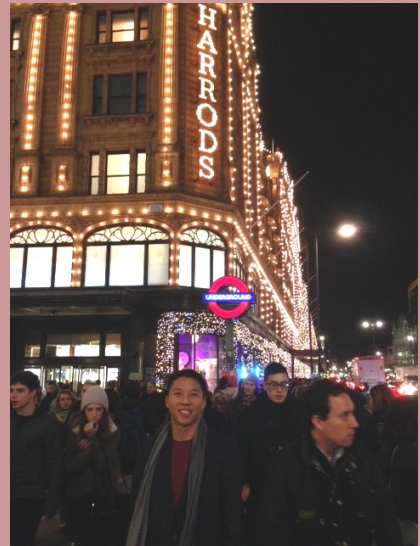


# Here's my Study Abroad Story

## Alvin Huang London School of Economics London, United Kingdom

**Major:** Economics; Financial Economics Sequence

**Program:** The London School of Economics is a year-long study abroad program. Students in the program take 4-5 courses that run from September to April, with examinations from May through July. My classes were comprised of a mixture of British students and students from around the globe. Because the LSE is a massive, world-renowned, research institution, the list of courses you can enroll in is incredibly extensive. The school offers classes in everything from economics and law to social work and geology. Classes are divided into two sections: lectures and seminars. Lectures are conducted by the professors, usually in large groups of 50+ students. The seminars, however, are smaller classes of about 12 led by a graduate instructor. In addition to academics, there is an opportunity for students to join sports teams and many other student organizations at the beginning of the year.



**Typical Day:** I would wake up at around 8AM to get ready and walk to class. It takes about 20-25 minutes to walk to school, but the view is spectacular so I have no complaints. My friends all live in the same residential hall as I do, so we walk over together. In between classes, we go to Nando's or Wasabi for lunch, and talk about our day so far, and probably plan activities for the rest of the night. In the late afternoon, I'll call my friends that live on the other side of the city, and we'll hang out around town. We go shopping at Oxford Street, take in a play, go to the British Museum, and get dinner in Chinatown. On weekends, I play basketball in the morning with my team, and enjoy the London nightlife thereafter. Somewhere in the middle of all this I fit in my studies, and that's the salient point. There is so much to see and so much to do that you really have to learn to study whenever there's a gap.

**Highlights:** If I had to choose, I would say that the highlight of my study abroad experience was playing basketball for the LSE team. I want to preface this story by saying that we are no where near acceptable, talent-wise. In fact, we played so terribly that we lost the first 11 games played by an average margin of 15. And yet, I was so proud of my guys, so proud of each loss. Throughout the year, playing with these guys allowed me to meet individuals from all over the world. We had a master's student from Germany. We had a father of two from Japan seeking a post-graduate degree in management. The list of characters goes on and on. I had the opportunity to travel the city with my teammates, to learn about their cultures as well as the one we lived in. We took the bus and tube to various parts in and around central London, visited other campuses, and connected with other UK university students. We learned more about the city and more about each other. Team meals usually meant trying new cuisines, and team practices seemed more like old reunions. The year brought us closer together, and by season's end, I truly understood what it meant to 'learn from each other' and 'live in the moment.' I am incredibly proud of our guys, and the story that we created together. And just so you know, we won our 12<sup>th</sup> and final game. By 25 points. How sweet is that, right?



**Challenges:** For me, there was really only one major challenge: London is incredibly expensive. The exchange rate is not favorable for those on a student budget. I would suggest saving up the summer before you leave, and maybe taking a job once you get there (your student visa should allow you to work part time). And once you get there, learn to save money here and there. For the every day things, there are ways to save up. Most dorms come with two meals a day on weekdays, and UK grocery stores have reduced prices in the afternoons. Also take advantage of student travel cards (the Oyster and National Rail have special pricing for students), and ask for student discount at almost every retailer – even the ones on Oxford/Bond Street!

**Advice:** This is probably one of the few times you will get to be absolutely anyone you want. You can reinvent yourself, and do things that other people would never expect you to. Even if you fall flat on your face, you'll learn something from it (and no one there will know you anyway). So join the club that you were always shy about joining, say things that you wouldn't ordinarily say. Take advantage of living the city life, and go out of your way to enjoy it every possible second.