

# NOVEMBER BLOG 1

## What's the food like?

I love love love the food here, it keeps getting better the longer I'm here. My favourite foods right now are cold noodle salad (we pick and mix the ingredients), Chao Bing 炒饼 (a sort of chopped up pancake noodle type dish fried just like chow mein 炒面 and a super good noodle soup called 白菜拉面 from a Muslim restaurant round the corner from the university. 真的好吃!



## Is the food similar to home takeaway

I guess in some small ways yes, for example chow mein is very similar as well as some simple rice dishes however mostly the food is very different as often Scottish take away restaurants are Cantonese style plus there is such a huge range here that I haven't found much that is like home. I love the food here more than back in Scotland!

## How's the group life

As it's now been a fair while since arriving in Tianjin everyone has found the people they are closest with, although we all have a really good large group relationship too. It's just like at school or work anywhere, everyone finds their little group of friends that work best. We have as a group made lots and lots of international friends from Polish to Chinese to Mongolian to Congolese and many more- I couldn't even count. With many they speak good English however we try to adopt "chinglish" where we speak much Chinese with a bit of English to help each other out if our mandarin isn't quite up to scratch.

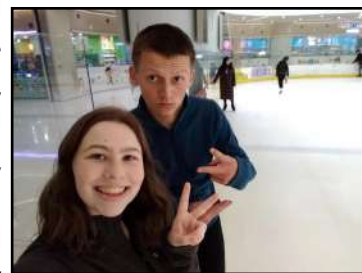
## Month so far



November so far has been... hard. At the very start of the month we had our midterm exams 考试: Comprehension 综合, Writing 汉字, Speaking 口语 and listening 听力. I'd been studying crazy hours towards the end of October and am still keeping up lots now but around exam time we were all doing that little extra to get great results. Some stayed in the dormitory 宿舍 rooms or common area, some went to the library 图书馆, and me to Starbucks as it's where many international students also go to study. We all just found places that worked for us. Once exams were done it was a relief and I gave myself more free time with everyone and awaited results, all my results have come in at over 70% so I'm super happy and know my revision paid off.

Maia, (my friend from High school and fellow scholar) and I sent a video message to the Scotland China Education Network (SCEN) annual youth summit which was held at the EICC to let them know how we got into the scholarship and what it was that we were doing while here. We had people message saying they had seen the video so it was good to hear that it had gone well and we were able to be somewhat present at the conference in which we had hosted ourselves the year before in Perth. SCEN works to promote the learning of Chinese and about China across Scotland much like CISS does but in slightly different ways. I have been part of SCEN for many years and was previously the Chair of the SCEN Youth Committee which certainly led to and had a huge impact on my choice to come to China.

Just after the exams Morgan and I went ice skating at one of the shopping centres in the city, boarding the metro for around 20 minutes to get there, changing subway at Tianjin Zhan 天津站. It was great as we could just chat and laugh at how



terrible I was... Morgan used to go to skating training clubs back home so she was well above my level and even held my arms to keep me upright at times :)

## What are the benefits of coming on the scholarship and what are things to think about?

- Being on the scholarship accelerates our rate of learning so much as we are using it in our daily lives, to read texts from teachers, order food and clothes, look for directions, pick the right products at the shops and everything else in between.
- Whether you want to go into a Chinese based or linked workplace or you simply want to learn Chinese as a language for other reasons besides work, learning such an up and coming language, spoken by the most people in the world, will certainly 当然 come in useful plus it's super interesting 特别有意思 to learn.
- If you're looking to come to China on the CISS scholarship or in another way one thing to bear in mind is that it is hard work, if you don't put in the work and don't get the results you will only be disappointing yourself for not putting in the time while you had the chance. So make sure you're fully prepared to put in the work.
- If you're someone who is very close to your family you'll have to make sure you understand you can't always talk to home when you want to because the time difference is 7-8 hours. Many of this years scholars are very close to their family though and are coping just fine being away as you learn to adjust to the time away. Don't let leaving family and friends be the thing that stops you from coming away.



天津



In the middle of the month I had a delivery from my Auntie 姑姑 Kat of sweets and chocolate 巧克力 from home of some snacks I am craving that I simply can't get here. It was a great wee boost of home comforts as a reward for my studying and exams I feel. Tomorrow I'm taking a trip with some of the others from the group after uni the 75miles or so to Beijing 北京- the train ticket 票only cost 20¥ which is just over £2- to see the last of the autumn leaves in the beautiful streets 漂亮的胡同, visit Tiananmen Square 天安门广场 and eat some great food.

## Do you miss home and what do you miss?

Of course I miss seeing family and friends however I'm absolutely loving living abroad and the independence I have while here. I am super proud of myself for being across the world studying with such an amazing opportunity as a scholarship as I know it's a rarity. Studying, travelling and daily life is so fun here that I know China is my home for now and I love that.

I miss friends as I see them meeting up all the time at Universities back home and the time difference makes it difficult to have a good chat all the time. Family too as it's been three months now, however I'm used to travelling so have become accustomed to being away from my family more in recent years.



I definitely miss working, before coming to China I had two part time jobs 工作- normally working 30+ hours a week on top of school. I'm a bit of an addict when it comes to keeping busy and making money so I have genuinely found it hard while being here however I know it will benefit my studies. I worked for a wedding and events company that was so interesting and Tesco too which I loved :).

Another big one is driving. In China cars 车 and motorbikes 末班车 are everywhere but we of course are not allowed to drive them while here so I'm missing being able to drive to new places and meet people like I could at home. It is definitely saving me money on fuel and better for the very polluted environment to go on the hire bikes 共享单车 and walk 散步 everywhere locally though!

## Best way to keep in contact with home...

Certainly keeping in contact with home becomes quite important 重要 when away for such a long period of time. What we have

### Is it not scary going to another country for a year?

So yeah of course it is daunting to be heading off to another country for a year away from family and friends but right now I am nothing but happy to have the opportunity. I love to travel 流行 and have done so for a number of years now; from China, Tanzania 坦桑尼亚, Iceland 冰岛, Morocco 摩洛哥 and 3 weeks around Europe 欧洲 inter-railing (Paris 巴黎 was one of my favourite stops) so that has made it a fairly easy transition for me. Some of the others on the trip haven't travelled nearly as much or been away from family for more than a week before and they are doing well on the scholarship too despite it being so scary beforehand for them. This experience will always have ups and downs and times where we feel more nervous than others but there is so much support from the other scholars, the team at CISS and at worst you will only have to wait a couple of hours for family to wake up 起床 at home so there is nothing to be worried 心焦 about. So in short yes I did feel daunted by this however now that we are here I've realised how there is no need to be.



found after staying here for a couple of months now is that WeChat (China's main social networking/ messaging service that now is the basis of daily life; from paying for shopping to booking transport and leisure tickets) is the easiest to use. It works similarly to WhatsApp, sending messages, calls and video calls instantly, free of charge, using only internet connection. You can use the moments section similarly to Facebook's feed so you keep everyone up to date back home.

Most importantly, it is the way everyone in China contacts each other- from teachers 老师们, friends 朋友们 even to shopkeepers and restaurant owners if you make friends with them. Recently 最近 I got my dad setup on the app so now he doesn't have to wait for me to contact him in other ways.

My second best way to contact home is through FaceTime Of course you have to have apple products to use it however it is again reliable and easy to use just like at home. I have started using FaceTime every couple of nights to contact friends especially and have a proper chit chat about everything as it can be easy to feel like your missing out on all the normal chat you'd get when home. There are other ways, however, to get in contact however WeChat and FaceTime are the best and easiest options in my opinion 在我看来 ;)

### What do you do in your spare time

When I'm not at uni or studying I've started to take up a little bit of french language 法语 learning using the Duolingo app alongside the help of my roommate Colin who speaks fluent french. I have to recommend Duolingo to learn any language, I have even got my brother 哥哥 trying it before he comes to China). I've also been reading 看书 many 很多 books on my iPad, I'm currently reading Poverty Safari, to give my mind a rest from Chinese now and then. I've also been listening to lots of podcasts from news outlets and other interesting sources just to try and keep up to date with news 新闻, politics 政治 and business 生意 at home.

