



Last year, I had the opportunity to complete my study exchange with the University of Wollongong, Australia. While I was initially meant to attend in-person, due to the COVID-19 pandemic I ended up completing both semesters remotely from the UK. Although there were many challenges that accompanied this experience, it is one that I found extremely valuable and rewarding. I managed to make friends on the other side of the world, study different subjects, expand my world view and broaden my academic knowledge.

Over the year, I learnt a great deal about Australian history and culture and expanded my general academic knowledge. Through one of my modules, I was able to speak to a Dharawal country Elder. During this, I learnt first-hand about the ‘Dreaming’, as well as the damaging effect Australian laws have had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout history. I also attended several Zoom sessions with UOW’s Global

Mobility department to learn more about Australian culture. Here, I primarily learnt about Australian cooking, flora and fauna, and the general Wollongong area. Likewise, I expanded my general academic knowledge through the range of online modules on offer at UOW. While I predominantly spent my year attending Creative Writing classes – to prepare myself for the final year of my English Literature degree – I also took Philosophy and Biology to explore my own interests and do something a little different.

The main challenge I faced during my study abroad year was the time difference. I needed to live on the Australian time zone (without being in the country) to attend my live lectures and seminars on Zoom. This meant I lived nocturnally, as there is a 9-hour time difference between the UK and Wollongong. Therefore, I would wake up between 7pm and 9pm UK time and go to sleep around 11am each day to attend classes. This was because classes could begin anytime between midnight and 8am in the UK. It was difficult to get into, but it allowed me to focus on how I learn best and effectively manage my time. This is particularly important now that I am going into my final year at Surrey and helpful if I ever need to work internationally.



While I believe the most valuable take away from my study abroad would be the more global outlook I’ve gained, I am also incredibly thankful for the people I met during my exchange. I now have friends who I hope to see in-person in the future, as well as access to academics who are currently researching topics I am interested in studying at a postgraduate level. I learnt so much academically, culturally and personally during my study exchange, but it really was the people I met that made it such an incredible experience.

If you are debating whether to undertake a study exchange, I would highly recommend it; whether you will be completing it remotely or in-person, the experience will be valuable.

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