



Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Student Report

OCAD U Program: Illustration

Host University: Nanjing University of the Arts

Host Country: China

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Drawing & Painting

Semester: 2018 winter

Date of Report: July 11, 2018

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 am very interested in China because of its cultural isolation and differences from my culture. The university also offered me a scholarship, which was a very big incentive.

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

I went on a two-week outdoor painting excursion with my class and painted landscapes in a rural area of China. It was one of the coolest things I've ever done. Also my studio space was fantastic and really beautiful. It was totally available for me to use at any time. The biggest challenges all had to do with language barrier or cultural differences. Some things you experience in China are quite shocking and difficult to understand, and can leave you feeling alienated.

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?

There were a lot of issues leading up to the visa application. Apparently, this is very common. I couldn't formally apply for my student visa until I received a hard-copy application form from my host university. I couldn't get them to mail it to me because I was unable to log in to their website and fill out their application form. It was hard to get in touch with the university in time but eventually it worked out and I was able to get my visa on time.

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

Most items are best purchased in China because it's much cheaper and better over there.

3. ARRIVAL

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

I traveled for two months before arriving at school so I did not have anyone to greet me at the airport. However, when it came time for me to start school another international student was there to show me around and he became one of my best friends.

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

I arrived a couple days early. Classes start and end at haphazard times so it's best to be a few days early.

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

There was not.

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 an international office. It's very helpful and everyone there is very kind and speaks good English. I can't remember how to pronounce their names unfortunately.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in a dorm at the campus. It was pretty nice but you share a room with one person. My roommate was cool so it was alright. There is a curfew at 11pm on weekdays and 1am on weekends, which is kind of patronizing so I chose to stay out until morning on several occasions.

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

They helped me right away, it was totally fine.

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: As difficult as you make it.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 15 – 20

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 20 – 30

Studio-based work: All of it.

Written assignments: None.

Interaction between students and professors: Good.

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?

The outdoor landscape painting excursion was great. It was optional but I would absolutely recommend it.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The library was huge and had books of several different languages. I don't know much about their computer facilities because I didn't use it.

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 loans and/or financial awards (scholarships or bursaries)? Did you have help from family?

I had my usual student loans plus a mobility exchange bursary and a scholarship from OJS to help me out. I had some savings as well. My whole trip was covered by this.

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

Much lower.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: The Chinese rmb is a factor of five to the Canadian dollar.

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): \$5,000
2. School supplies: \$500

3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$700 for the whole semester
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month = \$10
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month = \$8
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$200
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$15
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$5
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$20
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$
10. **Travel health insurance:** Included with OCAD
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$1,200
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$400
14. **Student visa:** \$45
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$8,000 (approx.)

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?

Definitely. China is really strange sometimes, and really confusing. It's a completely different culture and it can be quite difficult and alienating. You just need to keep your mind open and try to understand that this is real for a lot of people in the world. Eventually if you can adjust, it's actually really cool.

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?

I had some Chinese friends but it takes time to get to know them. It's not as easy to get to know Chinese people if you can't speak a lot of Chinese, but if you want to meet more Chinese people just offer to help them learn English.

Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected?

People were significantly less brainwashed than I was expecting, and they were surprisingly aware of the situation. A lot of young people had similar opinions to me on a lot of political things and knowledge about the world outside of china. That was very surprising.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

It was great! I'd do it again 100%.

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