University of Bath Exchange Report

Introduction

During spring of 2017, I had the opportunity to study Education and Psychology at the University of Bath located in beautiful Bath, England.

Preparation for exchange

After some research about visas, I decided to apply for a student visitor visa the UK border since I am a Canadian citizen and was not planning to be staying in the UK for more than six months. At that time the visa expired every time I left the UK but I could reapply upon entry at the UK border. It was also convenient to carry the University of Bath offer letter with me when exiting and entering the UK border.

- Packing
Because I was studying in Bath from February to June, I mostly brought winter clothes, including a nice warm coat. It is important to note that the accommodation has very little in stock for you. Therefore, while they do provide a pillow and duvet for you, you will still have to bring your own duvet covers, towels, hangers and toilet paper etc. You can also purchase additional room décor items at Primark for a good and affordable price, which is located in the city center of Bath. The student union of University of Bath provided an opportunity for students to go to Ikea therefore I would recommend to take advantage of such opportunity as you can purchase any kitchen and room necessities that you didn’t pack with you for a good price.

**Travel and Transportation**

I would recommend to book and purchase your flight ticket early on as ticket prices could increase over time. I had a direct flight with Air Canada from YVR airport to London Heathrow airport. From there, I bought a National Express coach bus ticket that takes me directly into Bath. Once I’ve arrived at Bath spa train station, I took a taxi to John Wood Building to pick up the keys to my accommodation. From John Wood Building, I walked to my place of accommodation.

**Accommodation**

I chose Thornbank Gardens as my accommodation because it offered a private bathroom in my room. It is also relatively close to the city center and to the big Sainsbury’s. As such, it makes grocery shopping a lot more convenient. In addition, Thornbanks is located near both the U1 and U2 bus routes, thereby making transportation relatively convenient as well. Bus tickets can be purchased through the Wessex and First Bus mobile applications for package deals. You can also purchase tickets on the bus.

**Orientation**

The International Mobility Team had organized a meet and greet event for exchange students. This was a great way to meet some of the fellow peers and friends. The event provided valuable information such as where to pick up and drop off relevant documents. Additionally, every student had the opportunity to meet with someone from the Department of their studies to discuss about courses for the semester.
**Academic Details**
The structure of courses at the University of Bath is very similar to SFU. All of my courses are taught lecture style. However, the grading schemes are different. At Bath, there are fewer assignments but every assignment is weighted more heavily and the final exam is often worth a big portion of the grade. For example, for one class I had a final exam that was worth 100%. In another class, I had an essay that was worth 80% and a group project that was worth 20%. Another difference between Bath and SFU is that 40% constitutes a passing grade and 70% is equivalent to an A. It is interesting that some lectures are held in different classrooms every week. So be careful when attending classes. Check your timetable to see where your classroom is.

Bath also recommends quite a few courses for exchange students. I would recommend taking one or two to learn more about British Culture in addition to your other courses. Also, while SFU uses canvas for course uploads and discussions, Bath uses Moodle. It would be useful to be familiarized with Moodle before the start of classes.

**Country Information**
The weather in England is quite similar to Vancouver. During the spring semester, it was often cold and rainy. However, the rain came and went very randomly. Sometimes the light showers immediately turned into hail. I would advise to bring an umbrella on cloudy days.

Bath is a very walk-friendly town. You can reach the city center 10-15 minutes from Thombanks or Pultney court, depending on your chosen accommodation. At the city center, there are many shops and cafes for you to choose from. However, it should be noted that most stops close around 6-7 pm.

People are exceptionally friendly and helpful. You could meet new English friends by joining clubs or attend dinner at Café International at Widcombe Baptist Church. It is a wonderful way to learn about the British Culture and other foreign cultures through each week’s themes.
Social Activities

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of studying abroad is the ability to travel and explore the world simultaneously. England is located relatively close to the rest of Europe therefore it is recommended that you take advantage of such opportunity. However, there are still plenty of great things to do in Bath. For instance, you could visit:

- The Roman Baths
- Bath Abbey
- The Royal Crescent and The Circus
- The Skyline Walk
- Sally Lunn’s [offers great buns]
- The Scallop Shell [delicious fish & chips]
- The Boston Tea Party
Favorite study spot: Society Café

**Reflection**

Before coming to England, I was incredibly skeptical and nervous about this experience. I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to handle this incredible opportunity on my own. However, I was quick to learn that I wouldn’t be alone because I made friends with other fellow SFU students who were going to study in Bath alongside me. I also made friends with other exchange students from other countries. Meeting new people opened my eyes to new perspectives and broadened my horizons. I’m so glad I made this decision to study abroad because I learned a lot, made lifelong friends and travelled to many European countries. I learned I am more capable than I thought. I am definitely braver, more confident, and more willing to take up new challenges. Change is always going to be unsettling, sometimes scary, but you have to try and have to let go. Take a risk. Risk can be fun!