



2012-2013 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

Student Name:

Host University: Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK)

Host Country: Finland

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Fine Art (Art and Media Campus)

Semester: Fall 2012

Date of Report: January 2013

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.

I would give my overall experience a 9 because it was pretty much a perfect but experience but there were hard times and stresses and nothing is always perfect!

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

I learned how art and design studio and professional creative practices happen in other cultures, like in a Northern European country like Finland.

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

The three most positive experiences would be:

- 1) Traveling with other exchange students with school organised trips to places like Russia, Sweden and Estonia.
- 2) Spending time in studio and classes with other like-minded artists and students that have studied and lived in a different culture.
- 3) Getting to know teachers and locals and getting to know a beautiful city which enriches the learning experience.

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

I knew I wanted to study in Finland, but I choose to study in Tampere specifically because the city is one of the biggest in the country, the Art and Design Campus (Finlayson Campus) is very charming and historic and has a great local culture for the arts. I also choose Tampere over Lahti because it has a bigger fine art department than Lahti which is more specific to design, and Tampere has many exchange students from abroad.

Please describe your preparation for the exchange, including banking, travel documents and student visa application. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

You have to do important things before you go like visa and medical insurance, and finding a place to live. It is imperative that you apply for visa and student housing as soon as you receive your acceptance letter, students apartments are always based on first come, first served and it could take a few months for your visa to be processed. The last step in the application for a student visa you need to go to the Finnish Embassy in Ottawa to get your finger prints scanned (this is normal and is done in every country). You need to make sure you complete all of your documents and have them ready and with you at this time. I didn't have all of my documents ready and it was a stressful time. I didn't open a Finnish bank account like other students did, I ended up having to pay a small fees here and there but I used my Canadian accounts and that worked out best for me.

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

No. you can find everything there, and there are a few great art supply stores in Tampere (but in Finland the school supplies your paint and drawing supplies, but not paint brushes) so you may not need to buy a lot of art supplies

2. ARRIVAL

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

I had a 'Pick-Up co-ordinator' from my university pick me up and take me to my apartment and show me to the closest grocery stores etc. It was a very helpful and eased my culture shock a bit. The airport in Tampere is very very small, and many people choose to take a train from Helsinki to Tampere instead.

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

I arrived about a month before my classes started because I attended a Finnish language and culture summer course (this was a great experience because I made new friends before I started classes and it helps to get used to the city and culture before you jump into classes). I arrived about 4 or 5 days before that started so I could settle in and grab a few things I needed that I couldn't bring (kettle, extra blanket, fan, etc) Many people have a hard time settling in if they come too late or just before classes start. There are a lot of great 2nd hand stores and if you get here early you get the decent necessities that the last group of exchange students left in the city.

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

The orientation sessions take place the week before classes start and you do activities with exchange students from all over Europe and the world and they (the student facilitating group CLINT) do activities to help you get to know each other even though it may be awkward at first. You usually go to the beautiful Viikinsaari island to sauna, swim, hike and play group sports with the other exchange students and its very fun. If you live in student apartments you will probably meet and live with other international students.

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 student group CLINT is very helpful in all matters concerning international students, and there is an international student teacher/coordinator on each campus.

3. ACCOMMODATION

Where did you live during your exchange? Would you recommend your accommodation to future exchange students?

I lived in an apartment that had a separate wing that was mostly for exchange students. It was located in the downtown core of the city called Rasti/Rastin/Rastii Siipi. There are other student accommodation outside of the city that has a lot of exchange students and exchange student culture but you have to take a bus to the university. There is also 'TOAS City', a downtown apartment by the TOAS student apartment company that has student apartments in different areas of the city. Since Finlayson campus (art and media campus) is located in the city centre, many media and art students live in a student apartment in the city core.

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

The university does not help students find accommodation but it has links to student housing companies on their website in the international student section. You need to apply for any or all of these companies and they will offer you a room or residence in the location that is closest to your school etc. But since it is based on first come, first served, you should apply early to get a location and residence that you prefer.

If you lived on-campus, which residences would you recommend? Are there any that should be avoided?

There are no residences for this university.

If you lived off-campus, do you have any recommendations for future exchange students? For example, does rent include hydro and other utilities, or are they extra? Which location in the city is ideal for exchange students?

Almost no apartments make you pay separate heat or hydro or internet. I would recommend that Art, Media and Design student stay in the city core. However the transit bus system is affordable, safe and reliable if you stay outside of the city centre.

4. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION

To better understand the similarities and differences between academic studies at OCAD and at your host university, please comment on the following:

Level of Academic Difficulty & Challenge: in the end you get a mark for quality of work and a mark for credits acquired according usually to number of hours spend attending class. So you sort of decide on your own level of involvement that will ultimately decide your grades and marks.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): approx. 27

Time spent outside of class (# of hours per week): approx. 9. Studio classes are spent working in the studio and you are not required to bring in outside work for marking.

Oral presentations (Individual and Group): In many classes you are expected to present your work but nothing extensively formal.

Written assignments: It depends on the classes you take but in studio classes there are no written assignments. I took a sound art class and an online portfolio class that required some writing but no long essays.

Studio-based work: All studio work is done during the classes set studio hours, however you are expected to work for the time allotted and the teachers are fantastic people and professionals.

Interaction between students and professors: Always open and open minded creative people that are open for discussions about class and its topics. A few of my teachers did their off campus study at OCAD during their undergraduate.

5. 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?

Each semester there is student cruises to Stockholm, Sweden – St. Petersburg, Russia – Tallinn, Estonia. And other student trips to Lapland, a survival weekend and many other CLINT parties and events. I went to St. Petersburg with the school organisation and it was amazing.

What were the libraries and computer facilities like? Would you recommend that students bring their own laptop?

Yes I recommend that students bring their own laptop, I am not sure if there is a laptop program. There are libraries at all TAMK campuses and all students are allowed to use all libraries at all campuses.

6. 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 OSAP while studying abroad and I applied for the Joubin-Selig bursary and that help me very much.

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

Finland is a bit more expensive than Canada, but I would say that overall rent is a bit cheaper in Tampere than in Toronto. Naturally food and other things are a bit more expensive because you're paying with Euros.

7. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: it changes a little bit all the time, but over all a euro is usually 25% more than a Canadian dollar, such as 1 dollar Canadian is equal to 1 euro and 25 cents.

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): July 2012 – December 2012.

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

I think a little more time was spent in class in Tampere, but at OCAD you spend more time working outside of class on your own time.

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:** \$2500, tuition is free in Finland but you still have to pay tuition to OCAD for that semester, but I suggest you apply for the bursaries available, (I got a bursary for my tuition)
2. **School supplies and books:** \$10
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$450/mo X 5 months = \$2250
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ 0/month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ 30/month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ 0/month
 - D) **Other (specify) \$ /month**
5. **Groceries (or meal plan) and housekeeping supplies:** \$ 0/month = 0\$
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** 10\$ /month = 50\$
7. **Laundry and /or dry cleaning:** \$ 3/month = 15\$
8. **Transportation:**
 - A) **Public (Bus, Taxi, Subway, etc.):** \$ /month
 - B) **Private Car (gas, parking, ins.):** \$ /month
9. **Clothing:** \$200 (you will need warm boots and a good coat, I brought mine)
10. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$30/month
11. **Extended medical coverage:** \$300

12. **Travel / trips:** \$700

13. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$2400

14. **Student visa:** \$330

15. **Medical expenses:** \$50

16. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$6070

8. 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?

Since I arrived there in the summer, there is lots of sunshine and warm weather but around September and October the days start getting shorter until around the end of December it is dark out most of the time, except for a few hours of day light, otherwise it was a very comfortable place to get used to, it looks like Canada in any Finnish city you visit, and there are plenty of exchange students in your situation. Most Finnish people know English, however it can be very difficult to get to know a Finnish person because they are known for being very shy, and they are very very shy but have a great sense of humor.

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?

You will probably end up living with other exchange students and there are organised orientation days for the international students that help you get to know people. And there are plenty of organised parties for all months of the school year as well, usually weekly planned get-togethers by the students, I recommend joining a facebook group for exchange students in your school or year.

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?

No, it was a comfortable city to live in and a great school and campus, schools and alumni are usually very organised which is a very Finnish attribute, all surprises have been good surprises.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: