

## THE BASICS

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Your partner university: [University of Essex](#)

Your UVic major during the exchange: [Psychology](#)

UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: [Fall 09](#)

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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 think I can safely say this was one of the best \(if not THE best\) experiences I had during my academic career. A must do!!!](#)

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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: [Beware of travelling from the airport to the university on the tube with lots of heavy luggage. It is very crowded down there/very hot, with lots of people in a hurry around you. Expect that very few people will even give up a seat for you to sit with your heavy bags! Either pack lightly, or arrange a bus ride from the airport to the university. In fact, I ended up shipping one of my suitcases out from home because I knew it would be difficult to do that sort of travel with two heavy bags and one person!](#)

What assistance, if any, did you receive when you arrived at your exchange destination? [University Student Union representatives were at the train station upon arrival, and were very helpful in assisting with bags and transport to the Uni. They were all wearing green t-shirts clearly stating who they were, and drove us from the station to the university in vans. It was very nice indeed!](#)

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)? [I didn't have to get a visa since I was only going for one term \(less than six months\). I travelled on a visitor's visa that restricted my ability to work overseas, but was worth it for me because it was free and I was not planning to get a job anyways. Look up the details online about visas for England or ask the study abroad office.](#)

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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: [Orientation meetings were helpful and assistance available to students was amazing. I really appreciated all of the help from the student's union, they were amazing!!! Fresher's week \(during the first week you arrive\) will also supply you with all of the uni-related needed information to get you by during your stay there!](#)

How easy was it to find information you needed to know right away? Very easy. Student Union reps wore lime green t-shirts and set up booths for the entire first week of school and were there to answer any questions we had!

What help did you receive from the international staff or office? The study abroad office at Essex was staffed by very friendly people and they were helpful with how to change my courses (called modules there!). They also offered various free day trips for international students on the weekends to go visit places in England which was very nice of them!

What was your impression of the international staff or office? Friendly and helpful. Effective communication via email.

What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one, and how well did it suit your needs? It was a powerpoint presentation followed by an open floor question/answer session. We were given booklets to take home with us with all of the information covered and other tips/things to look over if we wanted to which was nice as well.

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? English culture seemed very similar to Canadian culture which made for an easy transition. Expect a lot of pub-going to add to the English cultural experience!

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## 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 was in the South Towers (the least expensive housing option) and I had my own room which was a decent size dorm with desk, chair, closet, bedside table. I lived on a floor with 15 others (boys and girls mixed) with shared bathrooms and showers (2 toilets on each side shared between 8 people, and 1 shower per side). Cleaners came in every weekday in the mornings to clean which was wonderful!!!

\*Beware that the Towers are party towers! Mostly first years and no noise regulations as compared to UVic residence. Quiet hours do not exist there! If you are looking for something more quiet then I suggest the Quays which are off-campus but only a 10 minute walk from the Uni. The courts and the houses are also more quiet and are located on campus. One drawback I heard from other students was that their roommates were less social/kept to themselves more because they had their own ensuite bathrooms, etc.

How early could students move in to housing at the beginning of term? One week before school started in order to celebrate fresher's week which is strategically placed before term begins ☺

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? No meal plans available. Cooking facilities in the Towers included one kitchen per flat with 2 ovens/stoves and fridges/freezers shared between 3 or 4 people.

How satisfied were you with the food? I prepared my own food in my kitchen so I could grocery shop for whatever I wanted to cook. Grocery store selections are very similar to Canada, while food in restaurants is a little more pub-like (aka. Not very high in nutrients)! Food prices at Tesco (the most popular grocery store) are unbeatable and are very similar to Canada once you convert it from pounds to dollars. I was pleasantly surprised!!

How close are the residences to the university? On campus. Quays are the only ones off campus and they are only 10 minutes walk down a trail that leads straight from there to the Uni.

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

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students? It depends on the type of person you are/what you plan to be focusing on while you are away. If you want to party, the South towers are the place to be. They are also conveniently located beside the gym and very close to the campus club/bars. North Towers

are only about a 2 minute walk further. If you want to live with less than 16 people and want to be a bit more quiet but still on campus, choose the Courts or the Houses. The Quays are off campus and seem to attract people who are not in their first year as they are a lot more quiet and allow for more study time (although some first years stay there too!)

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

What should future UVic exchange students know about living off-campus? [If you want to meet loads of people, live in residence!](#)

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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: 2

Comments: [Nothing is online!](#) For me, it was a bit shocking at first when comparing the ease of use. I found it very archaic to have to walk to and from professors' offices to switch my courses and get signatures to bring back to the Study Abroad office. This was one of the only things that bothered me about Essex, but after the first two weeks when all of my classes were sorted out, it was no longer an issue! Advice: [Choose your courses very carefully before leaving for your trip to avoid having to change them later.](#)

Please describe the registration process at your partner university. [When we registered for our student cards, we had to wait in massive line ups at various tables which took about an hour total if not more. It was a bit annoying because nothing was online, everything had to be done in person. I was glad when it was over!](#)

What kind of help was available? [Study abroad office was available to help but could not offer much in terms of academic advice. To decide whether a course is right for you, speak directly to the undergraduate admin for the department of the course you want to take. Then you can meet with them and find out more than what is described online.](#)

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted? [100% successful. Time clashes were an issue for some of my friends which inhibited their ability to take certain courses.](#)

What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your partner university? [Pick your courses carefully before you go to make sure they will transfer, and try to do electives while away \(there are lots of choices there\)!](#)

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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: [I found it to be far less demanding than Canadian standards. Quality of teaching was good, but class time was about half of what I am used to \(while students in lab oriented classes spent about double the amount of time in classes\). The term was very slow to start and workload became very heavy toward end of term. The spare time was good for me because I had spare time to travel and get involved in sports clubs, etc.](#)

How did the style of teaching at your partner university compare with that at UVic? [Lectures are directed by the professor and do not allow for much student interaction with the material. This is meant for the](#)

Seminar classes which allow for discussion and reflection of reading material etc. Powerpoint slides are used similar to UVic.

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

Workload was far less demanding than UVic in my experience. The term was slow to start and there was a lot of work to do before end of term. Teachers were a bit late with announcing the study abroad alternative assessments which made it difficult to do them ahead of time. My experience with the lesser workload may have been because I was enrolled in mostly first year electives, or 4<sup>th</sup> year psychology courses.

How many courses did you take in your first term abroad? 4 (the max)

Your second term?

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

4 classes is more than doable. This is the max amount of courses you can take at Essex, but still gives you the time to travel!!

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students?

Emotion (Psychology)  
Social Cognition (Psychology)  
Initial Italian

Why?

The professors in the Psyc department are reputable and I thoroughly enjoyed those classes. Italian was a class of 6 people which allowed for a lot of student to teacher and student to student contact which I liked especially for learning a new language.

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

What advice would you give UVic students about succeeding academically at your partner university? Do your work early!!! If you know the due date ahead of time, get it done towards beginning of term if possible so you can save the rest of the time there to experience the "English culture"! (Note: There are 4 venues for going out on campus alone- 3 bars and one giant club. The Student Union puts on events every night of the week and there is always something to do. If you want to get involved, then get your work done early ☺ !!)

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your partner university? Computer labs were open late hours and there were many around campus. Library has lots of places to study. Go on the lift in the library!!!! It is monumental! Internet access is not available in the dorms for the first week so make sure to use the computer labs.

What electronic devices would you recommend a UVic student bring (laptop, PDA, etc.)? Laptop, external hard drive for movies, pictures etc, camera! Ipod and ipod speakers (or buy them there from tesco!), cell phone or just buy one at tesco- cheap!

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## **COSTS**

Please indicate currency:

Books - per term: Most of the classes I took did not require the purchase of a textbook. I would usually share with a roommate if I bought a book. To budget for this expense, I would say approx. \$100 CDN.

Accommodation - per month: \$600 CDN

Meals - per month: \$75 per week? Grocery shop at Tesco!

Local transportation - per month: Depends on if you are taking trains or buses. Train to London return was approx. 24 pounds, and the bus to Colchester from the Uni return costs approx. 3 pounds. You can walk to Tesco in 10 minutes from the Uni. Budget maybe \$200 per month?

Health insurance - per term:

Personal spending - per term: Budget for shopping. The clothing in England is amazing!! Personal spending depends on how much you plan to go out/shop... As a highly social person (aka. Going out about 2-3 times per week), I probably spent average \$100 per week?

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term: I bought a phone (pay as you go) at Orange for 9 pounds. I would top up every 2 weeks with 5 pounds credit. Cheap!!

Other university related fees - per term: Sports clubs cost 10 pounds to join, then approx 3 pounds per game. University gym membership costs approx 35 pounds per term. Bus pass would be worth investing in if you are staying for two terms/same with train card.

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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: The Student Union provides students with amazing opportunities to get involved in sports/clubs/societies. I played on the Uni Volleyball team and it was one of the best things I did while I was there!!

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students? LOADS! Everything from Water Polo to Fencing to Kickboxing to Football- it's got it all. Check out the SU website on the Essex webpage for more details!

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students? Sports teams. Great way to get to know people and get involved in team socials, etc! Lots of other internationals play as well!

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays? Take advantage of the day trips that the Study Abroad office puts on (they're free!). Take Ryanair to other European countries on the weekends. \*\*I did a Contiki 16 day tour of Europe in September before arriving at the Uni and I saw 7 different countries which was an awesome way to start out my trip. Hint: Grad present idea??

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? Student Union provides lots of information on this during Fresher's week. If you want to work, you have to get a visa. In fact, at times I wished I could have applied for a job in the week because there are very few class time hours. However, on weekends I was glad to have the time off!

Off-campus?

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students? Lots of volunteer through the SU. (Nightline, St. John's ambulance, etc).

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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: Everyone is very friendly!

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

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

Swine flu?

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## PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends? *Easy, especially living in residence with shared kitchens. It has a very communal feel and makes it a lot easier to meet people and get to know the ones you are living with. Also, going to the gym and being part of the volleyball team made it very easy to make friends!*

How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students? *Successful. I found English people to be very outgoing and easy to chat with. The only real difference between us was the accent!*

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? *Similar to home.*

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? *Lots of different terms! At the orientation, they give you a list of English terms and I suggest you take a look at them before attempting to socialize! Makes things a lottttt easier!*

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? *Outgoing people!*

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students? *Locals were friendly. Staff and faculty loved the Canadian accent and were always willing to help. Students likewise.*

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university? *People seem to have very accepting attitudes at this Uni as it is 40% international, so based on that, I would say it would be a good place to go.*

For students who are visible minorities in your host country? *There were many people who came from all parts of the world and everyone seemed to have a generally friendly attitude towards people no matter what cultural differences there may have been.*

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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?

*It gets cold/rainy in the Winter, bring a jacket or two!*

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

*Don't bring too much stuff!! You can buy everything there that you would buy here.*

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

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience?

Meeting lifelong friends from all over the world that now give me an excuse to do even more world travel!!

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange?

Getting used to the lack of online resources when it came to class registration, checking progress/grades, etc.

How has your perspective changed as a result of the exchange? Very open minded, ready to meet new people.

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

DO IT!!!!