**Study China Programme Report**

**11th August- 1st September 2019**

**What did I hope to achieve on the Study China Programme?**

Firstly, I should begin by mentioning that I studied Mandarin at Zhejiang University, Yuquan Campus in Hangzhou- one of the top universities in China, based in a beautiful scenic area.

I initially applied for the Study China Programme as I wanted to gain an insight into Chinese culture, tradition and history. Before taking part in the programme, I had never been to China before, so I also felt that this opportunity would offer the chance to become more culturally aware of Chinese customs, as well as appreciate some beautiful landmarks and architecture. I was really excited to take part in the variety of daily activities and arranged day trips- such as the boat trip around the West Lake, a visit to the Song Dynasty Theme Park and He Fang Ancient Street (the best place to get souvenirs!) as well as the G20 Summit Evening Light Show (and so many more). These trips were fantastic and allowed me to view how beautiful and photogenic Hangzhou really is. The photos do not do it justice!

Similarly, I was really keen to improve my Mandarin skills (the official language of China). As I had already completed a beginner’s Mandarin language course at the Queen’s University Language Centre, I was interested in developing my oral and written skills on the programme- which I definitely did! (I will talk in more detail about the classes in the ‘academic’ question below). I am about to enter the final year of my Law degree and wish to secure a traineeship abroad in the next few years. As Law is very competitive, and employers prefer graduates who have some element of previous global experience, I knew that having this experience on my CV would undeniably make me stand out in future job applications and interviews. Also- being bilingual is definitely an advantage when applying for roles with global firms!

In relation to my personal development, I had hoped to become more independent, self-assured and secure in myself. As I had never been away from home for this length of time (without friends) I was extremely nervous and apprehensive! However, travelling to and from China *alone* has allowed me to become more confident in myself, as well as taught me that I can easily and happily adapt to new environments- even if they are extremely different.

Of course, I also wanted to develop my social skills. As I don’t often have the chance to mingle with other non- law students at university, I hoped to meet a wider variety of people. As the Programme involves living and studying with other UK University students, I was definitely able to achieve this. I met and became friends with so many amazing people- English, Scottish, Welsh, Polish, Russian, Turkish, Romanian and many more! There was also great representation for all degree backgrounds and stages of study- ranging from first years, to master’s students, recent graduates and final years. Very diverse!

**How did I benefit from the Study China Programme, academically?**

Although the programme does offer the chance to explore China, its main objective is to develop academically. We had daily week-day Mandarin classes at Zhejiang University from 9am- 12pm, and on some days, from 1-3pm too. As my teacher was a lecturer at the university, the quality of teaching was brilliant. The teaching pace was perfect- challenging but rewarding. We also had the chance to attend Chinese Business Culture lectures. I really enjoyed these, as I am extremely interested in Global business and how different countries culture’s affect the way they approach business. I have to admit, I do feel quite lucky that I was able to attend these lecturers, as they complement my own degree course.

**Why I would recommend this Programme to other students?**

I would recommend this programme to all (eligible) students, as it is so unique, in that it offers a variety of opportunities to develop yourself personally.

As well as being able to visit local sights and take part in daily language classes, it also allowed us to spend one weekend with a local Chinese family. My host family and I visited a local calligraphy studio, whereby we were able to meet local artists, write our own name in Chinese characters, and also keep our own personalised picture. Later in the evening, we made dumplings and ate dinner with the host family. This was very special, as I was able to try some traditional Chinese food and take part in the family’s social customs. This visit was undoubtedly the highlight of the programme for me personally- and I am definitely going to keep in touch with my host family on social media. Hopefully they will visit me in Northern Ireland someday. One of our other arranged activities involved a visit to the OSM Pearl Museum. Here, we were able to study a variety of clams and pearls, and got to open, as well as keep our own pearls. We were consequently awarded certification for Pearl Anatomy training- definitely a unique experience.

During the weekends, participants were able to travel independently around China, separately from the programme. I decided to visit Shanghai, which was very quick and easy to get to by the bullet train. It was great getting to see the high-rise city buildings and bright lights at the Bund, as well as try some local food. Some students travelled to Beijing which I have heard was brilliant too. I would recommend taking this opportunity to travel independently on the programme, as it helps to develop your self-confidence, adaptability and maturity- and of course put your new language skills to use.

Taking part on the programme also allows student to act as a Global Opportunities Ambassador for Queens, giving you the chance to share your experience with potential future applicants. Further, you are able to achieve Degree Plus through completing the programme- another great way to make your CV stand out.