



Exchange Report

JIANG, Yang (ECOF) Spring 2020

PART 1 – MONTHLY LOG

- **January 2020**

I arrived on Jan 5, one day before the first day of the spring term. In the first three weeks, most seminars didn't start so I did a solo trip to Paris and a trip to Finland with my friends. I also spent the last weekend of January in London to celebrate Chinese New Year with my friends also doing exchange in UK. I made friends with British girls in my apartment as well.

- **February 2020**

The first half of February was just 'final exam reading weeks' for me to prepare HKUST final exams of last semester due to the turmoil at the end of 2019. While I was reviewing for my exams in the kitchen where we shared a table and cooked, girls in my apartment always accompanied me, doing their assignments and discussed all sorts of interesting facts about differences in Asian culture and British culture. They astonishingly found out that, me, a 21-year-old college girl, had never been to bars and clubs before. So after I finished my final exam, they brought me to clubs and danced all nights. The drinking culture in UK really blew my mind out. They also prepared me a hand-made birthday cake for my birthday on February. It really surprised me. I couldn't believe just in one month I built friendship with British and how they embraced me and my culture. At the end of February, I went to Nice in France to join the Nice Carnival of this year, another mind-blowing experience for me.

- **March 2020**

I spent a week dealing with assignments. And then I went to London to hang out with my friends, apply for my Schengen Visa and visit a vintage market. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I was planning my Europe trip during the 'gifted' one-month Easter Break. If COVID-19 were not break out, I would probably travel all around Europe with friends doing exchange in different parts of the continent. I would also travel with British girls in my apartment, and it would have been their first trip outside their nation with friends, especially a friend from China! But things just happened. At the same time most of my friends doing exchange in Europe were booking flight tickets back to Hong Kong. I was lucky because I had a friend in Switzerland. I flew to Switzerland before the Swiss border closed.

- **April 2020**

Switzerland was relatively safe. The population was not dense so even in parks and supermarkets, it was easy for people to enforce safe social distancing. The supply in supermarkets was ample, which was much better than that of other European countries. Tourist attractions were not allowed in Switzerland but cities themselves were unexpectedly beautiful.

- **May 2020**

The daily cases of COVID-19 dropped from thousands to hundreds and finally below 100. The Swiss border reopened at the start of May so I booked the first direct flight back to UK. Not many students living in campus. Sometimes I felt like a lord of manor when I took a walk around the big campus, only seeing one man or two every ten-minute walk. The spread of COVID-19 in UK also slowed down and the supply of supermarket was getting back to its original level. I got plenty of time to prepare for the open-book online exams, to cook with friends living in campus as well, and to did online shopping with huge discounts offered by retailers under the sluggish global economy.

- **June 2020**

After closing restaurants, bars, and other commercial places where a lot of people could gather, the situation in UK was also getting better and better. I visited several cities nearby the campus with my friends and at the second half of June, I moved to London to live with my friends there. I flew back to Hong Kong on July 5.

PART 2 – GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Visa Procedures**

Chinese citizens studying in Hong Kong can apply UK visa in Hong Kong. There are 2 types of visas can be applied for Chinese citizens: Tier-4 visa and short-term study visa. I applied for the Tier-4 because it could be used to apply for Schengen visa in UK while the short-term study visa does not provide the benefit. Notice that Tier-4 is much more expensive than short-term study visa to apply.

- **Orientation Activities**

Most orientation activities are in Autumn for freshmen. In spring, two activities at least were held for exchange students. One was an information sharing meeting for all exchange students. Another gathered all students exchanged to WBS to talk about modules selecting, applying courses outside WBS, etc. WBS organized several coffee chat and lunch parties for exchange students as well, but the attendance might not be great. So I would say it was quite hard to make friends with help of the exchange student office of the university. Most exchange students made friends in their apartments or just stuck to their original culture groups.

- **International Services & Activities**

The school offered very cheap trips to cities in UK such as Bath, Cambridge, and Edinburgh. I attended on to Bath and the experience was okay. The benefits of these trips were the cheap prices and arranged transportation. But the one I attended to Bath just left us with 5-6 hours strolling in the city. The percentage of international students in University of Warwick was huge. So societies of ethnicities were quite active. Girls in my apartments are from different ethnicities and they invited my to join the activities of their societies quite frequently. There were several International Cuisine Days in the campus as well when set up a lot of food outlets near the student union building, offering food from all around the world.

- **Accommodations**

Before the exchange officially started, University of Warwick would send emails notifying exchange students to apply halls of residence in campus. The prices and condition of different halls are well-introduced in the university website. I would also recommend the Wechat official account of Chinese student society in University of Warwick which has room-tour videos of all types of rooms in student accommodation in campus and living experiences shared by previous residents. I lived in Sherbourne Block 7 during my exchange. It was the latest-built one in campus with elevators. But it was at the edge of the campus area. I walked a lot because of that.

- **Courses Registration**

Module registration started before the term officially began. At first exchange students would probably find that not many courses left to choose because most courses preregistered students in programs originally. Later students would start to drop courses during the first three weeks of the term. At that time preferred courses can finally be enrolled in by exchange students. Be careful with all emails from University of Warwick in October and November for all important information they may contain.

- **Teaching & Assessment Methods**

All lectures would be video-recorded, and the attendance were not mandatory. But seminars would record attendance rate and students could only miss 2-3 seminars or else international student visa would be cancelled according to the university website. So if the schedule can be arranged smartly, exchange students can have quite a lot day-offs in a week.

- **Sports & Recreation Facilities**

The sports facilities at school are paid by membership. The Student Union always offers student discounts of clubs and bars in Coventry, which are very popular among students.

- **Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)**

Exchange students can only open basic bank account in Santander Bank, a branch of which is located in campus. I would suggest exchange students bring some cash and stored cash in the bank account after arrival. The UK bank statement is a must during the Schengen Visa application. I would also suggest student bringing an international credit card without currency transferring fee.

- **Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities**

As I mentioned before, social clubs of different ethnicities are active in University of Warwick. And the best networking opportunities with locals and foreigners are people living in the same apartment.

- **Health & Safety**

I recommend to bring common medicine from home because purchasing medicine in UK is quite troublesome. Students with Tier-4 Visa need to register to the national insurance system and make reservations to hospitals. Only with prescription can people purchase medicine from clinic. Non-prescribed medicine such as Panadol can be easily purchased in supermarkets and retailers like Boots.

- **Food**

The varieties of microwavable food in supermarket are beyond imagination. So students can survive even without cooking utensil. If you want to cook, second-hand group chat in campus always selling very cheap cooking utensil and cooking materials could be easily purchased in the supermarkets nearby

campus: a Tesco and a Korean supermarket. The prices of restaurants in campus doesn't really match the food quality there.

- **Transportation**

For travel between nearby cities, buy bus day tickets. For travel between cities in UK, register 19-25 discount card and take trains. For travel between countries in Europe, closely follow the ticket price trend and cheap flight tickets are usually available.

- **Climate**

In January, sun rises at 9 am and sun sets at 4 pm. In May, sun rises at 4 am and sun sets at 9 pm. UK is windy, moist and rainy always. But during the pandemic almost everyday is sunny. I would recommend bringing a lot of clothes for Winter and Autumn in Asia.

- **Communication**

It is the best time to learn British Accent.

- **Cautionary measures**

Be careful with wallets and valuables all the time when travelling in Europe, especially in Paris.

PART 3 – ITEMS TO BRING

- Money: cash, credit cards (UK is a shopping heaven, cosmetics and luxuries are always on discount)
- Visa, passport
- Clothes (If you plan to visit countries like Iceland, Finland, you'd better prepare some very heavy clothes and shoes for ice hiking)
- A phone with a good camera
- Medicine

PART 4 – USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

Chinese Society of University of Warwick Wechat account: chisoc_warwick

Warwick Accommodation

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/accommodation/studentaccommodation/>

Campus postal address and deliveries

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/estates/post/students>