

Student Exchange Questionnaire

Name: Anna Milson

Massey Degree: Bachelor of Design (Honours), Textile Design

Host university: Nottingham Trent

Semester and year of exchange: Semester 2, 2017/18

- *Why did you choose this particular university and/or country for exchange?*

I had always wanted to visit the UK, so it was an easy decision for me to go on exchange to Nottingham. There isn't a huge variety of universities which offered Textile design, so I was excited to find that NTU (Nottingham Trent Uni) was available to go on exchange to. NTU has a highly-recommended textiles course as well, so that also influenced my decision.



- *Did it meet your expectations?*

I had to choose whether to major in embroidery, weave, knit or screenprint – and I chose embroidery – so I didn't have many expectations of what I would learn, as I had only a small knowledge of hand and domestic machine techniques. I was very impressed by the facilities and technicians across all the textiles department; in particular the facilities and support in the embroidery studio. Meeting my new classmates was a bit scary, but everyone was so friendly and the tutors are always keen to help me with any questions or concerns. If you are willing to be friendly and social, and get involved, the study experience is really rewarding!

- *What papers did you study while on exchange? Would you recommend them?*

As I was specifically studying embroidery, I only had core papers and alongside that was Design, Culture & Context (DCC), which is the theory paper. The first core paper was learning and exploring embroidery techniques, and the second was a collaborative group project, where we got to create a collection for a design company. I got to work on a menswear collection for Next fashion, which was a fantastic opportunity to meet people who work in the textiles industry and to also gain valuable insight into industry processes. I would definitely recommend the embroidery course at NTU, as they have a lot of resources and industry connections.

- *Were there differences in the teaching methods and academic environment at your host university, compared to Massey University? If so, what kind of differences?*

I found that I had a lot more classes to attend during the week, but these ranged between 1-3 hours, and covered a range of different topics. I had industry-based lectures, to CAD

sessions, personal development seminars, alongside embroidery tutorials. There was a stronger emphasis on getting students ready for moving straight into industry after graduating. I felt like NTU was very good at preparing textile students for textile-based careers, which is less taught at Massey. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as Massey challenges you to be your own designer, so each university teaches equally important skills. Personally, I am more industry focused, so NTU really taught me a lot about textiles and the careers paths I could pursue. I did go into their second year (and I was nearing the end of third year at Massey), so I wasn't super challenged by the theory papers, but this gave me more time to strengthen my technical skills and travel around!

- *Did you stay on-campus or off-campus? What was the accommodation like?*

I stayed in a privately-owned hall, which a lot of international students lived in as there was one semester contracts offered. It was about a 15-minute walk to uni, but the train station was nearby which was handy. It was a four-story building, with 14 rooms, so it was a great space to meet new people from all parts of the world. There were a few problems that arose in the flat (maintenance issues), but overall the rooms were warm so being in the UK during winter was a lot easier to cope with!

- *How did living expenses compare to in New Zealand?*

Buying food from the supermarket, especially fruit, veg and dairy, was a lot cheaper than New Zealand! Eating out was a bit more expensive, but there were always student deals on offer, so if you knew where to look you could get a cheap meal. The pharmacy (Boots in particular) sells a huge range of necessities, makeup and even food, so this was an affordable place to buy most of the essentials.

- *What extra-curricular activities did you participate in at the host university?*

I had intended on joining some of the many societies that were offered at NTU, but I didn't end up joining as I got busy with uni work and travelling. It would have been a fantastic opportunity to meet other local students, so I would definitely recommend joining a society if you want to meet new people.

- *What's one thing you learnt about your host country or culture?*

Funnily enough, British people line up to wait for buses! British people like to queue, so don't push into a line! Oh, and I gotta add that they also greet you with "Are you alright?", which confused me at the beginning. Once I realised they weren't worried about me, but just saying hi, it made a lot more sense!

- *What were some of the highlights of your exchange experience?*

It would have to be going travelling around the UK and into Europe on a Contiki tour over my Christmas break. Also, I met the most wonderful people in my flat which I became really good friends with. Getting out of Nottingham to go for hikes was a great stress-reliever, and almost feels like a little bit like NZ by being back in nature.

- *What did you find challenging?*

I think I found it difficult to understand what was required of me to produce as part of my design process, as NTU had quite different ways of presenting and organising your work compared to Massey. I had to keep a different file for all the classes that I took, which was a little hard for me to get my head around. But the teachers are always keen to help, so I got a handle on it all by the time I had to hand in my first project. Also, having to leave all the great people I had met was also a little heartbreaking – but on the bright side, it gives you another opportunity to travel again!

- *What do you feel you have learnt or gained from going on exchange?*

One of the main things I gained from going on exchange, and it's going to sound a little cheesy, is more self-confidence. I mean, if you are brave enough to travel across half the world to live in a completely new place, it's safe to say that these experiences really make you grow as a person! I've gained a new sense of adventure for travel and spontaneity that I didn't have before I left New Zealand.

- *Do you have any tips for future students intending to travel to the same country or university?*

Go for it!! You have nothing to lose, and a lot more to gain. England is an amazing place to experience history, fantastic museums and art galleries, fantastic shopping and food, and not to mention, there's a pretty great nightlife as well! But more seriously, I would recommend doing research into universities who have a lot of successful graduates or a highly reputable course that you are studying yourself. Exchanging to a university with well-respected programmes really benefits your learning and pushes your creativity.

- *Do you have any comments on the support provided to you by Massey University and/or by the host university before/during/after your exchange?*

Craig was very helpful before I went on exchange, and I felt very confident that it was all sorted before I left New Zealand. NTU had a great international student group and people to help you during orientation/registration week, so there was a lot of support during the transitional phase into NTU as well.

