Introduction

- University College Dublin, Ireland
- Major: Business
- Term: Spring 2012 (January to February)

Preparation for exchange:

- Provide recommended do’s and don’t’s.
  - Do’s
    - Make sure the classes you are taking can be transferred back as useful units by checking through the credit database (if it will affect your graduation).
    - Make sure you know when to apply for the residences because if you don’t get one then you need to find off-campus accommodation (also make sure you pay for the deposit).
    - If you want to stay after semester to travel then plan well.
    - Arrive one week before semester starts: UCD holds a lot of events prior school starts where you can meet friends (e.g. shopping tour, city tour).
    - Apply for a bank account as soon as possible: there is a bank on campus call AIB. It is very easy to apply for a bank account. You would need this bank account to apply for GNIB (see below “Visa”).
  - Don’t’s
    - Don’t stay in your room and not talking to anyone. Usually if you go to the events that international office held everyone will be very nice because they are exchange students as well and they want to meet friend as you do.

- Transportation
  - From Airport to UCD:
    - Taking Aircoach from Dublin Airport to UCD: you can buy the ticket online or buy it on spot when you get to the Airport. Aircoach is available in both T1 and T2. Currently it is 15 EURO round trip and 8 EURO single trip.
    - Taking bus from Dublin Airport to UCD: there is no direct bus from Airport to UCD. You need to take a bus from Airport to City Center (downtown) and then a bus from downtown to UCD. This way it is cheaper (within 5 EURO).
    - Taking taxi from Dublin Airport to UCD: it is the most expensive but in return the most convenient way. Since Aircoach does not go into UCD (it stops in front of UCD) you need to walk for 15 minutes to go to the residences. I was with one big suitcase, one small suitcase, a backpack, and a laptop bag, and I was dying taking all of them to residence.
  - From UCD to City Center:
• Bus is the normal way. You can take 39a in the campus. 46a and 145 that are not in the campus but in front of campus head to City Center as well, but you need to walk there. It is the same bus stop as Aircoach when heading from UCD to Airport.
  o Clubbing and Pubbing:
    ▪ The last bus is around 11pm so usually when students come back from clubbing or pubbing they will take taxi together. If you can get four people to share it is around 3 EURO per person. Taxi drivers in Ireland are SUPER NICE!
  o Bus Ticket
    ▪ Bus ticket is 2.15 EURO one way from UCD to City Center. You can buy a 30 day bus ticket (around 82 EURO I believe). It counts as how many days you use. For example, if in one week you use it for Monday and Tuesday it will only deduct for two days not seven days. However, in order to use this 30 day ticket you need to have a “student travel card” which you can purchase it on campus. Without the student travel card there will be a chance of being fined for 50 EURO if you get checked. For me, one 30 day bus ticket is enough for whole semester.
• Accommodation
  o Merville: the bathroom is shared with the roommates.
  o Roebuck
    ▪ Roebuck Hall: own personal bathroom but do not include meal.
    ▪ Roebuck Castle Catered: own personal bathroom and include meal plan.
  o Glenomena: own personal bathroom but do not include meal.
  o Belgrove: it is the residence that is not close to Merville, Roebuck, and Glenomena (15 minute walk from Belgrove to other residences). It is closer to Quinn School of Business (5 minute walk). The style of the residence is similar to Merville.
  o Blackrock: it is not in the main campus. If you live here you need to take bus to school or own a bike.
• Study Visa
  o Check if you need to apply for study permit before you go to exchange. For my country I do not need a visa before going on exchange.
  o Once I arrive in Ireland, I need to apply for a card call GNIB (every non-European student needs it). You will get informed when you arrive in the airport by the officer.
• Financial details
  o Credit cards are very convenient (chip ones). You can also use them in pubs.
  o I didn’t use my Canadian debit card when I was in Ireland because the transaction fee is too high.
  o I applied for a local bank account (AIB) when I arrived in Ireland and I used the debit card from AIB often.
  o Cash is very important (e.g. taxi).
During Exchange:

- Arrival and orientation
  - As I mentioned, arriving one week before semester starts is better because this way you can meet people smoothly through the events.

- Accommodation & living
  - I picked Roebuck Castle Catered because the meals are included. It is more expensive than other residences. I liked it but it is kind of a waste for me because I had been travelling a lot so I didn’t eat a lot of the meals. If I can pick again I will probably choose Glenomena or Roebuck Hall because I would like my own bathroom.

- Academic details
  - Classes in UCD are pretty easy. For a 300 or 400 level business course it is only two hour/week. Moreover, because half of the business students in your class will be exchange students (students from UCD are also on exchange) so the group meetings won’t be that intense. 40% is a pass in UCD. I travelled to 14 countries within the semester (I didn’t stay after semester to travel).

- Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.)
  - I went in spring (Jan to May). The temperature was okay but the wind is terrible, so make sure you have warm cloths if you are going in spring.
  - **Within Dublin:**
    - Famous attractions in Dublin are (1) Guinness Storehouse (beer), (2) Jameson Factory (Whiskey), (3) Book of Kels (in Trinity College), (4) Phoenix Park (a huge park with deer), (5) Kilmainham Goal (jail in Dublin), (6) Bank of Ireland (near Trinity College, former parliament of Ireland), (7) Wax Museum, (8) St. Stephen’s Green Park... etc
    - The pub I like is Porterhouse. It is very special because it brews its own beer that other pubs don’t have. For example, oyster beer.
    - Must eat/drink: must eat fish & chips! Very greasy but delicious. Must drink Irish coffee (alcoholic coffee).
    - Shopping in Ireland: Henry Street or Grafton Street is very good. There are also some malls.
  - **Within Ireland:** Nature in Ireland is perfect. I would recommend you to go to Cork (Blarney Castle as well) and Galway (Aran Islands and Cliff of Moher). Moreover, Belfast (also Giant’s Causeway) is also cool. For a one day trip you can consider Glendalough (search online and you can find a one day trip company easily).
  - **Outside Ireland:** travelling to other countries is very easy (if you don’t need visas to visit other countries). You can get a round trip to Norway for 40 EURO if you buy the ticket early enough. The two companies that I fly mostly with are Ryanair and Aer Lingus. Among them Ryanair is cheaper. However, the airport that Ryanair land in is usually one hour away from City Center because those airports are cheaper. I use hostelworld.com to search for hostels, it is more affordable than hotels and you can meet more people this way.
• Social and extra-curricular activities
  o First day of class is called “Black Monday” where everyone will get drunk before classes and rest of the day.
  o In UCD drinking during weekdays are normal. Students will gather for predrink in residence and then head to clubs or pubs. Every night you can see a lot of taxis parking around residences to pick students up for night life.
  o There are two student clubs in UCD that held trips for exchange students: ESN and ISS. They held trips to Galway, Cork...etc. A lot of people think they are overpriced but if you want to meet people then it is a good way to do it.

Reflection after Exchange:

• What you've learned & the challenges you faced
  o Be outgoing and willing to learn/understand others’ culture. There are a lot of exchange students in UCD, and understanding or appreciating others’ culture is important.
  o When you feel home sick, talk to your friends and families back home and I think you will be recharged again. Everyone experiences homesick so it is fine!

• What you wish you knew before you left
  o I wish I brought less stuff so I can bring more back to Canada, haha.

• Words of wisdom for other students
  o It will be the most valuable experience in your life so enjoy it 😊
Dinner Gathers:
Eating Fish & Chips on the Street

The Temple Bar
St. Patrick’s Festival

Giant’s Causeway
Netherlands

Sweden
Spain

Prague