Preparation for Exchange

After reviewing and researching the Beedie partner institutions for exchange I decided to attend University College Dublin in Ireland. At UCD I was in the Quinn School of Business and was permitted to take a variety of Economics and Business courses, including upper division requirements for my finance concentration. My exchange was in the fall 2018 semester, going from September 9th – December 22nd, with orientation events taking place the week before.

While researching for exchange, I focused mainly on reviewing past exchange reports from other students and the partner school websites. After determining which schools offered the appropriate courses I needed to fulfill graduation requirements, I began to look into the individual cities and campus lifestyles. Upon doing so, I decided that I felt most comfortable going to a primarily English-speaking country and was most interested in Irish culture. UCD also had the most details on their campus lifestyle and the different clubs and activities available to students.

When researching courses, UCD provides a list of courses previously available for business exchange students on their website. While the actual list of courses for each semester is sent out by email after you have been accepted at UCD, these lists will give you a good idea of what courses will be available. With these lists course outlines for each course are also provided. Additionally, Beedie’s course planning database provides a good idea of which courses have been previously approved for credit at SFU. These two resources were the main places I looked for course information prior to applying. Closer to your departure date UCD will send you a complete list of courses available to take. This email will be received about a month before course registration, giving you lots of time to change your plan if a course you were hoping to take is not offered.

The weather in Ireland is comparable to that of Vancouver so packing was not too difficult. That being said, as I was planning on travelling to a number of different countries I needed to pack clothing for all types of weather, so make sure to keep this in mind. I would also recommend packing a good rain jacket and a pair of boots as it rains frequently and you will likely be walking most places. Beyond clothing I made sure I had some living essentials, such as bedsheets and a towel, to make it through the first couple of days before making a trip to Ikea (UCD organizes bus trips as a part of orientation week). I recommend packing as light as possible as most things you will need can be purchased for cheap at Ikea or shared with your roommates.

In terms of travel in Ireland, the easiest way to get around is by bus. There is a bus to downtown Dublin that comes directly onto campus, as well as a number of buses that come just outside campus. When travelling to and from the airport the Aircoach bus is the most convenient and you can buy tickets online ahead of time. I highly recommend downloading both the Dublin bus app and the Mytaxi app if you plan on staying downtown past the last bus.
The cost of living in Ireland is comparable to Vancouver. Accommodation was fairly expensive, but being right on campus (across the street from the business building) was a huge perk. As for food, public transport, etc. the costs are about the same as Vancouver. In Dublin and other major cities in Ireland, credit and debit cards are widely accepted. The only time I used cash was when travelling as an emergency, and there were ATMs available on campus to withdraw cash.

Enjoying an Irish Coffee in Dublin

**During Exchange**

Upon arrival, depending on your arrival date, UCD may have an airport welcome team waiting for international students. I arrived before this, but found it easy enough to find the Aircoach bus that takes you directly to campus. Once you arrive on campus there are sings directing you to accommodation sign in (assuming you are living on campus). I lived in Ashfield accommodation which is the newest residence that was built about 2/3 years ago. The apartments are six
bedrooms each with their own bathrooms and a common living room/kitchen. I would highly recommend Ashfield accommodation as it is the newest and in a great location for business students. There is also a grocery store on campus that is a bit more expensive than others, but convenient.

The academics at UCD were similar to courses at SFU. The main difference being less lecture time (I had 8 hours of lecture a week), and a lot more focus on self study time. As well, each of my courses were weighted 70% on the final exam. I much preferred this structure while abroad because it allowed me more flexibility when travelling and was okay if I fell behind once in awhile. However, you do want to keep on top of things. I was also able to schedule class Tuesday-Friday, allowing me long weekends for travel.

Outside the Guinness Storehouse

Getting to see and experience Ireland was the best part of my exchange. I was lucky enough to meet a group of friends to travel with, as well as meet up with friends from back home who were also in Europe. Ireland is a beautiful country with both big cities, like Dublin and Cork, and small country side towns, like Dingle and Killarney. The people of Ireland are some of the nicest people you will ever meet, especially when you venture outside the big cities. This is clear when you experience Ireland’s incredible pub culture. Some of my best nights were spent in pubs meeting new people and listening to live traditional music. I recommend the Temple bar area in Dublin, or pretty much any pub in a smaller town.
Beyond Ireland I was able to visit a total of 10 other countries with friends I met at UCD including: Scotland, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Northern Ireland, England, Czech Republic, Vienna, Netherlands, and Germany. I recommend looking for hostels or cheap Airbnbs if you’re planning to travel in a bigger group. For most of my flights I booked with Ryanair and prices for most flights are very reasonable if you book at least three weeks in advance.
Reflection After Exchange

Being on exchange provided a great international perspective on a lot of business subject matter, like the effect of the EU. This was especially valuable in a finance perspective. However, the biggest learning experience from my exchange came from just being able to experience different cultures through traveling and meeting new people. My greatest piece of advice would be to take full advantage of this opportunity abroad. Since returning home I have not regretted any of the new things I have tried or any of the places I went. In fact, I wish I had squeezed in even more. Try as many new things as possible and travel everywhere you can.