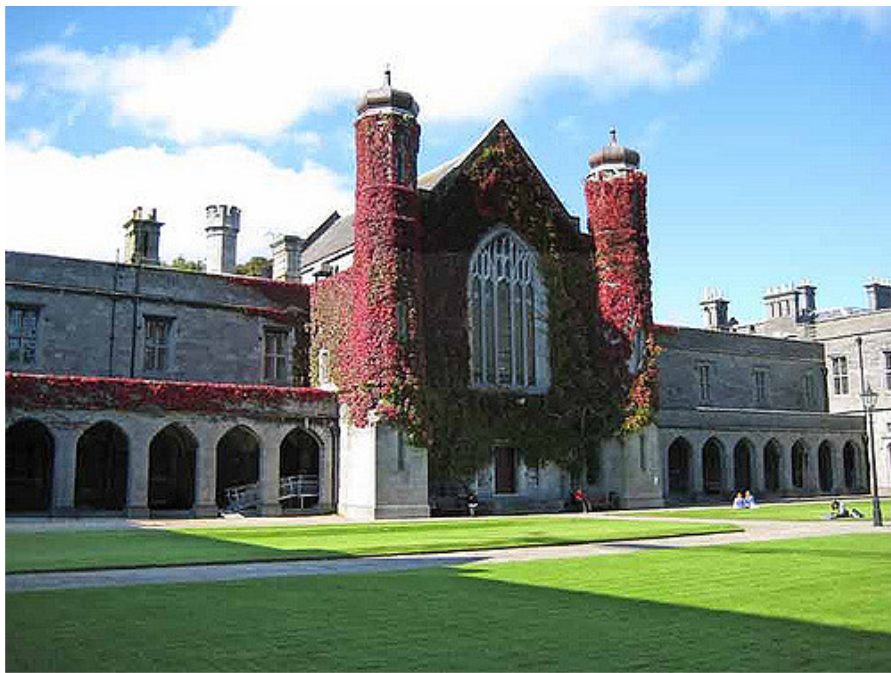


Exchange Report

National University of Ireland, Galway

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Fall Exchange 2016

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Monthly Activity Log

August

I arrived Galway on 30/8 and moved into Sleepzone, which is a hostel I booked for the first week of my stay. It is located at the city centre, which is very convenient for buying necessities and walking to NUIG. I explored around the city on 31/8 and went to NUIG to seek help from the accommodation office. The staff members there are very helpful, as long as you provide your desired rent for a month or a week, they would find appropriate hosts and let you contact them for further information.

September

I attended the orientation programme on 1/9, different office heads and societies were introduced during the session. I also met some new friends who are also visiting students, yet there were no other students from Hong Kong in that semester. On the following day, I attended the academic advisory sessions where I received registration pack and id card. Essential information on exam and course selection procedure were introduced, including introduction of different departments and schools. The professor also taught us how to access our campus account for module registration.

I found a host family and moved in on 6/9. After I got my address proof letter from my host, I went to set up a bank account at the NUIG branch of Bank of Ireland (BOI). After two weeks, I received an email from International Affairs Office about my assigned timeslot to register for GNIB card, so I followed the appointment of GNIB and register to the Garda. I have 3 courses that include projects for final grade, the projects groups are formed during September. In late September, I travelled to London and Oxford with my friend.



October

There was nothing special in October as the classes began. Projects were on track and several meetings were held to discuss the details of how to get them done. As NUIG seldom has midterms for modules, the workload in October is quite light. I managed to travel to 2 different cities in late October, including Oslo in Norway with my friend and Dublin on my own.



November

November was a relatively tough month since presentation and projects were due in the first and second weeks. It was hard for all of us to catch the internal deadlines of projects as many students had several projects in parallel. After submitting all projects and finishing the presentation, I went to Brussels in Belgium and Barcelona in Spain with my friends. It is always beneficial to relax yourself after experiencing tensions. When I got back to Galway, I started studying for my final examinations. I studied 5 modules and all of them had a final examination in December.



December

The first week of December is the study week for students to be prepared for the final examinations. As I have studied some materials starting from November, I managed to have my last trip before examination. I went to Reykjavik in Iceland with my friends, it was freezing though exciting. My examinations were stuck together within 7 days including weekend. Yet the instructors in NUIG used to provide tips and possible exam questions to guide your study, this made it easier for students to revise the materials in classes. 14/12 was the last day that I took my last examination, and it marked the end of my semester. I packed my suitcases, left Galway and moved to Glasgow, Scotland to find my friend from Hong Kong. Then we started our 18-day travel to Eastern Europe, including Warsaw in Poland, Vienna, Salzburg and Hallstatt in Austria and Prague in Czech Republic. After the trip to Eastern Europe, we went back to Glasgow and packed our luggage and travelled to the UK. We went to London and Cambridge before taking the flight from London back to Hong Kong.



General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

As a HKSAR passport holder, you do not have to apply for a study visa to enter Ireland. However, you have to register at their immigration registration office, the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) after arrival in Ireland. GNIB has reserved a week for the registration of new international students at NUIG and the school arranges a timeslot for you to go to the GNIB office to register. You should register according to the given schedule. Otherwise you may have to wait till a much later date as you have to queue up with the other residents trying to do the registration. Please be noted that you should register within 30 days of arrival or you will be prosecuted. The registration costs 300 Euros and some documents are required for registration, which are passport, NUIG student card, original letter of offer from NUIG, proof of residential address in Galway, proof of comprehensive medical insurance and personal credit/debit card for payment of immigration fee. Please remember that GNIB do not accept cash.

2) Orientation Activities

NUIG organizes an Orientation programme for all international students in the Bailey Allen Hall a few days before the start of teaching. The orientation provides a lot of information that help you with your study in Ireland, for instance they introduced different office heads who offer assistance for any matter, the introduction of IT services, which are Campus account (like ITSC of UST), Student Email and Office 365 App, Blackboard (like Canvas of UST) and the procedures of opening a bank account in Ireland which is important and convenient for visiting students. Student cards and some other important forms and booklets like course registration forms and orientation booklet are distributed on Academic Advisory Sessions for visiting students which is on the next day. NUIG provides exam information and introduces course/module selection procedure. Different department heads have separate timeslots for distributing timetable of courses and introducing online registration for visiting students. You could just attend the timeslots that relate to your desired courses. NUIG also provides campus tours that help you familiarize with the locations of different facilities in NUIG.

3) International Services & Activities

There is no compulsory international activities in NUIG, however if you are interested to join the clubs or societies, there will be a clubs day and societies day after the start of teaching. You could join ESN NUIG, which is Erasmus students network, if you want to meet other visiting students. For International Services, you could ask for assistance from the International Affairs Office.

4) Accommodations

I booked a hostel few days before arriving Galway through the link: <http://www.sleepzone.ie> provided in the pre-arrival guide of NUIG. Sleepzone was the hostel I stayed for the first week of arrival. On 31/8, I went to NUIG and seek help from the International Affairs Office, the staff members were so kind that they helped me to find several accommodations including private accommodation building and host family. Although I did not accept the offer from IAO, they were really helpful in finding accommodation. I found the offers from IAO were out of my budget so I searched for alternate accommodations through the links provided in the guide again. Finally I found a host family through www.collegecribs.ie and moved into host family on 6/9. The room was a double bedroom ensuite, I am very satisfied with it.

5) Courses Registration

To register for courses, you have to access their online platform to update your personal details and select your subjects/modules (like SIS of UST). Yet if you would like to register for science and engineering modules that provides equivalent OM courses of UST, you must complete the Science and Engineering Registration Form provided in your Registration pack and submit it to the International Office. You are free to sit in any classes and find course that interest you for 3 weeks before submitting your registration. A full course load is 30 ECTS per semester (6 courses). The courses that I took are as follows.

1. MS216 – Networks & Communications
2. MS325 – Contemporary Project Management

- 3. MS403 – Information Systems Strategy & Planning
- 4. IE309 – Operations Research
- 5. IE446 – Project Management

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

Most of the courses at NUIG consist of large lectures only. They only have lectures and do not have tutorials, lectures are held once a week for 2 hours. Students in my classes were very eager to raise and answer questions, the lecturers are very welcome to questions and willing to help you with your studies. The assessment methods vary in different classes. For the majority of the classes that I have taken, there is a project that accounts for 30 to 40% of your final course grade, while one has 5 quizzes and a final examination and another one only has one final examination. You could access your learning materials through Blackboard. Please be noted that the examination venues might not be at the campus, I had 3 examinations held close to my accommodation. Please check how to get there before your exam begins.

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a large sport centre named Kingfisher Club in the middle of the campus that consists of a swimming pool, gym and indoor courts. Most of the trainings of the clubs take place there like dancing society. If you are not practicing with the club, it costs you some money to use the facilities including the gym and the swimming pool, which are both free at HKUST.

8) Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

The total costs incurred during the semester are summarized below:

Category	Expenses (in Euros)
Flight tickets	950
GNIB Registration	300
Food and Necessities	665
*Rent	1260
Mobile	100
Transportation	245
Shopping	700
Oyster Festival	70
Total	4290

9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

NUIG provides a wide range of clubs, those are very unique and you might not find in other universities. The most interesting societies I found are Disney Society and Potter Soc, they are places that gather students with same interest in Disney and Harry Potter. I was planning to join the musical in NUIG, yet their performance is in Semester 2, therefore I did not join any society at the end.

10) Health & Safety

Galway is a safe place to live and study, you can consider it as Hong Kong. It is not crowded at all so you would probably experience no chance of pickpockets. I got sick for once during the semester and I sought help from the family doctor close to my place, the consultation and medicine fees are similar to Hong Kong.

11) Food

To dine out in Europe is quite expensive compared to Hong Kong, so I always cook my meal by myself. The prices of food and drink in Galway are relatively cheap, you could spend only 2 to 3 euros per meal if you cook by yourself. There are some cheap supermarkets for example LIDL, ALDI, TESCO. There are also cheap discount stores where you can find snacks and drink, like Dealz and Euro Giants.

12) Transportation

I bought a student leap card from Student Union, it is just like the Octopus card in Hong Kong. As my accommodation was a bit far from the city centre, I must take the bus to NUIG. It costs me 1.5/1.6 Euros to travel to NUIG. The bus departs every 30 minutes, and it took me around 20

minutes to travel in between. There are mainly 2 inner city bus services in Galway, Bus Eireann and City Direct, one departs 15 minutes later than another one. For travelling out, most of the international flights depart from Dublin Airport, while few flights depart from Shannon Airport. In order to travel to Dublin Airport or Shannon Airport, you must take coach to get there. There are mainly 3 transfers from Galway to Dublin and Shannon, named Bus Eireann, Citylink and GoBus.ie, among these 3, Bus Eireann is the cheapest but longest travelling time, there is no service for midnight. GoBus.ie provides direct bus without stops in between, and it equips with sockets and toilets, buying ticket from web is cheaper, and it has midnight service. Citylink provides same price with gobus.ie, also equips with sockets and toilets and with midnight service.

13) Climate

Galway is always windy and rainy during winter, the weather is normal on the first month, when it gets to October, Galway is raining most of the time. You are recommended to bring more water- and wind-proof clothing to cater with the weather of Galway. An umbrella might not be useful because the wind is too strong that might blow it off. Starting from late September, the sunset would be as early as 4pm, it would be quite cold after that, you are advised to always keep yourself warm by using the heater.

14) Communication

There are lots of mobile service carriers, for instance Vodafone, 3, O2 and Meteor. I bought Vodafone Data Extra plan that provides 5GB data a month for the first month, it costs me 20 Euros for the sim card and another 20 Euros for topping up. After the first month, I switched to 3 and it also costs me 20 Euros per month. The main difference between these 2 is the network coverage. 3 allows me to have data access among several countries for free, but Vodafone did not provide free roaming service, they charged you 2.99 Euros per day to have 200MB when travelling outside Ireland. Another difference is that 3 provides all-you-can-eat data plan, which allows you to have unlimited 4G access to internet.

Items to Bring

GNIB Registration
Documents for GNIB Registration
Clothing
Raincoat
Jacket
Gloves/Scarf/Knitted cap
Down Jacket
Study
Laptop
Stationery
Others
Cash/Credit card
Mobile Phone
Chopsticks (Could only buy a 10-pair pack in Galway)
Travel Adapter (For travelling in Europe)

Useful Links and Contacts

Looking for Accommodation:

- Official NUIG Student Accommodation: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/accommodation>
- www.daft.ie
- www.collegecribs.ie
- Hostel for temporary stay:
 - o <http://www.snozlehostelgalway.ie>
 - o <http://www.sleepzone.ie>