

General Information			
Host Country	Australia		
Host School	Swinburne University of Technology		
Program start & end dates	February 27 – June 16, 2023		
Program of Study	GDMA (Graphic Design for Marketing)		
Type of Study Abroad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
General Evaluation			
In a couple of sentences, summarize and explain your general evaluation of your experience.	The entire experience was incredible. I would do it all again in a heartbeat!		
Arrival			
How easy or challenging was it to obtain your travel documents (visa, permits, etc.)?	The application process was easy. I received the visa immediately after submitting the application. However, this may not be the case for everyone, so be sure to give yourself plenty of extra time just to be on the safe side.		
Describe your transportation arrangements to your host country. Would you alter any part of those arrangements?	I booked my flights directly through the airline’s website. My flights got rearranged slightly on the day of departure due to a cyclone in New Zealand where I was supposed to have a layover. All went smoothly though, as the airline took care of everything for me. I was happy with my arrangements and there’s nothing I would have altered.		
How was your experience clearing customs and immigration upon arrival in your host country? Any surprises?	No surprises, thankfully — I checked Australia’s entry requirements a few months before, then again right before I left Canada. I recommend doing this for peace of mind!		
Describe how you traveled to your host facility. How long did it take and how much did it cost?	<p>I travelled from Vancouver to Melbourne on two flights: YVR to LAX (3 hours), layover (4 hours), LAX to MEL (15.5 hours). The total cost of my return flight was around \$2,600 CAD.</p> <p>Regarding transportation from the airport to campus, Swinburne offered a free airport pickup service for new students. I booked my ride a week before arriving.</p>		
Orientation and Assistance			
How satisfied were you with the orientation and student assistance available to at your host school?	Very satisfied. The Study Abroad office offered Welcome Hours every day for a week leading up to orientation for students who arrived early. The StudentHQ office was also super helpful. The day of orientation was a great opportunity to meet all the other exchange students. This was followed by “O-Week” — a week filled with events, campus tours, prizes, and lots of free food!		
What help did you receive from the international staff or office?	The Swinburne Abroad staff advised me on where to get my student ID and public transportation card. They also helped us settle in by giving advice on where to buy homeware, a SIM card, setting up an Australian bank account, and informing us about upcoming events in the city.		

Orientation and Assistance (cont'd)	
How was new student orientation at the host university? How did it suit your needs?	It was great. They started with a presentation then allowed us time to get to know each other with a game of social bingo and a classic aussie BBQ. They provided us with lots of resources and contacts for future reference. This is where I met most of my study abroad friends and I ended up travelling Australia and New Zealand with some of them.
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?	Australia is similar to Canada in many ways, so I didn't experience a huge "culture shock". Everyone was very welcoming. As mentioned above, the Swinburne Abroad staff provided many resources and contacts to help us navigate our lives overseas.
Housing & Daily Life	
Describe your accommodation in your host country.	I lived on campus in Swinburne's student residences (apartments). I had 3 roommates.
When could you move into housing and how long were you allowed to stay?	I moved in on the first possible day and stayed until the last day of my lease (February 14 th – July 1 st).
What kinds of services and facilities were nearby where you lived (shop, cafe gym, parks, pharmacy, stations...)	Glenferrie Road (right next to campus) is lined with grocery stores, pharmacies, gyms, cafés, tons of restaurants, and an outdoor pool (free for Swinburne students)! On the other side of campus, there's a lovely park called Central Gardens — a great study spot when the weather permits. The train station is right on campus, so you can get to Melbourne CBD in 10-15 mins.
Describe what you did about meals and what other options were available. How satisfied were you with the food?	There are some cafés/restaurants on campus. And, as mentioned above, Glenferrie Road is just a few steps away. But since I lived there, I cooked my own meals most of the time. The grocery store was a two-minute walk from my place and offered everything I needed, so that was super convenient.
How close was your accommodation to where you studied?	I lived on campus. My classes were a five-minute walk from my apartment.
Academics & Course Registration	
Please describe the registration process at your host institution. What assistance was available to you? Were you satisfied?	Online registration went smoothly. It was similar to KPU's class registration process. I had no issues, but there were resources available if I needed assistance.
What advice would you offer to another exchange student about registration at your host institution?	To ensure you get your preferred timetable, register for your classes as soon as the registration portal opens as some classes may fill up quickly.
What tips do you have for finding the courses and course syllabuses/ outlines?	You can browse single course units at this link: https://www.swinburne.edu.au/courses/browse-course-units/

Academics & Course Registration (cont'd)	
How satisfied were you with the amount of knowledge/skills you obtained from your host?	Certain classes were more impactful than others, depending on the content, the instructor, and my prior knowledge of the subject. Overall, I am satisfied with the amount of knowledge/skills I gained, whether from the actual course curriculum or simply from being immersed in Australia's educational environment, hearing my classmates' perspectives on discussion topics, and witnessing new teaching styles. The entire experience of studying in a different country is educationally enriching and extends far beyond the walls of the classroom.
How did the style of teaching, and workload compare to Canada? Was it more independent or group learning?	Overall, there were fewer assignments, but they were large and graded heavily (i.e. one of my classes had 2 assignments @ 50% each). So, it is up to you to check in with your instructor for feedback to ensure you're on the right track and to avoid any surprises. I had a mix of individual and group projects.
How many courses did you take during your time abroad? Are there particular courses would you recommend?	I took four courses. I really enjoyed my Digital Video Camera Techniques class (DDM20003) because it was very hands on and collaborative. Swinburne has lots of media equipment for rent and we were allowed to film off-campus which encouraged us to explore parts of Melbourne that I likely wouldn't have seen otherwise.
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?	<p>Swinburne has a mix of new and old buildings; they are remodeling some of their spaces to create more inviting study environments, which is nice. But I tried to make the most of my experience in Melbourne by studying in parks, city libraries, and cafés instead.</p> <p>As mentioned before, they have heaps of specialized media equipment for rent. However, this equipment is only available to students taking media-related courses.</p> <p>Swinburne is an Adobe Creative Campus (i.e. free Adobe subscription!) Many of the classrooms have Macs, so you can login and work on your assignments from there, even if you don't have your laptop on you.</p> <p>The campus wifi was good; I had no issues.</p>
Cost (Canadian Dollars)	
Books and Supplies/per term:	N/A (Did not need to purchase books and already had all the supplies I needed)
Flight:	~ \$2,600
Accommodation/per month:	~ \$1,030
Meals/per month:	~ \$200 – \$250
Local transportation/per month:	~ \$30

Health insurance/per term:	~ \$280
Communication (internet, phone, etc.) – per term	~\$100
Travel documents (Passport, Study permit, visa, etc.)	Visa: ~\$600 Already had a valid passport
Vaccinations:	N/A
Personal spending (entertainment and extra travel) – per term	~\$2,800 (excluding New Zealand)
Were there unexpected costs you encounter? What items were less or more expensive than expected?	I did not encounter any unexpected costs, thankfully. Much like Vancouver, Melbourne is an expensive place to live. Alcohol is particularly expensive. Good news — Phone plans are much more affordable (I was with Optus and paid ~\$25 CAD/month for unlimited minutes/texts and 30GB of data which rolled over to the next month if unused).
Extra-Curricular & Social Activities	
What type of organized activities were available to you? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future students?	The Swinburne Abroad team advertises a tour company called “Real”. This company offers organized trips for university students. It’s a great option if you don’t feel like planning or researching; they do all the work for you. There’s also a student club at Swinburne called “Outdoor Explorers”. I’d highly recommend going to a meeting and joining them on one of their trips. I went camping and it felt like the true aussie experience. Great group of people! Also, much more affordable than the organized tours.
Did you travel outside the host location? If so, where do you recommend?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sydney during Easter break (~ 1 week) - Weekend trip along the Great Ocean Road (2 days) - Weekend camping trip to Wilson’s Promontory (3 days) - Day trips: Phillip Island, Yarra Valley, Puffing Billy Railway - Traveled along the coast in Queensland (Cairns to Airlie Beach) once I finished my studies (~ 1 week) - Road tripped the North Island of New Zealand for a couple of weeks before flying back to Canada
What opportunities were there to work or volunteer? Did you require special permits to do this?	Local job postings can be found on websites like Indeed and Seek, as well as Swinburne’s career portal, SwinEmploy. In order to do any paid work in Australia, you need to apply for a TFN (Tax File Number), similar to a SIN in Canada. Be sure to double check your visa’s work restrictions prior to getting a job. Volunteer opportunities are also posted on the websites listed above. In addition, keep an eye out for posters around campus; Swinburne conducts lots of scientific research, and they are often looking for volunteers to participate in their studies.

Health and Safety

Describe any health/safety concerns or issues you had during your experience.	Thankfully, I did not experience any health/safety concerns.
What helped you keep safe and healthy? Did you access any health care supports and if so how was the experience?	<p>Thankfully, I did not need to access any of the health care support services. But they are readily available if you need them! Here are a few things I did to stay safe and healthy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stayed sun safe by applying SPF every day and staying hydrated - Maintained a healthy diet by cooking most meals from home - Swam laps at the outdoor pool to stay active

Personal and Cultural Connections

How successful were you at making friends with local (not international) people and students?	Making friends with the locals requires a bit more effort on your part, as they are in a completely different boat than the exchange students. I met most of my Australian friends at Swinburne's residence events, in classes, and by joining a student club (Outdoor Explorers). Once you make one friend, you're bound to meet more!
How did you find it adjusting to the culture of your host site?	A very smooth adjustment. Although I had never lived on a campus before, it felt like second nature, and I really enjoyed the whole "student life" experience.
What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging?	No challenges, thankfully. Some fellow exchange students mentioned that the Aussie accent/lingo was a bit hard to understand at times. However, aussie slang is quite similar to British slang. I was born in England and have many British relatives, so that is likely why I didn't experience this issue.
What part(s) of the culture did you most appreciate?	Although I mentioned that Australian slang is similar to British slang, aussies most definitely have their fair share of unique expressions, and they are proud of them. I also admire their undeniable passion for footy (AFL); I recommend going to a game solely for the cultural experience. Overall, Australian's are very laidback which I find to be comforting, especially as foreign student.
How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?	All in all, a very respectful, friendly environment. Most people are more than happy to help, whatever the situation may be.
As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?	As far as I could tell, Swinburne has ensured that its buildings and services are accessible to those with disabilities.
As far as you could tell, for students who are visible minorities in your host country?	As far as I could tell, Swinburne has a very inclusive, intercultural environment.
For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?	As far as I could tell, Swinburne actively supports and promotes LGBTQIA+ rights. The campus seems to be a safe space for queer individuals.

Overall	
What are five important things other students should know before going to your host country/region?	
1. Wear SPF everyday! Australia has a high UV index.	
2. Despite the above statement, Melbourne’s weather is very unpredictable, so pack a small umbrella as well.	
3. Swim between the flags at the beach!	
4. If you’re worried about spiders, don’t be. They are not as prevalent as you think, especially in the city.	
5. Aussies don’t tip.	
What are ten important things you would tell another student who is going to your host facility/agency?	
1. Living on campus removed a lot of potential stressors (i.e. transportation, searching for legit rentals, finding roommates, etc.). The application process was very easy and the location can’t be beat. Just make sure you apply as soon as the application portal opens!	
2. Go to class! Even if you’re tired. Learning in a new country is such a fascinating experience and one day you’ll wish you could experience it all over again.	
3. Attend the study abroad events, and if you live on campus, attend the ressie events as well!	
4. Try joining a club. Even if you decide it’s not for you, at least you tried!	
5. The second floor of the AMDC building is a great study spot — lots of natural light, bean bags, couches, and an outdoor seating area.	
6. Go for walks around Hawthorn and get lost in the neighborhoods; It’s a beautiful area.	
7. Swinburne is great, but don’t forget how close you are to Melbourne CBD! Go explore the city and find a new study spot every week. Time will slip away so fast.	
8. Tuesday night? Grab a few mates and go to drag queen bingo at a Nevermind Bar (“Nevs”) then uni night at the Hawthorn Hotel (“Hawka”) — a classic Swinburne student experience.	
9. Axil coffee is great and Yo-Chi frozen yogurt is delicious as well. They will steal all your money though, so track your spendings!	
10. Swinburne’s instructors are very approachable and receptive, in my experience. So, don’t be afraid to ask questions and participate in class discussions. Chances are they are excited to hear an international student’s perspective.	
What was the most rewarding part of your study abroad experience?	Forming connections with people from all over the world.
What was the greatest challenge you faced during your experience abroad?	Missing out on family celebrations and birthdays back home; at times I felt guilty that I couldn’t be there to celebrate with them.
How has your perspective changed as a result of your study abroad experience?	Overall, I feel more open-minded and have learned to take things with a grain of salt.
What else do you want to add about your study abroad experience?	This is a once in a lifetime experience. If you’re even the slightest bit interested in studying abroad, just go for it! There are many support systems and resources to lean on while you’re in university, so if you want to experience living abroad for the first time, now is the time.

Below is a space to share any photos (this is optional and may be shared on our website).

