Exchange Evaluation Report
Thanks for filling this out. It will be a great resource for future exchange students and for the IESS office.
Please email your completed report to Sherry at src@uvic.ca

THE BASICS
Your first name ONLY: Kay
Your partner university: University of Nantes
Your UVic major during the exchange: French
UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: Fall 2012 Semester

GENERAL EVALUATION
Please rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):
Rating: 2
Comments: The exchange experience was unfortunately not what I hoped for.

ARRIVAL
How satisfied were you with your experience of arriving in your host country or city? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):
Rating: 1
Comments: The instructions were confusing, I got lost. No one seemed to know where I should go, what I should do. At the ‘welcome center’, I was tricked into buying some insurance that I found out later I didn’t need.

What assistance, if any, did you receive when you arrived at your exchange destination? There was a place for international students to go, which is nowhere near the University or my housing, but they told me where to go (information I could have figured out with Google maps).

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)?
Not applicable, because I am also a French citizen.

ORIENTATION AND ASSISTANCE
How satisfied were you with the orientation and assistance available to students at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):
Rating: 1
Comments: There was no orientation.

How easy was it to find information you needed to know right away?
It was very difficult to find information. I barely made it into my residence before the office closed, and then I would have been on the street until the morning, with all of my luggage.

What help did you receive from the international staff or office?
Very little information. They told me where I was in residence, made me sign a bunch of papers, and told me I had to buy SMEBA insurance (I found out later I didn’t, but I had to buy a different kind of insurance).
What was your impression of the international staff or office?
The international staff was very nice, although not very knowledgeable or helpful.

What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one, and how well did it suit your needs?
There was no orientation.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site and were there people you could talk to about what you were experiencing?
There was no one to talk to, although the adjustment was as expected.

HOUSING
How satisfied were you with the housing available to students? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):
Rating: 2
Comments:
The housing that I received, although admittedly the cheapest available, was disgusting. There was mould everywhere, shared co-ed showers and toilets (the toilets had no seats or toilet paper), and shared kitchens without an oven. The internet access was awful, and we were often without hot water.

How early could students move in to housing at the beginning of term?
I’m not sure.

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities?
There are a few cafeterias on campus, and in my residence there was a shared kitchen.

How satisfied were you with the food?
The food at the cafeteria was good, and quite reasonably priced.

How close are the residences to the university?
About 10 minutes, either by foot or by tram. So quite close.

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays?
Yes.

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students?
Anything other than Launay-Violette, although I believe it was going to get renovated in the near future.

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find?
N/A

What should future UVic exchange students know about living off-campus?
N/A

COURSE REGISTRATION
How satisfied were you with the registration process at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):
Rating: 1
Comments: There was no registration process. You are just expected to show up to classes, then “register” at the exams, although you should still warn your professors that you’re in their class (some of them refuse international students). It’s extremely disorganized, frustrating, and slow process.

Please describe the registration process at your partner university.
See above.
What kind of help was available?
None.

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted?
I managed to get into all the classes I wanted, although I was so confused, that I ended up not going to one of the classes until mid November, so I missed over half of the course.

What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your partner university?
Expect it to be incredibly frustrating, but in the end, all you have to do is show up for the exams. Also don’t expect anyone to be able to help you.

ACADEMICS
How satisfied were you with the academic program at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):
Rating: 2
Comments: The classes are pretty much not worth going to. If you don’t go, you don’t miss anything. You aren’t graded on anything during the semester- your entire grade rests on your exam. For an exchange student, that’s frustrating because he/she doesn’t know what to expect the exam to be like at all.

How did the style of teaching at your partner university compare with that at UVic?
Much lower level, much less engaged and less dynamic than at Uvic.

How did the workload compare to what you would expect at UVic?
There was barely any work to do compared to Uvic, other than reading, which you don’t really need to do either.

How many courses did you take in your first term abroad?
8

Your second term?
N/A

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other UVic students visiting your partner university?
You could easily do 10, as there is no work during the entire semester.

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students?
History of French literature of the 19th century with Mr. Ledda.

Why?
It was a very interesting course that covered a lot of history and culture, and the prof was really good and knowledgeable.

If you studied in a non-English speaking country, what was the availability of courses offered in English?
I don’t know, because I only took courses in French, other than translation, which is a bit of both.

What advice would you give UVic students about succeeding academically at your partner university?
Learn the technicalities of writing in France, because they are different than at Uvic. Once you know how to write an essay in France, it’s very easy.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your partner university?
The library is small but enough for the needs of the students. The internet access was poor, and I don’t think there were any computer facilities...

What electronic devices would you recommend a UVic student bring (laptop, PDA, etc.)?
A laptop, but it would only be necessary for keeping in touch with friends and family in Canada.
COSTS

Please indicate currency: Euro

Books - per term: 25
Accommodation - per month: 150
Meals - per month: 200
Local transportation - per month: 80
Health insurance - per term: 150 (for the whole year, but you had to buy for the whole year)
Personal spending - per term: 1,500
Communications (phone, etc.) - per term: 40
Other university related fees - per term: 20

EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

How satisfied were you with the out-of-class opportunities at your exchange site? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 1
Comments:
The clubbing in Nantes was great- but as far as organized activities go, there were few.

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students?
There were lots of sports, but they were overcrowded and of poor quality.

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?
Something unrelated to the University.

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?
Anywhere in Europe is great to visit!

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus?
I don’t know.

Off-campus?
In bars, under the table.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?
I don’t know.

SAFETY AND HEALTH

How safe did you feel at your exchange site? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 2
Comments:
I would never go out alone at night. Between my residence and the University, we saw a guy sitting there, jerking off right beside the path. There was an assault in the forest near the university where the path is poorly lit. Even downtown, girls get harassed very often by drunk people. Always stay in groups when you leave.

What are the biggest safety concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site?
Going out alone, especially at night for women.

What are the biggest health concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site?
Drinking too much?

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends?
It was very difficult to make friends with the locals, but the international students were great!

How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students? Not very. I had a few friends towards the end of the semester who were French. Despite my best efforts, the students at my university seemed uninterested in getting to know the international students.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? I found the people a bit cold, but I loved the food in the area! It wasn’t really a difficult adjustment, the culture isn’t that different from Canada.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? Rudeness. I found the stereotype to be kind of true...

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? Food! So good!

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students? Locals treated me like anyone else. The university staff was incredibly rude. One of the professors said she didn’t want international students and said that international students were the reason the classes were overcrowded. Some of the professors were nicer than others, of course, and in those cases I was mostly just treated the same as the other students. The “accueil” people, when I went in to the office to inquire about classes, asked me “what do you want” when I came in. The students pretty much just ignored me.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university? It would be possible, but I didn’t notice any elevators in some of the buildings...

For students who are visible minorities in your host country? It wouldn’t be a problem.

TAKING STOCK
What are the three most important things for students to take with them when they go to your host country or region?
1. A camera!
2. A knife (you don’t know when you’ll have a sudden brie craving)
3. A raincoat/umbrella- it rains all the time!!

What are the three most important things you would tell a UVic student who is going to your partner university on exchange?
1. Be patient and expect to waste a lot of time.
2. Say yes to everything- you never know where an invitation will take you!
3. Go out lots- guys at bars/clubs will talk to you if you’re a girl and that will help you with your french!

Is there any other information that you think might prove useful to UVic exchange students attending your host university?

In France they have a two-tiered post-secondary education system, and Nantes is in the lower one. The quality is far inferior to anything you would get at UVic, and anything you would get at a private institute in France- that will explain a lot.

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience? The market in Nantes. It was amazing. You can get fresh, delicious food, and foods that you could never get in Canada.

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange? The bureaucracy.

How has your perspective changed as a result of the exchange? I have a new appreciation for the quality of education I’m getting at UVic. I also think that I’ve seen the pros- and cons of free university. I think I’ve been disillusioned about a lot of things, including the value of a formal education.
What else do you want to say about your exchange experience?
I would recommend choosing a different university- either a private institute in France, or one in another country, unless you’re OK with going all the way over the ocean to make canadian friends.