

MAY 07 2012

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

Dear Foreign Study Returnee:

The International Programs and Exchanges Office requires that students enrolled in University of Washington direct exchanges or foreign study programs submit a final report to our office concerning their experiences abroad. This report has a dual purpose: to help us evaluate our current exchange ties and programs and to help us inform and orient students who will be participating on foreign study (or are considering applying) in the future. We ask you to reflect on your experiences abroad by addressing each of the topics in this outline. Advice or comments on other topics are also welcome.

The reports are kept on file in the International Programs and Exchanges Office and are available to any prospective student or interested faculty or staff member. If you wish your report to be read by the International Programs and Exchanges Office only, and withheld from all others, please write CONFIDENTIAL at the top of your report.

Thank you for your cooperation. We appreciate your time and effort.

PLEASE TYPE YOUR REPORT OR WRITE LEGIBLY. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO BE CONTACTED BY THE IP&E OR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM, PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR CURRENT AND PERMANENT PHONE NUMBERS AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESSES. THANK YOU!

IP&E PROGRAM EVALUATION OUTLINE:

-Please list your name, program location, term/year of participation, and your current and permanent phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses at the top of your report.

London, England, UK – University College London

Summer 2011/Fall 2011

Phone:

Email: _____

1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

I stayed at the YHA hostel near Regent's Park and Oxford Street, on Great Portland Street. They have a number of locations throughout London, are affordable, hospitable, clean, and safe. I highly recommend the one I stayed at, and have heard great things about the others as well. Remember to bring a padlock, though, to keep belongings safe.

- b. If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

The first meeting was just to get our ID card and registration in order. Then the rest of the day you could attend lectures about UCL classes, transportation, activities, safety, etc. I found most of this information in the booklets and handouts they provided on the second day and chose to instead spend my time exploring the city and meeting people in my hall. I think that was more beneficial in the long run. Shortly after this we signed up for classes – I remember thinking it was really calm, compared to the crazy online registration at UW. It will feel very weird having the advisors work out your schedule for you instead of doing it yourself on a computer. You pretty much just go to a meeting, say what you'd like to take, and then you're in and you attend the class the following week. There is also "Fresher's Week," which is full of activities to help you meet people and get used to campus, a bit like Dawg Daze. I definitely recommend getting tickets for one or two of the events – clubs around town, musicals, boat rides, dances, etc – and attending the Societies/Club fair. I joined two of the societies and had a blast.

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure
- instruction
- teacher/student relations
- grading/exams
- administration
- library, computer, and classroom facilities

The classes at UCL were much less involved than UW, and much shorter. You're in class for less time, but this means you need to study on your own time about twice as much. I found I had a great deal of free time, but had to carefully structure it to make sure I got my work done. That being said, I felt more relaxed than I ever have in Seattle, and I truly enjoyed what I was learning because I had such a choice of what I wanted to read and study further. I enjoyed the independence.

Because lectures were delivered by a variety of professors in the English program, rather than just one, I didn't get to know any one professor better than the others. My seminar (section) leaders and tutors (counselor-type people in charge of grading) I built a closer relationship with. I enjoyed having them to touch base with, but it was quite intimidating having to go in to hear about my grades and have my tutor ask me to defend my own work! That was a new experience, but overall helpful for my writing.

Grades are more difficult to achieve, but I think are fairly distributed. Tutors are always available to discuss your work with you, and they give excellent feedback during the scheduled meetings. Because I was in the English/Humanities department and because I was only there for fall semester, my grades were entirely based off my essays. I wrote 8 essays over the course of three months, ranging from 5-10 pages a piece, which was about twice as much work as I was used to. I stressed quite a bit about this, but in the end I made it happen, and I don't think I'll ever be afraid of writing essays again!

The main library at UCL is much smaller than Suzzallo or Odegaard, but it's quite easy to navigate and I never had trouble finding the materials I needed. Also, the university is very close to the British National Library, which has every book ever published. As long as you have a permanent address when you're there, you can sign up to use material from this resource, though you can't check it out.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

Occasionally I got bored in lectures if the information wasn't the material I was interested in exploring in my essay. Overall, though, I found it easy to listen to the professors, who clearly know a lot about their specific subject, and with speakers changing from class to class, you were always learning something new. I read more than I've ever read in a UW quarter, and I loved having the freedom to choose the material I personally wished to focus on.

c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

Shakespeare was fantastic – I love the Shakespeare classes at UW just as much, but there's nothing like studying the Bard in his place of residence. I also loved Ruth Austin – she was sassy and fun and lead some really interesting worthwhile discussions. The Moderns class I took was also great – there's one seminar that focuses on Modern film rather than novels; I didn't get to take that, but it sounded interesting. When you choose your seminars they show you what texts you'll be studying in each, then you get to list your preferences, so just go with the material that seems interesting to you.

d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

I am a Creative Writing and Drama major. Classes in these departments are not offered at UCL, so unfortunately the credits I earned were all extraneous. Granted, I still think I read some really great, important literature and improved my essay writing tenfold. It doesn't really matter what you're doing there: just *being* in London is unforgettable.

3. HOUSING:

a. What housing options were available to you?

I think just dorms. There might have been apartment options too, but I seem to remember them being more expensive. Dorms are definitely the way to go – you can party in them there! ;) I requested a self-catered room, since I like cooking, but got a meal plan instead. This was somewhat difficult, as there are specific times you eat (unlike UW where you can buy food with your husky card whenever you need it), so if I had a rehearsal with the Musical Theatre society that started before dinner and ended after it, I had

to buy food I'd already paid for somewhere else. If you plan on getting involved in something like this, a self-catered plan might be a better option, but you're sort of stuck with whatever they give you in the end.

b. Which did you choose, and why?

Like I said, I chose a dorm with a self-catered plan. I got a dorm with a meal plan and wasn't ever informed I *had* a meal plan. It took me three days (and a grocery trip) to find out that food was included in my housing payment – luckily one of the RAs told me! I'm also happy I ended up in the International Hall, because no one really knew anyone else and everyone ^{wanted} to be friends. I got close with about 14 people, all different nationalities, and we did everything together. They were some of the most open, friendly people I've ever had the fortune to meet. If possible, mark this dorm as your top preference.

c. What would you recommend?

(see a, above)

4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

UCL is located in the Bloomsbury district, very close to the National Library and the British Museum. It's a fantastic place to be, since you can walk almost anywhere. The campus itself is very small – I remember seeing the grassy area and thinking "This is our quad??" – and you can walk around the entire perimeter of the campus in about 10 minutes. This makes it really easy to get around, though, and it's so nice that after school you can just hop on the underground and have an adventure on the other side of town in less than 15 minutes time! Very convenient, and I actually felt safer walking alone there than in the Seattle U-district.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

My only difficulty was getting a personal medication overseas. The doctor's office wouldn't let me order 6 months worth, so I could only take the first three months of pills in my bag. I registered with a UK doctor just in case, and she said she'd be able to get me the prescription just fine, for about the same amount I'd pay in the US. In the end, though, I ordered my prescription ^{online} each month to my parent's house, then they forwarded the medication to me in the mail. I'm not entirely sure that was allowed, but the postal service never mentioned it....

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

a. How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community?

(e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

I joined the Musical Theatre and Drama societies and auditioned for their shows. I performed in *The Producers* which was a great time commitment, but a lot of fun. I met people at activity nights at my dorm and reconnected with them at meal times. It's great to meet International kids, cause they'll always be up for exploring London with you. Even just going out to a nearby café for a late night coffee and cake is a relatively affordable adventure to have with a new friend.

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them.

(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

British people love to humiliate Americans. The Dutch, Italian, German, French, Icelandic, and Spanish people I met at my dorm were all welcoming and friendly and lightly teasing – probably because they were similarly out-of-sorts in a new country – but the native British folks I met through the societies I joined loved to tease me, and it was definitely the first time I experienced the awkwardness of being the minority. They asked me questions like "Why are Americans stupid? Why are they all fat?" – I'm sure it was just British dry humor, but I considered it impolite, and it made me feel very self-conscious at first. After a while I laughed along and humored them, but also tried to explain that not all Americans *are* like that – especially those from Seattle!

My only other struggle was with customer service. Many of the people at grocery stores and especially at the help desk in my hall were foreigners themselves, meaning they didn't speak English very well and perhaps weren't being paid well enough. This made them extremely difficult to work with. I found that even when I approached them with complete politeness they were very gruff with me and not at all in the mindset of "the customer is always right." My RA told me it's because the British have a different customer service mentality. I found I just had to be patient and polite, no matter what I was getting in return. I have come to greatly appreciate the USA's efficiency!

7. FINANCIAL:

- a. What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

I opened a bank account. It's free for students and totally worth it, even just for three months. I took out large sums of cash, then put that straight into my account at the nearby bank branch. Larger US banks will wire directly, I believe, but since mine was local it would've been more expensive. Then I took out my remaining cash and closed the account about 4 days before I left. Simple.

- b. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

I'm sorry, but I can't remember well enough to give a good estimation.

- c. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Clubs and societies charge you to join. The International Hall charges an "Activities Fee," even if you don't attend any of the events. They also like to tack on things like "bedding fees." The hall assumed I was staying for the full year, even though I was only there for a semester, so I had to pay a cancellation fee even though I'd clearly expressed on my application I would only be there for half the year. That really irritated me. I'd figure in about 100 extra GBP for general British-sneaky-fees.

- d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any complications?

If so, how did you address them?

n/a

8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:

- a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

Perhaps more involvement in student housing, if that ^{is} possible? I felt very in the dark about much of that - whether my application had gone through, how much it would cost, whether I'd be on a meal plan, what exactly I had to pay for... This is more a fault of the London hall, of course, but any help with that would've been greatly appreciated.

- b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

n/a

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

Independent, self-motivated, friendly, polite, patient, adventuresome, plans well (assignments) and works without constant input; someone unafraid to go out and take advantage of the amazing city that surrounds them!

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I discovered more about myself and the rest of the world than I ever dreamed I would. It surpassed all my expectations, regularly bringing better experiences than I could ever have imagined. Thank you so much for allowing me to participate!!