

## EXPERIENCES ON A PLACEMENT

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### 1. Introduction

The aim of this short paper is to present some remarks which may be useful for new visitors from Poland in arranging their travel and work in British Universities under TEMPUS financial support. On the other hand, it may be treated as a record of the personal experiences of one of the visiting academics in England.

### 2. Planning for the Journey

#### 2.1. Formal Invitation

Formal invitation is very important to start the preparation of the visit. The invitation has to state precisely the aims and duration of the visit, as well as details of financial support and the supervisor in England. I was always supplied with very correct documents by the European Office of the International Centre, University of Bristol. Direct fax invitation from my Professor-supervisor helped me in arranging all necessary documents and official agreements at my Polish University in advance. It is important to confirm the invitation with the Polish TEMPUS Office in the Ministry of Education, to avoid a long wait for the visa and a charge for it. (From 1 June 1992 it is possible to get a visa at the British border, but the above-mentioned set of well-prepared documents is even more necessary than before).

#### 2.2. Getting the Visa

It was a very time-consuming and difficult job to get a visa from the British Consulate-General in Warsaw (now the visa is given at the border), because the building was overcrowded and the staff overworked. I was one of the visitors who was rejected by a very unkind security guard without a chance to speak with a member of staff. Fortunately, after my intervention in the Polish TEMPUS Office, it was later possible to get a visa in a very short time, in pleasant surroundings and atmosphere, without any problems - sometimes on the same day that the application was presented. It is now possible to cross the border and obtain a visa there. I cannot therefore emphasise strongly enough the importance of having all your documentation in order before

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starting your journey. After 1 May 1992 it will be possible to travel to England without any difficulties.

### **3. Travel**

For people outside Warsaw, living near Germany, I recommend the British Airways connection from Berlin, which is much cheaper than from Warsaw. As a good alternative, especially when heavy luggage is carried for a long stay, it is possible to use the direct coach service from Berlin to London ("Eurolines", £90 return). Recently several private bus services have come into operation between England and Poland, including a direct line from Bristol for the same price.

### **4. Accommodation**

The cost of accommodation in Bristol is around £35-£45 per week. The University of Bristol has a very good Accommodation Office.

### **5. First Day at the University**

It is very difficult finding oneself in the new, exciting, pleasant but strange surroundings of a new University. The staff of the University, especially the Professor-supervisor, offer a great deal of help for beginners, including the arranging of a Library card, copying facilities and computer access. It is not good to have a separate room or rooms with only Polish visitors, since progress in English and assimilation of English social life will be very slow. There are several activities which help visitors from Poland, including regular English lessons, but the most important thing is to join in with normal University life, starting with the Research Fellows' coffee club in the lunch hour. It is important to listen to the radio or watch English TV from time to time, and to regularly read the English newspapers.

### **6. Research and Teaching**

It is great fun to have lectures and laboratories with British students. The "step by step" method introduced by the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering seems the best way. At the beginning, responsibility for the course is rather low (it belongs to the lecturer from the University), but this is increased during the course as much as possible. Research under TEMPUS must support the teaching activities in Poland. It is like learning new subjects to be taught in Poland by the participants, by solving some new, but real, topics. It gives stronger motivation for hard work than simply following the written curriculum. The Library in Queen's Building supported me with any books and papers necessary for research or teaching activities. Thanks to the kindness of the Dean of the Faculty, I was also involved fully in the examination process.

## **6. Conclusion**

After my visit to England, I feel more confident of what, and how, to teach my students in Poland, and of how to carry out research. I hope that my English is much better than it was before, especially in understanding speech at normal speeds. I found my visits very fruitful also from the social and cultural points of view. The scholarship was more than sufficient to cover short trips to many interesting places in Britain, including London and Windsor.

## **7. Acknowledgement**

I am very grateful to Professor Erik Dagless and all the staff from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering for providing good conditions for "learning how to teach", as well as self-study help and a very cordial, friendly atmosphere.