Study Abroad Report
University of Manchester

Manchester City Centre

Piccadilly Gardens
Preparation for Exchange

Packing (what to bring)

The weather in Manchester is quite similar to Vancouver, so I would recommend bringing your standard Vancouver essentials such as a small umbrella, rain jacket, rain boots and etc. I brought two weeks worth of clothing, my electronics (laptop, tablet and phone) and some stationary, and toiletries. If you plan on travelling around Europe, I would highly recommending bringing your own travel size toiletries (its more expensive in England). I also brought a bedding set (pillow cover, bed cover and duvet cover), as it cut down my shopping list and allowed me to sleep in clean bedding on my first night there. I would also recommend brining a few Canadian snacks, so you can share them with your flatmates and non-Canadian friends.

Travel and Transportation

Since I am a Canadian citizen, I did not need to apply for a visa in advance. I received a six month student visa when I arrived at Manchester Airport, when I showed them my original acceptance letter. I took a direct flight to Manchester, as it made travel much easier and less stressful for me. I then took a cab directly to my campus accommodations (it cost me about 30 pounds).

Financial Details

I brought a decent amount of British Pounds with me, my debit card and two credit cards. Scotiabank is in the program called the Global ATM Alliance, which allowed to me withdraw British Pounds at Barclays (UK Bank), and BNP Paribas (French Bank). When I needed more Euros, I went to Debenhams (a department store) to exchange my Pounds to Euros.

In order to fund my exchange, I saved up money from working and I received some money from my parents. While I was in Manchester, I kept a detailed spreadsheet on where most of my money was going, and how much I had left. I found this helped me to better budget my money and curb unnecessary habits. I spent an average of 500 pounds each month on food, mobility, supplies and transportation. This does not include travel to other countries or cities outside of Manchester.
During Exchange

Arrival and Orientation

I attended one compulsory orientation event, and one optional orientation event for North American students (USA and Canada only).

Academic Details

In terms of academics, I was only able to take a maximum of three courses due to a credit limit for exchange students. My three classes only had a lecture component, which usually were about two to three hours. Each course only had two graded components: one small essay (less than 1500 words) and one large essay (around 3000 words). The small essay would be worth at most 30%, while the final essay (which was assigned for you to do over the winter break) would be worth about 70%. There were some readings assigned (all online, there were no assigned textbooks you had to buy) for you to do before lecture, but it was usually only one to two short readings. I took two undergraduate planning courses and one graduate level planning course. The grading system is very different in compared to SFU, as a 70% is considered an A, while I believed 40% is considered a pass. In term of actual grading, the University of Manchester was just a little more easy when compared to SFU.

Country Information (culture, weather and where to visit)

In terms of weather, Manchester was just a little warmer than Vancouver, but much windier and less rainy. Manchester has a very rich history that is linked to the Industrial Revolution, a period in which Manchester grew from a small village to the industrial capital of the world. The city

Social and extra-circular activities

I would highly recommend you join the International Society, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping international students. Each week there are two social events, in which students (especially exchange students and international students) come to play board games. It is a great way to interact with others and make friends. The society also plans trips across the United Kingdom to places like Stonehedge, Bath, Oxford and the Lake District. The trips are affordable and a great way to explore the UK, while having fun with others. I met most of my friends through the International Society, and I believe this is the best way to meet other students (especially if you’re looking to travel Europe with someone).
Reflection after Exchange

What you’ve learned and the challenges you faced

One of biggest challenges I faced was that I went abroad with incredibly high expectations. I expected myself to have a life changing trip in which I would make a ton of friends and travel across ALL of Europe. Halfway through my exchange, I did not even go to half the places on my list, and I did not have a large group of friends. It took me some to realize that my expectation were unrealistic, and that I needed to lower them to prevent myself from upsetting myself. Everyone’s experience of a semester abroad is different, and it’s not realistic to compare yourself to others. All that matters is that you’re having fun, and you’re doing activities you enjoy. Now that I’m back in Vancouver, and I have time to reflect on my trip, I realized I actually had a lot more fun than I thought.

Advice/tips for other students

- Buy the 16-25 Rail card, as it allows you to save 30% on ALL of you train trips in the United Kingdom (yes, you can get 30% off first class tickets too!)
  - You can visit nearby cities such as Liverpool for about 5 pounds (roundtrip) with this card
  - Perfect for weekend trips within the United Kingdom

- Explore Manchester, and visit many of the landmarks
  - I regret not exploring Manchester as much, because I spent most of my time of visiting other nearby cities. Which meant I didn’t really know Manchester as well as I wanted to.

- Try to get a souvenir from everywhere you go to. I personally chose to write a postcard to myself (recounting what I did in the city I was visiting) and sent it back home to Vancouver.