

## THE BASICS

Your first name: Sarah

Your email address: sbauer@uvic.ca

Your partner university: University of Exeter

Your UVic major during the exchange: English Literature

UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: Fall 08 and Spring 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: Going to England for a year was easily the best decision I could have made for myself at this point in my life. I don't call it the happiest year of my life though; I call it the year that taught me how to have the happiest life. I will be always so grateful to the incredible people I met whilst abroad.

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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: It was very DIY. I had to sort out (on my own) my train trip from Heathrow to Exeter, which was quite hectic and difficult, especially with a massive suitcase! But I found most attendants at the station very helpful and friendly.

What assistance, if any, did you receive when you arrived at your exchange destination? Once at Exeter Uni, the student support team was so great in helping me get my bags up to my room and in getting me settled.

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)? Not difficult, just a trip to Vancouver to sort out the visa. Make sure you do it a few months in advance!

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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: It was all geared towards first-year students, as I was living on campus in first-year accommodations. It was very similar to UVic's welcoming program.

How easy was it to find information you needed to know right away? Very easy; the porter's lodge on campus has the most lovely old gentlemen who can help you out with any questions.

What help did you receive from the international staff or office? I attended several international workshops, but I really didn't need to because everything on campus is pretty straight forward.

What was your impression of the international staff or office? **So friendly and awesome. They just want to help you out in any way possible!**

What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one, and how well did it suit your needs? **As I mentioned, it was for first years, so a lot of games and "get-to-know-eachother" activities. There's also a fantastic clubs day where you can sign up for loads of clubs.**

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? **Coming from an English speaking country to another English speaking country made the adjustment much easier for me. I was living with all first-year English kids, but since we were all new to the school we were all eager to get to know eachother and share our concerns and such. I didn't really reach out to the international society on campus too much because I felt confident getting to know the people around me.**

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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 living in Lafrowda, which is apparently the cheapest accommodation with fewest amenities. It was clean, but not very pretty! I really didn't mind though! We had a cleaner who came in twice a week ( that felt like such a treat!) and all appliances functioned well enough. It was just a very old building that didn't look too good.**

How early could students move in to housing at the beginning of term? **I moved in three days before school started, and I believe one could move in earlier if need be.**

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? **I lived in self-catered accommodation, but had I chosen a more expensive option I could have lived in a building with a cafeteria.**

How satisfied were you with the food? **I cooked my own so it wasn't very good! But some of my flat mates were excellent cooks (and nice sharers!)**

How close are the residences to the university? **About a ten minute walk to the center of campus.**

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays? **In my accommodation you could, but I know that in some of the nicer buildings the students had to vacate during all holidays! Very inconvenient I can imagine.**

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students? **LAFROWDA alllll the way! It was so much fun! Everyone is easy going and ready to party. You grow to love the dingy old place.**

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find? **N/A, although I can imagine it would be a bit more difficult sorting that out from Canada, especially seeing how most off-campus accommodation was meant for 4-6 people per place.**

What should future UVic exchange students know about living off-campus? **It costs much more! And most places to not rent to singles, you need atleast three other people with you.**

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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: **5**

Comments: **It was all done with assistance from UVic, so I didn't feel any strain at all.**

Please describe the registration process at your partner university. Basically I was emailed a form and had to fill out what classes I wanted. This was all done in April. Then they email you back showing you what you would be taking. In October you meet with your advisor, who gives you a schedule and further assistance.

What kind of help was available? We each had a academic advisor at Exeter. I only saw him once at the beginning of the year, but it was good knowing he was there.

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted? I didn't get exactly what I wanted, but you sort of have to take what you can get.

What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your partner university? Take what they offer you, and try to find joy in what classes you have!

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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: 2

Comments: Academically, Exeter was very strange compared to UVic. I much prefer the professor-student relationship in Canada, whereby one speaks to another as a colleague, and there is a clear mutual interest. At Exeter, students are looked at by some professors as spoiled brats with no interest in their subject.

How did the style of teaching at your partner university compare with that at UVic? I prefer UVic, where one can expect 12-16 hours of contact time with a professor a week. In Exeter I was in class for 6 hours a week.

How did the workload compare to what you would expect at UVic? Workload was much lighter, one essay and one exam per course. Lots of reading was expected outside of class, but I still feel I have a heavier workload in Canada.

How many courses did you take in your first term abroad? 2 per semester, which is a full course load in Exeter.

Your second term?

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other UVic students visiting your partner university? Take the full course load!! You'll still have tons of time to do other things!

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students? The film courses are great.

Why? Exeter has INCREDIBLE film resources! You can take out any good film imaginable! And the archive collection library is apparently one of the best in southern England.

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? Do all the course readings and take notes from those readings. Come to tutorials prepared to say a few things.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your partner university? [It was pretty similar to UVic. Internet was available on campus, and the library was a bit smaller, but offered similar resources.](#)

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

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## **COSTS**

Please indicate currency: [CDN](#)

Books - per term: [\\$100](#)

Accommodation - per month: [\\$600](#)

Meals - per month: [\\$200](#)

Local transportation - per month: [none, unless traveling by train to other places.](#)

Health insurance - per term: [done through UVic.](#)

Personal spending - per term: [\\$400. Could be more or less, considering how much you travel.](#)

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term: [\\$75](#)

Other university related fees - per term: [Gym passes are so expensive! \\$300 per term!](#)

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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: [Exeter is so enthusiastic about their sports and societies. You should definitely join atleast one or two whilst in Exeter! They are so welcome to everyone. I got to try out for plays, run with the Jog Soc, and go on English Lit pub crawls.](#)

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students? [Everything you can imagine \( except American football!\)](#)

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students? [Whatever interests you, there is something for everyone. The Outdoor Society looked cool because they did lots of trips to the Lake District .](#)

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays? [Visit your friends' homes! I got to see so much of England this way, just traveling from place to place with my flat mates. I found most British families so accommodating and warm.](#)

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? [There are several. You can apply through the on-campus job centre called The Works.](#)

Off-campus?

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students? [Many were available through the clubs and societies.](#)

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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 [I was never too concerned, except for when swine flu swept through the campus near the end of June.](#)

What are the biggest safety concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site? Well try not to start trouble in bars. Most people assume you're American and can get a little bit aggravated by your accent if you are obnoxious

What are the biggest health concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site? Don't start smoking just because so many other students do! My boyfriend lived in a smoking flat, so it sometimes felt quite unavoidable.

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## PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends? Easy, easy, easy. Just be friendly and take every opportunity for something fun ( and legal!) that comes along.

How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students? I lived with all English students so the majority of my friends were from the UK. I did also make some lovely friends from the Philippines and Norway.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? Not difficult at all, mostly just funny noting the differences. I made a lot of strange etiquette mistakes at the beginning. You really learn to laugh at yourself.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? I found most people very friendly, but challenging to get to know well. People from the UK tend to not give much of themselves away as easily as North Americans. Some have a hard time letting their guard down.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? I love the British culture so much, and I think one of the more lovely aspects is the general respect for "old things". People generally live in very old, very small homes with older things in them, instead of feeling a pressure to have the latest in cars, TVs, and houses, like we tend to do in Canada. In England, a building will be fixed rather than replaced. I really liked that.

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students? I was treated warmly so long as it was clear I was Canadian. I found some pretty funny ways to slip that into conversation.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university? It would not be easy for access to my res building as there was no elevator. The campus is built on a steep hill, so it would not be ideal.

For students who are visible minorities in your host country? Exeter is a very diverse campus, I don't think there would be many issues.

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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? A camera, a sturdy backpack, and a sense of humour.

Is there any other information that you think might prove useful to UVic exchange students attending your host university? Bring some Kraft Dinner with you because the students there don't know about it yet! And please don't stress about the credit transfer, this year would have been worth it even if I'd gotten no credit at all.

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience? I was so so so lucky to meet some very special people whilst in England. I will never forget our travels and time together, they are friends for life and taught me so much about myself.

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange? Coming home was extremely difficult.

How has your perspective changed as a result of the exchange? I've been blessed with the opportunity to see how much more of the world there is outside of the UVic bubble. I've learned to laugh at myself. The people there taught me how to be more generous and forgiving, of others and of myself.

What else do you want to say about your exchange experience? Thank you so much! Seriously! I can't wait to go back.