Exchange report
University of Bath, United Kingdom, Department of Psychology, Fall 2018 (Sep 22, 2018- Jan 25, 2019)

*Preparation for exchange

- information I would have found valuable when planning for exchange

1. Talk to your bank about how the banking system works in the other country (if they happen to have any idea, but usually they don’t) I had a difficult time trying to find out more about how the banking system works in the other country. I tried joining the Facebook groups to ask about questions I had at the time, which certainly helped. The most important thing here is having a back-up plan. Make sure you have enough cash in case anything happens. What I did was I made sure I had about $1000 CAD converted into GBP, and made sure what my plan would be for money usage when I was abroad. I was able to get a Master card (Rogers Platinum) right before I left for exchange, and I wish I had found out about it earlier. I found it very easy to use this Mastercard during my exchange. I could pay most things with my Mastercard and just pay for it after. I highly recommend using your Mastercard/credit card because it saves you so much time to just get out changes, or to have your money converted. It was a very easy way to get around, as both tubes and buses accepted credit card/ Mastercard payment.

2. Make sure you’re clear about what’s provided in your dorm and what isn’t. It’s a lot of luggages to bring for four months of your life. Therefore, making sure what are the stores there, whether you can get your necessities around where you live, and just simply making sure what’s provided by school accommodation will be helpful. Chances are you will have more things to bring than the kilos you’re allowed to bring with you. Things aren’t necessary more expensive there, so make sure you only bring the things you need, and make it simple. Write down a list of what you’ve brought with you so you don’t leave anything behind when you’re finished with your exchange terms. There are way more things to bring back (including souvenirs from travelling, necessities, etc) so just try to only bring what you absolutely need on the daily basis.

-academic details:

Course details aren’t necessary out yet when you’re researching for the potential courses you might take. Always refer back to past year’s syllabus, most of the requirements are the same if they’re taught by the same professor. Look up whether the courses you’ve selected have been transferred in the past. Most courses are transferrable, but some aren’t. Make sure you do enough research to make sure they are transferrable, if you want them to. Print out past course syllabus, talk to your academic advisor, talk to your exchange advisor, talk to anyone you think will be helpful to help you assess transferrable/non-transferrable courses. However, they don’t always know until the detailed syllabus is sent to them. So as long as you’ve done your preparation work, send in necessary documents, your part is complete.

-Packing:
Bring the necessities you’ll still be able to use after exchange, and those that you think will be hard to get in your destination country. You could avoid spending more money there and bring back what you’ve already had. In this case, bed sheets, pillow cases, cutleries (chopsticks, a fork, and a spoon), facial products, daily necessities etc. Things like shampoo, conditioner, hair oil, and basically everything that you think can replace what you’re using on a daily basis should be available in your destination country. UK also has a dollar store, except it’s mostly one GBP per item instead of CAD. Dollar stores have almost everything you’ll need during your stay there. It’s a great go-to spot to get what you need, and to save money.

-Travel & transportation:

Make sure you look up the route to get to your destination before taking off. There’s a great chance that you’ll only get monthly phone plans after you’ve settled in. Additionally, there isn’t always free WiFi available in your exchange destination. So make sure you know how to get to your dorm from the bottom of your heart, because you’ll really need that. Bring extra cash for the trips you might take on exchange so that you can convert them into the currency of the country that you’re visiting.

-financial details:

UK was a card-based country. Cash isn’t used as much as cards there. Visa/ Mastercard both work very well in the UK, and it’s easy to use with just a tap. Cost of living: about 700 CAD per month including groceries, necessities, and costs extra-curricular activities (train tickets, trips you take, etc). This excludes accommodation fee. I would say higher than Vancouver if you do take trips and visit other countries/cities.

*During exchange

-I wasn’t able to make it to the orientation due to a relatively late arrival. With the University of Bath, please note that they do not allow you to move in until the orientation weekend. They also do not allow you to stay later than the contracted period unless you talk to them about it. Therefore, when booking flights, it can be a little tricky as flights are usually more expensive from Friday to Sunday. I chose to arrive after the orientation weekend to avoid spending more money in youth hostel/hotels/airbnbs. However, it’s really up to you.

-accommodation

Accommodation condition is great at the University of Bath. Pultney Court was definitely a great location when picking accommodation. It’s close to city centre, right next to the bus stop (you’re home once you get off the bus) and close to co-op (convenience+ grocery store). Housing condition is quite new, kitchen appliances are updated as well. There’s also a social area where friends can get together. Definitely recommend!

-lecture format, scheduling and grading

Lectures in the UK are basically the same as they are in Canada. However, lecture is shorter (2 hours in the UK V.S. 3 hours in Canada). They are once a week, but hours and locations may be different. Grading system in the UK is a lot harder than it is in Canada (in my opinion). Usually
one assignment or one exam can determine whether you’re passing or failing the course. The four major assignments I had for each of my class worth 50%, 66%, 80% and 80%. Passing grade there is 40% so just make sure you hand in all assignments in order to pass the course.

(my favorite spot on campus- the pond)

- Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.)

Bath is a very historical and British city. Weather is a lot like it is in Vancouver, but it’s definitely nice when the sun is out. It’s a very beautiful city. Basically, anywhere you go is just beautiful. Places to visit include Skyline (must-go), Roman Baths (must-go), and the Abbey. London was a must-go, all the major and famous attractions are there. Westminster Abbey- must visit. One of the most fabulous churches in the world. Make sure you get a ticket online to avoid huge queue. Loch Ness near the highlands in Edinburgh is also a must-go.
(welcome week)
Thai Khun was a good restaurant to visit. Desert wise, Sally Lunn’s lemon bread and Fudge factory’s caramel fudge was good. I haven’t been to Sotto Sotto but I heard it was a great restaurant. In terms of nightlife, I heard second bridge was a good club to visit.
I’ve learnt that the tourisy places aren’t THAT safe. Make sure you keep an eye on all your valuables at ALL TIMES. Diverting your attention for just one second can result in phone lost, missing wallets and possibly missing passports. Check on your belongings every time you think of them to make sure that they’re still there. Travelling is always fun but it won’t be so fun anymore when you lose anything mentioned above; and panicking doesn’t usually solve anything. Also, but schedules in Bath isn’t always precise. Always leave your house early to catch a bus when going to campus. You could leave early but still get to your class late because all the buses that pass by are full, and the drivers won’t stop when the buses are already full. Challenges I faced was about travelling. If you’re flying with Ryan Air on your vacation and are holding a non-EU passport, please make sure you print out your ticket for visa check or else they won’t let you board the plane. I almost missed my flight because I didn’t print out my visa check
paper- lesson learnt! Also if you take the train often, get a Railpass! It will save you so much money when travelling!

-What you wish you knew before you left

I wish I had a better idea on how the banking system there worked before leaving Canada. I heard that it was hard to create a bank account for just a semester of stay before leaving, but I wish I had known that earlier so I wouldn’t have spent so much time on researching about banking issues.

-Advice/tips for other students

Aside from figuring out how banking is going to work for you, making sure that the insurance company knows you’re going to be on exchange. Having something prepared is always better than having nothing prepared. If necessary, get extra insurance to be safe. All the flight delays, flight cancellation issue or emergencies may be eligible for reimbursement if you can provide proof.