



Erasmus Exchange Report

Aberdeen – The granite city
Robert Gordon University

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Introduction

The reason for choosing Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen was because it has a very good reputation in regards to both architecture and architectural technology, they are in fact one of the best in UK. Another reason was also because of the language. It was important for me that I could communicate and understand what the teachers said at all times. Being a Chinese language student prior to this education, living and worked in China, I have had my fair share of communication difficulties and misunderstandings, so this time it was important for me to completely understand and be able to communicate. Scotland has always been a place I have wanted to visit, so this was my chance. I struggled with choosing what semester to go abroad, **but ended up leaving in semester 3, as I didn't want to miss the refurbishment classes we would be having in semester 5 at KEA.**

Accommodation & Prices

If you are thinking of going to Aberdeen, I highly recommend that you in time are looking for an apartment to share with someone else.

I went with the Crathie Student Village that was organised through the university, which was good, however I also paid £600 every month (Excl. wash and dryer) for a 10 square meter room. Sharing an apartment (city center) with one person will cost around £350-£450 a month, which was what my fellow classmates from Scotland paid. I therefore felt that the university really took **advantage of new students coming in, and if it wouldn't be for the Erasmus grant, I would not have been able to stay.** The fire alarm at this place also went off at least 3 times a week and sometimes in the middle of the night for no reason, so for the amount I paid I feel you could probably get something better if you start looking in advance.

There are however cheaper options that the university provides, depending on what kind of living standard you want and need.



Crathie Student Village – Shared kitchen, Bedroom with private bathroom + shower

Useful pages to look for a room in Aberdeen:

<https://www.spareroom.co.uk/flatshare/aberdeen>

<https://www.gumtree.com/flatshare/aberdeen>

Transportation

I chose to live 20-25 minutes walking distance from both the city centre and school, and since I was extremely fortunate with the weather I mostly walked. The transportation system are mostly busses but are sadly never really on time. In the mornings it might be so **crammed with people they don't take you on**. I experienced this a couple of times, and decided to just walk everywhere. Great exercise!

If you however decide to take the bus every day, a student pass for 1 term is £145, and can be purchased through an app called First Bus, where you will have to confirm you are a student through your Robert Gordon University e-mail. You can also buy a student carnet through this app where a one day ticket is about £3, or a one way ticket £1.75. The original price is £4 for a day ticket where you can travel unlimited for 12 hours.



Robert Gordon University (RGU)

The surroundings at RGU are amazing. The university is entirely new built, and is surrounded by beautiful, Scottish nature. The view from the library at top floor is something I probably never will forget. You have everything there – a whole floor with books dedicated for your subject. If you are studying Architectural technology, you will also be spoiled with a Laster cutter, a CNC machine and an entire work shop with wood where you can create 1:1 or 1:5 models of your technical details, something I enjoyed a lot.

The university has several departments, and there is several study spaces throughout the university where you can sit down by yourself or book a group room. There is also a building that have a gym and a swimming hall, which I personally think is great. One semester gym card costs around £57, and a full year £103.

The classes I took at university was:

- Management for Built Environment 2 – contained 2 reports
- Design Technology 2 – Constructing a boathouse
- Professional Practice – One big report with a business plan and describing the different tasks throughout a construction project in accordance with RIBA.

Management for Built Environment 2

This module was based on classes two times a week at the university and the deliverables contained one presentation in groups and one written report. We were divided into groups over the different programs so that we would get to know each other better for the **presentation assignment. We learned about Construction KPI's (Key Performance Indicators)** and different ways of managing a company, such as TQM (Total Quality

Management). We also learned about benchmarking and different ways of measuring performance. It was really good and interesting in my opinion as these subjects are a big interest of mine.

For the second assignment we were taught different analyse strategies, such as SWOT- and PEST analysis. The task was to make a strategic proposal for one company to expand to another country within the EU. This was quite hard, but I learned a lot and it was a good way of applying these analyses into practise.

I really enjoyed this course, it was however sometimes hard since the UK students were so young and did not always take it so seriously.

Design Technology 2

This module was the one that was most similar to what we do at KEA. For this semester we got to do a boathouse in an area close to Aberdeen, where we actually could drive to the site and imagine how our project would look like. This module was very technical and had a lot to do with finding materials and having a valid reason for the choices.

The students at RGU are taught Photoshop in their previous years, something I have never worked with but have been very interested in learning, so I decided to learn Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign by myself in order to present my project as well as possible. One of the good things about RGU is that they provide computers to their students that contains all of these programs. You could also access these through your own computer while being on the school network.

The only downside (in my opinion) is that they are not taught Revit. They are only using Sketch Up and AutoCAD, even though every company that came to visit said they were looking for people with Revit skills.

I really liked this module as we learned a lot of technical things and it was also not too much group work. The deliverables for this module was:

- Two presentation sheets
- Design statement
- Technical booklet

The design statement was the only thing that started as group work, later on we chose one section which we had to detail and figure out by ourselves. This way you learned all the elements in the building, instead of dividing up the elements between the group members.

The hardest part of this module I believe was to get help from the teachers as they were only assigned to us once a week. If you had a problem on a Tuesday, you could not really get help with it until the Friday when they were assigned to be with us, it slowed down the work, but in the long run that might be a more healthy way for the teachers to handle their workload.

Professional Practice

The purpose of this report was first of all to practice report writing. The purpose was also to establish a professional practise, where we had to get a bank loan. To get this bank loan we had to figure out what our business would be, how we would market it, choices of location, staff and what our immediate financial needs would be. In this assignment, the analyse tools we were taught in the management class came to use, as we also had to look at the construction industry within the country we were planning to establish a practice. It was a lot of research that had to be made in this module, and we were not really given any guidance in how they wanted it or how it should be, but that was because they wanted us to figure it out ourselves and be original and not follow a specific model that was given.

We were also asked to make a report where a current client had asked us to write down the important tasks throughout the projects according to the new RIBA Plan of Work and what they involved, what order they came in and what was important for that particular stage.

Of all the modules we had I believe this one was probably the hardest. We were not given that **much teaching in the subject, so the assignment felt very “general” and it was hard to go in to depth**, with for example how a financial statement would look like in order to do a proper proposal for the bank.

Things to consider:

- The students in UK are very young when starting university. Some of them are as young as 17 years old, and may affect the overall environment as many of them **haven't matured. I also experienced that they did not necessarily want to be there**, they only did the education because their parents wanted them to and to eventually have a degree.

At the end of the day you are responsible for your own education and what you learn, and luckily there is not as much group work at RGU as we have at KEA, making it simple to perform after your own capability and not depend on anyone else, which I found in many cases had its perks.

- In UK they divide what we call a “Bygningskonstrukør” or a constructing architect up in three different professions: The Architectural Technologist, the Quantity Surveyor and the Surveyor. This means that in the UK the architectural technologist is closer to the profession of an architect. So if you are more interested in construction management, planning and cost, this will not be covered in the architectural technology education in the UK.



Robert Gordon University

Meeting people and surroundings in Aberdeen

The people in Aberdeen are by far the nicest people I have ever met. Many of them are willing to show you around and tell you a lot about the surroundings. The university has many different organisations where you can get involved and meet new people, which I recommend! They have everything from rifle shooting to climbing. There is also an Erasmus group that organise trips around Aberdeen and is also a great way of meeting people. I did however feel that it was very hard to make friends as the semesters only consist of 12 weeks and people don't really put much effort when they know you are soon moving back.

Have-to's

Aberdeen has many bars and pubs, the best ones are by far **Tripple Kirk, Slain's Castle and Brew dog**. The alcohol in this country are much cheaper than in Denmark, and is a big part of the Scottish culture.

I personally tried to go out on trips as much as possible when I had time. These places are according to me reachable to do for one day:

- Stonehaven, Dunnotar Castle – amazing views and they happen to have **Scotland's best fish & chips at the harbour** not far away from the city center, **the restaurant is called "The Bay"**
- Ballatar – The reason for going here was initially to reach Loch Muick, however we got lost so we ended up hiking another mountain by mistake. Ballatar is in itself a beautiful little castle city and is definitely worth going to. **If you're up for it** – it is around 10-12 km to Loch Muick and I recommend renting a bike from Ballatar, and of course not to get lost as we did.
- Fittie, Aberdeen – A cute little area with funny houses close to the harbor in Aberdeen
- **Slain's castle** (not the bar) close to Cruden Bay – It is an old castle that is now in ruins. Fantastic views, however can be a bit difficult to get here if you **don't have a car**
- Glen Garioch – A small whiskey distillery located in Oldmeldrum, not too far away from Aberdeen and can be reached though train and a bus.

- If you have time I recommend a trip to the Islands on the west side of Scotland.
Edinburgh is a city you have to see, but I recommend spending a weekend there



Shopping

Aberdeen has two big shopping centers, Bon Accord and Union Square. You can find everything you need in there when it comes to clothes, shoes make up and so on. The shopping is quite cheap depending on what brand you are looking for, however I personally did not do much shopping except for what I really needed. When it comes to shopping groceries there is Sainsbury's, several Tesco shops and my personal favourite ASDA. In ASDA you can find almost everything, from clothes to electricity and of course also food.

Conclusion

I am very happy I travelled to Aberdeen. I actually wanted to stay one semester more since their semester only consist of 12 weeks and felt way too short. However, I was not allowed. I was lucky enough to meet people that were willing to provide me information about the **city I never ever otherwise would've known about today**, and I believe that is also partly why it became so good. The school was great and it was nice to be in a school that is more organised. When it comes to the city itself, after visiting other Scottish cities I would probably prefer to live in Edinburgh because it is a bit bigger and has more things to do. I am still glad I went to Aberdeen though and I do not regret it at all. It was a great experience and the people I met there made it all worth it.

