

Exchange University of Western Ontario

At the beginning of the third year of my bachelor study in economics and business I took part in a four-month exchange program at the Western University in London Ontario. Studying in this Canadian city has been a very valuable experience for me.

Preparation

Once you have decided that you wish to study abroad, you first have to write a motivation letter and make sure that you match the requirements for going on exchange outside of Europe. Somewhere in February you will receive an email from the ESC regarding whether you are selected or not. Once you are selected you will be nominated at Western University by the ESC. The exchange coordinator at Western will then send you emails with various information about housing, courses, etc.

As my stay in Canada was for less than six months, a visa application was not required for me. The only document that you will need at the airport besides your passport is an acceptance letter from Western. I would recommend booking your flight after acceptance from Western of the nomination sent out by the ESC.

You will also have to make some arrangements with DUO concerning the scholarship that you are receiving. You have the right to apply for an away from home scholarship and a monthly compensation of your OV-card. Make sure you make these arrangements well in time.

I decided to stay off-campus quite near the University, as it is much cheaper than living on-campus. I made arrangements for my stay before leaving for Canada. As it is an exchange program for four months you will have some struggle finding a landlord that is willing to accommodate you, since most of the landlords are looking for students who will stay the whole school year. I made use of the following house listing website: <https://offcampus.uwo.ca/listings/>. I contacted the landlords by phone and hence found suitable accommodation.

I would recommend having a credit card with you, since opening a bank account in Canada for four months is not worth the hassle. I would also try, if possible, to temporarily stop your mobile phone contract or to minimize the monthly cost of it. Purchasing a travel adapter is also recommended.

Arrival

I arrived in Canada about a week before the start of the orientation activities. As I had family living in Toronto, they received me at the airport and I also stayed the first night at their place. From the airport you have the option to take the Robert Q bus that can take you directly to London. The following day I left for London to get settled in and discover the city a bit before the start of the semester. I would recommend taking the bus everywhere you go, as biking is not very convenient in London.

Western organized two orientation events for exchange students, which were very helpful. These events are also the perfect opportunity to get to know new people from around the world. You will also have to collect your student card and bus pass during these days. Western also organizes an orientation week which I did not take part in, as it is primarily directed towards first year students (frosh).

Courses

At Western you will need to pass four courses in order to obtain the 24 ECTS credits that are required. I would recommend starting early with registering for courses as there is a chance of classes being full quite early. At first I enrolled in 5 courses and subsequently dropped the least interesting one. Being a Western student for only the first semester you will have to choose from the A and F type courses. From the ESE I was required to take at least two of my courses in the field of economics.

I took the following four courses during my exchange:

ECON 3332 – Financial Economics

This was by far the most interesting course I took at Western. The professor was very enthusiastic and his way of teaching was very appealing. It was also a quite challenging class as it is an honors level course. A few topics that were covered: CAPM, APT, futures/forwards and bonds.

ECON 3344 – Labor Economics

This course was a bit less interesting but nevertheless helped in enhancing my presenting skills. We had to do two presentations in groups. Topics included: wage and employment determination, labor force participation and human capital.

ECON 3330 – Advanced Monetary Theory

This was also a quite interesting course, although the professor was not that great. I did learn a lot from this course and gained new insights in monetary policy. The main focus of this course was on the role of money in a general equilibrium.

MOS 3363 – Introduction to Auditing

I gained a lot of knowledge taking this course. The professor was very well organized and also taught in an appealing way. This course basically covers the main auditing concepts and procedures. This course was also quite challenging.

Finances

What I found quite surprising in Canada is that the prices that are displayed everywhere are stated without taxes. So essentially you need a calculator with you all the time to know what you will actually be paying. Below you will find a brief overview of the expenses and receipts. All amounts are stated in Canadian Dollars.

Expenses		Receipts	
Rent	\$ 1.520	DUO scholarship	\$ 1.830
Insurance, student ID, bus pass	\$ 500	OV compensation	\$ 560
Flight	\$ 930	ESE scholarship	\$ 770
Books	\$ 260	Savings	\$ 1.210
Food	\$ 980		
Phone Plan	\$ 180		
	\$ 4.370		\$ 4.370

Daily Life

I really enjoyed the daily life in Canada. The country in general seemed very spacious to me in comparison to The Netherlands where everything is very compact. Furthermore Canadians are very welcoming, open and helpful people. I didn't get to experience a typical Canadian winter, since the weather was very mild in comparison to preceding years.

There are quite a lot of activities that are organized by Western especially for international students like the Global Café, which is a weekly get together of international students. All of these activities are very good opportunities to make new friends and socialize. I would recommend joining the peer guide program, in which you will get a personal guide to whom you can ask questions and interact with.

The Western campus is quite big and also very beautiful. It has a huge Recreation Centre, which also includes a very nice gym. Every Western student has free access to the gym and I would strongly recommend making use of this.

I had family living in Hamilton and Toronto and therefore visited them a couple of times during the semester. I also spent a weekend with family living in the US. Furthermore I spent some time in exploring London itself. The local public transport system in London is very good and it can get you everywhere. When traveling long distances I would recommend taking the Greyhound bus, as its fares are very reasonable and goes to a lot of places.