

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