

THE BASICS

Your first name: Stephen Andrew

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Your partner university: Sciences Po

Your UVic major during the exchange: Political Science and History

UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: Fall 2009 and Spring 2010

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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: 4

Comments: Excellent intellectual and cultural experience, however, there is quite a bit of homework and administrative paperwork, so much to the point that there is not enough time to appreciate all the great works of art in Paris.

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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: 3

Comments: Customs and Immigration were very efficient in processing incoming travelers. Transportation into Paris is abundant, though at times confusing.

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

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)? It took one morning once all the necessary documents for the visa were there. It took me roughly two weeks to get all the documents. (Bank declaration will depend on the banker's responsiveness to requests.)

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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: 3

Comments: The students that were a part of the orientation were very helpful. The Welcome Program is a bit over the top: there was simply too much homework and the professors who taught the French methodology classes refused to speak anything other than French. Needless to say, the French language professors of the program also refused to speak anything other than French. Missing more than one of these classes will result on an inconsequential failure in the Welcome Programme that will not affect one's future.

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

The exchange office staff was quite knowledgeable about their work, however, getting all the right documents together is quite troublesome, especially when dealing with the prefecture.

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

Information on getting documents and dealing with banks.

What was your impression of the international staff or office?

Excellent

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

It was very informative and it suited my needs excessively.

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 very agreeable

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: 3

Comments

Although Sciences Po has no on campus housing, there are plenty of choices in Paris to choose from, however, be sure to not transfer any money before signing a residential contract. If money had been transferred and the person offering housing for rent refuses to sign a contrat de location, call the police at the earliest possible moment. Foyers, apartments, homestays and the Cité Universitaire are excellent choices.

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

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? There are university restaurants all over Paris. €2.90/meal is the best price one can get. That is the most economic meal plan available

How satisfied were you with the food? Satisfied

How close are the residences to the university? N/A

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays? Yes, since they are private.

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students? Get your own apartment or rent a foyer.

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

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

Be sure to not transfer any money before signing a residential contract. If money had been transferred and the person offering housing for rent refuses to sign a contrat de location, call the police at the earliest possible moment. Foyers, apartments, homestays and the Cité Universitaire are excellent choices. Foyers and Cité Universitaires, in my opinion require too much documentation and bureaucracy since they want every single detail of tenants.

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: 3

Comments: The NEW registration software was very user-unfriendly; I can swear that during one of the group registration sessions, people were in tears and panicking.

Please describe the registration process at your partner university.

Disorderly and confusing because few people understood the PDF file with the instructions for course registration

What kind of help was available? There were many people there, but nobody knew what to do until some people figured it out.

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted? Quite successful, since I was one of the first people to figure how the software worked besides the programmers themselves

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

Read and reread the instruction manual. Register the first moment possible. Plan back up courses. Ignore crying and panicking people at the computer labs unless one has finished registering for courses.

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: 5

Comments: It was a very intellectually stimulating experience

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

The lectures were less structured than the classes at UVic if taught by an older professor, and more structured if the professor was under 40. The Seminars are much more structured than those of UVic and consisted essentially of presentations by students and professors, term papers and technical reports.

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

The frequency of homework at Sciences Po was higher in that they expect many little pieces of homework: technical reports, mid-term dissertations, presentations on a specific topic of a class, press presentations, etc.

How many courses did you take in your first term abroad? 7 courses: 2 lectures and 4 electives in English, 1 elective in French, and 1 French language course in French

Your second term? 6 courses: 1 lecture in French, 1 lecture and 2 electives in English, 1 French language course, and 1 Chinese language course

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other UVic students visiting your partner university? Full load 30 ECTS

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students? Courses that have essays

Why?

UVic's Student Advising is completely incompetent in providing proper information beforehand. The Political Science Department was not very willing to consider courses with presentations only as 300-level courses because it claims to be a writing-heavy department

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

Widely available at Sciences Po

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

Do your homework on time. Don't make vacation plans unless it is after a semester

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

Horrible

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

Lap top

COSTS

Please indicate currency:

Books - per term: €10-50

Accommodation - per month: €600

Meals - per month: €500

Local transportation - per month: €50

Health insurance - per term: €100

Personal spending - per term: €500

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term: €300

Other university related fees - per term: €50

(This budget on the high-end spectrum in terms of being indulgent in food and alcohol consumption)

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: I only attended film screenings

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students? Film, art, music, rugby, volleyball, etc.

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students? Depends on personal interests

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays? Go to museums and cafés

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? Translation, office clerk

Off-campus? Barkeep, waiter(ess), translator, etc.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students? NGO or international organization work—talk to professors and TAs about those. Talk to people one might meet randomly at restaurants as well. Be open to conversation to random strangers at restaurants or other events.

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: 4

Comments:

It is as safe as Victoria with the large number of homeless people with dogs out on the streets

What are the biggest safety concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site? Pick-pockets, vehicles and pedestrians neglecting traffic rules and lights

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

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends? [Easy](#)

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

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? [People here are reserved but friendly in general. Get used to the paperwork](#)

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? [None](#)

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? [Food and art](#)

How were you treated by local people? [Kindly on the whole, although they can be a bit pushy when they are in a rush. By university staff and faculty? Quite well. By students? Very well, except for two exceptions.](#)

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

[It might be a bit challenging because Paris is not exactly a physically disabled-friendly city. Security should be able to make arrangements to help physically disabled students get from one place to another. As for learning disabilities, I do not know.](#)

For students who are visible minorities in your host country?

[Blacks, Veiled women, East and South Asian, although France maintains a color blind policy. It is difficult to discern whether white Europeans or Arabs are the majority in Paris, although white Europeans are the majority in the whole of France.](#)

TAKING STOCK

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

[Documents pertaining to visa application, prescription medication, banking, money.](#)

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

[Don't panic, read things over again. If in doubt and ask people when that still does not work. When that does not work, ask for a second opinion. Do your homework.](#)

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

[There are a wide variety of courses in sociology, political science/international relations, history, art history and culture.](#)

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience?

[Making new friends and gaining potential references.](#)

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange?

Getting around all the red tape imposed by the French Republic and Orange France Telecom

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

Yes, Paris is only fun if one has the time and money to enjoy the city. The average Parisian probably has forgotten how the Mona Lisa looks like due to stress from too much work and probably has no clue as to what is on display at the Centre Pompidou.

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

Plan ahead and make sure you have all the CORRECT DOCUMENTS on hand otherwise getting anything done may take months—or not at all. Don't sign contracts with telecommunications companies if possible. Ask the landlord if they have some sort of telecommunications plan that might cover you.