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Erasmus+ International Mobility Grant: Refreshing Experience in Learning and Research

Erasmus+ International Mobility Grant is an excellent opportunity for research students who are up for an adventure with an academic twist. The particular program that is being offered at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) gives the selected candidate an opportunity to spend six months with a research supervisor at University of Middlesex London. I was awarded the scholarship for Spring Semester 2018 which led to an exciting six months in London.

The international exchange specializes in providing an opportunity for research students to hone their skills. I was able to work under the supervision of Professor Stephen Syrett with similar research interest. With his help I was able to elaborate and strengthen various elements of my research. Being a student in London I was able to access libraries not only at University of Middlesex but also places like The British Library. The non-credit nature allowed me to choose the time and place of my study. Varying places of study meant that I explored different sources, met new people and saw new places. Although I did not have to go through formal course work and classes but that did not restrict my access to seminars, workshops and cocurricular activities on campus. I was able to access the PhD room, which was facilitated by friendship with postgraduate students. Peer learning became an important component in my experience as sharing ideas always led to some new information or improvement in my thesis.

With the help of my supervisor at University of Middlesex I was able to attend a workshop for handling qualitative software NVivo 11. The ability to use the software has not only helped my research but has added great value to my data handling skills. The software was free of access for university students and came with a video guide for beginners. For my research I had gathered fourteen in-depth interviews and NVivo 11 was able to help me systematically organize my data for coding and picking emerging themes. Use of the software facilitated me by not only organizing my data but also was able to give me the options to graphically represent my data through: flow charts, theme trees, and word clusters. The exercise of transcribing interviews for

NVivo 11 was not easy but enhanced my transcribing skills and imparted patience. Thanks to the exchange I was able to use and learn about a professional software that is used for data analyses around the globe.

The host institution is a multicultural hub as it attracts students and faculty members from all over the globe. In this diverse setup I was able to meet people from places like Brazil, Germany, Ghana, and other countries working on similar research interests. However, my noncredit exchange could have easily been derailed; thanks to my planner and logbook I was able to do my work on time, be present for my appointments, and have time for fun!

Research in a culturally changed environment can be a lonely experience but the vibrant life outside and on campus did not leave me with a single boring day. Transport of London's excellent connectivity, the cities walkable streets and the safe atmosphere make it an enjoyable place to travel. In a city where more than three hundred languages are spoken you can find cultural treasure-troves at every street corner. The charm of London's museums and gardens is excellent. I was able to enjoy weekends exploring museums in winter and gardens in spring (which were either free or offered student discounts) and sip tea or coffee at some unique themed café with new friends. A huge part of my exchange revolved around making friends from different places. During my travel outside and inside London I was able to learn about cultural similarities and differences between us. Yes, new words from their mother tongue as well.

From my perspective and experience, the Erasmus+ International Mobility Grant is an opportunity that helped me explore the world. I met new people, exchanged ideas and visited places that were inspirational. The non-course nature gives one freedom and room to self-discipline which makes the learning process lively. Outside the classroom I was able to explore one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world--London.

The program has given my MPhil Public Policy a new magnetism, which I strongly believe has given new dimension to my research and given me self-confidence that has opened up new vistas. I commend FCC for facilitating my entry and the CPPG for allowing me to compete and avail the opportunity. I strongly recommend the continuation of this program and encourage students to avail this wonderful opportunity.