



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

**Host University:** Nanjing University of the Arts  
**Host Country:** China  
**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Sculpture  
**Semester:** Winter 2016  
**Date of Report:** June 2016

### 1. OVERALL EVALUATION

**How would you rate your exchange experience overall?**

**Poor** 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  **Excellent**

**Please explain your rating.**

While the courses themselves weren't all that great, I had the good fortune of meeting an excellent professor who went out of his way to help me create my own work outside of class time. He was also open to having discussions about pretty much everything.

**Why did you choose this host institution? What key factors or issues influenced your decision?**

I chose this host institution because I wanted to experience China and its culture. This was the only institution that permitted me to do so.

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

One of the biggest challenges was definitely the language; it's incredibly difficult and in no way resembles any of the other languages I already speak. My peers were shy about speaking it at first so it was really difficult to communicate with them, though after some time they opened up. While many students only speak very basic English, there are some that are proficient and in the end I ended up making great friends.

Thanks to my teacher's and friend's help I was able to have a little show at an artist-run gallery in Nanjing. It was a wonderful opportunity and experience to have met some engaged artists here in China.

Also, in their 4<sup>th</sup> year (out of 5) sculpture students travel around China for 3 weeks to a number of different cities to see some historical monuments. I was fortunate to be able to join them and it was an incredible experience.

## **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 visa was relatively easy to get. Once you get here, the international school helps in setting up a local bank account. Also, there are a few ATMs/banks not too far from the school that take Canadian debit cards.

**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're a picky eater, or have any strict dietary restrictions, food can be an issue here. Not sure what could be done about this, but the dorms have small kitchens (hot plate, fridge, microwave) so it's possible to prepare your own meals. Art supplies are easy to come by – there are a bunch of art stores around the school and with the help of a local friend, you can buy tools/supplies really cheaply. Also, tap water isn't safe to drink so you can buy a water filter locally or bring one with you. I bought a 500ml Grayl water filter and it worked great. You can also buy bottled water fairly cheaply (50 cents a bottle, but I'm not a fan of the consequential pollution, although sometimes you don't have a choice).

## **3. ARRIVAL**

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

This was a little tough, especially given that I didn't speak the language at all upon arrival. I showed the acceptance letter (in Chinese) to a taxi driver and fortunately he brought me to the right place. I took a flight straight to Nanjing (instead of to Shanghai or Beijing) and I think this made it a little easier. I didn't have to navigate train stations/buses etc. Also, after getting to the school, I didn't know where the school of international students office was, so I had to ask a bunch of people, none of who spoke English, where it was, so I ended up waiting standing around for a good 45 minutes.

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

I arrived on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Feb, the day before classes started. Classes start just after the spring festival, which is a big holiday, so most things are closed. So I think coming the day before was a good call.

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

There was no orientation. Just had to go with the flow.

**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?**

There is, and they are fairly helpful, to an extent. I would recommend speaking with Gu Laoshi (Teacher Gu). She is kind and helpful and is proficient in English.

#### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived in the Int'l Students' Dormitory – it's a pretty decent place. There's everything you need – a small kitchen, a bed, a desk, a closet and a pretty decent washroom. There are 2 people to a room, so there's always the risk of getting an unsuitable roommate, but I was somewhat lucky in this regard.

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

#### **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:** Grade 4 (4<sup>th</sup> year of a 5 year bachelor in Sculpture)

**Time spent in class (# of hours per week):** 25

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

**Studio-based work:** All fairly traditional – observational figurative sculpture, wood carving, etc.

**Written assignments:** N/A – All classes here are in Chinese

**Interaction between students and professors:** Of the 5 professors, one spoke a little English, and another speaks well enough to have a conversation with. The last one ended up becoming a close friend. With all other teachers, a translator was required (fellow student who speaks English, or an int'l student friend who speaks Chinese).

#### **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, but I didn't participate in any. There was an art fair that I participated in (people from the same country get together to show their cultural arts/crafts/food/music). It was fun.

**What were the library and computer facilities like?**

Not sure, never went.

## **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'm on OSAP and there is a \$2,500 scholarship for participating in this exchange, so that covered most of it. Otherwise I had some small savings. All of it was spent.

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

Cost of living is significantly lower – a decent meal outside costs between \$2-5, phone bills are roughly \$15 a month (I used a lot of data), dorm costs about \$150 a month (though I think they are raising the prices from next year onwards, etc.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:**

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

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

**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):** ~\$3,200
2. **School supplies:** ~\$300 - 400
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$150
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ 10/month
  - B) **Telephone:** \$ 15/month
  - C) **Cable:** \$ 0/month

- D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 250/month (I ate out a lot)
  6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$
  7. **Laundry:** \$ 5/month = \$
  8. **Transportation:** \$ 40/month – lots of taxis
  9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** 50\$
  10. **Travel health insurance:** 0\$
  11. **Medical expenses in host country:** 0\$
  12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1,500
  13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$1,000 – travelled a lot
  14. **Student visa:** \$200 – I asked for express service due to time constraints
  15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$8,220

## **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?**

The main “shock” was the language. I tried my best to learn as much as I could and make as many local friends as possible.

**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?**

In the beginning, interaction was minimal, but in the end there was quite a bit of interaction. Just be open to learning and friends will be made – they are very fond of foreigners here.

**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?**

Not particularly.

## **10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

*Please email your report to Susan Kemp, Student Mobility/Exchange Coordinator, at [skemp@ocadu.ca](mailto:skemp@ocadu.ca)*