

2013-2014

University Attended: University of Washington

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

The introduction programme was conducted by Foundation for International Understanding Through Students (FIUTS) and lasted for roughly two weeks before the start of the fall quarter. This comprised of several activities everyday the majority of which were optional, however as an exchange student you do have to pay an International fee each quarter of \$45, regardless of whether you partake in the events or not. Most of the activities were free, although some you had to pay a small fee for. I myself went to the pub quiz (\$10) and the boat cruise (\$15), which was my particular favourite. In addition, there were some other events organised such as a scavenger hunt, and informational sessions, that allowed new international students to not only get to know the local area, but new people too. As well as the induction by FIUTS, the University of Washington (UW) also hosts an activity fair on Red Square that allows students to see the range of clubs they could join whilst studying at UW. Finally, the Business School themselves arranged an afternoon the day before classes started in order for exchange students to meet their buddies, and other students also on an exchange programme. This was a nice experience, and did allow me to ask students question about how the classes were and address any concerns I had.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The teaching style at UW is very different to Manchester. You have to complete 12 credits a quarter which is usually three classes in the business school. One of my classes (BCMU301) was more skill than theory based and the aim of the course was to help each student improve their presentations, business writing, and general communication. This course I particularly enjoyed and would recommend students take it during one of their quarters studying at UW. Every course I took at UW had some element of a group project and this usually accounted for 30% of your grade, so therefore be prepared to have group meetings at least once a week for each course, and more often towards the end of the quarter. Exams at UW tend to be multiple choice, and it is common to have more than one exam for each course, however, the exams do not have a heavy weighting in terms of your grade, as they are normally worth 25% each, instead of 75%-100% at Manchester. On the other hand, most classes are graded on a curve, which means that you are graded as a representation of the class as a whole. Just because you scored 90% on an exam does not mean you have done particularly well in terms of Grade Point Average (GPA), so it is important that you keep on top of reading assignments and assignment deadlines. It is common for classes to have reading quizzes, to ensure that students are reading textbook material, and the scores from these quizzes do contribute towards your overall grade for that course, maybe only 10-15% but they do count. Also, the most prevalent difference between UW and Manchester is that participation and attendance are a part of your grade, again, this may only be a small percentage of your grade, usually 10%, but all the grades do contribute to your final result, therefore it is recommended that you do frequently contribute to class discussion, and missing classes results in you becoming too behind in your work, and ultimately affects your grade. The professors at UW are very nice and always willing to help with any problems you have. If you email any of the staff, they tend to respond very quickly, and nothing is too much trouble for them, their goal is to get you the best grade you can.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

The International Team provided me with all the information I required and if I did have a question or needed something clarifying, they were there to help.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

The meetings do provide you with enough information, however I felt the meeting with the students who had previously attended our universities, or students who are currently on exchange from our host institution could have been sooner in the year than March. *MBS comment: It is not possible to schedule this any earlier. Most students haven't started their applications at this stage and incoming exchange students only start at MBS at the beginning of February.*

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

The main point of contact at UW is Kathleen Hatch who really wants to help you as much as she can. Her office is always open, and nothing seems too much trouble.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

UW does accept the University of Manchester policy and therefore you do not have to pay any additional health care insurance costs. You simply have to fill out a short questionnaire online for an insurance waiver, and then an email will be sent to you to confirm that it has been waived.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS AND FINANCIAL CERTIFICATION

UW does charge international students both a U-pass fee (\$76) and an international fee (\$45) each quarter which are compulsory, regardless of whether you use the services or not.

ACCOMMODATION

From previous feedback, I decided that I wanted to live off campus by myself. I found a studio apartment when I arrived in Seattle within a few days, so it is possible to go out there without accommodation already in place. You will find that the majority of places only offer 12-month contracts, which is frustrating considering that you will only be there for around 7 months. However, I signed a 12-month contract and the leasing agent found a replacement for my room so that I was not liable to pay the remainder of the rent. I rented a studio on 45th and 21st, which is a 5 minute walk to the business school and in the 'Greek System' – where all the fraternities and sororities are. My rent was \$685/month which included free wi-fi, and I had to pay for utilities (electricity, water, garbage, and heating) myself. All together it would cost around \$750/month, although that may seem more expensive than other accommodation, that is around the price you will pay if you want to live by yourself and close to campus. There are cheaper alternatives available. The building I stayed in had secure access and each studio had it's own private bathroom. The room was also furnished, and there was a community kitchen on each floor, with a cupboard that was accessed via a key, so utensils and pans wouldn't go missing. There was also washing and drying facilities available in the kitchen for \$1 each, which was very cheap. The company I leased my studio from was called Trimark Housing which is a relatively big company with around 10 different properties across the UW area comprising of shared houses and studios. If you were planning to find a place when you got there I would definitely recommend looking at their website or heading to their office to talk to the staff.

Website: <http://www.uw-housing.com>.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

The students at UW are very welcoming especially when they hear you have a British accent. I didn't join an activity group and this is one thing I do regret not doing whilst on exchange, however students are friendly and will invite you out to events or parties. I travelled to Vancouver, BC over thanksgiving break with my friend who was on exchange at the same time and that was really nice and pretty cheap to get to, as Washington State borders Canada. I also turned 21 in January and I travelled to Las Vegas to celebrate in style, which again was definitely a worthwhile trip, and if you look around, you can get very good deals, so I would recommend having money to travel, as flights and hotels can be found inexpensively. I had family living in Seattle, so over Christmas we travelled to east Washington, and I got to experience Leavenworth which has a Bavarian style village set up at Christmas – similar to the Christmas markets, but better- so if you find a way of getting there, you would not be disappointed.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

A wonderful experience, I'm so glad I chose Seattle.

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

There were numerous events put on for around a week that helped new students to meet others and familiarise ourselves with the campus and Seattle itself. A couple of notable highlights included a scavenger hunt around the entire city, a boat cruise (costs extra), and campus tours. There were also information sessions put on which were optional, so you only went to the ones that interested you, and they were very useful. Some of the ones I went to were the International Student Services talk (about visa requirements and conditions), and a talk and tour of the gym facilities.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

The teaching style is very different to Manchester. Classes are much smaller (around 40 students), attendance is expected and participation is graded. There is normally homework set after each class, and instead of one exam at the end of the course, assessment is broken down into smaller parts (eg a group project, individual assignment, quizzes, midterm and final exams). Midterm and final exams are common across most courses, but they are totally different to exams in Manchester. They are normally always multiple choice with a few short answer questions, and take less than an hour. Exchange students are not given priority when it comes to choosing courses, so some of the more popular ones may already be taken by the time you are allowed to register. Having said that, I had no issue with my courses, you just have to be flexible and think of a few alternatives instead of being set on certain choices. The teachers are very involved in the courses, and are more than happy to stay behind after class or arrange a time to meet if you need extra help.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

The MBS team were very helpful and gave us all information that they could. If they did not have the answer to a question they would point you in the direction of someone who could answer it. If I had a problem or question (no matter how small) I would never hesitate to email them.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

The information was understandably very general to suit students going to different universities, so it was a good starting point for further research. It would be worth letting the appropriate students know that it is normal for the documents for UW to come very late, which makes the visa process quite stressful.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

Kathleen Hatch is great; her door is always open and she responds very quickly to emails, normally with the answer to your questions even if they are not really in her area.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

Having the University of Manchester policy waives the requirement to buy their insurance plan. This is really easy to do and will be explained when you arrive. Just make sure you have all the policy details with you and you complete the form by the deadline. The document provided by Manchester could be more detailed on what exactly the policy covers, and if students need to take out any further insurance.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS AND FINANCIAL CERTIFICATION

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc. Any information that you had to provide on financial certificate would be helpful.

There are a couple of extra fees charged by UW. The first is an International Student Fee which is \$45 per quarter, and the second is a U Pass Fee which is \$76 per quarter. The U Pass is loaded on to your student ID card and gives free/discounted fares on various methods of transportation. For proof of funds I used a savings account and got a print out from the bank before I left, however I don't recall ever having to present it anywhere, not even when I went for my visa.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

Previous feedback had recommended that we look for private accommodation instead of the university dorms. I followed this advice and found a studio in a really convenient location close to campus. I had my own room and bathroom then shared a kitchen with the rest of the building. All utilities were included in the rent, so it worked out well for me. I am happy to provide more information and contact details for the place I stayed if required. A few of my friends who were also exchange students stayed in university accommodation and didn't have any issues with it. One of the main advantages of the university housing is that you get to know a large group of people really quickly.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Transportation around Seattle is really easy, there are a lot of bus routes to the most popular places. Having the U Pass is really handy as you don't have to worry about having the right change (you have to have the exact fare on buses!). There are also a lot of students with cars, so you will probably make a friend with one! There are so many different student clubs and societies, and I would definitely advise exchange students to join one. It is a great way to socialise, have fun, and meet lots of local students, as well as other exchange students. Washington state has so many different things to offer thanks to its landscape (eg. mountains = skiing) so be sure to make the most of them! I joined the Ski race team as I wanted to do some skiing whilst I was out there, however I had never raced before. That wasn't an issue, the people were so welcoming and it was where I made most of my good friends from my exchange. So if you are into skiing definitely give racing a try, even if you aren't that advanced!

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

The most amazing experience of my life so far; I do NOT want to come home!