Partner University: University of Bath
Country: England
Major / Faculty: International Studies / Language, Politics, and International Studies
Dates of Exchange: September 22, 2018 to January 25, 2019

**Preparation for Exchange:**

**Packing**

The weather in Vancouver and Bath are very similar: cold and wet during the winter. I would recommend bringing a warm (and waterproof) jacket, scarves, and intend to dress in layers as the weather changes constantly. Thinking back on what I packed, I probably brought too many things of my own. Keep in mind that the shopping and style of clothes is, in my opinion, fairly affordable and quite fashionable. For the amount of time you’ll be abroad, you will most likely buy a fair amount of clothes and shoes over that period. So perhaps leave some empty space in your bag for coming home! I brought an adaptor for items like my laptop charger. However, to save space in my bag I bought items like a hair dryer, phone charger, and straighter upon arrival so the wall plugs were from the UK to make things easier.

**Travel**

Since I arrived in the UK a month before classes started, I bought a one-way ticket from Vancouver to Heathrow Airport. Once I received my exam schedule for January, I then purchased my return flight. Overall, the cost of flights was
around $1200. Upon arrival, there are buses from the airport that bring you to Bath. However, I was lucky enough to have family available to pick me up from the airport and bring me to Bath once classes began.

Upon arrival at the border, I needed to provide the customs officer with a proof of student status letter. The University sent this to me months before my arrival. With this I was able to receive a student study visa that lasted 6 months. In addition, I was also asked to provide proof of residence and a financial statement (which thankfully I could pull up on my phone on the spot).

**Financial Details**

One month into my exchange, I opened a bank account with HSBC UK in the city center of Bath. I found out that every time I used my credit card for transactions or withdrawing money that my bank charged me a fee for the exchange rate. Opening an account was very easy. All I required was a proof of my address and proof of my student status to open a basic account. All I had to do was contact my bank at home and have them transfer my money to the HSBC UK branch to process. Note that this took about 3-4 business days to process so have a back up during that time! Otherwise, almost everywhere accepts credit, debit, and cash just like Vancouver.

Upon arrival, I also bought a SIM Card phone plan to last me the duration of my exchange. Any phone company in the UK will provide a plan that offers call, text, and much more data than what you can get in Canada. For example, I had
all these features and 22Gb of data every month for around £25 a month. Just remember you have to have your phone 'unlocked' before you can activate a SIM Card from outside your country. I previously had this done, but your phone carrier can do it before you leave for your exchange.

## During Exchange

### Arrival and Orientation

The University holds a weeklong orientation for student the week before classes started. I attended a few events during this time. The first was an orientation for all exchange students where you are introduced to important information about classes, clubs, activities, and the student union team. Following the meeting you were split into groups and given a tour of the campus, which I would highly recommend doing! The second event was for the department of Language, Political Science, and International Studies exchange students. At this event, we were once again given general information about classes and were able to meet other students in your department. Most of these students ended up being in many of my classes so it was a bit of a relief knowing at least one person in my class.

Finally, during this time the University holds a week long event called Freshers. Basically this welcomes all the new incoming first year, exchange, and returning students with a variety of events. Similar to what SFU does for welcome
week, the campus has games all day long and club booths you are welcome to join. In addition, almost every night there are themed events held on campus. For example, my flat mates and I attended a silent disco and a pub quiz during this time. This was a great time to meet students other than those on exchange.

**Accommodation**

My accommodation was near the city centre and off campus. I ended up being in Pulteney Court which houses exchange students and Graduate Students. Three students share a flat that has your own bedroom, and a shared kitchen and bathroom. I ended up with some amazing flat mates that I enjoyed spending my term with! Since Pulteney Court does not have cleaners, it is up to you and your flat mates to clean the shared areas and provide items like toilet paper and such.

Upon arrival, you must pick up your keys from a building in the city centre and then walk to your accommodation. The only bedding items provided is a pillow, mattress protector, and a duvet. You must provide your own sheets and towels. In the city, there is a Primark that is a 10-minute walk away where I got all my stuff for my room. House items like this ranged from £1-5, so it is very affordable. Just note that if you are arriving later in the evening that most of these shops close fairly early, so if you’re worried you can make room in your bags for bedding just in case.
Pulteney Court was so close to the town centre and every other place you will use throughout your time. The Train and Bus station was a 7 minute walk away, the closest major grocery store was 20 minutes, Tesco express was only a 5 minute walk, and the town centre only 5 minutes. I also ended up signing up for a gym membership at the Bath Leisure Centre (just around the corner from Pulteney Court) as it was much more affordable than the Sports Village on Campus.

**Academic Details**

Enrolling in classes is fairly easy for exchange students. During your orientation week, you must meet with your Department Head where you will provide them with the courses you intend to take. Then you will be manually enrolled in each of your classes throughout the next week. This information could all be found on the University website before arriving. One piece of advice I can give is to try and choose most of your classes within the same year (10000 = 1st year, 20000 = 2nd year, etc). This way there won’t be any timetable conflicts.

I found the instruction and style of classes very similar to SFU. Lectures will range from 2-3 hours and tutorials are only held every 2-3 weeks and last an hour. Class sizes are considerably smaller than SFU, however I ended up loving the class sizes as participation, and interaction with the professor is heavily encouraged.
Also, the very best part of University of Bath is you don’t have to buy textbooks for your classes! Professors will provide all the required reading material on a website very similar to Canvas. In the end, I only needed to buy a single book for a class that I found on Amazon for £3.

The major difference with SFU is the assessment of classes at Bath University. Most of my classes had only 1-2 assignments and there are no mid term exams. Assignments ended up having a value of 70-100% impact on your final grade. This did put some pressure to do well on them, however all the due dates were given in the first lecture so you had plenty of time to prepare. In addition, a pass on an assignment equates to 40% and above, where an A is 70%. I heard from many that professors are very reluctant to give any mark higher than 70%.

Country Information

England and North America are actually quite similar to each other, so you won’t experience too much of a culture shock upon arrival. The biggest difference is obviously that the UK drives on the other side of the road, and this is most important when crossing roads. Remember pedestrians don’t have the right of way like they do in Canada; I had a few close calls because I forgot this!
Temperature wise, Bath didn’t get too cold during the winter and it didn’t snow once. However, despite the temperature it does feel considerably colder because of the humidity. The coldest it got during December and January was around -1 to -3.

I would highly recommend studying at Bath University, the social life on campus is amazing and the city has to be one of the most beautiful I have ever visited! In addition, due to the smaller size of the UK, it is incredibly easy to travel around by train or bus. London is only an hour and a half away by train and was relatively affordable if you buy a student railcard (this cuts down fares by 1/3 of the price). Flights are also very cheap within Europe with some airlines like EasyJet and Ryan Air who offer flights from £20-40. This is a great idea for a quick weekend away with some friends!
Above: Pulteney Bridge and the waterfalls

Right: Walkway along the river behind Pulteney Court
Visiting the Tower of London with London Bridge in the back

View from Conwy Castle in Wales
Reflection after Exchange

Before arriving, my only worry was the fact I was putting my self far outside my comfort zone. I had never travelled for so long by my self before! However, upon arriving and experiencing the vibrant campus life my worries were soon gone. I never realized I could be so independent both in my academic and personal life. The amount of people I met from around the world and life lessons I learned from being on exchange made the experience more than worth it.

I would highly recommend using this opportunity to travel and learn more about yourself and the world. An exchange offers you the chance to learn things you will most likely not encounter on a vacation through Europe. By putting myself outside of my comfort zone ended up being one of the most enriching and worthwhile experiences to date.

Embrace the experience and enjoy every minute of it, because it'll be over before you know it! Going on an exchange to Bath was one of the fastest and most enjoyable 6 months imaginable.