

Host University: University of Strathclyde, Semester 1 2017

Programme on Exchange: BSc (Psychology)

I was in my 6th year of study when I went on exchange to the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. I had completed my law degree, so just had a few psychology papers to finish off. It was my last semester and a great way to finish off my degree – it's never too late to do an exchange! Since I was studying psychology, the choice of partner universities in Europe was somewhat limited compared to other faculties but I would definitely recommend spending a semester in Glasgow.

Arrival

Before arriving to Glasgow I did some travel with some friends around Europe during Christmas and New Year's which I would recommend doing. It was cool to experience the spirit of a Winter Christmas and get amongst the Christmas markets. It also gave me a chance to get over the jetlag before starting my exchange. But be prepared for the cold! It got as cold as -15°C when we were in Budapest.

Arriving to Glasgow itself was an easy process. If you are going for only one semester on a New Zealand passport, then no visa is required. The passport control will give you a short-term student stamp as long as you have your Strathclyde acceptance letter and proof of address.

Accommodation

The university provides accommodation for all exchange students to live in on campus if you need it. However, since I had already been flatting for a few years I decided I would rather continue doing that than go back into the halls. I found my flat before I arrived by joining the 'Rent a Room in Glasgow' Facebook group. I found it really easy to find a place but if you go on exchange in semester 2 and plan to arrive in September then finding a room in a flat might be more competitive as this is when a lot of students return to Glasgow after Summer.

My flat was in the West End of Glasgow which is a quirky area with some of the prettiest buildings in the city and a great café scene! I payed £410 per month and was on the lease for 5 months, which worked out to be roughly the same price as the halls. I lived with two students who were studying at Glasgow University which was only a 2-minute walk away from our apartment. While Strathclyde University is located in the city centre, it was easy enough to get to Uni each day by taking the subway. The trip



from Kelvinbridge (the stop near my flat) to Buchanan Street (in the city centre) took 6 mins and from there it was a 5-10 minute walk to uni depending on the lecture theatre.

I really enjoyed living in the West End as it was my favourite area in Glasgow and allowed me to get to know more of the city. In saying that however, all of my friends who lived in the halls really enjoyed that as well. From visiting their flats, I think the best halls were Birkbeck Court, Thomas Campbell or Chancellors Hall, as they were set up as flats of 6-8 people within the hall and were mostly filled with exchange students.

Facilities

At the time I was on exchange, Strathclyde was in the process of building a huge new sports and recreation centre. Their current gym was quite basic, although it would have everything you need. I decided to join Glasgow Club for £27 per month because they had a number of gyms around the city, including one close to my flat, and offered Les Mills classes.

Admin / Money

I had to set up a Scottish bank account so that I could pay rent and for my gym membership. I decided to set up an account with Santander because they had a branch on campus which was student friendly and had no start-up costs. If you live on campus then you probably won't need a bank account. Predominantly I used my Cash Passport card for spending which I got in New Zealand before coming. It's easy to use and can load pounds or whatever currency you need onto it through online bank transfer.

In terms of phone networks, I joined Three because they offered the best value prepay plans which included lots of data that worked overseas. Having data was really helpful when travelling Europe for using google maps and for contacting AirBnB hosts etc.

Courses & Workload

A fulltime workload is 60 credits. Most courses are worth 20 credits, so you have to do 3 courses. I did 2 x 300-level psychology classes and one introductory French class because I was moving to France on a Working Holiday Visa after the exchange. The psychology classes were comparable to Otago as they each had 3 hours of class per week. However, there was only one internal assignment per class which meant the exam was worth more (about 60-70% of the final mark). The grading system at Strathclyde was quite different to Otago, as you only need 40% to pass and anything over 70% is considered an extremely good mark (first class level). I found that getting a mark in the high 60s was quite attainable but not many 70s or above were handed out.

Student Experience / Nightlife

Strathclyde is well set up for exchange students and although I lived off campus, it was easy to meet a lot of people and make friends. We had a welcome week with a few tours and events, including a bar crawl. My advice is to be friendly and meet as

many people as you can. A few people that I met while we were waiting in line to collect our student ID cards ended up being some of my closest friends on exchange! The Erasmus committee also organised drinks or events every Wednesday which was a good way to keep meeting new people throughout the semester.

Glasgow has an incredible nightlife, with heaps of bars and clubs that offer everything from EDM to Spanish music. My favourite places were Garage (which has a bouncy castle some nights), Mango and Firewater (which on certain days has drinks for less than £1!). Strathclyde also has a big student union which has two bars in it which we would sometimes go to if we wanted to have a more chilled out night. Other than that, pub quizzes are really popular in Glasgow.

Glasgow

Things to do in the City Centre: Buchanan Street, Necropolis, the 'lighthouse', walk / bike along the river Clyde, Bread meets Bread (amazing burgers)

Things to do in the West End: Ashton Lane (cobblestone street with bars and pubs), University of Glasgow clock tower, Kelvingrove Museum, Kelvingrove Park, Botanical Gardens, Kelvin Walkway (a great walk that goes along the River Kelvin connecting Kelvingrove Park and the Botanical Gardens which a lot of people don't seem to know about!)

Travel

For travelling within Scotland, there are trains between the main cities which is probably the easiest and fastest way to get around. Alternatively, a funny guy called Gary runs Student Tours Scotland, which does day trips in the weekend for around £20. I think the tours are generally only worth it if they go to places that would be harder to get to on your own, like Loch Ness.



I also did quite a lot of travelling around Europe. The good thing about going on exchange in semester 1 is that you get two weeks off for Easter break before exams start, and because my first exam wasn't until the beginning of May, I had 4 weeks off! In terms of travelling outside of Scotland, Glasgow offers some incredibly cheap flights. For example, I got flight to Warsaw in Poland for only £13, and return flights to Ibiza for £30! Keep an eye on Skyscanner!



Tips for travelling in and out of the UK:

- 1) If you are on a non-EU passport, some airlines (usually the cheaper ones such as Ryanair and Wizz) that require you to check-in online will require you to print your boarding pass and get a visa stamp from the airport desk when flying between Europe and the UK so remember to do this!
- 2) Bring proof you are studying (Student ID card and acceptance letter) when travelling so it makes it easier to get back into Scotland when going through immigration
- 3) Check flights from Prestwick Airport and Edinburgh, as sometimes they are cheaper/ have different destinations

Overall, I cannot recommend going on exchange enough! It really is true when they say that 'people make Glasgow', as everyone was so friendly and always willing to help you if you need it.

