

2013-2014

University Attended: University of Southern California

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

- At the beginning of first semester we had a full orientation including lessons how to register for courses, how to commute from USC to downtown, some large supermarkets, shopping centres, where to eat, what to do around campus, what events are being held on campus and close to it. Besides, we played ice breaking games, got to know each other better, because there were around 90 exchange students from all around the world and programme director wanted us to trust each other more. The whole orientation programme lasted for a couple of hours, where we also presented our documentation and got maps of USC campus. It was useful mostly because we found out who was an exchange student, so we felt less stressed out after that. Moreover, the orientation was useful because Sean O'Connell told us how the classes look like, how lecturers normally deal with the material.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

- Style of teaching depends on the lecturer, but usually teachers are very accessible, they want to know each student better before the semester really begins, so that they could help students with workload, assignments, etc. All the lecturers that I had were extremely helpful, most of them knew each students' name (even if we met on the street outside campus). Most of the time you can talk to them about your grade if you think it is not right. Teachers never ask to write your ID number on the paper, only names, which means that the grade really depends on your participation in class. In all the classes at least 10% of the grade consists of participation in class, meaning you have to raise your hand, ask and answer questions, interpret material out loud during the class. Besides, you have to be ready for class by reading all the assigned material. If you want to get a good grade (an A or at least a -A) you must go out of your way and do more than it is assigned.
- I loved all the courses that I took. Both semesters I took Spanish language where it is possible to be chosen by your lecturer to be rewarded for excellent performance. I am proud to say that out of 600 students only 2 were picked and I won the award. It was such a great experience. Besides I got to know my lecturer better and made some good connections for my future recommendations.
- In addition I would strongly recommend Global Marketing Management course (MKT 465) to those who want to work for international companies in marketing or R&D, because the assignments throughout the course were the exact same thing that employees do for these companies. I loved the practical use of the course. Moreover, Leading Organizations (BUAD 304) included exercises in Experiential Learning Centre where all the theory from the textbook was used. I also took Professional Selling (MKT 410), which taught me confidence. Finally, I took New Media and Communications Management (BUCO 458), where we presented to real companies like IBM, Rextex. IBM Social Symposium, where my group presented a new social platform, was phenomenal.
- Usually during the application process you might not get classes that you want, but when you actually come to USC you will see that people drop classes all the time, and there is a huge chance that you will get that course in the end. They give 3 weeks to register for courses so in that time you can add, drop, switch classes as many time you want (given that there are enough empty spots). Besides, most of the times you can simply go and talk to the lecturer before class and tell him/her that you want to attend his/her course and they will try their best to add you. Overall, everyone is extremely helpful. I met many great professors who wanted to keep in touch even though I am leaving soon.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

- ➔ Honestly, I didn't know that something was going on with the MBS International Team, but there were no problems that USC could not solve for me.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

- ➔ I think meetings were clear enough. You only experience the university when you actually come here and study. So as far as documentation goes, everything was clearly explained.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

- ➔ Always accessible, frequent emails from programme director, always reminded us the deadlines, gave us information about upcoming events, tried to engage us in many activities. (Both semesters)

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

- ➔ The insurance was compulsory for both semesters. \$608 every semester plus around \$250 for other health fees each semester as well. The most worrying part was that I needed to pay for the whole summer till August even though I was leaving before June. Luckily, Sean O'Connell told us at the end of second semester that it is actually possible to waive it if you show Health Insurance office your confirmed ticket that shows that you are leaving the States before June 30th. A lot of the people decided to get their own insurance plans, which were good enough for USC. But obviously you have to talk about it with people working there and programme director. They can explain everything very clearly. I am not sure because I just decided to use USC Insurance for less hassle.

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.

- ➔ Some of the classes have labs that you have to pay for. In my case, they were both semesters' Spanish language labs (\$50 each semester). Still do not know what the lab was, because we only had classes in the same room all semester round.

ACCOMMODATION

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

- ➔ Usually, people want to live as close to campus as possible, however, nobody in their junior (3rd) year should live in halls (dorms) because they will have to deal with freshmen all the time. It is not useful in terms of focus on studying. USC offered apartments are great. I lived in Sierra Apartments next to the fraternity and sorority street, called The Row, which at first I thought would be very noisy, but as we got a room facing the street next to the Greek "Row", it was very quiet. Only 10 minutes to campus by foot, very friendly staff in the first floor. The CSC (service centre) is located in Sierra so every other accommodation members have to come to Sierra to pick up their parcels. That was very useful. Besides, I do not recommend buying a meal plan because you won't use the dining dollars, thus a lot of money goes to waste.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

- ➔ At first, we all were pretty scared and overpaid for both coming to the campus and navigating around downtown area. There is no need to take a shuttle or taxi if you don't have a lot of luggage, because one bus (#102) takes you straight to campus (from LAX airport). Moreover, busses called Dash F take you from campus to downtown and cost only 50 cents instead of usual fair on any other bus or metro (tram). Unluckily, any kind of trip with a bus (Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, Rodeo Drive) will take a long time (at least 1 hour and 30minutes, so if you have friends who own cars, you will be very lucky. On the other

hand, there is an app called Lyft or Uber, which you can use for cheaper commute. Lyft ride from campus to downtown only cost \$8, and first ride is free for USC students.

- Travelling is essential when you are here on West Coast. USC has many “long” weekends, so visiting San Francisco, Las Vegas, San Diego is extremely easy. During my first semester I went to a 5-day trip from LA to San Francisco along the coast (views were amazing), then from there to Fresno city which is next to Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks, which we visited. Then we visited Las Vegas, Grand Canyon and came back to LA through Death Valley. Besides, if you look for itineraries in advance, the prices are very appealing.
- Social life naturally depends on your spending habits or extra cash that you have. Going out in LA is quite expensive. Usually people go to Hollywood night clubs and bars, because there is only one bar next to campus. You need to keep in mind that the legal drinking age is 21 and it is very strict. I know one girl who was 19 at that time and borrowed her friend’s ID to get into club. The police were checking all the bars that night and she was caught and sent to court.
- The integration with students is very easy. There are many social events happening on and off campus. All you need to do is go out and step out of your comfort zone. I was alone at the beginning, but at the end of first month I made some really good friends. One of them even invited me to their thanksgiving celebration at his house. Local students are very friendly and open-minded. I definitely made friends for life.
- There are many student organizations that you can join, some similar to university of Manchester societies, and many more. Religion, business, technology, sports, arts – everything is accessible. There are multiple career fairs as well. These are usually very well advertised way in advance for you not to miss them. A piece of advice would be to change your CV to a resume before you come to USC, because the format they are using is very different from the one we are used to use in Europe.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

This year was the most enjoyable year of my life not only for great learning experience, being acknowledged by university, but also for life-long friendships that I made and will keep for the rest of my life.

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

Orientation lasted for a full week before classes started. It was very useful in presenting us with the basic things we needed to get around Los Angeles, performing well in school and getting to know the other exchange students. We scheduled group meetings, individual ones (if necessary) and other social events that would help us learn about the campus and about the city.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The main difference between the English and American school system lies in the methods of assessment. In America, the overall grade is distributed between coursework, midterms and final exams, some with an emphasis on coursework and midterms rather than finals.

Every professor has his own style of teaching, but a common theme I observed was encouraged interactive participation from the class in every lecture.

There are, of course, more popular courses and less popular ones. The more popular ones usually have a number or ‘reserved’ seats for incoming exchange students, so I would recommend knowing exactly which ones of the popular courses a student would like to be in, register for it, and if he/she loses interest then there are 3 weeks allocated for adding/dropping courses.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

There is a good level of support available from the MBS international team, if needed. I got by quite well on my own, or with advice from my friends and did not fully take advantage of the MBS team, but otherwise I’m sure they would have done everything in their power to help.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

The meetings were relevant and very helpful. I felt like I knew everything I needed to know about the visa application process and what needed to be done once entering America.

The meetings with students that came back from their exchange year also provided a crucial informal perspective from their experience.

It would have been a bit useful to know smaller details that would help with my budgeting. Things like the cost of a phone plan, transportation, food, etc. (*MBS comment: The meeting arranged with returning students in March gives the opportunity to ask other students about questions like this. Unfortunately it is not possible for MBS to provide details such as this for all exchange destinations.*)

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Great level of support from Sean O'Connell and the international office, periodic emails about formalities that need to be done, opportunities to schedule appointments and a proactive approach in helping us have the best experience possible by organizing trips to museums, sporting events, hikes, dinners, sightseeing, etc.

Future students should know that they have the opportunity to extend their stay for the whole summer by being involved and working towards getting an internship. I did not know that USC would sponsor my visa extension (I thought that the employer would have to sponsor it) until the last month of my visa, but luckily enough I still managed to get a job and successfully continue my stay.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

I purchased the USC health insurance plan (\$800/semester). It wasn't covered by the University of Manchester, since I am an EU student. A bit costly, but I think that there should be no chances taken on this one, just to save money.

I feel like the health insurance policy should be slightly more emphasized, as any medical care in America can be devastating for a student's finances without the proper medical insurance.

I was unlucky enough to break my arm during the summer, but I had the USC health insurance plan which covered literally everything. Otherwise, I would have been liable to pay around \$3000 which would have cut my summer short.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS AND FINANCIAL CERTIFICATION

No real added costs, apart from small fees (\$50) if registering for specific courses (i.e. in the film school)

ACCOMMODATION

For an easy transition, I chose USC accommodation for upperclassmen. Subsequently I joined a fraternity and moved into their house in the second semester, which definitely helped cutting costs. (dues included accommodation, food and social events)

I wouldn't recommend private accommodation as leasing and other insurance costs could prove to be a massive pain for the student.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transportation in LA is not that great. They have a metro system but it's very limited. To get around and sometimes downtown, I had a bike, but most people use cars.

Los Angeles is a great travel destination. From there, trips can be made to cities like San Francisco and Las Vegas, natural attractions such as Joshua Tree, Yosemite National Park, Grand Canyon and Big Sur...or anywhere in North California. Even trips to Mexico or South America can be made.

Inside Los Angeles, you can never get bored. The beach is a 25 min drive from campus, mountains are 3-4 h drive. So basically you can go snowboarding in the morning, spend a couple of hours there, come back and catch the sunset on the beach. And they have a wide variety of beaches to choose from.

In terms of integration with students, USC is a very social place within which the Greek community dominates the social scene. Joining a fraternity was by far the best decision I made while here. I didn't just make 100 friends for my stay here, I made 100 friends for life which I know I will see when I come back and visit / they come to visit me. It is also an incredible networking opportunity, hence me getting my internship. Not only that, but the process of application to a fraternity changed me into a better person and I got to do things in LA that I would have never done otherwise!

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD:

One single sentence wouldn't make it justice but, in short, this has definitely been the most challenging and yet rewarding year of my life and it changed my life forever.

FEEDBACK 3

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

Whilst this was long and not quite what you want to do when you first arrive, the information is important and noting the important things will save you a lot of time and stress later. It is also a great opportunity to meet all the other international students on your course, one of the few times when you will be able to do so.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

The teaching here is excellent, and the structure of the courses, on the whole, is more interactive. Assessment is more regular than what we're used to so you need to make sure you have a little more consistency than you have perhaps had in the past. I failed to utilise my teachers to their full extent so go to their office hours if you are having trouble. Remember, here they know who you are when they mark your work so having a teacher like you/know who you are can be the difference between grades.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

The support from Manchester was fantastic. They were quick to help with any problems that arose and were incredibly understanding despite a noticeable lack of organisation on my behalf. It's almost as if they've seen it before...

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

A clearer understanding of the academic requirements for your institution could have been helpful. The learning agreements seemed to be more for MBS than they were to help us determine how many units we could take, what grade we needed, how many business units we needed to take to pass etc. (*MBS comment: A Workload Requirement document is given to every outgoing student and this shows exactly what students are required to undertake on the year abroad*).

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

Although Sean always seems to be very busy he is incredibly organised and efficient. Rarely has he been too busy to offer a quick word of advice. In fact, I realised that despite having a margin of workload that he had, I could barely keep up. If he says he will do something, consider it done. Just make sure you ask.

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

Pretty straight forward, purchase the USC health insurance. The health centre is very good.

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.

This is undoubtedly the most complicated area to provide feedback on. There are many additional costs and also some refunds available. One thing I would strongly suggest is that student look into the Student Finance Year Abroad Travel Grant. If you're eligible, this can save you \$\$\$\$'s.

ACCOMMODATION

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

First semester I lived in Sierra, simple, close to the row, can't complain. Annenberg is another good choice.

Second semester I lived in my fraternity, something I would strongly recommend to anyone looking to become involved with Greek Life.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

Need a car to travel around USC. However, I didn't buy one as you can borrow friends due to their difference insurance system. The social life is incredible, although this year DPS has become stricter and increased control.

I would strongly recommend getting involved in Greek Life. It has 100% been the best decision I made whilst I've been here.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

One sentence!?! Not a chance. Go to USC, it will be the best decision you've ever made.

FEEDBACK 4

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

A four hour talk (mainly from Sean) where we got to meet the other exchange students, our USC buddies and learn about course selection and all things USC - slightly tedious but useful. The next day we had a Marshall buffet where we could meet all new Marshall students.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

I found the courses much more practical (and easier) than Manchester. The teachers were really easy to talk to and helpful. There's a lot of smaller assignments throughout the semester and a lot of group work. I mainly took marketing and entrepreneurship classes which I really recommend as most end with a project which'd be great to show in interviews to future employers.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Good, I didn't have anything I needed to contact MBS about this year.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

More about VISAs and working/internships. *(MBS comment: Students have to be guided by the US Government Visa website and information given by the partner institution. MBS is not able to give out any visa advice in case this changes. MBS is not involved in internships for students and this has to be arranged by students themselves).*

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

Good, hand in stuff on time to Sean, he always gets mad because Manchester students are the last to hand stuff in.

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

Compulsory health insurance through Aetna. You can get your own as long as it has the specified terms but it's much easier just to do it through USC.

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.

Health insurance

Optional dental insurance

ACCOMMODATION

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

This year international students were mainly placed in Sierra, Founders or Annenberg - all are really close to The Row (28th Street) which is where all the parties are. All really similar size, layout and amenities. 4 per flat, you share a room with one roommate, and have a shared kitchen, bathroom and living room. Pretty basic apartments but you can make them look nice. Much better standard than oak house or tower!!

If you can I really recommend living in a sorority or fraternity for spring semester and summer. Much much cheaper than living in USC housing, they also cook and clean for you and it'll give you a great American experience. I lived in a 6-person room in spring semester and loved it!

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

SOCIAL LIFE: Most of the parties are either on The Row or at the 901 bar, if you're 21 you can go out in Hollywood where they're strict on IDs.

GO GREEK!! I can't recommend joining a sorority or fraternity enough! Most of the films about frat life were based on USC's Row (the name for 28th street because its a road of frats and sororities). In my opinion it's the best way to meet Americans and fully integrate yourself. You instantly meet 200 new people who will all be ridiculously nice to you. You'll also then have your social life taken care of for the rest of the year.

For guys: it's hard to get into parties unless you're in the frat or are really good friends with a guy in the frat. JOIN A FRAT!

For girls: Recruitment week (rush) for girls is a little bit weird, everyone you speak to will be over the top and cheesy and LOVE that you're "British" but I promise you they'll be normal after the week's over. Even if you don't end up wanting to join a sorority do the week just as a way to meet lots of new people.

If you do join, you'll gain hundreds of new "sisters" who'll take you under their wings and make sure you have the best year. You also have the option of living in the house in Spring semester which I'd really recommend.

TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL:

Public transport here is ridiculously bad! Most of your friends will have cars and probably be more than happy to drive you anywhere or let you borrow their car (everyone's really generous here!). Download the app 'Uber'.

FOOD:

Eating out is so cheap, the portions are huge and the food is delicious!

Close places: Urth Caffè, Bottega Louie, Wokcano in Downtown. Pizza Studio and Built on Figueroa.

Drunchies: PANDA EXPRESS!!

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

The best decision I ever made.