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# Student Exchange Questionnaire

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<b>Massey degree</b>	BDes (Hons) majoring in Visual Communication Design
<b>Host university</b>	University of Brighton
<b>Exchange details</b>	Semester 2, 2017

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

Let's be honest, a big part of most people's reason to go on exchange is to travel. I am not an exception. Because graphic design has relatively limited options in terms of exchange partners, I chose Brighton as it was a well-ranked UK design course, had great lecturers and was a good location for European gallivanting. I'm lucky enough to have travelled a fair bit, but had never been to England and wanted to see what all the fuss was about.

**Did it meet your expectations?**

Yes, although I had pretty open expectations as I knew this would be an awesome experience. The course was so different to Massey, which served as a much-needed creative rejuvenation half way through my third year. I met so many talented, incredible people (students, great lecturers, people in the community, practicing creatives) and made the most of the collaborative vibe at Brighton. There were fundamentally no limits - new techniques, ideas and approaches were welcome and encouraged. England is also pretty great to live in - the culture is very similar, there is no language barrier and the access to design opportunities is endless. Also, Brighton's close proximity to Gatwick Airport meant travel around Europe was so easy, despite protest from my bank account.

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

AG280 - Graphic Design Studio  
KV515 - British Cultures (compulsory)

The studio paper was great. The studio culture at Brighton is so different to Massey, and they take a much more hands-on approach to design. It's a really open and collaborative paper, with each assignment letting you push the boundaries and dip your toes into the different departments. The compulsory essay paper was more of a bonding experience with the other exchange students. The weekly seminars and field trips were a good way to learn about the local history, and generally this was a low-key paper.

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

Brighton's design course is so different to Massey's, but both have their merits! The course at Brighton is made up of many short-term projects which culminate as one journal documenting the entire semester's process, whereas Massey is one or two bigger projects focused on the final outcome. Brighton focus on a hands-on, practical approach utilising any and every technique, embracing the creative process. They also encourage the use of their facilities (such as letterpress and bookbinding - at Massey, you have to take the elective paper to do these). This is more about experiments and happy accidents - the briefs are very open and accommodate each students interests. Massey is more structured in the briefs set and outcomes expected, more aimed at refining the final outcome. The studio culture at Brighton is very relaxed, with bi-weekly open workshops, film club nights and a general space to hang. There are also weekly seminars with local practitioners, and the lecturers are super open about their industry work outside of teaching. While there are no interim deadlines or formal crit sessions, lecturers organise group feedback often and encourage conversation, giving the course a community vibe.

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

Finding a three-month lease is quite tricky, so I lived on-campus. Great Wilkins Hall was pretty standard self-catered university accommodation. The only downside; it was a 40-minute bus to town and the design campus, but the plus side was all the exchange students lived in the same building, making for a great social experience.

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

Relatively similar. The hall was \$4100 NZD for three months (expenses included) and living costs were affordable. My flat ordered groceries and cooked together for \$40 NZD each per week; groceries are much more affordable in the UK than in NZ. Everyone's living expenses were different depending on how many meals out, travel trips, concerts attended, assignment materials etc.

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

I was in the Surf Club (ended up going on the winter trip to Morocco) and I played netball on Brighton's Parklife team. There were also other smaller events within the design course, such as fundraising gigs, pub quizzes and film nights.

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

While the Brits apologise for everything, are fiercely patriotic and have a dry sense of humour, they're a lovely bunch that are always willing to help out. There are so many different, but welcoming communities in the UK, you just have to give them a good go. Sometimes things are unnecessarily complicated but you just have to roll with it!

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

Where do I even start? As a general statement, the people and the places made the experience incredible. The exchange students were all lovely, and my flatmates, classmates, lecturers, and randoms met along the way are people who impacted my life in so many different ways. Being able to visit so many places in the UK and Europe was a great by-product of studying - its hard to pick a highlight when each place and experience was so unique. Being able to visit some of the world's design capitals - Scandinavia, London, Switzerland, Barcelona- was amazing to see in the flesh what we can only read about at home. Going on the Brighton surf trip to Morocco, skiing in the Swiss alps, sinking pints of Guinness in Dublin, sailing through the Nordic fjords and all the other trips are definitely lifelong memories I'm stoked to have.

**What did you find challenging?**

Organising corresponding papers was challenging due to credit allowances. As a semester-long student, I could only take the main studio paper and not the Brighton equivalent of the essay paper and the elective. Initially, this was frustrating; but as there was no way around it, I made the most of the studio paper.

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

Exchange was confirmation of independence - six months and one suitcase is all you need and you'll be sweet. I had so many amazing experiences and now have friends all over the world. I learnt new ways of being creative and got back in the groove for my final year of study at home. I had the time of my life!

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

As a third year student, one semester was the only viable option to be able to graduate on time, and I had a great exchange experience. However I would say for those looking into Brighton (especially second years) to also consider going for a full year just to make the most of the course - being able to do the design electives and design theory is something I wish I could have done. That being said, one semester at Brighton is a great creative refresher as it is so abstract and open, compared to the more structured, polished nature of Massey. Another tip is to budget more than you initially think - its so easy and tempting to travel around Europe from Brighton/Gatwick Airport, so make the most of it.

**Do you have any comments on the support provided to you?**

There is a lot of admin with going on exchange, and because the various offices are co-ordinating so many students, you have to be proactive (but not annoying). Especially because USAC is based in the USA, allow plenty of time for things to get done. Mary and Becca at Brighton were so lovely and beyond helpful, so anyone heading to Brighton is in good hands.