STUDENT INFORMATION

Faculty: Health Sciences
Major/Minor: Health Sciences/Kinesiology
Host university: University of Birmingham
Host Country: England
Dates of your exchange: (month/year) September/2014 to (month/year) December/2014

TRAVEL
Approximately how much did air transportation cost? $1100 return trip
Approximately how much did any required ground transportation cost? $100 on train costs
Do you have a recommended routing or airline? □ No □ Yes
If yes, please describe: Air Canada or AirTransat through canadianaffair.ca

VISAS
What is your citizenship? (voluntary; may impact following information) Canadian
Did you need a student visa/permit? □ No □ Yes: What was the cost? free
If yes, what documentation was needed? Host acceptance letter and student visitor visa letter
Did you need a visitor visa/permit? □ No □ Yes: What was the cost? 
If yes, what documentation was needed? 
Where was your immigration documentation processed? at the airport when I arrived
How long did it take to procure your visa/permit? immediately
Were any other documents required (residence permit, etc)? □ No □ Yes
If yes, please comment: 

AIRPORT RECEPTION
Were you met at the airport by representatives of the host university? □ No □ Yes
Is there easy transportation between the airport and university? □ No □ Yes
Please comment: The Birmingham New Street train station is a main station in England. I could easily get there from London airports. Birmingham also has its own international airport.

What is the closest airport to the host university? Birmingham International Airport

ORIENTATION
Is there an organized orientation session upon arrival at the host university? □ No □ Yes
Was there a cost for the orientation session? □ No □ Yes, how much? 
If yes, do you recommend that future students participate? □ No □ Yes
Please comment: The study abroad orientation team in Birmingham did a great job at welcoming their international students. They organized an ice breaker in the first week that allowed all the international students to interact with each other. I also took the opportunity to go on a canal boat cruise that was organized by them as well.
LANGUAGE PROGRAMS
Is there a language program available either before or during the term? □ No □ Yes
If yes, how long is it? semester-long
Is there an additional cost for language training? □ No □ Yes: How much? _______________________________________
Please comment: There is an English for International Students unit for students that require extra training in English. I used the EISU for the days trips to Cambridge and Wales that they organized for all students.

ACCOMMODATION & LIVING
Is on-campus or university dormitory accommodation available? □ No □ Yes
If yes, are you living in a university dormitory? □ No □ Yes
If yes, can you make a recommendation for a specific dormitory? □ No □ Yes
If yes, please describe: Pritchatt's Park (where I stayed) and Selly Oak residences
What is the average monthly cost of accommodation? $700
Is there a meal plan? □ No □ Yes: How much is it? _______________________________________
If no, do you have access to adequate cooking facilities? □ No □ Yes
How far is your dormitory from the main campus? 7 minute walk
Please comment on internet and phone access in your dormitory:
The internet company (Ask4) were very good at managing our internet problems in the first week and it worked perfectly after that. You could connect two devices to the internet. Each single room had its own phone that you could buy a call-card for. I just used my cell phone and bought a UK SIM card.
Did you have to make a deposit for your accommodation prior to arrival? □ No □ Yes
If yes, how did you arrange this? They accepted payment by credit card
Is off-campus housing easily available? □ No □ Yes
Please comment on off-campus housing:
There are many opportunities for getting private housing. The majority of the private houses are in Selly Oak, where the second, third and graduates mostly live. I saw many housing events happening, in addition to a lot of help services for house hunting. The off-campus housing is almost as close as on-campus housing and is very popular.
Approximately how much money per month is needed for living, including accommodation and meals? $900
Any other comments on accommodation:
The Vale is the only village that has a meal plan, and it is located farthest from campus (about a 30 minute walk). I stayed in Pritchatt's Park where there were kitchen facilities in my own flat. Selly Oak is the closest residence option, and the majority of second, third and graduate students live there. Bristol road in Selly Oak is also where all the student pubs and grocery stores are situated. In Prichatt's Park, we had a village called Harborne which accommodated to our grocery needs and it only took a 15 minute walk to get there.
FINANCIAL DETAILS
Have you opened a bank account in your host country? □ No □ Yes: What are the challenges/benefits to opening a local bank account?

I think it is only worthwhile to open a bank account if you are staying for an entire year.

How would you recommend students bring money (Canadian/American cash, travelers’ cheques, local currency)?

I brought local currency (pounds) to start, and I would withdrawal from ATMs. I found that most cash points were free withdrawal machines that didn’t charge extra fees.

What is/are the preferred method(s) of payment at most establishments? □ Cash □ Debit □ Credit card

Please comment: Canadian debit cards are not accepted in England. Cash and credit cards are widely used.

ACADEMIC DETAILS
Was it possible for you to get all of the courses that you wanted? □ No □ Yes

None of my classes were solidified until I arrived. It’s a rather old-fashioned system: I needed to gather signatures from the different faculty advisors in order to be enrolled in the course. I found it challenging to find courses that did not clash and would transfer properly, but ended up taking fascinating in History, Sport Psych, and Medical bioscience.

What discipline(s)/program(s) are you taking at your host university? School of Biosciences

What is the language of instruction in your courses? English

If not English, are English-taught courses available? 

Describe the manner and quality of instruction at your host university.

I found their university system quite different. The meeting time and room changed every week throughout the semester. With my bioscience classes, I had several profs teaching the topic of their expertise. It was a great opportunity to learn information from the top researchers of that field. I felt like I learned unique topics in medical bioscience that I couldn't have learned in detail anywhere else.

What do you feel is/will be the main academic benefit of your participation in this exchange program?

The main academic benefit of my exchange was gaining an international perspective in leading research of medical science. Participating in this exchange program has helped enhance my resume by gaining valuable and unique skills. I have already begun to use some new concepts that I learned in England, providing an major advantage to my studies here at SFU. I feel like I know have more of a global perspective.

Submission Instructions: 1. Please complete and return this form by E-mail to studyabroad@sfu.ca as a PDF. 2. Subject line of email: Questionnaire - [Host Country, Host University] 3. Please include your full name and student number in the body of your E-mail.