

General Information

Host Country Scotland/UK

Host School Abertay University

Program start & end Jan 30 - May 26 2023
dates

Program of Study Psychology

Type of Study Abroad x Exchange Independent (Other:

General Evaluation

In a couple of sentences, summarize and explain your general evaluation of your experience.

It was an amazing experience. I gained a lot of independence and life skills from it, and it allowed me to travel and experience new cultures and ways of life while furthering my degree.

Arrival

How easy or challenging was it to obtain your travel documents (visa, permits, etc.)?

I didn't require a visa or permits because I was there for fewer than 6 months, so it was extremely easy.

Describe your transportation arrangements to your host country. Would you alter any part of those arrangements?

I took several flights. I flew to Toronto a few days early to visit my best friend who lives there, then I flew out of Toronto, had a short layover in Dublin, Ireland, then landed in Edinburgh. In hindsight, I would have tried to get a slightly longer layover if I could, because since my flight was delayed leaving Toronto, I actually missed my original Dublin-Edinburgh flight. The airline got me on another flight only a few hours later than the intended flight, free of charge, but it would have been nice not to have to worry about it in the first place.

How was your experience clearing customs and

Very easy, walked right on through.

immigration upon arrival in your host country? Any surprises?

Describe how you traveled to your host facility. How long did it take and how much did it cost?

I took a bus from the airport to the Fife park and ride bus terminal, then took a large inter-city bus to Dundee from there. It took maybe around \$30 CAD total.

Orientation and Assistance

How satisfied were you with the orientation and student assistance available to at your host school?

It was good, orientation was very thorough including some things I would not have thought to do otherwise, such as getting registered at a GP (doctor's office) in case.

What help did you receive from the international staff or office?

There were email check-ins and activities from study abroad staff every so often.

Orientation and Assistance (cont'd)

How was new student orientation at the host university? How did it suit your needs?

Again, very good. It also gave us an opportunity to talk to other international students, which was interesting.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? Were there people and resources available for you to talk to about what you were experiencing?

It wasn't too bad, the differences were mostly small but the biggest thing I had to adjust to was looking in the other direction when crossing the road. I mostly just talked to my friends and family about differences I noticed.

Housing & Daily Life

Describe your accommodation in your host country.

I stayed at iQ Parker House, which was only a 5 min walk from Abertay. It was also near the city centre, which was convenient.

When could you move into housing and how long were you allowed to stay?

You could move into housing as early as sometime in December the previous year, but you could choose any date and time to check in. Check out was similar, I think the final day was sometime in June.

What kinds of services and facilities were nearby where you lived (shop, cafe gym, parks, pharmacy, stations...)	The school was nearby, there were grocery stores a 5 min walk down the street and a convenience store nearby. There was a park just up the hill and a multi-stance bus stop and mall nearby as well. As said, it was near the city centre so most things were pretty easily within walking distance, and it was easy enough to catch a bus for things further away.
Describe what you did about meals and what other options were available. How satisfied were you with the food?	I actually learned to cook. I ate out or got pizza occasionally, but most of the time I just made my own food. Between the Tesco Express and the Lidl near my building I was able to get pretty much everything I needed.
How close was your accommodation to where you studied?	A 5 min walk.

Academics & Course Registration

Please describe the registration process at your host institution. What assistance was available to you? Were you satisfied?	For exchange students, you choose the program you want and there are two different preset pathways you can choose from: a 2nd-year level and a 3rd-year level. You could also swap courses from these pathways out for electives or micro-credentials if you already had completed equivalent courses back home, which I did. You don't choose your schedule, you give them the pathway you want and alterations if you have any, then you get a schedule back. You could email Evie Jackson (study abroad coordinator) or contact an assistance email for help if you needed it. I was satisfied, though it wasn't always clear that they registered you in your courses instead of doing it yourself. I also found it difficult to find information on substitutions/micro-credentials on the website.
What advice would you offer to another exchange student about registration at your host institution?	Try to choose a pathway with no courses you've done an equivalent to if you can.
What tips do you have for finding the courses and course syllabuses/ outlines?	For finding the courses themselves, if you can't find a map, just give them the room number at the front desk and ask for directions. All course info is on a website called My Learning Space, which you can log into with your Abertay email and password. I think

they also explain this in the orientation, or you can just ask one of your profs.

Academics & Course Registration (cont'd)

How satisfied were you with the amount of knowledge/skills you obtained from your host?	I was satisfied. I found the teaching style at home easier, but that's also just what I'm used to and just a matter of personal preference, and would still encourage people who wanted to go.
How did the style of teaching, and workload compare to Canada? Was it more independent or group learning?	For my in-person classes, there was a lot of group learning involved.
How many courses did you take during your time abroad? Are there particular courses would you recommend?	I took two full courses and three micro-credentials (adding up to a full semester course load). The "Dundee and Me" micro-credential was cool because it teaches you about the city, its history, and some points of interest.
If applicable, what impact did the language barrier have on your learning?	N/A
What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, internet access, specialized equipment and supplies available at your host facility?	There was a very nice library with lots of computers and printer service. Internet was good, but I occasionally had to log in again. The library also had a Student Enquiry Zone (SEZ) which was intended to be a place where you could ask for help with anything school-related and they would either answer your question or send you to someone who could help. I used this a few times and found it helpful.

Cost

Books and Supplies/per term:	N/A
Flight:	\$1775 (all costs in CAD)
Accommodation/per month:	\$950
Meals/per month:	\$150

Local transportation/per month:	\$48
Health insurance/per term:	\$700
Communication (internet, phone, etc.) – per term	\$80
Travel documents (Passport, Study permit, visa, etc.)	N/A
Vaccinations:	N/A
Personal spending (entertainment and extra travel) – per term	\$1000

Were there unexpected costs you encounter? What items were less or more expensive than expected?

I tried to minimise spending on my credit card or withdraw cash to use because of foreign transaction fees. The exchange rate threw me for a loop too. For example, groceries for the week might have been £25, which didn't sound so bad, until I would remember that it was closer to \$40 Canadian.

Extra-Curricular & Social Activities

What type of organized activities were available to you? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future students?

There were a number of extracurricular clubs available, but when I tried to sign up for any of them on the school website it didn't work.

Did you travel outside the host location? If so, where do you recommend?

Within Scotland I went to Inverness (where Loch Ness is) and Edinburgh, and I also travelled to Gothenburg, Sweden and Vienna, Austria. I would visit any of those places again, but Vienna was my favourite. If a student likes to travel I would recommend visiting at least a few other places, because it's possible to get flights within Europe for extremely cheap.

What opportunities were there to work or volunteer? Did you require special permits to do this?

For the length of my stay in the UK I was not permitted to work.

Health and Safety

Describe any health/safety concerns or issues you had during your experience. I had one small health concern pop up, but I went to the GP I had registered with and it was resolved.

What helped you keep safe and healthy? Did you access any health care supports and if so how was the experience? Registering with a GP when I arrived was definitely a good move. You should also register with a dentist. I had a good experience with the GP and when I went to pick up a prescription from the pharmacy I didn't get charged for it, which was a pleasant surprise.

Personal and Cultural Connections

How successful were you at making friends with local (not international) people and students? Not the best, but that was more of an introversion problem than a cultural problem. Joining the dance class helped me meet people, though.

How did you find it adjusting to the culture of your host site? Not too bad. The UK is different, but usually not different enough to seriously freak you out.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? Sometimes I had a hard time understanding stronger accents. It was also a chore not to get run over while crossing the street. And not to be a stereotypical Canadian, but it was a little upsetting that I could only find back bacon and not normal (strip) bacon. Other times, I would think they didn't have something in the UK, only to realise they just called it something different and I was looking for the wrong thing. For example, they call arugula "rocket."

What part(s) of the culture did you most appreciate? I really like Scottish accents, even if I did have trouble understanding sometimes. Some of the architecture was absolutely breathtaking. They were also far ahead on certain things, like free period products in public bathrooms.

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students? I was treated pretty well.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?	I'm not sure. A few of the main entrances only had stairs and no ramps, and I didn't see an elevator (though I wasn't looking for one). I feel like it might be difficult. However, I think there were services available for students with cognitive or visual/hearing difficulties.
As far as you could tell, for students who are visible minorities in your host country?	Dundee was a pretty diverse place, with lots of international students. I don't think it would be too difficult.
For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?	They were pretty good about that kind of thing. Also because Dundee has a lot of students/younger people, attitudes are usually pretty accepting.

Overall

What are 5-10 important things other students should know before going to your host country/region?

1. Learn to cook at least a few different meals; the alternatives are blowing your budget on takeout or eating frozen pizzas and ramen three times a day.
2. Take advantage of cheap flights. If you have any other dream destinations in Europe, go! Even though you'll probably be travelling on a budget, you'll still get the experience.
3. Don't be afraid to go places/do things on your own. Don't let lack of a companion stop you from doing something you want to do.
4. Join an activity other than classes that will give you social interaction once a week or so or you'll start to go crazy. It doesn't have to be with the school, I joined a burlesque dance class for example.
5. Go to the 'tourist trap' activities in your city or area, just to get a better understanding of the culture/history. Plus it's a good way to kill an afternoon if you're bored.
6. **DON'T FORGET YOUR BAG IN THE LUGGAGE COMPARTMENT OF A BUS.**
7. For students who get periods, free pads and tampons are available in many womens' public bathrooms.

8. Know the name of the stop you're getting off at before you get on the bus; they're going to ask you for it because they charge by distance. Don't be the person that holds up the line because you don't know where you're going. Google maps will tell you the stop name.

9.

10.

What was the most rewarding part of your study abroad experience?

Learning that I can be independent and live on my own and do pretty well. I feel like when I do move out to live on my own I'll be better prepared than if I hadn't done this.

What was the greatest challenge you faced during your experience abroad?

Sometimes you start to feel isolated. I'm an introvert so I didn't really make many friends for the first few months, and with the time difference it can be demoralising when none of your friends are texting you back, when really they're just sleeping. This is why it's good to join a regular activity or social club where you can get comfortable with the same group of people over something all of you are interested in.

How has your perspective changed as a result of your study abroad experience?

I feel more confident in my own competency and life skills now that I know I can thrive on my own.

What else do you want to add about your study abroad experience?

Absolutely do it if you have the means!

Below is a space to share any photos