2010 Ireland Exchange Report

Ardalan: University college of Dublin for spring 2010.

I had decided to go on an exchange during my first year of university and as soon as I had completed enough credits I applied to go. Exchange has taught me so many invaluable things that I would never have any regrets about going on the trip. Currently, I’m a fourth year marketing and finance student looking to graduate in about a year’s time. Some people think that exchange is useful to a narrow category of students such as those studying international business but I have found out that whatever you’re studying you will learn something that you would not have by staying at SFU. Having the experience of communicating and getting contacts with people abroad is a great asset to have for your future career no matter what path you choose to take.

Before Leaving

Most of the stress and the planning goes into this time. Although, there isn’t that much stress if you plan everything out right and give yourself enough time. For example, I suggest buying your plane ticket well in advance. I should say right now that you need a return ticket as they don’t let you have a student visa if they don’t know when you’re planning to go back.

After you get accepted from SFU you will need to apply to UCD and once they accept you a little while after they’ll ask you to choose your courses. This is a pretty simple process compared to what we have to go through in SFU. They’ll ask you to choose your top 10 courses available to international students in preferential order. I suggest that you look at the business credit transfer database and choose courses that others have already done the work for and the credits get transferred automatically.

So banking is quite simple. I’ll mention how much you will need a little later on but as for the bank that you should use it doesn’t matter too much. I used a BMO and RBC card which they charged me 5$ CAD every time I made a withdraw so I made sure to withdraw the maximum amount available. The other choice for banking is to transfer your funds to one of the Irish banks such as the AIB which has a branch on campus. Some of my American friends did this but I found that I would be paying just as much for the transfer charge as all my withdrawal fees added up. Just make sure if you do the same thing I did that you have a safe place to store your money.

As for the Visa, one of the greatest things about going to Ireland compared to some of the other countries is there is no visa that you have to apply for before you leave. Although, if you’re staying for longer than 3 months which you would have for one semester it costs
approximately 200 euro’s for a Garda card. Most of your roommates will have to apply for one as well so don’t worry it’s not too hard of a process, although there is a long line up usually at the Garda. Just make sure you have all the necessary documents with you such as passport, bank statement, acceptance letter from both universities and so on.

**Dublin Living**

When you arrive at the airport simply go to the tourist information desk and tell them you want to get to UCD and they’ll tell you which bus to take. As well, tell the bus driver where you want to get off, they’re all quite nice. Remember to have some euro’s with you to pay for all these things. I suggest having 100 euro’s in cash before you land in 20’s.

For accommodation I stayed in Belgrove. If you ask people where the best place to stay is they’ll tell you the place that they lived in. This is because it doesn’t really matter where you get accommodated. I truly enjoyed my time at Belgrove. Some of the reasons included the closeness to the campus, I only had 2 roommates which is usually easier than having 4,5 or even 6! The other great thing about Belgrove was that you didn’t have to get electricity cards which I thought would be quite inconvenient.

Some good things about the Merville is that it is close to the on campus convenient store (yummy pizzas for 5 euros). Roebuck you had to pay a little extra for, had more roommates but it was much newer and more modern than all the other places. You also had your own shower and bathroom at roebuck.

The academics of UCD are fantastic. The professors are much like the ones at SFU I found where they truly enjoy teaching and are genuinely happy to help students out. So if you have any problems with anything go see one of your professors or your advisor, she can help out with a lot of your problems. The marking is different for every class but generally there is a group project, a midterm and a final worth a large percentage of your mark. There are some courses that have all the grade depending on the final so watch out for those.

Anyone considering going on exchange to Dublin should not downplay that it is an expensive city. Dublin is rated as the 2nd most expensive city in Europe after Oslo and trust me when I say that your bank account really feels it. Budget yourself anywhere from 9000-12000 dollars for a semester, just be smart with your money. Don’t go out to bars every night because it will take a big chunk out of your budget. That should be enough for all the minor expenses that you would encounter, as well as all the travelling you’d want to do.
Making friends is easy as long as you’re outgoing and friendly. The greatest thing about Ireland that really made the trip for me was the people. There is a reason that Irish people have a reputation for being very welcoming and kind. Just be respectful and remember that you’re a visitor in their country. I found that I first made friends with all the international students and my roommates and branched out from there. It is also great to go out and join one of the clubs or sports teams. I joined a volleyball drop-in league and had loads of fun and met many of my friends through that. Depending on how long you’re there the possibilities are endless so don’t limit yourself.

I didn’t face many challenges there but I have to say I did get a little homesick when I was there. But I was only there for about half a year so I didn’t allow myself to waste time on getting homesick. You will probably be getting homesick as well but it’s just important that you’re there to enjoy yourself and learn. Call home often and you’ll feel much better.

Something that I wished I knew before going to Ireland was all the beautiful places to travel around the country. You’ll probably be doing some travelling outside of the country but take a look at all the great things that they have to offer on the west coast such as the beautiful areas around Galway. Other than that, I don’t have many regrets about my time away.

As for travel, don’t plan anything out before you go. I found it was best to find some compatible travel partners at the university and choose some fun destinations and go to them together. Although, I do suggest staying in groups smaller than 5, it can get very annoying and frustrating trying to coordinate that many people all at once.

Once more, all I would have to say is to enjoy your time and remember that it will end sooner than you’d like it to so make the best of it.