



UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Exchange Report (2018 Spring)

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Year 3 ECOF

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I would like to use this exchange report to express my gratitude towards the support of Hung Choh Jan Fong Scholarship.

Part I Monthly Activity Log

December 2017

I travelled a bit before the semester started. Since the air tickets are more expensive towards the end of the year, I departed on 21 December. I went to Austria, Czech Republic and Brussel for the Christmas markets and did New Year count down in Brussels.



January 2018

We were required to attend the orientation activities on 4 January (Thursday). Since the accommodation contract started on 31 December, I decided to move in on 2 January to allow myself 2 days to settle. There were more optional orientation activities on 5-7 January. I joined the fee paying Edinburgh day tour and the free Glasgow walking tour for the weekend. The teaching period started on 8 January. I spent the second weekend walking around the university and the city center to familiarize myself with the buildings and buy daily necessities. I went to London on the third and fourth weekends.



February 2018

I have a midterm in mid-February and two essays due at the end of February which required much readings. I went to Milan and Naples mainly for operas on the first weekend before spending most of my time on revising or reading in the rest of the month.



March 2018

There was a blizzard in early March and the school suspended for few days, I built my first snowman. On the first weekend, I did a day tour to visit my friend in Aberdeen and she came to Glasgow to see the city as well. I went to London again on the second weekend. I joined a weekend tour to Isle of Skye with my exchange friends on the third weekend. The Easter break was on 24 March to 15 April. I travelled London and Amsterdam during the break.



April 2018

I had to go back to Glasgow for revision lectures on the week of 16 April. My first two exams were on 25 and 26 April respectively. I did not leave Glasgow until these two exams finished. I have a stained glass assessment on 3 May which did not require much preparation, so I went to the Netherlands during 27 April to 2 May.





May 2018

After my stained glass assessment, I travelled again on 4 May till 12 May as my last exam was on 18 May. I spent 3 days packing and checked out on 21 May. I spent my last 10 days in London as my return flight departed from London and I did not want to carry my luggage around. I left UK on 1 June as I needed to come back for my internship.



Part II General Exchange Information

(i) Visa Procedures

Holders of Hong Kong SAR passport can choose whether to apply for a visa beforehand. If you plan to work in the UK or would like to get a multi-entry visa to avoid bringing the required documents with you every time you pass the immigration, you can apply for a Tier 4 visa or a short term study visa beforehand with a fee. If you do not plan to work and would like to save the visa fee, you can bring the required documents (including but not limited to the offer letter of the university and financial proof) every time you enter the UK boarder. When you arrive at the immigration in any UK airport, you need to show the immigration officer the offer letter and any extra documents the officer requests (e.g. financial proof). The officer will then give you a short- term student visa stamp on your passport which is valid for six months. However, you need to present the documents and get a new stamp every time you reenter the UK.

The offer letter states the semester period which ends quite early (in my case 25 May), if you plan to travel after the exams, make sure you do not reenter the UK after the semester ends, otherwise the immigration officer may not give you the stamp. However, you can avoid this problem by applying a multi-entry visa beforehand, which usually valid for longer (you can only apply for the multi-entry visa in Hong Kong).

(ii) Orientation Activities

The compulsory orientation activity was a welcome and introduction session. Representatives from different departments talked about general class information, fee paying courses offered by Glasgow of Art and Bagpipe course and how to sign up for courses. This session was held in the morning in my case. In the afternoon, there was an information fair. Representatives from different departs and even external organizations (e.g. bank, police, transport department etc.) were there to answer your questions. There were different orientation activities to choose from (including networking event, campus tour, film screening etc.) on the next day. In most cases, you need to book tickets beforehand and collect the tickets before the introduction session. There were Edinburg day tour (€ 20) and Glasgow walking tour (free) in the

weekend. I recommend joining these tours as they can help you know more about the cities in Scotland.

(iii) International services and activities

An International Welcome Desk was set up on the first few days (on 3 to 5 January in my case) and you can seek help from the International Student Support throughout the year. You can send them emails or make an appointment with the advisers if you have questions. There are two student unions in the University of Glasgow (QMU and GUU), they sometimes organize events for international students like pub quiz and party night, but I am not very into drinking so I only joined once.

(iv) Accommodations

There are a few accommodations to choose from (with single/double room, en suite/shared bathroom etc.). You can rank the dormitories based on your preference on the application form and most people I know got their first or second choice. I lived in the Kelvinhaugh Gate. It has 5 en suite rooms with a shared kitchen per flat. The bedroom is quite big but a bit old. The laundry room is in the courtyard, it costs € 2.4 to wash and € 1 to dry for 50 minutes. It is 20 minutes' walk from the campus. I arrived during the New Year holiday when most shops were closed, the accommodation office was so kind to give us beddings in case we could not get some. If you wish to live in an en suite room, you can rent a newer room closer to the university with similar rent from private agencies (e.g. Unite Students). It is possible to rent for just one semester but you will need to apply for exemption of city tax and may need to pay other fees.

(v) Courses Registration

You are required to put down the courses you plan to take in the application form. The University of Glasgow will inform you whether your course choices are approved and whether there is vacancy in the class. After you finish the academic registration, they will enroll you into the approved classes which are not full. Even your course choices were approved, there may be time clash among the classes and you have to choose which you prefer. If you are on the waiting list, you will not know your waiting list position, they will send you an email once there is a space available

and you have to reply to that email before the deadline specified in the email in order to get into the class. You can also enroll in classes that you did not put down in the application form once the semester starts, given that you get the approval from the courses coordinator. The credit load in the University of Glasgow is 60-70 Glasgow credits which is equivalent to around 4 courses. Most students I know did not get their classes settled before the semester started. You can make an appointment with the department head or course coordinators to see how they can help.

(vi) Teaching and Assessment Methods

I took 4 courses during exchange. They were HIST 1020 History 1B Europe Rising: the Medieval World, 500-1500 (20 credits), ECON 4053 Game Theory for Economists (15 credits), ECON 4054 Labour Economics (15 credits) and EXT 1083P Stained Glass Workshop (10 credits).

For HIST 1020, there are three 1-hour lectures every week and 5 seminars in the semester. Several lecturers lectured throughout the course, each focused on their research area, which gave us deep understanding in each area. Instead of presenting events in chronological order, lectures were given by topics (e.g. papacy, education in medieval time, women's participation in renaissance etc.), this was a bit hard to follow as I did not have much background knowledge in medieval age. There were five seminars in this course, the seminar topics were related to some lectures. We had to read extra materials and had more in-depth discussions on the topics during seminars. The assessment for this course was tutorial participation (10%), essay (30%), final exam (60%). You need to contribute in all tutorials in order to get full mark for that part. There are many essay questions to choose from and they provide you with suggested reading list related to each essay topic. The final exam is close book, it consists of two parts, you have to attempt one essay question in each part. I think it is not hard to pass, but hard to get good grade in this course as the final exam allows students to use any knowledge they have to answer the questions and all local students taking this course are history major students.

For the economics courses, the way of teaching is pretty similar to that in UST. One of my lecturers prefers to write on the board and the other always used PowerPoint slides. There were tutorials for the Game Theory class but not the Labour Economics class, the TA explained answers to exercises during tutorials. There was a midterm

and a final exam for the Game Theory class and a paper and a final exam for the Labour Economics class, the exams were not difficult compared to those in UST. The Stained Glass workshop costs € 300 (all inclusive). It is an open studio course offered by Glasgow School of Art(GSA). The University of Glasgow cooperates with GSA to offer exchange students with opportunities to learn in a prestigious art school. There was a 3-hour class every week, we were taught different techniques of stained glass making and we finished few pieces to take home. The assessment was based on the glass pieces we made in the course and a self-reflection. Although I cannot transfer credits for this class, it was a rare opportunity and it is one of my best experiences during exchange!

(vii) Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a gym and a swimming pool on campus. The accommodation fee includes the usage of the sports facilities during off-peak hours (before 2 pm), you can pay extra if you prefer to use them during peak hours or you would like to take sports classes.

(viii) Finance & Banking

I did not open a bank account. I used my Hang Seng debit card to withdraw cash. However, most ATMs in Glasgow do not accept UnionPay debit cards (Hang Seng debit cards use UnionPay system), so I needed to go to HSBC ATMs to withdraw money (the HSBC branch in Glasgow is in the city center). Most shops and restaurants accept credit cards, so you don't really need much cash.

Since I chose an en suite room (around HKD 38000 for 5 months) and I travelled a lot, I spent around HKD130,000 for the whole trip. I think HKD 100,000 would be enough in normal case.

(ix) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I guess most clubs recruit members in the first semester. Since I had exchange in the second semester, I did not see recruitment booths of the clubs and did not know how to join the student unions. Nonetheless, the student unions post their events on their Facebook pages and you can just show up if you are interested. The student unions and other student organizations organize pub nights and club parties frequently, you

can meet friends there if you wish. One of my friends joined the basketball team practices. I think it is possible to join clubs even you do exchange in the second semester, but you have to look for the information yourself.

(x) Health & Safety

You can register for the National Health Service (NHS) either in the school clinic or in any general practitioner (GP) clinic near your accommodation. NHS is free for short term study students in Scotland. From what I know, the doctor will give you a prescription and you have to get the medicine from a pharmacy like Boots.

I felt Glasgow is a relatively safe city in Europe. However, it is always recommended to keep an eye on your belongings and not to go to quiet places alone at late night.

(xi) Food

Eating out is quite expensive in the UK (usually at least 10 pounds). School canteen operates as self-service, the cost of the meal depends on how much you take, a meal in the canteen usually costs € 5-7. I cooked most of the meals. However, ingredients could be expensive as well. If you plan to eat rice frequently, I suggest you to bring a cooker from Hong Kong as most shops do not sell cooker. You can buy rice/noodles/dumplings in Chinese supermarkets. I used to buy from Everyday Oriental Supermarket, it is close to the university and the quality is quite good (Chinese food is unavoidably more expensive than western food).

(xii) Transportation

The city is quite small. There is one metro line and some buses go around the city. It takes 15-20 minutes to walk from my dormitory (Kelvinhaugh Gate) to the university and it is a 35-40 minutes' walk or a 15 minutes' bus ride from the university to the city center. Transportation in Scotland is of similar price as other European countries. It costs € 1.7 for a metro one way ticket and € 1.9 per bus ride if you buy a carnet of 10 tickets on the app beforehand.

(xiii) Climate

I arrived Glasgow in January. It was more gloomy and rainy in the first two months and there were more sunny days in the following months. Unlike Hong Kong, there is more rain in winter than in summer in the UK. The lowest temperature was -3°C but you won't feel too cold as there are heaters in all indoor areas and it is not too windy outside. So I suggest not to bring too many thick clothes and pack some short sleeves for early summer.

(xiv) Communication

The official language is English in Scotland. The local dialect is called Glaswegian which is a language very similar to English. Most lecturers and staff in the international student office do not have very strong Scottish accents. You may meet local students with strong Scottish accents though.

I used three mobile 's "all in one add on" during exchange. I got the sim card in Hong Kong (you can get it in UK as well), it offers free EU roaming (i.e. you can use the voice call minutes and data allowances in Europe). It costs € 10 for 1GB data, € 15 for 5GB data and € 20 for 12GB data, all valid in a month with 3000 texts and minutes.

(xv) Cautionary measures

You are recommended not to go to quiet places alone at night. Living in Glasgow which is a quite safe city may make you lose caution. Please be very cautious when you travel in Europe as there are more pickpockets and even robberies. It sometimes rains suddenly and there are water puddles everywhere whenever it rains, so a waterproof jacket and a pair of water proof boots is recommended.

Part III Items to Bring

- ✓ **Passport**
- ✓ **Official acceptance letter**
- ✓ **Financial proof**
- ✓ **Cash, debit card and credit card**
- ✓ **Medicine**
- ✓ **Insurance certificate**
- ✓ **Notebook**
- ✓ **Camera**
- ✓ **Winter and spring clothes**
- ✓ **Waterproof jacket and boots**
- ✓ **Umbrella**
- ✓ **Toiletries (for short travels and the first few days)**

Part IV Useful Links and Contacts

Information related to visa application

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa>

Course Catalogue of University of Glasgow

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/coursecatalogue/browsebysubjectarea/>

Exam Timetables of University of Glasgow

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/registry/exams/timetables/>

A website you can order beddings and cooking utensils before you arrive and get them delivered to your dormitory

<http://www.click2campus.com/>