Exchange Report

Partner University: Deakin University
Country: Australia
Major: Communications
Dates/Term(s): February 20th - June 20th, 2017/ Trimester 1

Preparation for exchange

There were few paperworks to prepare before heading to Australia. **Confirmation of Enrollment from partner university; Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC); Australian Student Visa.** I received my offer letter and CoE from Deakin University on December 4th, 2016 and purchased OSHC right away, since both of the CoE and OSHC issued policy number were essential requirements to apply for student visa. I received my student visa within three business days after submitting all required documents, but I strongly recommend to start the process as soon as possible.

When it came to packing for Australia, because it was summer during February until May in Australia, I only brought necessary clothing such as a windbreaker jacket and decided to purchase household items such as hangers after I arrive in Australia. Deakin University is in a suburb called Burwood, it is similar to SFU Burnaby campus. They have few shops on campus and a 24-hours supermarket called Coles within 10 minutes driving or Uber. So I recommend to only pack necessary items and purchase the rest in Australia if needed.

I took a flight to Melbourne through Vancouver to Amoy, China; then from Amoy to Melbourne, the flight times were really long and I highly recommend to get a noise-cancellation headphone, it made the flight much easier. After arrived in Melbourne, Deakin University offered free pick up at airport to Deakin University Burwood campus, the registration was done online and the process of meeting the driver was really smooth as long as you follow the guide provided by Deakin University.

Melbourne is an expensive city with similar living costs to Vancouver, the average spending including accommodation is around $1500 - $2000 per month. Melbourne is a credit card based society, but there are certain places such as restaurants that only take cash, moreover, if you are not staying in the city/downtown, it is kind of difficult to find an ATM machine. So I always bring some cash on myself to avoid card surcharges. However, places like supermarkets and chain restaurants will accept most types of credit cards. (Visa, Master, Amex) Even I brought my own credit cards from Canada, I also opened a local bank account with Commonwealth Bank as they have free student accounts and more ATMs across Melbourne. I chose Optus as my cellular service provider, it costs $40 per month with 8G of data and 100 minutes international calling,
and unlimited calling and texting within Australia, just make sure your phone is unlocked before you leave Canada.

**During Exchange**

After I landed in Melbourne, I was kind of worried about the driver sent by Deakin could have left, because my flight was delayed for couple hours and had a long line up at the Australian border. However, the driver did not leave and waited for me until I came out from the border. I decided to live on Burwood campus. Deakin University has three campuses and the Burwood campus is their main campus. Burwood is a mid-class community where most people are friendly and it takes an hour to get to the Melbourne Central by public transit.

The orientation last for two weeks, the orientation is similar to SFU’s club fair that all kinds of clubs and groups gather together to provide useful information on studying, living and all other resources that are available to students. The most important part of the orientation is a program that available exclusively for exchange students is called **The Beach Welcome Program**, it is a short two-day trip to a beautiful town called Lorne near Great Ocean Road, it is well-organized trip with many complimentary activities such as surfing and mountain biking. Moreover, you will be able to meet other exchange students from all other countries.

I chose to live on Burwood campus not only because it is closer to all the Deakin University facilities than rented homes, but also they have 24 hours securities on site; free high internet and utilities including washing machine and dryer; twice a week in-room cleaning services. They have saved me many unnecessary hassles in the new environment.

When the classes started, I was able to familiarize with the course structures easily, as the format of the courses are similar to SFU, including lecture and tutorial, however, Deakin will also record most of the lectures and upload the records online, it is considered a more flexible way of learning. They have a different grading system in Australia, as they have High Distinction’s (HD), Distinctions (D), Credit (C), and Pass (P).

In terms of travelling during the break, I highly recommend to travel to other cities of Australia at the beginning of the exchange, as you could get really busy during the semester. I went to Sydney and the Sydney opera house is a must see. When it comes to travel within Melbourne, there are few ways you can get to the Melbourne Central, **Tram, Bus and Train**. Bus and Train is similar to the system we have in Vancouver, the tram is more like the train runs on the road along with all other types of vehicles. Deakin offers discount fare rates to exchange student, so make sure to print out the form from the Deakin Studentconnect system and bring the registration form to large stations with customer service (ex. Flinder St. Station) to get the **Myki card (Compass card in Vancouver)**. Melbourne is a beautiful city where most people are
friendly, it is multicultural society as well, you will be able to find different aspects of cultures as you did in Canada.

**Reflection after exchange**

Being an exchange student was one the most valuable and decisions I have made during my undergraduate. The experience not only made me experience Australia in person, but also made me grown stronger internally as an adult, I learned that there are problems I can only solve by myself, I learned the importance of make a budget to limit my spendings, more importantly, I learned different perspectives in Communication field and met many friends that will keep in touch in my entire life. I would recommend who are going to exchange to step out the room and try to blend yourself into the local community and meet new people who share the similar interests with you, because they are really interesting and they will make your exchange experience unforgettable.
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