



## 2014-2015 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

**Student Name:**

**Host University:** ESAG Penninghen

**Host Country:** Paris, France

**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Art Direction

**Semester:** Winter 2015

**Date of Report:** August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### 1. OVERALL EVALUATION

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

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

**Please explain your rating.**

Didn't give it a 10 because, even though it was an incredibly enriching experience, the facilities weren't great, and communication between administration and professors at Penninghen was poor. For example, administration told me classes started on January 26<sup>th</sup>, however, when I went to classes that first week, all profs questioned my 'late' arrival. It was almost as if the person in charge of exchange students didn't inform professors of our arrival.

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

I wanted to perfect my French, and I thought it would be culturally enriching to study in Paris. In the end, it was the only school I got into, out of the three I applied to.

**What was the most meaningful thing you learned while studying off campus?**

- Learning to understand cultural differences,
- Growing thicker skin
- Meeting the most talented and passionate individuals I've ever encountered, and realizing they work 24/7. Great work doesn't come easy.
- Perfecting my French
- Exponentially improving my craft

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

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- First drawing class was an observational drawing class at the Louvre Museum.
- Working on a real brief for ELLE France in class.

- Attending a conference by alumni Ludovic Houplain, director of *Logorama*, an Oscar-winning animation.
- Living with a French family.
- Meeting other international students

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- After Effects class in French. It was very technical and hard to follow.
- Presenting projects in French, especially the final project, with a jury of 15 professors and administrators.
- Communicating with students. It's easier to understand the profs, but students talk faster and colloquially, and a lot of them don't know English.
- French culture was a great shock to me. French are very dry in general, and not very welcoming, especially Parisians.

## 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'm Colombian, so I did the student visa application in Colombia, one month before travelling. I would have liked to have more time to get all the paperwork done, for I received the acceptance letter from ESAG Penninghen one week before flying to Colombia. I had to rush to collect everything so I could apply as soon as I arrived to Bogotá. I used my Colombian debit and credit cards in Paris, and that worked fine.

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

You'll find everything you need in Paris, but you'll be paying in euros, so I recommend taking basic art & design supplies and everything you can fit in your suitcase, to save some money. Also, if you take daily medications, I recommend you take enough pills for your stay because it can be more expensive or impossible to find.

## 3. ARRIVAL

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

My host family picked me up at the airport. It took me a while to find them because I had no way of communicating with them. I recommend you make sure you know how to get from the airport to your temporary home address before you travel. Write down the route and make sure you can access it without wi-fi.

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

I recommend you arrive for the Orientation session. I arrived two days before the meeting, and it was just right.

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

They gave me the schedule, went over the school rules, and gave us a small tour of the university. We also got to meet all the exchange students, which was the best part.

**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?**

The person you go to is Veronique Gaujoin. She's in charge of everything related to the exchange.

#### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

Lived with a French couple who had hosted students before. Learned a lot from them and felt at home. The location was absolutely amazing: 12 minute walk to school, one block away from Musee D'Orsay, and across the Seine from the Louvre.

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

I found it hard to find an accommodation with so little time. I was very lucky! Accommodations in Paris, especially student residences and things of the sort, book quickly. The host institution did not help with 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:** Very challenging

**Time spent in class (# of hours per week):** 22.5 hours

**Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week):** more than 20 hours

**Studio-based work:** all classes were studio based

**Oral presentations (Individual and Group):** I had individual oral presentations to explain assignments during critique (for every class), there was one BIG pitch for Arts Graphiques class (ELLE logo pitch), and a major presentation for the final project, which was a project we worked for in every class during the last month of school. There were no group projects or assignments.

**Written assignments:** None

**Interaction between students and professors:** Lots of one on one time

#### **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?** None, only the orientation session.

**What were the library and computer facilities like?** Facilities were not great. The photo studio was an attic, with one light only. They don't have equipment to rent out, so I had to ask a friend from class to lend me a tripod once. There's a small office with books and magazines, can't really call that a library. No computer facilities available. Also, there's barely any room to work at university, other than empty classes. On the bright side, got to explore lots of Parisian cafés where I would do school work. You can look up co-working cafes, where you can pay a certain hourly fee and get unlimited food and drinks, plus, it's usually a working environment that can help you stay focused.

## 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?** My parents paid for everything.

**In general, was the cost of living in your host country higher, lower, or similar to that in Canada? Please explain.** It is less expensive living and studying in Paris for 5 months, than it is to study at OCAD U for one semester (4 months) as an international student.

\$11,600 (exchange) vs. \$17,000 (OCAD U)

The cost of living in Paris is higher, but tuition is way cheaper (\$7000 less compared to OCAD U)

## 8. EXPENSES

**Exchange rate with host country:** 1 Canadian dollar = 0.67 Euro

**Time spent in host country (month/day/year - month/day/year):** 01/21/15 – 06/05/15

**Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution?** I can say that I spent less at ESAG Penninghen than I do as an International student at OCAD U. Just tuition at OCAD U costs what my entire exchange in Paris cost.

**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):** \$3500
2. **School supplies:** \$295 (*\$200euro*)
3. **Rent:** \$1185 /month (*\$800 euro*)

4. **Rent-related expenses:**
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$0 /month
  - B) **Telephone:** \$30/month + (one time payment of \$74 for French sim card)
  - C) **Cable:** \$0 /month
  - D) **Other (specify)** \$0 /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$340/month
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$30/month
7. **Laundry:** \$0 /month
8. **Transportation:** \$30–45/month (*\$20–30euro*) (*I walked a lot*)
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$50/month
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$315
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$75
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** (from Colombia) \$1400
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$815
14. **Student visa:** \$300 (got it in Colombia, so price may vary)
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses (from January 21<sup>st</sup> to June 6th):** \$11,600

## **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?**

I did experience culture shock. French people, especially Parisians, are dry and unwelcoming. To deal with this I stopped expecting anything from anyone. I became really close friends with the international students at Penninghen, and with some Parisians, and I focused on my work.

**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 guess if you're nice, they'll slowly open up to you. Also, if you show them you are passionate about what you do, they'll want to get to know you more. Some of my first interactions with French students were through my work. They'd ask me to show them my 'book' (portfolio), and the friendship would slowly build from there.

**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?** I didn't encounter something completely unexpected. Nothing that I haven't mentioned before.

**10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

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