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Neuroscience, 2018-2019

My year at UCL was unforgettable. When I was applying to study abroad, I wanted to find an academically challenging university that was situated in a vibrant European city. Not only is UCL a great school, with an excellent Neuroscience program, but the campus is in central London, which means all the amazing museums, shops, restaurants and landmarks are within walking distance.

Upon arrival, I was assigned a tutor who gave me a tour of the campus and helped me finalise course selections. She introduced me to other students on exchange and was available to answer questions or give advice when asked. Overall, I really enjoyed the Neuroscience course. It provided an in-depth anatomical, electrophysiological, and cognitive view of the brain that was complementary to and built on my previous studies. The lectures were very enjoyable and the professors always demonstrated a knowledge and expertise in each course that encouraged a greater appreciation of the field in me. I also enjoyed an Art History module I took, which happily forced me to explore many of the art museums in London.

Going in, I was not aware of the differences and challenges that come with UCL's particular style of teaching. For one, in many classes, the majority of your final grade comes from the final exam, which is mostly, if not completely, essay formatted, and unlike the University of Toronto, few classes had mini-assignments, quizzes or graded participation throughout the semester. In addition, many modules require some degree of self-study and extension of lecture content, if you aim for upper-second for first level grades. It becomes your responsibility to keep up with class and review regularly. Though it took some adjustment, I now appreciate the independence that UCL expects and have benefited greatly from fostering those skills.

Notwithstanding the excellence of UCL, being able to live in London for a year was the highlight of my experience. London has always been one of my favourite cities, and being able to spend months exploring the diverse neighbourhoods and finding new bookshops or cafes for the next study session with my friends was exciting. The most rewarding parts of my days were walking to Regent's Park or down Oxford Street and sightseeing. I was constantly inspired by the city, and given the chance, I would do it all again!