Practical Advice

Visa
You receive your visa upon arrival into the UK. It took me about 30-45 minutes to fill out paperwork required to obtain a visa while still at home. Once I arrived in UK customs, I simply showed them my prepared paperwork and my acceptance letter into Harper Adams. Because of the type of visa I obtained, it did not cost me anything. My advice for successfully receiving your visa is to not over think any questions they ask in customs, be confident with your answers, and do not let your travelling fatigue interfere with your attitude towards the custom service people.

Packing
I was content with what I brought, so I’ll just include some important notes.
Do NOT Bring:
Hair dryer, straightener, excessive amounts of soaps and hair products, pens, pencils, batteries, notebooks, binders… If it costs under $10, buy it there. It’s not worth hauling over little things you can buy once there.

DO Bring:
Rain coat, warm clothes, medications you are used to (Ibuprofen, Advil, Tylenol, etc.), essentials and an extra set or two of clothes to keep in your carry-on luggage in case your luggage is lost, power converters so you can charge your phone and or computer in the airports, key ring.

Arrival
Immigration was fine. If you are stressed and have a short temper, don’t expect any favors.
I wasn’t aware of any assigned buddy. What was pre-arranged was a ride from the airport when I arrived. This was extremely useful and relieving. My ride arrived on time, was extremely kind, and took me to ASDA (a store owned and run similarly to Wal-Mart) before dropping me at the University.

There wasn’t much of an orientation program set up. A day or two after my arrival at Harper, other students that were returning back to the dorm from vacation were very social and made me feel very welcome. I met with my Harper Adams advisor, and he helped me sort out my courses, schedule, expectations, opportunities, etc. I felt very prepared for the semester to start.

Academics

The University
The University is located outside of Newport. Newport itself is about a 5 minute drive away. You can pay for a taxi or take the free Harper shuttle busses. The campus is much smaller (and flatter) than Cornell and the campus is very well kept. Computer labs, wifi, and libraries are all easily accessible. There is a student bar on campus as well. There were trips available to take through the International Office. I went to Liverpool with them. It is a cheap way to travel and if you’re uncomfortable with using public transportation (ie. buses or trains), I would strongly encourage this form of travel. The international office and student services people were all incredibly welcoming and kind. I personally did not get involved with social activities, but I did get involved with some graduate student research that was looking into grazing dairy cattle on fodder beat. I found that very interesting and would encourage getting involved in research.

Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class title</th>
<th>Schedule/When it met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Business Law</td>
<td>M 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forage, Grass, &amp; Environmental Science</td>
<td>M 11-12 &amp; 3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene &amp; Food Safety</td>
<td>M 2-3, T 11-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Quality Assurance</td>
<td>F 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop Science &amp; Sustainable Systems</td>
<td>T 4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of Animal Welfare</td>
<td>T 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Nutrition</td>
<td>W 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste &amp; Resource Management</td>
<td>W 11-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Life Abroad

Living costs
Estimated monthly budget whilst on exchange
- Housing: about $3500 for the semester
- Food: Depends on what you eat really. My bill was about $200/month and I made almost all of my own food.
- Transportation: It all depends on if you travel anywhere. My plane ticket was about $1300.
- Books: $0
- Miscellaneous

Language
There were no language barrier issues. Relative to communicating in Kenya and Italy, it was no problem. The cleaning ladies in my dorm were awesome along with the students.

Banking
I did not open a local bank account. I had a VISA credit card and a VISA debit card. Don’t forget to call your bank to inform them you are traveling abroad.

Housing
Harper Adams arranged the housing. I lived in Silcock Hall – an international dorm. I loved it. It was self-catered, and I like to cook. Most of the students on my floor were actually English. I wouldn’t have cared either way, but it worked out for me. I would recommend it if you don’t mind cooking for yourself. Housing was paid through the housing office. It was easy to do, and I paid it using my debit card. The cost is listed above.

Transportation
Transportation is expensive. I made a friend that was willing to drive me anywhere I wanted or needed to go. It worked out better for me because not only did I have a travel buddy, but paying for their gas was cheaper than buying a train ticket. I went to Scotland for 5 days. For that trip, I used the trains. I would recommend buying a 16-25 railcard. This railcard is good for the year, costs about $50 and gives you a 30% discount on your train tickets. Plan to use a VISA credit card to pay for tickets.
For the train, use http://www.thetrainline.com/
For the bus, use http://www.arrivabus.co.uk/

Health and Safety
I felt safe the whole time. I was ill for almost half the time I was there. I went to the doctor once in Newport and once on campus. It was not difficult or expensive to do, and collecting prescriptions was painless. I recommend bringing Advil, if that’s something you’re used to. I would also not be too worried about getting sick because the medical services are up to par.

Overall exchange experience

*The best thing about my semester abroad was:* Managing to tour the entire UK and southern Ireland.

*The most challenging things about my semester abroad was:* I was extremely bored on quite a few occasions. There were only so many gourmet meals and naps I could do. I brought my guitar with, which came in handy on most days.

*How did your semester abroad change your perspective?* Harper is set up to teach more of the applicable/hands on side of agriculture studies. I will always get confused on whether or not I am eating chips, crisps, or fries, but other than that, there wasn’t too much of an extreme culture difference that has changed my perspective on life.

*Tips for future students:* Keep track of your passport, credit card, debit card, health insurance card, and ID. You have to be independent and clever about how to stay organized.

If you are looking for a school that compares to Cornell’s rigorous course work load, I would not recommend attending Harper Adams. When I went there, I received 1 assignment per course (8 assignments total) with the maximum assignment being 2,000 words. There were no exams. Assignments were very straight forward and did not require much outside research besides looking through course material and finding resources that paralleled what was discussed in lecture.

I also would like to call attention to one cultural difference in particular. As is the case in many parts of Europe, drinking is a notable part of the student culture. You can choose to not drink, but be aware that social drinking is acceptable in dorms and on campus; as mentioned above, there is a student bar right on campus.