



University
of Glasgow

Exchange Report

2018 Fall

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Part I: Monthly Activity Log



September 2018



My exchange journey to UK started in late August given the unavailability of air tickets in early September. I flew to London first, before taking another flight to Glasgow. And make use of the time before semester to travel around London. There were not many tourists in early September and temperature was slightly cool, it was nice and comfortable to spend time in London, and its periphery, such as Cambridge, Oxford, Brighton. The period of heat in UK is rather short, so I would suggest those going to Brighton to go early so that you catch the summer breeze. The majority of the UK universities usually start their academic year in late September, but the start for the Scottish would be slightly earlier. Therefore, I moved to Glasgow about one week before the orientation day to set things up and to prepare myself. In the week prior to the commencement of the classes, a Fresher's Week in a similar scale of a festival is run each year to give warm welcome to all the UoG newcomers. There are booths where societies of all kinds are gathered, free pizzas and drinks giving out, parties and pub nights ongoing. They are very good opportunities for exchange students like me to get a taste of different cultures.



October 2018

Few holidays were in October, so classes were progressing in its full speed. I enjoyed spending my day time in class, night time joining different societies, and weekends exploring Glasgow and Scotland. The school only allows exchange students to take 60 credits, so the majority of students will take 4 courses in a semester. Timetable can vary a lot depending on your course choice, some have daily class, but the courses in Business school are similar to that in HKUST as lecture, tutorial and lab are all included. There are plenty student-targeted day tours running around Scotland every weekend. You will receive flyers around campus or you can easily search some in the web. With the lack of long holidays in the month, my weekends were spent in different parts of Scotland. There are lots of great places with stunning scenic views in Scotland, I went to Edinburgh, Stirling, St Andrews, Dundee, Fort William, Loch Ness, Inverness, and Isle of Skye. Each of them serve a bit different and some being quite unique. While Edinburgh is a must-go, I would recommend Inverness and Isle of Skye. Some of my friends also enjoyed their fish and chips very very much in Oban.



November 2018

With the approach of the end of the short fall semester, deadlines were slapping on the face. My focus was on battling with tests, assignments, and essays, which the UK people have strong focus on.

Despite studying, going and joining the festivals in western countries can be a great experience. Like in Halloween, celebrations were all around the city. You can see Halloween decorations anywhere you go. Large pumpkins, witches and vampire costumes pop up in stores and even supermarkets. In weekends, there are Halloween parade, show performance, pumpkin and makeup workshops, and many more. Plenty Halloween parties are there as well. You can see people all very well dressed up prepared to break in an uneasy night. Another more special festival in UK is the Bonfire Night. More than half of the people in town, all of a sudden, will all rushed out to the park near the river just for the firework display. Except the official display at the Bonfire night, there are boom boom sound in different parts of the city throughout the week coming from the own fun of the people.



December 2018

Regular students in UoG will have their examinations in June for most of the subjects. However, the university do set up December exam for exchange students that are staying for one semester only. Therefore, I stayed in my dorm and the library to prepare for my exams before the end of the semester. After school ended, I stayed two days more for luggage packing and then headed off to my travel journey in Europe.

Part II: General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

Hong Kong Passport holders do not require a study visa for short term study that is less than 6 months. However, you do have to bring the letter of acceptance issued by the University for the checking in the immigration counter. The officers may ask you some questions regarding your studying details, and you may also have to show your proof for accommodation in UK. Then the officers will put a short term study visa stamp on your passport. If you did not apply for any visa beforehand, this stamp is especially important. The university will ask for your stamp on passport or study visa for the academic registration process. If you only enter as tourist, but without the short term study visa stamp, you cannot finish the registration process unless you leave and re-enter the country to get the stamp. To ensure safe immigration process, I also brought my financial documents, student id, flight ticket receipt with me.

2) Orientation Activities

The university will send you emails to register for the orientation activities before your arrival. There are campus walking tour, meet and greet event, international café, scavenger hunt activities available. You can also apply for exchange buddy program. The school has a mandatory orientation talk for international students, in which you can learn more about the school, course registration process, and local culture courses available in Glasgow.

3) International Services & Activities

There is international student assisting office in the Fraser Building, where you can seek advice on general information, such as locations, bank account statement etc. If you are seeking more personal academic advice, you can book a meeting with the advisor there from myglasgow. There is also a clinic in Fraser building where you can register for medical services.

4) Accommodations

UoG has a number of undergraduate residences for exchange students. You can apply through online system after submission of the online exchange application form. There are lots of student private accommodation options around UoG as well. Private rental is easy to find, of better facilities and the price discrepancy is not large. However, I would recommend school accommodation to save you lots of hassles and risks for a one-semester exchange. Murano street student village accommodates the largest number of students, while Kelvinhaugh Gate is a decent and popular option as well. I had the chance to live in a double room in Student Apartments, which is of closest proximity to the university.

5) Courses Registration

You can find course information in the course catalogue of previous semesters and indicate your course preference in the UoG exchange application system. Exchange programme advisors will give you feedback on the course choice and help you to pre-register the suitable selected courses shortly before your arrival. However, there are many exchange students they have to handle. If you do encounter difficulties and problems, please do not hesitate to send them emails and book for meeting appointments.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

As I have mentioned before, course format and requirements varies a lot depending on your course choice. While lectures are a must in most, attendance-taking tutorials and laboratories are possible in different classes. However, labs and tutorials may not be held every week, be careful of the changes in timetable and any time clashes. Economics courses mainly take a teacher-to-student one direction pedagogy, but management courses would involve more elements in student interaction and group discussion. For assessment, the UK schools tend to have more assignments and exams on essay writing, unlike HKUST. I had to hand in assignments instead of mid-term exams for most courses, but I do have one course that had 2 MCQ tests in the semester. If your courses take project works, there is larger chance of having no final exams. As matter of fact, some of my friends do not have any final exams, but I had to take four. Again, large variation is there.

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

UoG has a group of very energetic student population. There are lots of sports team, including hockey or cheerleading. You can take a taster session in their recruitment period at the beginning of the semester. Despite the sport teams, UoG has a state-of-the-art gym building. The gym facilities and conditions are better than most of the paid one in HK, which would make gym training a much more pleasurable activity to sustain. Furthermore, swimming classes, yoga classes, aerobic training classes are run from time to time for beginners to kick off their healthy lifestyle.

8) Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

Pound sterling is the currency. As there are many coins in UK, card payment is accepted almost everywhere. In addition to safety consideration, I opened a Bank account in HSBC UK. It is free to open a bank account, you have to book appointment in one of the branches, then take the bank statement from the school and your passport with you. There is no minimum deposit in the account, and you can use the debit card to pay both online and offline, which is very convenient.

9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are lots of clubs and events that you can join, especially in the first month. There will always be something that suits you. Do whatever you like, make friends whenever you want. Don't worry, and just enjoy some ceilidh dance.

10) Health & Safety

Glasgow is a very safe city with low crime rate. You can always seek help from the friendly Scottish people around when you are in any trouble. However, it is not advised to go out at night alone, no matter where you are.

11) Food

There are several restaurants in campus offering breakfast and lunch in discounted price. However, food option and quality is matching with the lower price. I usually cook myself, especially at night. You can buy cheap groceries in Tesco, Lidl, Iceland, Sainsbury's. For Chinese ingredients, Tien Tien Supermarket, China City, and See Woo can offer you most of the things you want. There are lots of restaurants around the campus and in city centre as well. You can find Japanese restaurants, Vietnam restaurants, Korean restaurants, if you have enough of pasta. Eating outside costs around 10-15 pounds, while cooking yourself would cost you similar to that in HK.

12) Transportation

Glasgow is one of the few UK cities that has a subway system. I mainly took the subway. It is easy to get a subway card by filling in the form, then you can save money and have no need to buy tickets each time you use it. Bus is another very convenient option, but it is not necessarily cheaper. Taxi and Uber are not very expensive in Glasgow, especially if you share with friends.

13) Climate

Weather in Scotland changes quite fast. There are usually some hours of blue sky in the morning and noon, but can turn cloudy and drizzly anytime. In general, Scotland is windy and cold. Weather is better in September and October, but it turns bad and cold as winter storm approaches. Windproof windbreaker and thick coats are very useful.

14) Communication

EE provides very smooth and fast network coverage among all the telecommunication providers in UK, but it is quite expensive. I used EE for one month, then I switched to Giffgaff, which offers a low price bargain with fair network. Giffgaff also cover European countries.

15) Cautionary measures

Glasgow is a very safe city. There is no need to worry much, but just be careful of the cars as they may not be as polite as in other European countries. Be aware of your belongings when you are traveling in tourist spots. Always plan your journey ahead to save money and keep updated with the news to keep you safe.

Part III: Items to Bring

- Passport
- Acceptance letter
- Credit card
- Cash
- Adaptor
- Medicine
- Adaptor for travelling
- laptop
- camera
- portable charger
- jackets
- umbrella
- warm clothing

Part IV: Useful Links and Contacts

MyGlasgow:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/students/>

UoG Accommodation:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/undergraduate/accommodation/>

UoG Course catalogue:

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

UK visa:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

Booking.com:

https://www.booking.com/index.zh-tw.html?label=gen173nr-1BCAEoggI46AdIM1gEaGKIAQGYATC4AQflAQ3YAQHoAQGIAgGoAgM;sid=20b6cc1d bca495ef882f9a99fc463981;keep_landing=1&sb_price_type=total&

Trivago:

<https://www.trivago.hk>

Cheapflights:

<https://www.cheapflights.co.uk>

Skyscanner:

<https://www.skyscanner.net>