

Exchange report – Aston Business School – Fall 2016

Aston Business School is part of Aston University which is one of the three universities in Birmingham, United Kingdom. Aston Business School, often referred as ABS is located very close to city centre of Birmingham. Birmingham is the second largest city in England based on population but the city centre itself isn't that big. Birmingham isn't the prettiest city in the UK so if you wish to spend your exchange semester in a nice-looking place don't go to Birmingham. However, Birmingham is in the middle of the UK, which means that you can easily travel anywhere in the UK and it's fairly cheap as well.

Housing

Finding housing from Birmingham was one of the hardest challenges for me. The confirmation letter I received from Aston Business School informed that on-campus accommodation wouldn't be provided for exchange students only attending for one term. I contacted the school residential services and asked what I should do and where to look for housing. The school replied me that it was my own responsibility to find accommodation. They did however provide me a couple websites that might be useful in my search for accommodation. It didn't take long for me to notice that finding a place close to the city centre for only half a year was nearly impossible. Most rental agreements in the UK are for a full year and living close to the centre would have been very costly. After looking at many different websites I found a place via a website called astonstudenthomes.org. [Astonstudenthomes.org](http://astonstudenthomes.org) is run by Aston Students Union and lets you search for student houses and flats in Birmingham. I got a student room from a place called Hamstead Campus. The campus is located around 30 minutes away from school and the city centre. I personally didn't find the distance to school too long but living on campus would have been ideal for me. Hamstead Campus is a of very old looking Hogwarts style building with around 300 hall rooms. Each hall room is approximately 10 square meters and you have a common kitchen plus shared toilets and showers. Even though the thought of having to share toilets and showers frightened me a bit in the beginning I have gotten used to everything by now. Hamstead Campus also known as HamCam isn't the nicest and cleanest student accommodation out there but I think it fulfils its job as a student campus. I met a lot of new people at HamCam and became very good friends with the people in my hall. I would recommend this place for exchange students coming to Birmingham for one term if you want to experience real British campus living, make lots of new friends from all over the world and you're not afraid to live in a bit shabbier place than you're probably used to.

Orientation programme & social activities for exchange students

Aston University as well as other universities in the UK organise an annual event called Freshers Week. Freshers Week is targeted for first year students and new coming exchange students. Freshers Week is held on the first week of university and it consists of different kind of events. The events included in our week were for example a BBQ party and a trip to Cadbury Chocolate Factory. The orientation week was nice and was a good chance to meet and talk to new people.

However, I feel like some of the events were organized badly at times. The Aston buddies seemed a little clueless as they didn't know what event was going to take part at what time so it was up to us to find out about those. Aston University also organised many trips to places like Stonehenge and Harry Potter Studios. They also did trips to different cities like Liverpool and Edinburgh in Scotland. I didn't do trips together with school as I thought it was cheaper and more convenient to travel with the people from hall. Yet, I know many people that made trips that were organised by the school and they enjoyed it a lot. For other social activities, there were a lot of parties arranged by the Aston Students Union. Our university bar had quiz nights and themed parties. They also arranged a few pub crawls which I enjoyed the most. For the pub crawls we wore t-shirts that said Aston University to represent our university among the other universities in Birmingham. Pub crawls were a good and easy way to have fun and hang out with people.

Quality of teaching

Aston Business School has a reputation of being one of the best schools in Birmingham. However, I didn't feel like this was the case. I don't feel like the quality of teaching differed much from the teaching at Stockholm Business School/Stockholm University. I did like the fact that there were quite many different courses that I could choose to study during my exchange. I chose six courses related to my business studies. Some of the courses did have quite a fast pace since there were lots of topics that were covered during the lectures. Most of my courses also had 100% exam meaning there were no additional assignments over the course and all the marking weight was put into the exam. Putting emphasis on the exam only meant that you couldn't affect your grade any other way which may come as a surprise for some. What surprised me positively was the fact that all lectures were recorded and put online after the lecture was over. Attending lectures and being active in class is highly recommended and advantageous. However, having the chance to listen to lectures afterwards and go through them as many times as I liked was very helpful for me. Some of the lecturers spoke with a strong British accent which made it sometimes hard to understand what they were saying. Listening to the lectures online in your own time made it easier to focus and follow what was said and taught at the lecture.