

# **Exchange Report**

University of Warwick

UK

Spring 2025

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## Monthly Log

### January:

January was a chaotic and eventful first month as I started adjusting to life at Warwick. I landed on the 1st and quickly headed to my relatives' place to pack some last minute essentials. The first week was mostly spent moving into my accommodation and getting used to the new environment, which included battling jet lag, the unpredictable weather, and most notably, the bizarre experience of the sun setting at 4pm. Once school started the next week, I headed to attend my first lecture and seminars. Having studied in an international school in HK, the classes felt rather familiar – incorporating elements of both IB classes and university lecture style, which was quite refreshing. The first week of school passed by like a flash, and I started getting used to living on my own. Travelling plans also caught on quite quickly, where I joined other UST exchange students on a quick weekend trip in London – that was when I found out that pickpocketing was real. Despite these hiccups, it was a month full of firsts – figuring out campus layouts, cooking for the first time, and slowly getting into the rhythm of my exchange life. By the end of the month, I started feeling settled and confident in handling my day-to-day tasks.

### February:

By February, I had slowly settled into a steady routine and started to feel much more comfortable living independently. I would do a grocery run once a week, cook new meals for myself, and usually set time for leisure activities once or twice a week. On school days, I would go to campus three to four times a week to help maintain the balance between study and personal time. That said, I also managed to fit in a few short regional trips to London and Birmingham to experience a different city atmosphere. Entering weeks five and six of the school term also meant that the workload started to pile up as group projects were introduced – giving me a taste of working alongside local students. One interesting observation I had was how much they preferred meeting in person as opposed to meeting on zoom, as they felt it would be easier to stay engaged and efficient during discussions. Overall, February was a month where I found stability in my daily life while also beginning to experience the academic and cultural differences of studying abroad.

### March:

To me, March was an intense but rewarding month. Most of my group projects were due at the same time in the middle of the month, which meant a lot of stress as I tried to juggle four different projects across various courses. Coordinating with different teams and schedules also wasn't always easy, but through this, I learned how to manage schedules, compromise on ideas and processes, and keep discussions focused and productive despite the pressure. Once deadlines were over, I finally had some time to travel, and it was my first time visiting Europe. I

visited Spain, Italy, and Iceland, each with its own unique cultures and highlights. Iceland was especially unforgettable because I got to see the northern lights for the first time – which was a surreal, bucket-list moment. Looking back, March was full of contrasts. From the stressful academic battles to the incredible travel experiences, this month really pushed me out of my comfort zone in very different yet meaningful ways.

**April:**

As April came along, the spring term had already ended, which meant that I didn't have to go to any classes anymore. As I decided to enroll for spring only, all of my final exams were also converted to final assignments instead. With that freedom, I spent most of the month travelling and making the most of my time in Europe. One of the highlights was the thrill and challenge of going skiing for the first time in the French Alps, but what stood out the most was the sheer beauty of the snowy mountains which felt like something out of a postcard. I also visited Switzerland, France, Denmark, and Italy again (because the food was too good), each offering different experiences. Of course, with the momentum of travelling, my productivity also took a hit. Having to write four different assignments, each with a 3000-word requirement, was definitely an experience, especially since much of the content from class has already left me. This meant that I often found myself catching up on readings in between trips, trying to balance study with exploration. Overall, April was definitely less academic – but offered a crash course in time management and self-discipline, learning how to make space for both adventure and responsibility.

## **General Questions**

### **1. Visa Procedures**

I hold a HK passport and am staying in the UK for less than 6 months, therefore I did not require a visa.

### **2. Orientation Activities**

Since we arrived during the spring term, there were no dedicated events (e.g. freshers week) for us to familiarize ourselves with local students. However, the university still held orientations and game nights during the first week, dedicated towards exchange students.

### **3. International Services & Activities**

Warwick does not provide any pick-up/transfer services in spring (at least not to my knowledge).

### **4. Accommodations**

There are two options for accommodations:

- On-campus accommodation
- Off-campus, independent accommodation providers

Since I only applied for the spring term, I didn't get an offer for on-campus accommodation. Additionally, from what I've heard, the contracts for those are fixed and ran until July or August, which can be too long for some students

Off-campus accommodation is a lot more flexible. For example, I had a 14-week contract and was able to negotiate length of stay before signing. Applications to the off-campus accommodations can be done directly through their website, using a referral provided from Warwick

### **5. Courses registration**

Course registration was very straightforward, and could be done through the universities' portal for WBS students (my.wbs). The application system opens a few weeks before the deadline, allowing students to select and adjust their course choices (similar to USTs shopping cart). It also operates on a first-come, first-serve basis, but I did not encounter any difficulties when registering for my courses.

### **6. Courses that you have taken**

IB2630 Design Thinking and Digital Innovation

- I found this course the most challenging. Content was not black and white, and final essay felt like a creative writing piece

IB2B60 Marketing Research

- Straightforward marketing research course – no prior marketing knowledge required

IB3680 International Business Strategy:

- Probably my favorite course as the seminars are just interactive case discussions. There was quite a lot of content, but because I only there for the spring term and was exempted from the exam, the course was very manageable

IB3A70 Problem Structuring: Facilitating Purposeful Analysis

- Standard OM course. Can get quite confusing, but overall workload and difficulty was not bad.

## **7. Finance & Banking**

The currency in the UK is the British Pound (£), which is roughly 10:1 against the Hong Kong Dollar. Most of my expenses went towards food, transport, and leisure activities, ranging around 3-5k HKD per month. For payments, contactless payment options (e.g. apple pay) were by far the most efficient and widely accepted methods, and there were only a few instances where I was required to use cash.

I used my HK HSBC account and it worked in the UK – there is no need to open a UK bank account unless you want to pay for subscriptions that require direct debit (e.g. gyms)

## **8. Climate**

The weather in the UK is much more unpredictable than in HK. One moment it can be sunny, and the next it turns windy with light drizzles of rain. During winter, the sun also decides to set as early as 4 pm, which was something I really had to get used to. Temperatures are also generally a lot lower than HK, ranging between 0 and 10 celsius in the colder months, but can reach around 25 celsius by May.

## **9. Health & Safety**

As I spent less than 6 months exchanging at Warwick, I did not qualify for NHS coverage – so I had to arrange my own travel insurance for medical care. While pharmacies with meds exist everywhere, I would still suggest bringing meds just in case.

## **10. Food**

Various food options were available on campus, ranging from restaurants, cafes, to food trucks on specific days of the week. However, food options, in my opinion, are a lot more expensive and not as good compared to HK, so I basically cooked all my meals in the UK. Living off-campus also meant that I was in close proximity to a lot of grocery stores (iceland, sainsburys) and asian supermarkets.

## **11. Transportation**

Getting to campus:

- Living in the city center, I found the 12X bus to be the most efficient option to travel to campus. There are multiple ticket options including: single pass, day pass, 5/10 day bundle pass, month pass. Since I only had 3 classes a week, purchasing day passes was the most cost-efficient option for me.
- Note that there are different bus operators in Coventry, and tickets are sometimes bound to a specific operator.

Getting around the UK:

- If you plan on travelling within the UK at least once a month, purchasing a 16-25 railcard (under 300 HKD if purchased with discount) would be beneficial as it reduces train ticket prices by one-third.

## **12. Communication**

Whatsapp seemed to be the most popular messaging app in the UK, so communication with people in the UK did not feel any different. As for the SIM card, I used lebara as my SIM provider – lebara offers really cheap data plans (e.g. less than £1 per month for 30gb), you just really need to dig the internet for those prices.

## **13. Sports & Recreation Facilities**

I did not utilize any sports & recreation facilities at the university.

## **14. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities**

Warwick has tons of student-led clubs, but unlike in the fall semester they aren't advertised since you're joining in the middle of the academic year. Despite this, there are still plenty of clubs and activities available for exchange students. For example, I was still able to participate in and represent Warwick in inter-university esports competitions.

## **15. Cautionary measures**

Probably best not to go out alone after dark and make sure to keep your phone safe, pickpocketing is a real thing and I found out the hard way.

## **Items to bring (excluding general travel essentials)**

### **Documents & Essentials:**

- Warwick acceptance letter
- Flight itinerary (if you purchased return ticket – can show to immigration)
- Cash (at least enough to last a few days)
- Travel insurance documents (optional)

### **Daily Living & Health:**

- Medication (widely available in the UK but it's probably better to bring what works for you)
- Instant noodles/foods (especially if you're going to the UK with zero cooking experience)
- Snacks or favorite sauces/spices (comfort food always helps)
- Mini rice cooker
- Reusable cutlery, especially chopsticks
- Umbrella (Ones that don't flip inside out because wind in the UK is next level)
- Formal wear (if you're still applying to internships in Spring)