Exchange Write-Up
My name is Jessica and I went on an exchange to Dublin, Ireland. Since first attending SFU I have wanted to participate in an exchange program. I love to travel and had previously visited many places in Europe as well as China. I was eager to participate in the exchange program because I viewed it as an excellent opportunity to immerse myself in the culture of a different country.

I am a Business student, concentrating in marketing and international business. The exchange program was beneficial to my studies as it allowed me to gain a new perspective on business transactions and learn the potential difficulties of conducting business internationally.

Arrival
I arrived in Dublin in the evening and just at the end of a ‘bad’ snowstorm (approximately 2 inches of snow). When I arrived I had to produce various documents including a letter of acceptance and proof of a deposit for accommodations. I also had to show I had health insurance and enough money to support myself for the duration of my stay. At the airport I was then notified that I had to register with the GARDA in Dublin within 30 days. When you go to register with the GARDA, go EARLY! Otherwise you may wait in line for up to eight hours. As a Canadian Citizen I also did not need a Visa to travel within Europe, but did need my GARDA card to re-enter Ireland when I returned from my travels. [Note from International Services for Students – Please be sure to research to date information from the Embassy that is relevant to your citizenship.]

Note: The GARDA card is also an important piece of ID for bars and clubs as they may not accepts other forms not issued by their government.

Culture and Weather
In Ireland the weather is very similar to Vancouver, except it rains more and isn’t as warm. Make sure to carry an umbrella everywhere as the weather is also subject to rapid changes.

Culture in Ireland is very bar orientated. There are traditional bars where many people still sing ‘trad music’ and drinking is a very inherent part of the culture, the drink of choice often being Guinness. When I arrived in Ireland I did not like beer in the slightest, however I quickly learned it’s the cheapest thing to drink, and even then it’s quite expensive compared to Vancouver, and was able to almost develop a taste for it.

To really experience the culture of Ireland it’s important to leave Dublin. I visited Galway and the Aran Islands, where Irish is still the first language of most people, and was able to experience the culture much more fully and would highly recommend spending some time there.

Accommodation
On my exchange I stayed in campus accommodations. The campus is about 20-30 minutes outside the city centre by bus, so travel back and forth was very easy. The accommodation on campus was good, clean, and staff were very friendly and welcoming. There are two residence buildings that are more
expensive, but they are much newer and therefore nicer. Campus accommodation was definitely a great way to meet people. Many incoming international students stay on campus, making it easier to make friends and socialize. It’s important to note, you will have an electricity bill and it’s not cheap. Dress warm and learn to conserve!

**Get Involved!**
UCD has many clubs and societies. An important one to join is the ISS- International Student Society. They plan a lot of events and parties, making it easier to meet people and get comfortable living in a new environment. UCD also has a club day within the first month of semester, which is definitely worth looking into as there is something for everyone.

**Academic**
UCD is not SFU so don’t expect it to be the same. Classes are much smaller and there is much less work during the semester. However, professors expect you to do more background and additional readings on your own and most of the weight of the class is put on the final exam. That being said, I found the professors spend more time preparing students for finals and that classes were in general less intense than at SFU.

**Financial**
Dublin is an expensive city to live in. If you’re on a tight budget learn to bargain shop. Tax, aka VAT, in Ireland is 21% and added onto everything. I found most prices, especially for food, were equal to prices here but were in Euro not dollars. Bars and clubs were also expensive with a pint of beer averaging at about $7.50 CDN. My suggestion is be smart about your money and cut back where you can so you have more to spend on the fun stuff.

Travelling around Europe can be really cheap but you have to watch for deals. Ryanair is a terrible airline, but has rock bottom prices so is good for students, just don’t get caught up in their fees.

**Best Experience**
My best experience was definitely getting to meet different people from around the world and travel with them. I was able to build strong friendships with some people simply by sharing experiences with them. I also got involved in school clubs which let me get to know some Irish people as well, which I can now go back and visit in the future.

**Challenges**
Living in Dublin was the first time I had ever been on my own and I had to adapt to being entirely self dependent. Social networks were highly important. I made sure to get out and make friends right away, and without them I don’t think I would have had as good a time. I also wish I had known how to cook before I left. I had a few too many pasta dinners and a few too many burnt ones. However, by the end of it I was able to make a meal that didn’t taste half bad.
Advice for future travellers

1. You’re there for a good time not a long time. Have fun and be open to as many new experiences as you can. Don’t sweat the small stuff
2. Put yourself out there and meet new people to build lasting friendships. Keep in touch with them and that way in future travels you’ll have places to stay
3. Keep in touch with people back home. It’s good to chat once in a while with people at home and makes coming home easier because you’re not as out of the loop.