

EXCHANGE REPORT

8th of January until 5th of May

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INTRODUCTION

I just finished my 3rd semester within the Multimedia Design AP at Kea , and I would say that I started considering going on an exchange already from the 1st semester. I had a growing interest in 3d animation and visual effects, and started learning it myself from the 1st semester with the Lynda tutorials which the access is provided by Kea. I have always been interested in Digital Visual Arts, therefore I saw a big opportunity to gain a wider knowledge about it, and learn it in a more interactive way than through tutorials.

I chose to go to Napier University in Edinburgh simply because it was the only university where I could study 3d animation and Visual Effects. I would have liked to go someplace else, someplace which provides more sun and warmer temperatures but unfortunately those places didn't provide the courses that I wanted. To me this opportunity was not so much about travelling, but definitely about the school and what I could learn there and not at Kea.

At Napier University I could choose from different classes within the Digital module available. So I decided to take the following ones : 1. 3d Animation , 2. Visual Effects, 3. Design Thinking and Doing.

3D Animation :

The focus is on the animation. You will learn how to make a walk cycle with a character, how to make a ball bounce that sort of things, and understand the principles of body mechanisms and use to create believable actions in animations. You will animate characters that can exhibit personality and express emotions and will get to recognise a range of animation styles and produce animation in a prescribed style. Most of the classes are in the 3d lab and therefore it is only practical classes.

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Visual Effects:

You will learn how to use a green screen room for example and film your own footages to then add effects to it. You will get a better understanding of the software After Effects, learn how to import 3D assets into an other footage and make the whole scene realistic. In lectures teachers show many examples of how visual effects are made in big production movies, so that students understand better the whole process of it, and can spot the special effects on productions where those are made to be invisible, which is very useful. That module is divided in two so that you get to have hours in the lab with the practical teacher , and lectures with an other teacher where you understand the process of it all, see examples and get a wider technical knowledge.

Design Thinking and Doing:

This module is about understanding the process of designing an idea. It is a lot of theory about the art of interviewing people in a objective way. Understanding your target audience to make the best out of your project, whatever project it is. You will get to work in a group and start a project together.

Academic Experience :

Both International coordinator have been really helpful and kind. So remember that if you have a question or doubts about something, don't hesitate to ask either the international coordinator at Kea (who has been willing to have short meeting where you can get everthing cleared up). I would actually advise you to have a meeting with the coordinator at Kea before applying. Simply because from my experience, I was quite sure I had all the informations that

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I needed but she proved me wrong, as a student you tend to forget about a lot of small details which maybe aren't so important to you but end up being very important in the process of applying for a school, choosing the school, and the right place to go. Secondly the coordinator at Napier University called Simone Dallas has been very helpful too. She answered to my emails extremely fast and once I was at Napier, I could always find her easily and she would answer my questions or solve my problems right away. Anyway, don't think that you are all alone in any of the schools and don't underestimate what they can do for you.

Concerning my classes, I have been both happy and quite disappointed. The way it works there wasn't exactly what I had expected. To be more clear, the 3D animation module's teacher hasn't been helpful at all. The process of the class was only him giving us an assignment to finish for the end of the week, and tutorials to watch.

The thing is that the teacher had advised us student to use Maya, or 3Dmax. Since 3D max isn't available on Macbook, I chose Maya. It turned out when I asked a practical question to the teacher that he didn't know how to use Maya. So through the semester, I didn't get any help or support from the teacher, which I was very disappointed about. Nevertheless, out of this situation I had to learn it myself and became more independant within the use of the software.

I found the Visual Effects module very interesting, informative and fun. The teachers were great and always very helpful.

Concerning the module Design Thinking and Doing, I have to be honest and tell you that I was also a bit disappointed. The idea of going to study abroad makes sense to me only if you are able

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to study something different. Unfortunately, this module was exactly what we learn at Kea, so I could not really see a purpose on studying it as-well abroad. The description of the course was describing something different, therefore I didn't think of asking more informations about this course. My advice here to you is to try to get more informations about the courses you are planning to take, so no disappointment is gonna pop up the day you start school.

Cultural/Personal experiences :

Edinburgh is a beautiful city, while there you should definitely go to all the museums since they are free. The contemporary museum of Scotland is huge and very interesting. There are also many small independant galleries you can go check out.

The food is quite special in Scotland, but you gotta taste their haggis, you should be carefull on the place you decide to eat it from, it can easily become a little weird. The biggest challenges I experienced there were : 1. The rainy/snowy/cold/very-windy weather through the winter, which is not as easy to handle even when you come from Copenhagen and think that you will be alright. The second challenge there was the Scottish food. I would not say that I really appreciated the food culture there but you should always try everything and then make up your mind.

Beside, Scotland has lots of hills and beautiful places to go visit, and Edinburgh is a quite small city therefore you can walk everywhere and discover more things through the narrow and dark streets of Edinburgh Old Town, very nice experience.

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Practical experience :

Kea has been very helpful within the application process. As previously said, the Kea coordinator set up meetings if you have any questions, she sent me all the administrative papers required and help me through the whole process. I would advise you to go to the meetings which are planned for all exchange students some time before the departure. There you can hear about other people's experiences and plan your trip more consciously.

I would not say that the receiving school has been fully devoted to exchange students though. Most teachers didn't know who was an exchange student or not, and in some classes teachers didn't care so much. As an advice, when you arrive and start a class, let the teacher know who you are, and that you might not know some things that home student do because they have previously studied modules and classes you haven't.

Concerning the housing, I didn't have a place to stay before arriving there and I would say that it was quite stressful because we had the Kea exam right at the beginning of the new school's start. I would advise you to find a home a bit before you go, so that you can be more relaxed and clear minded when you start your new school. The apartment I found ended up being really expensive, as the budget I did before going wasn't sufficient enough. Almost my whole budget went to my rent, therefore I didn't have much left for living, going out etc. Make sure that you acknowledge all the expenses you can think of, count it into your budget and then add a quite important amount of "unknown expenses" which you are gonna be really happy to find when the time comes.

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Conclusion

My overall opinion on the exchange is nuanced. In one hand, I got to learn a lot, because I could focus entirely on 3d animation and visual effects which I've been really happy about. On the other hand, I didn't like all classes I have been taught, but the university gave us a lot of time (no classes) to study on your own and have a lot of free time which gives you a big opportunity to explore, within what you are studying, but also explore the new city you are living in.