

GSA Glasgow School of Art student's report

Glasgow

Glasgow is a very friendly city and all the local people are easy-going and always ready to help. The environment was amazing and I really enjoyed my stay there. Glasgow is a reasonably big city; it offers plenty of fancy venues from parks, museums and art galleries to bars, breweries and clubs. Everything is in a walking distance from the city center that is why it makes sense to find accommodation somewhere nearby. I would also highly recommend to allocate some time for traveling - Scottish Highlands was one of the most inspiring landscape I have ever seen.

Accommodation

It is not so easy to find accommodation in Glasgow, especially if you stay only for one semester. If you do so, first consider a possibility to stay in one of the GSA student halls (unfortunately, they have a very limited amount of places). Other student halls offer only 12 months contracts as well as most of the tenancy contracts even for "spare rooms". Unfortunately, I faced some problems with my accommodation in the beginning of my stay, because I had no proper contract. My landlord was very inadequate that is why I had to move out after two months of stay in a rush. I have to mention that Students Support Services in GSA were very friendly and helpful; they helped me to deal with the situation and immediately offered a place in Margaret MacDonald House (GSA student halls). I consider this story as my own mistake, but in the end, I would suggest to be very careful with the accommodation part.

Introduction to the University

First week is fully allocated for the introduction part, some inductions even continued during the following weeks. It was easy for me to orient in the university. Official induction for Erasmus students took part one month after the official semester had started and at that moment we already knew everything. Other students were very supportive, hence they understand that Erasmus students are new in the city and in the UK educational system itself. There are a lot of activities happening at school all the time and once in a while it is hard to follow everything; you can easily miss a poster in the elevator or an event on Facebook. If something really exciting is in agenda, somebody will definitely tell you what is going on, as there are more than one hundred students in the course.

University

The Program itself consists of two main subjects - Project Design Studio and Architectural Technologies (the latter aims to support the studio project), plus series of lectures that do not require any final submission. First semester is mostly dedicated to a group work; individual task starts in December and takes only four weeks for Erasmus students, which I, personally, found a bit disappointing.

The Group Project - Urban design concept for one of the sites in Glasgow - we did in the team of nine people. The project was mostly self-driven; we had consultations once a week with our tutors and a Pecha Kucha review after one month from the date when the project had started. Since the other subjects did not require any submissions, the whole week time was allotted to the studio work, which I think is a great advantage. It was much more interesting for me to work with the other students than with tutors, as they are all extremely hard-working and talented. Our final exhibition and a public discussion took place in the Lighthouse (Scotland's Centre for Design and Architecture) and it was a very exciting final accord for the whole project.

In general, I felt that there were a lot of freedom in doing what the person is really excited about and, what was even more important - enough time to concentrate on the studio project.

Social

Somebody called Glasgow “students jungle” and I absolutely agree with that. Besides GSA there are three big universities in Glasgow - University of Strathclyde, University of Glasgow and Caledonian University - that brings a lot of students to the city. GSA students have a very diverse night life; everything starts from students cafe - the Vic - on the corner of the GSA Reid Building and ends up with flat parties everywhere around Glasgow. In my opinion, having a students bar right on the corner is the most uniting factor for students.

PS It was a little bit hard to understand Scottish accent in the beginning and it was a small communication barrier. But Scottish people are very friendly and ready to repeat what they said :)

All in all, I highly recommend Glasgow School of Art for the exchange semester. It was a great and exciting time with amazing people, good beer and inspiring architecture :)

