Exchange studies at Oxford Brookes University

Before departure
I like England and looking forward to seeing the amazing city as well as architecture for a long time. And the major of urban design in England is quite leading in the whole world. Plus the partner university is in Oxford then I decided to exchange in Oxford. Before I began my exchange study, two of my classmates exchanged in spring semester in 2016, who told me Oxford is historical and beautiful and there are a lot of chance to meet some famous people there. It is really worth studying there for a while. One tip for Chinese students is that leaving enough time to apply for the visa and deposit money in your bank account at least 28 days early before submitting the application.

Upon arrival
Actually, I arrived at Oxford one week late and unfortunately missed the welcoming week because of my visa. It is said that there are a variety of welcoming activities and parties for fresher in the first week. Therefore, Chinese students really need to be very careful on the application of Visa.

Financials
I got the Erasmus scholarships. In Oxford the living cost is similar with Stockholm but the accommodation fee is much more expensive. And part of my living cost is from the Scholarship, part are provided by my parents. Plus, I also saved money there such as I made coffee by myself not bought a lot in the store, as well as cook at home and took the lunch box.

Accommodation
The accommodation was provided by Oxford Brookes University, which was really convenient for students since it is so difficult to look for one place to live in one town full of students. And my place is quite close to the campus, just 6 min by foot. But the route is a narrow path along the wall one side, and fence in another side. At night it was very dark and make people feel unsafe.

University and studies
I was studying urban design when exchanged in Oxford Brookes. The program was consist of lecture, studio and workshop. Every week there was one reading list with one different topic, such as public space, place-making, energy efficiency...... All courses were taught in English. Plus, some English course were also provided by Brookes, including reading, listening ,writing and speaking, in order to help international students to understand other courses better.

Courses
In the beginning of last semester, the courses were studio and theory lectures. Studio 1 is group work consist of 6 international students with different backgrounds. Every one expressed their own opinion and contribute to the final work. The lecture was theoretical supplement to the studio. After it, studio 2 is individual work based on the master plan from studio 1 and designed with research more deeply.
City and country
Oxford is really amazing, with long history and rich culture. English culture is a bit similar in some parts. Such as in Sweden, people enjoy drink coffee and have some dessert in the afternoon, called “fika”, while in England, English is famous for having afternoon tea. Both of them are one break after the whole day work, as well as one opportunity to chatting with classmates.

Leisure and social activities
There are a variety of social activities in Oxford. At the beginning of last semester, the ESN organised several meeting parties and dinners for Erasmus students in order to know more locals and get used to the new environment. Moreover, the fresher ball was also amazing, which is a very good chance to know new friends. Plus, there are a lot of amazing pubs with hundreds of years’ history. A lot of influential results were came out in these pubs and a lot of great people were working there. Drinking beer and try English food in pubs are the must-do stuff in Oxford.

One of difference is English are more talkative than swedes. Especially in group work, my English teammates are quite active and enjoy discussing.

Other recommendations and observations
There are a great number of Talks in University of Oxford, which are given by very famous politician, scholars, sport stars or in other fields. Never hesitate to join that since we are only exchange in Oxford Brookes University. And most of these talks are open to the public.