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PLEASE EMAIL YOUR COMPLETED REPORT TO NICOLA AT nlamorte@uvic.ca

THE BASICS

Your first name: Stefan
Your email address: stefan07@uvic.ca
Your partner university: University of Essex
Your UVic major during the exchange: Economics
UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: Fall 2009

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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: The best 3 months of my life. I met many great people and the University was really fun. I was able to travel through-out Europe. I would recommend going on an academic exchange.

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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: 5

Comments: I arrived in London, which has a great underground system that is really easy to use. Using the underground I could get to London Liverpool Street Station which has an hour long train to Colchester.

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

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

Very difficult. The UK visa requirements were brand new and nobody knew how to help me.

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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: 5

Comments:

There were several events for international students as well as events for first years (which exchange students count as)

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

Very easy, there is the international office and an information centre.

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

They put on several events and field trips.

What was your impression of the international staff or office?

They were nice and helpful.

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

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?

It was easy to adjust because the English culture is very similar to Canadian culture. There were many people I could talk to because around half of the students and staff are from other countries.

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

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

About 10 days.

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities?

There were kitchens in the dorms which was very helpful. I don't know about meal plans because I did all of my own cooking.

How satisfied were you with the food?

The food was not very good in England in general. Fortunately, there was a large Tesco's Grocery store within walking distance. They sold a wide variety of groceries which makes it easy to cook your own food.

How close are the residences to the university?

Right on campus. About a 2 min walk away from my classes.

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays?

Yes, but they have to pay extra I believe.

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students?

North or South Towers because it is more social.

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: 2.5

Comments:

The registration was not online.

Please describe the registration process at your partner university.

Sign up for classes, then talk them over with an advisor.

What kind of help was available

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted?

I was able to get most of the classes I wanted. However, the timetable does not follow a set pattern which made it difficult to coordinate classes.

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

To make sure that they are in a class level that suits them. The numbering system is different because they have 3 year degrees instead of 4.

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: 3.5

Comments:

How did the style of teaching at your partner university compare with that at UVic?

The teaching was similar; lectures with powerpoint presentations.

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

Difficult to say. Because I was only there for one semester, they made extended assignments for me. This was because all the exams are at the end of the year.

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

It is mandatory to take 4.

Your second term?

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

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students?

Not a language course. They go way slower than uvic which means I could not continue with Italian at uvic. For economics, they were similar to uvic classes which means it doesn't really make a difference. However, I would recommend taking classes that are related to being in Europe.

If you studied in a non-English speaking country, what was the availability of courses offered in English?

n/a

What advice would you give UVic students about succeeding academically at your partner university?

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

The

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

Laptop.

COSTS

Please indicate currency:

Books - per term:

Accommodation - per month:

Meals - per month:

Local transportation - per month:

Health insurance - per term:

Personal spending - per term:

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term:

Other university related fees - per term:

Most of the prices are on the University of Essex webpage such as accommodation, which has several price depending on which housing a student chooses. Expenses like personal spending depend on the student and if they travel or not.

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:

The student union was amazing. They organized many events. Also, there is a sport and society for everyone. Essex had an enormous amount of student involvement.

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

Almost everything you can think of. There was even lacrosse and american football.

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

I would recommend soccer because that is part of the reason I chose to study in England

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

Travel. There is a bus that comes to the university that take you to Stansted Airport, which is the main airport that EasyJet and RyanAir fly out of. This bus only takes an hour which made it easy to travel to European cities on weekends.

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

I never looked into working because my visa did not allow me to work.

Off-campus?

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

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

There were CCTV's on campus. At the night events, only students and one invited guest per person were allowed to attend the night clubs. This was tracked through scanning students cards.

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

Make sure your dorm room is locked.

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

Well this year we had the H1N1 scare

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends?

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

Easy for me, I got along with my flatmates very well. Also, I was knowledgeable about the English Football (soccer) which made it easy to talk to many of the guys.

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

The culture was easy to adjust to for me.

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

There is no thanksgiving day in the UK. Also, around Christmas time, nobody on my flat except the american knew what eggnog was. I didn't find this difficult but it made me notice cultural differences during holidays.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Soccer.

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

I was overall treated very well by everyone.

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

I didn't notice.

For students who are visible minorities in your host country?

Around half of the entire school is international so I would assume most would have an easy time.

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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?

Camera, laptop

I can't name anything else specific but there are some items that are not the same as in North America. I would recommend bringing anything that you can not find in the UK.

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

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

It is a very fun University. There are many sports/ societies to join. It is a great university to party on as it has two nightclubs and two bars. That being said, make sure to get your work done because it is easy to get carried away because some dorms there are always people going out.

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience?

Living along with another culture. By the end of my exchange, I felt almost like a Brit for example I started using their slang (eg saying "quid" instead of pounds). Also, living near London made me feel like an English person. London is one of the most historic and famous cities in the world. Living only an hour away from London was an amazing experience.

As much as I felt a connection to English culture, I gained a strong sense of Canadian pride. Being the only Canadian guy on campus was a special experience. I learned how great another culture is but I also learned how much I love being Canadian.

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange?

Leaving. On my exchange I met many friends and some I got to know very well. It was very difficult to leave them not knowing if I will ever be able to see them again. I did not realize how difficult this was until the end. My advice would be aware of this and have as much fun while you can.

How has your perspective changed as a result of the exchange?

It changes what I find to be "normal". For example, going to London for a day or weekend was a normal or even annoying thing to do for some of my friends. I see the world in a broader view as I can understand how people in the England see the world. My perspective is very difficult to put into words

because this whole exchange experience was such an amazing experience. There is still a lot to take in and I believe the exchange will continue to change my perspective as I adjust to life back at home.

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

I want other students to know that this is a once in a lifetime experience. Enjoy every minute of it and realize how fortunate you are to be in a position to do this.