



Exchange Report

THE BASICS

Your name: [Stuart](#)
Your email address: stuartrandell@hotmail.com
Your partner university: [University of Hong Kong](#)
Your UVic major during the exchange: [Political Science](#)
UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: [Sept 2005 – May 2006](#)

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GENERAL EVALUATION

Please rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: [5](#)
Comments:

[I had an amazing time!](#)

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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: [4](#)
Comments:

[A buddy from HKU came and picked me up at the airport and then we took three buses to the residency. It's more expensive but I would recommend taking the "airport express" to downtown and then take a taxi, it's a lot faster and easier when you have a lot of luggage.](#)

What assistance, if any, did you receive when you arrived at your exchange destination?

[A buddy from HKU picked me up at the airport and took me to the residency, then spent the next two days showing me around HK. He was a very nice and helpful person.](#)

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)?

[I had no problems obtaining my travel documents.](#)

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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:

[The HKU bureaucracy is extremely complicated and difficult to navigate. There is an orientation session but it is mostly dealing with the social aspect of the University. The biggest problem is that all of the various branches of](#)

the University don't communicate with each other and all tell you something different. For me and the other exchange students I was with it took us about one week figure out registration and everything else with the University administration.

How easy was it to find information you needed to know right away?

Very difficult.

What help did you receive from the international staff or office?

Yes the International staff were very helpful (probably the most helpful out of any) but once you when to another department to do something the people there would tell you something different. There are lots of forms to fill out and instead of talking to people directly you often had to write a letter first.

What was your impression of the international staff or office?

The staff at the international office was nice; however, their hands were tied when dealing with the rest of the University administration.

What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one, and how well did it suit your needs?

Orientation was mostly photos with meet and greet.

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?

The culture was easy to adjust to as Hong Kong is an international city. All the exchange students generally stuck together.

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: 4

Comments

I stayed I Ricci Hall, which was a single dorm. Most of the other residencies were double rooms. Ricci Hall was in very rough shape but it think it was worth it to have a single room. All of the other residencies were very nice and most were really new. A lot of the stuff in Ricci was broken or didn't work but we didn't that the really tight security which other Halls did. Most Halls had security measures of signing in and out and only having friends at a certain time that frustrated the exchange students. Some Halls also locked their doors around 1am. Ricci didn't have a security guard and people could come and go as they please. However, girls were not allowed in the Ricci Hall except on Sunday from 1pm – 7pm. The Hall is run by Catholic Priests. This posed a significant problem.

How early could students move in to housing at the beginning of term?

As I remember one of the German students was there about one month before school started.

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities?

Three meals a day were included in the price of the dorms at Ricci. There were no cooking facilities in the Hall except a microwave and a fridge that sometimes worked. All of the other dorms had really nice cooking facilities.

How satisfied were you with the food?

The food at Ricci was horrible. However, the food at the other Halls was really good.

How close are the residences to the university?

All residencies are within walking distance (10 min), except University Hall which was a 10 minute bus ride. However, University Hall is supposed to be the nicest residency. I personally have not seen it.

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays?

Yes, and extend into the summer if they wished.

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students?

Star Hall has double rooms with male floors and female floors. It is the closest to the University, nice rooms and has cooking facilities. It is where the vast majority of exchange students stayed. If you want to hang out with exchange student then stay there.

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

In the second semester some exchange students wanted more freedom so they got an apartment close to the University. They had no problem finding an apartment, however, they spoke Cantonese so this probably helped somewhat.

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

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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:

Very complicated process first semester, its a lot easier second semester.

Please describe the registration process at your partner university.

What kind of help was available?

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted?

What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your partner university?

Don't stress out about why the process is so complicated. Everyone goes through it and it usually works out in the end.

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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: 4

Comments:

How did the workload compare to what you would expect at UVic?

The courses are split into senior and junior level classes.

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

5 classes, mostly senior level.

Your second term?

6 classes, mostly senior level. Plus 2 online classes from a University in Canada. I also taught English and worked out at the gym and still had a considerable amount of free time available.

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other UVic students visiting your partner university?

6 senior level HKU classes equal the course load of about 3 or 4 upper level Uvic classes. The junior level classes at HKU are very very easy.

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students?

I am a Political Science major so I took classes to learn about Chinese political views. All of these classes were very interesting.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your partner university?

All very good and comparable to Uvic.

What electronic devices would you recommend a UVic student bring (laptop, PDA, etc.)?

Any electronic you want I would recommend you buy them there. University has promotional deals with various computer companies and the prices are pretty good.

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COSTS

Books - per term: a lot cheaper then Uvic

Accommodation - per month: 9000 HK per term

Meals - per month:

Local transportation - per month:

Health insurance - per term: NA

Personal spending - per term:

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term:

Other university related fees - per term:

Teaching English for 4 hrs a week paid for everything except accommodation.

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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: 5

Comments:

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students?

Too many clubs and sports to count.

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?

Travel throughout Asia. Flights to Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines were only a few hundred Canadian. Take advantage of the region you living in.

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus?

Off-campus?

Teaching English, it was very easy to get private jobs.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There was lots of volunteer and internship opportunities for exchange students and they are well advertised.

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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: 5

Comments:

Hong Kong is a very safe city.

What are the biggest safety concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site?

I can't think of any safety concerns, HK is very safe.

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

I can't think of any health concerns.

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PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends?

Easy to make friend with exchange students, with the local Chinese it was much more difficult.

How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students?

Unsuccessful, from what I remember most international students were.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site?

Very easy.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging?

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?

Everyone was really nice.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?

Depends on the disability. From what I remember it would be almost impossible for a person in a wheelchair. The campus is build into the side of a mountain so everything is vertical and I can't remember seeing any wheelchair lifts. In fact the city in general is build on a slope, is mostly vertical and very unfriendly to wheelchairs. I can't remember seeing anyone in a wheelchair in Hong Kong. As for a learning disability, I am Dyslexic and obtained high grades at HKU.

For students who are visible minorities in your host country?

In Hong Kong there was discrimination against persons of African decent, however, there was no discrimination within the University.

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TAKING STOCK

What are the three most important things for students to take with them when they go to your host country or region?

Take an open mind and patience.

What are the three most important things you would tell a UVic student who is going to your partner university on exchange?

If you arrive in the summer, prepare for the heat and humidity, its extreme. I'm not sure how you would prepare for this though.

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

If you are planning on taking your exams early at HKU, begin the process months in advance as it takes a very long time.

The University also has very good health, medical and dental services which are extremely cheap.

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange?

Dealing with the administration, everything else was easy.

What else do you want to say about your exchange experience?

I am extremely fortunate to have gone.