

## **A Wee Scottish Semester**

*Student Report by Nabila Sudradjat*

In the fall semester of 2016, I moved to Glasgow, Scotland to study at University of Glasgow. The exchange period lasted almost four months, so I was there from early September to mid-December. The university is located in the West End, the 'posh' side of town. The campus itself is situated on a hill, with its iconic bell tower overlooking a panoramic view of the city. It really was like stepping into Hogwarts every day! I didn't know much about Glasgow when I first arrived, but I did read somewhere online that it was voted 'World's Friendliest City' – needless to say, I didn't believe it until I saw it for myself. Their slogan is "*People Make Glasgow*" and I could not have summed up my experience better than that – the people I met really did make Glasgow.

In the words of the lovely taxi driver whom I met on my first day in town – *everything you can do in London, you can do in Glasgow – just cheaper, with less congestion, and nicer people!*

### **Preparation**

**Visa:** If needed, you can apply for a visa up to 3 months before your date of travel and the sooner the better, as it does not take long and it is better to get it out of the way. The documents needed for the application process for a Short Term Study visa (6 months) can be seen online.

**Accommodation:** This was probably the most stressful aspect of the preparation process. Since I was only staying for one semester, it was not possible to be allocated to university halls. Also, rooms in a private flat usually have contracts for 6 months and I was also unfamiliar with the area. I ended up staying with Unite Students, an organization that specializes in providing accommodation for students attending for a shorter period of time. They have several buildings near university campuses, however the rooms for one semester do run out quite quickly. I was very lucky to get a last minute place at Kelvin Court, which is a 10-15 minute walk to university.

I lived in an en-suite flat and shared a kitchen with 5 other flat mates (this varies between flats) and there was cleaning service for the kitchen once every fortnight (similar to The Student Hotel). I highly suggest looking into these private halls because although they are not the cheapest, they are the most convenient. You'll be within close proximity of the university and will have plenty of chances to make friends at social gatherings. Also, everyone who works at the accommodation are very welcoming and always there to help (and more importantly always giving free food, organizing free trips, or throwing pizza parties!).

If you are unable to find accommodation beforehand, hostels may be an alternative option until you meet people also looking for private housing or find a last minute opening at one of the private student halls. Some hostels to check out would be SYHA Glasgow Youth Hostel (near the university) or Euro Hostel (in the city center).

**Tickets:** If you're flying from the Netherlands, I would suggest booking a direct flight using easyJet (as it is fast and relatively cheap). I took British Airways, which I do not recommend as there is a layover in London and the journey becomes much longer.

## **Arrival**

When registering for introduction events, you can also register for a pick-up service at the airport that will take you to campus. A taxi into the West End area is on average £15. Alternatively, you can take an Uber, which is well established in Glasgow and is likely to be relatively cheaper than a taxi.

The university organizes a 'Fresher's Week' for incoming students, and it is basically two weeks of welcome events and partying before the semester begins. You can register for campus tours, a bus tour around the city, social events and much more. You can buy a Fresher's pass online that gains you access to all the parties hosted every night (it is around £40) and it's great if you're up for getting down and dirty with the first years... But don't worry, if you're not willing to spend that much on parties, the university does hold a lot of other events for free that you can join and you can still decide to buy a Fresher's Pass at any point during the week. I also recommend going to the Fresher's fair to check out all the different societies and clubs (even if you're not interested, go for the freebies!) and joining traditional events, such as a Ceilidh, which are always great fun.

## **Courses**

- *Economics of Poverty: A Behavioural and Experimental Approach (7.5 ECTS)*

This course focuses on Development Economics but more from the micro-economic aspect, so we mainly looked at the understanding of human behaviour for economic development. For example, examining the context in which the poor undertake decisions and how to improve the work of development professionals. Most of the content is logic based but it was still very interesting and the professor's informal style of teaching was interactive, which really made me enjoy the course.

- *Economics of Industry 1: Basic Theories of Market Structures (7.5 ECTS)*

This course was quite theoretical as we looked at the various types of strategic behaviour in industries. There was a focus on competition and we studied a lot of models from monopoly theory, collusion and product differentiation. However, there were also some interesting practical insights and we had to write a paper on how to incorporate the theory into real-life situations, in my case it was regarding tacit collusion in the oil and gas industry.

- *Economics of Business 1 (7.5 ECTS)*

This course is a Microeconomics course and looks at the coordination and motivation problems that arise due to increasing specialization, and the potential solutions to these problems in the form of various types of contracts and governance structures. This was the most theoretical course I took out of all my courses but I really enjoyed it. If you enjoyed the IBEB course 'Applied Microeconomics', you will definitely enjoy this course.

- *Environmental Economics (7.5 ECTS)*

This course focuses on linkages between the economy and the environment and also looked at an analysis of the policies to deal with environmental problems. Content-wise it is quite interesting, however it was not my favourite course in terms of structure or teaching style.

## **Finances**

Type of expense	Approximate cost (£)
Visa	89
Flight	226
Accommodation (129 days)	2580
Food*	650
Trips	200
Sports	
- Gym membership	75
- Muay Thai	30
- Pole dancing	20
Entertainment	300
Total	±4170

\* Includes groceries and eating out. Groceries were ± 20/week depending on where I decided to shop. The most common I went to were Morrison's, Tesco, Lidl or Roots & Fruits. Lidl is obviously the cheapest option, then Morrison's and then Tesco. Roots & Fruits sell organic fruit and vegetables with a 10% student discount!

## **Daily life**

In the months approaching winter, I was surprised to see that Glasgow had been graced with decent weather. The cold was crisp but bearable and there was sun on most days. Although it was relatively colder than the Netherlands, I surprisingly didn't encounter as much rain or wind.

The greatest part about being in Scotland is the Glaswegian hospitality, and it is certainly something I look forward to coming back to. However, I must stress that the accent is tricky, but as they would say in Glasgow – *'that's alright, love!'* because you're bound to get used to it one way or another.

Another thing about Scottish people is that they love to drink! In the West End, you're never more than a 5-minute walk from the pub. My favourite thing about the city is that there is always something for you to do, whether it's through university or elsewhere. The university is unique in that it has two student unions (the only university in the UK that does). Double the student union means double the variety of events and parties. Sometimes it might be hard to escape the perceived 'exchange bubble', where you hang out mostly with exchange students, but if you've joined a society or club like I did, they always throw socials and it's a great way to make new friends, who are local or study there full-time. Furthermore, shopping in town is pretty good, and there are plenty of stores that offer student discounts so don't be afraid to ask. This also applies to the vast amount of places to eat. I don't particularly like Scottish food, however the West End does have a lot of hipster cafes and tearooms, which I thought were particularly cute. My favourite places to grab a drink were in Ashton Lane – a small alleyway with restaurants and bars behind the university, where they often have live music, or Sauciehall Street, where you're bound to find a bar or club that suits your tastes. From downing cocktails at *Nice'N'Sleazy* to enjoying some Reggaeton at *Mango* on a Friday night, this street paved ways for some very notable stories to tell. However, do consider that by law you are not allowed to consume alcohol outside after 10pm (shops will not sell alcohol after this time), and most clubs close at 3am – which is something I was not used to. If you're bored and broke during the day, a great thing is that most of the

museums and galleries in Glasgow are free, so you always have something to discover. You can even check out the Hunterian museum on campus on your study break from the library.

Glasgow has a range of bus services, which I must say are quite confusing. However, you can get around easily either using the Subway, on foot, or by bike. The university has a partnership with *NextBike* (a bike rental service) and you can always rent a bike for free to get from one place to another – this is an efficient way to get to and from the city center, but don't forget that you are not in the Netherlands so you would have to bike on the opposite side of the street! Also, be careful when biking because there are limited bike lanes. The subway system has one line circling around Glasgow (fun fact: as the logo is orange, the Subway is commonly known as the '*Clockwork Orange*'). You should definitely take the unique opportunity of joining a 'sub crawl', which is basically a pub-crawl where you stop at every station and have a drink at a nearby pub.

While you're already in Scotland, some must-sees would definitely be Edinburgh, Loch Lomond, Glencoe and the Highlands, and Isle of Skye. A company called ISUK Tours organizes student tours to a range of places and I recommend checking this out if you're planning on visiting somewhere not as accessible such as Isle of Skye, as it is not only more convenient but also a great way to meet likeminded students. A suggestion would be to make the most out of your first few weeks/month in Glasgow because you won't be as busy as the study period only begins at the end of September and there is a greater chance that the weather will act in your favour – so take these trips as early as possible!

Overall, I had endless opportunities to experience new things and so my advice would be to say 'yes!' to everything (within reason, of course) because you will surely make some unforgettable memories and meet people who are bound to become your fondest of friends – I know I definitely did!