

Student Exchange Questionnaire

Name: April Fini

Massey Degree: Bdes (Fashion, minor in Marketing)

Host university: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Semester and year of exchange: Semester 2, 2017

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

I chose this university because it is in the heart of a world renowned fashion capital which is appropriate for my area of study. This meant that through my course I was able to take opportunities within Milan's fashion industry and be exposed to the industry from a different angle. Italy means a lot to me as a country because the Italian culture is embedded in my heritage. I was able to visit my family who welcomed me into their culture and showed me the local Italian ways!



- **Did it meet your expectations?**

The only expectations I had before I left was that I was heading into a totally different culture which could have its challenges, but that I was going to have the experience of a lifetime. Looking back I did have the experience of a lifetime and more - it exceeded any expectations I had because every second of it was a fantastic adventure and I fully embraced the culture which was essential.

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

I studied fashion management which meant I took a range of papers such as luxury business, fashion images and the city of Milan, fashion; a marketplace and a fashion from production like to marketplace. I also did a two-week language course prior to the beginning of the semester and this counted towards the credits and was a good start to understanding the culture and how to get around. Because they are the only fashion courses available I would recommend them. I did hear good reviews regarding the cooking classes and theatre/drama classes if that works into the course and papers required.

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

Learning the correct name and title for your teachers is essential as it is disrespectful to address them as Mr/Mrs/Miss or by their first names unless otherwise indicated. It was also considered rude to eat food or leave to go to the bathroom during class time as well as being late to class. The academic environment is surrounded by all other international students from all around the world and therefore you are in a separate building from the full-time curriculum students.

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

I stayed off-campus through a company as directed through the university during the application process. Therefore I lived with other foreign exchange students in an

apartment 20 minute walk from the university. It is essentially like flatting in any city in NZ but in an apartment complex not necessarily surrounded by other students.

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

Because I went through ISEP I paid a set fee for accommodation and food and I think that it worked out to be pretty similar to if you would stay in a university accommodation in NZ. I didn't have to worry about weekly expenses because it was all covered in that initial cost. I did spend a little bit of money on food when I went out for a meal.

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

My host university connected us with another student exchange organisation called Erasmus and so I signed up to their weekly activities which included travelling around the country, tram rides around the city, parties and more. In my own time I found some local running events that I participated in every few weeks.

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

The food and wine is a big part of their culture and locals will often meet up after work and bond over an aperitivo (you pay for one drink and have access to a buffet). They appreciate it when you try and speak their language even if you don't know a lot!

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

Meeting new people from all over the world who will be friends for life. Learning about other world views and perceptions as well as my own. It's a really great learning experience in terms of the course, culture and of course about yourself. The biggest highlight was having the opportunity to travel all over Italy and see how each town and city is so unique and different that you can't even compare them to each other!

- **What did you find challenging?**

Initially the language barrier at certain places however I built up the confidence to practise my Italian and it was really fine to get around as so many people can speak English. Every body in Italy buys bottled water and it is deemed unacceptable to drink a cappuccino after 11am in the morning! So coffee lovers have to be prepared to drink a lot of espresso's!

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

I learn a lot about myself as a person and I learnt a lot about my home country as well as my host country. It was interesting to compare social and cultural differences that you wouldn't necessarily think anything of. It's great exposure to the wider world and the types of people and lifestyles there is out there. Overall it's really eye opening!

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



My biggest advice would be to embrace the culture. If you choose to go to Italy then don't expect it to be like New Zealand because it's not, it is totally different! So you have to be prepared to take on those differences and make the most of them. My other advice would be to remember to explore the country AND city you choose to study in. I had a lot of friends who travelled all around Europe but didn't end up spending any time in Italy or in Milan. You don't want to have any regrets in retrospect!

- **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?**

I believe Milan was a new experience for Massey University but I received a lot of support until I was handed over to the host university. During the exchange the host university was readily accessible and very keen to be of support to us throughout our stay.

