

EXCHANGE REPORT



CASS BUSINESS SCHOOL
CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
FALL 2017

LO YUET CHE REGINA

BBA IN GLOBAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

Part I: Monthly Activity Log

September

I arrived London on 15th September, roughly two weeks before the orientation activities. I travelled from Heathrow Airport to Angel Station by London Underground, then bought a sim card from 3UK opposite of the underground station before settling down at Liberty Hall. I spent the first night buying daily necessities and exploring the neighborhood. On the second day, I went to the British Museum and China Town, and departed to Austria on the third day. I spent 8 days exploring Vienna, Hallstatt and Salzburg, and returned to London on 25th. The orientation week commenced on 27th September. There were only three compulsory orientation activities, including a welcome meeting, an ID collection session, and a Moodle induction. I travelled from London to Coventry on 29th September to attend my cousin's wedding, and then to Birmingham on 1st October before returning to London.

October

School started on 2nd October, and the add-drop period ended after the first week of school. I decided on taking 4 business courses and 1 common core course, which I will further explain below. Since there was not much work, I spent most of my time meeting up with high school friends who are studying in London, and planning for my upcoming trips. I travelled to Edinburgh, Oxford and the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Almere) in that month. The weather was still moderate at that time, so it was perfect for travelling. I also spent time exploring London, visiting places such as Borough Market, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London and the Tower Bridge, the London Bridge, and the Monument. I celebrated the Mid-Autumn Festival with some of my friends from Hong Kong in China Town.

November

The workload of this month was significantly heavier than the previous month since the coursework of all of my courses were due in November, so I spent some time on completing my essays and preparing for the group presentations. I also travelled to Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Copenhagen, Ireland and Malta in November. I would definitely recommend one to visit Iceland. My friends and I were lucky enough to see the auroras on the first night of our stay in Iceland, and we also visited other major tourist attractions like the Blue Lagoon, Golden Circle, and some glaciers for hiking.

December

The semester ended after the first week of December. Alternative assessments were arranged for exchange students in Mid-December to replace the final examinations since Cass understands that most of us have to leave the city by January for another semester in our home country. I had two early examinations, two 3000-word essays and a twelve-page report as the alternative assessments for my five courses. The last examination ended on 15th December, so I moved out of my hall on 18th December, and started my 17-days trip in Europe. I travelled to Barcelona, Budapest, Rome, Venice, Istanbul and Moscow. Pickpockets are pretty common in

Barcelona and Rome (my friends and I almost got robbed in these two cities), so stay alert if you wish to visit these places.

January

I returned to London for two nights on 4th - 5th January after my 17-days trip, before going on to my last trip on exchange. I left London to Frankfurt on 6th January, then visited Berlin, Lithuania and Poland. I spent my last two days on exchange in London, and returned to Hong Kong on 15th January, ending my four-month exchange journey.

Part II: General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

HKSAR Passport holders are not required to apply for a Tier-4 study visa (or any other study visa) prior to arrival at the UK border as long as the school term does not exceed 6 months. All you have to do is to bring along the official copies of your school acceptance letter and accommodation proof to the customs every time you enter the UK border. The customs will ask you some basic questions related to your stay (e.g. reasons of coming to the UK, length of stay and accommodation location) before giving you a stamp/ chop on your passport, which is equivalent to your short-term study visa. It is good to have your boarding passes ready (Hong Kong < > London) just in case the customs want you to prove when you are going to leave the UK. Some past exchange participants reminded us to also bring our bank statements (to show that you have the financial ability to stay in the UK) to the customs, but the customs never asked me for them.

Orientation Activities

As aforementioned, there were only three compulsory orientation activities (a welcome meeting, an ID collection session, and a Moodle induction). Some other optional orientation activities include Fresher's Fayre (a promotional event for student clubs and teams), campus tours, city walks and language fairs. The orientation activities are pretty sufficient for you to familiarize yourself with the school and to meet new friends who are also on exchange in Cass.

Accommodation

I was really fortunate to be offered a room at Liberty Hall (a third-party, off-campus student accommodation for City, University of London), since the other two girls from HKUST did not manage to get an accommodation offer from the school. Liberty Hall is 8-10 minutes on foot from the university campus, and 10-15 minutes from the closest London Underground Station, Angel. There are two small supermarkets (one of which opens 24/7) and a few restaurants within 2 minutes of walking distance from the Hall, and a lot more within 10 minutes. There is a small shopping mall near the Angel Underground Station, with a cinema, some boutiques and stationery shops, and Chapel Market (a daily street market) is right opposite of the shopping mall.

The room that I got in Liberty Hall was a single ensuite room. The kitchen was shared amongst 10 rooms (i.e. 10 students). The room was roughly 3,500 GBP for the fixed period from 16th September to 22nd December. A set of bedding and kitchenware were provided. The Hall is staffed 24/7 and the reception would help you sign any parcels that are delivered to you. Although there were cheaper accommodation options elsewhere, I settled for this hall offer because of its location and the fact that it was pretty hard to find a room for a contract of just 4 months, unless I opt for homestays.

Course registration

Right after I received the admission offer from Cass in March, I was asked to fill in an online form to pick the courses for my exchange semester. As I have mentioned, the first week of school was the add-drop period, so you could still change your courses after school has started.

Course registration was really simple – unlike full-time students there, we do not have to enroll into any courses on Moodle (similar to SIS/ Canvas of HKUST). All you have to do is fill in a google form provided by the exchange coordinator, indicating your final decisions. Class outlines and timetables could be found on Moodle.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Teaching methods in Cass are similar to that in HKUST, although the workload was much lighter - only one lecture per week for each course, one assignment (group/ individual) and one final examination. For exchange students, we could opt for taking the alternative assessment (held in mid-December) instead of the final examinations (conducted in January). Attendance was recorded for every lecture and tutorial, but I don't think it was counted towards the final grades.

The courses in Cass were coded according to the year of students that were supposed to take it. I took one year-one course, three year-two courses and one year-three course. Interestingly, the year-three course was the easiest to me, and the year-one course and another year-two course were quite demanding. The courses that I have taken are as follows:

BS1106 Introduction to Business Law

This course is supposed to be taken by first year students who have no law background, but it was really demanding in terms of the level of understanding and analytics. The course covered civil law, criminal law, contract law, tort law, employment law, company law, property law and other related issues like sources of law and corporate legal responsibility in only 10 lectures, and the content was pretty detail-oriented. Both the coursework and the examination were extensive, meaning that it wouldn't be sufficient to simply study your notes and textbook. The coursework was an individual 2000-word essay, and the alternative assessment was a seen examination. The examination questions were disclosed two weeks before the actual examination.

BS3111 Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice

This course requires students to finish two readings before every class. Lectures were interactive, and different guest speakers (mostly startup businessmen) were invited to share their experiences to us during the lectures. The coursework was a group work of 15 pages, and the alternative assessment was a 3000-word essay together with an interview audio note.

FR2202 Financial Econometrics

This is the most demanding course among the five that I have taken. This course was transferred as an ECON elective, which at HKUST, has a pre-requisite of taking basic econometrics before enrolling into the course. However, there is no such pre-requisite at Cass and I was able to take this despite I have never done econometrics before. This course was thus really challenging for me because I had to pick up the basics on my own in order to follow the pace of the lectures. Tutorials in computer labs were held every two months for students to familiarize themselves with EViews (an econometric software). The coursework was a group project, and the alternative assessment was a take-home examination similar to that of the coursework.

IF2201 Monetary Economics

Most of the concepts taught in this class were already covered in ECON 2123 back in HKUST, so this course was quite manageable. The coursework was a group work of a 3000-word essay, and the alternative assessment was an individual 3000-word essay that was not at all related to the topics taught in class.

LA2018 Historic London

I took this course to fulfill my last common core requirement (non-SSC HUMA). Only the first class, the mid-term review and the final class took place in the classroom. Others were 1.5-hour walking tours around the historical sites in London. The guides of the tours were all professional guides of the city, instead of university professors. This course is a good one for you to meet exchange students from other faculties.

The coursework was a group presentation on an assigned topic, and the alternative assessment was an examination that took place in mid-December. There were 2 sections in the examination, 3 questions for you to choose from in each section. The mid-term and final review classes were really important and helpful because the professor would cover almost everything that you would have to put down in the exam, so make sure you attend both of them!

Sports & Recreation Facilities

The gym of the university was located around 5 minutes of walking distance from the campus, and it requires a membership fee of 25 GBP per month if you wish to use the gym facilities (you could then attend as many sports classes as you want for no extra cost). You could also join sports classes for 5 to 7 GBP per session (depending on the sport) if you do not wish to use the gym facilities. I joined the gym for only a month, since I reckoned that I was always travelling and hence did not have much time to spend in the gym.

Finance & Banking

I did not open any bank accounts in the UK since Cass has informed us that it is unlikely that banks would allow students to open an account for only 4 months. I used my Hong Kong HSBC card for cash withdrawal at HSBC/ other UnionPay/ JETCO ATMs. The transaction fee was HKD20 per withdrawal, so I tend to withdraw up to 600 GBP (the maximum limit) every time I do so. Before leaving Hong Kong, remember to activate the overseas withdrawal function of your bank account, and it would be good to have an ATM card with the PLUS logo since some European countries don't have UnionPay nor JETCO ATMs.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

The Fresher's Fayre held during the orientation week was a fair for freshmen and exchange students to explore different teams and clubs. I went to the Fair and signed up for some email subscriptions, but I never joined any of the activities held by the clubs or teams.

Health & Safety

I find the neighbourhood of Cass and my hall pretty safe, although pickpockets were quite common in that area. It is compulsory for students living in student accommodations to sign up for a health care scheme, which a medical practitioner would be assigned to you, and you could visit him/her in case you are sick.

Food

London offers a wide variety of food choices, where you could find a lot of good restaurants in the areas of Covent Garden and Leicester Square. However, eating out is quite expensive in London, so I would recommend you to cook for yourself if you want to save money.

Transportation

The transportation network in London is sophisticated; it is easy and convenient to travel to other parts of the city. The oyster card is equivalent to the octopus card in Hong Kong, which give you discounts compared with buying disposable single tickets every time you travel, and it can be used on buses, Underground (i.e. tube) and Overground. I usually take the Underground to avoid the terrible traffic congestion that one would come across every time he takes the bus.

The bus costs you 1.5 GBP per hour, and the underground costs you 2.5 GBP per journey (1.6 GBP if you combine your 16-25 Railcard with your oyster card). The 16-25 Railcard gives you 1/3 prices off the tube and the train during non-peak hours, at a price of 25 GBP per year. Train prices go up drastically as the departure date approaches, so do plan ahead and purchase the train tickets in advance for better deals.

‘Citymapper’ is an app that Cass has recommended to us for transportation purposes. It gives you the fastest route (combining bus, subway, train, ferry, bike, taxi options) to reach your destination. ‘Tube Map – London Underground’ is the official app of London Underground, which gives you the best tube route and pop-up notifications in case of delays or other issues. For national and international trains, I used ‘Virgin Trains Tickets’.

Climate

The weather in London was surprisingly pleasant during my stay – it seldom rained and it only snowed for a day, although it could get very windy at times. Compared to other European countries, the temperate in the UK was already quite warm and moderate, and there was a heater in my room at Liberty Hall, so the weather never really bothered me.

Communication

I used 3UK’s pay-as-you-go sim plan of 12GB for 20 GBP per month. You can use a maximum of 9GB in any of the 71 feel-at-home destinations (Istanbul, Turkey is the only European city I have been to that was not on the list) without paying any extra. Many past exchange participants said that the reception of 3UK’s network was unstable but I never had such problems. I remember there was a free Giffgaff simcard inside the welcoming box given by Liberty Hall, but I thought 3UK offers better deals so I gave away the Giffgaff simcard.

Cautionary measures

Watch out for pickpockets, and try to avoid staying out late or going to places that are too crowded in Europe.

Part II: General Exchange Information

Items to Bring

- Passport
- University Acceptance Letter
- Hall Acceptance Letter
- ATM Card with overseas withdrawal function
- Laptop
- Adapter (if you wish to travel out of the UK)
- Medicine

Enjoy your exchange journey, and if more information is needed, get my contact from SBM Exchange Team by emailing at bmugexch@ust.hk. ☺