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## Exchange Report Form

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Program: Computer Science and Mathematics

Host University: University of Manchester

Host Country: United Kingdom

Semester: Winter

Year: 2023

Hello and welcome back from your exchange! We at Concordia International hope that you had a truly wonderful and life changing experience. In order to lend a hand to future exchange students, and for our staff's information, we ask that you fill out the following information sheet regarding your exchange. Please be as precise and inclusive as possible in the details you provide in your report.

Please complete and save this form on your computer, and e-mail it as an attachment to the International Liaison Officer responsible for your exchange.

### Section 1 – Choosing your host

Please provide information here for students who are thinking about applying to your host institution, or who have been accepted and are preparing for their time abroad.

1. Why did you choose your host institution and country? Please list the pros and cons of your choice.

The main motivations were language, quality of education and having a connection.

- Being familiar with the local language was quite important to me, and I believe it helped in day to day interactions with local students and staff members.
- University of Manchester was ranked quite high and offered many interesting courses related to my program of study
- My mother knew someone who was studying at the University of Manchester. Although we only met for a few times, it was comforting knowing I could reach out to someone if I needed it.

2. What were the semester dates at your host institution? How are the semesters called and split? What are the main holidays and breaks?

The semester dates at UoM were from January 30 to June 7th. This semester was called semester 2, which is equivalent to North American winter terms. The main holiday was Easter break and it lasted from the end of March to Mid April.

3. What facilities were available at the school (library, gym etc), and did you pay any extra fees to be able to use them?

There are many different gyms located around the different campuses. All of them require additional payments and have their own membership schemes. The university provided students with a lot of clubs and events for all kinds of sports. Finally, the libraries are open almost all day and provide free access to books, laptops and desktops.

4. How easy/difficult was it to match courses with your Concordia courses? Do you have any specific suggestions for future students?

I think this was one of the most frustrating parts of the exchange. The course approval required a lot of back and forth emails and had uncertainties till the beginning of the semester. I would recommend future students to have a backup plan like general electives or extra approved courses.

5. What can students expect out of the classes they will be attending? How difficult were the courses? What was the grading/ evaluation system like?

I think this depends a lot on the program of study. But for CS and Math classes specifically, I found them quite challenging and workload heavy. Some classes have a few three-week long courseworks to complete and others had weekly tests and problem sheets that were not mandatory but quite helpful. You can find the grading scheme [here](#). Getting 70% nets you the highest possible grade, a first.

6. What were the immigration procedures and requirements for your host country? Did you need a visa (please mention your citizenship)? How much did the visa cost? Are there any special options available to Canadians/Quebecers?

There are no immigration requirements to study in the UK for one semester. This is because there is an agreement between the two countries which allows anybody from Canada to stay in the UK as long as it's for a period of less than 6 months.

7. How much (approximately) should students budget monthly for the following: housing, local transportation, food, health insurance, going out, travel to and from the host country as well as within?

I think one should budget about 10k Canadian dollars for all the above. Housing will be the majority of the costs, while traveling will come as a close second. The food price is generally the same as in Canada, but perhaps the portions are slightly smaller. Transportation was overall quite affordable.

### Section 2 – Housing

1. Where did you live while you were on exchange (i.e. on your own or in a student residence)? Were you happy with your decision?

I lived in a student residence (Whitworth Park) that was close to the main campus of the university. I was quite happy with my decision as I met a lot of new friends and interesting people near where I lived.

2. How difficult was it to find housing? Did the host school assist you with the housing process?

It was quite easy to find student housing as the host school provided a selection process amongst many choices ranging from close, mid-distance to far from the main campus. There were also many price ranges for different styles of rooms (en-suite, shared, etc.)

3. Do you have any suggestions on good places (i.e. websites) for students to look for housing? Do you have any suggestions for locations in the city students might want to live in?

I would suggest future students to look at the official University of Manchester accommodations list as there are many great choices to pick from. I believe all locations have their own benefits, but I would personally suggest living in Victoria Park or near Oxford Road.

### Section 3 – Settling in

In this section please provide details for what students can expect in their first few days in their new home and during their exchange.

1. What orientation activities were there for incoming exchange students? If possible, please provide a brief summary of what your first week was like.

There was a Whatsapp group for exchange students and people were planning parties and visits around the city. During the first week, the university also planned a social event for international students. My first week consisted of going to classes, learning to cook with some of my flatmates, and meeting some new people.

2. Are there any non-academic related formalities to be taken care of upon arrival?

There were small tasks to complete after arrival, such as figuring out how the laundry machine worked, getting a railcard for traveling around the UK, and where to buy groceries.

3. What are the school related formalities to be taken care of upon arrival?

I had to get a student card to gain access to places around the campus. I also needed to become familiar with the University of Manchester's online teaching system, using Blackboard and MyManchester. Finally, it took me about a month to become familiar with the university campus and the location of my classes.

4. Where and how did you set up a bank account? How did you go about activating a cell phone?

I ended up using an online bank account called Monzo. I was also using cash sometimes because it was difficult to store the money into the online bank. For the cellphone, I used Vodafone and the university accommodation provided some prepaid cards that were quite convenient to set up.

5. Do you have any travel tips, information about must-see places, or tips on places to go out for students attending your host school?

I think one definitely needs to visit around the UK to have a complete student exchange experience. I would recommend Scotland (preferably the north), Peak and Lake District, Liverpool and Birmingham and also anywhere in Wales. Those are all very famous tourist locations near Manchester and I believe they are definitely worth experiencing at least once. For some general travel tips, I would recommend getting a Railcard and bringing your own food/snacks to make the trips a bit more affordable.

6. Did you encounter much culture shock during your exchange? Is there anything that Concordia students studying in your host country should be aware of?

There was no big culture difference between Manchester and Montreal, in my opinion. There are a lot of similarities in the food, the events and the overall life. The biggest (minor) differences were: people like to wait in lines for concerts, drinking tea with milk, and let's not forget the obsession with meal deals.

#### Section 4 – Final thoughts

Now that your exchange has come to an end, take a bit of time to reflect on your experience.

1. How has your exchange affected you in your academic and personal life?

My exchange experience has had a tremendous impact on both my academic and personal life. I made a lot of new friends and faced a lot of new challenges. Academically, I gained clarity on what I want to pursue later on, or at least, a general direction of where things are going for me. Personally, I learned to cook basic but nutritious meals, buy my own groceries, and plan my days to avoid distractions (not always for that last one, although I still tried to maintain some balance by enjoying myself every now and then).

2. Do you have any further advice for future exchange students or any other comments you would like to add?

I remember reading somewhere, someone who did an exchange previously saying that if you were having any doubts on doing an exchange, you should put them aside and try regardless. I have to reiterate this advice as it became so true for my case, it's easy to overthink a lot of things and expecting them to go wrong, but somehow, slowly and surely, you will get accustomed to a new lifestyle and fall in love with it, you will cherish unforgettable memories and long lasting stories to share with others.