

About my exchange period at York University, Toronto



From September till December 2016 (the Fall semester), I studied at York University, Toronto, Canada.



Preparation

Before I arrived in Canada, I had to prepare many things like housing, choosing courses, buying plane tickets etc. This took me a lot of time, so start in time. Even before I was informed that I was admitted to York, I already made the Toefl test, just in case. After I received my admission letter from the ESE, it took some time before York contacted me. After the official letter of admission, I could really start preparing my exchange period. I choose to live on campus, because I wanted to be sure to have a place to stay. Besides, it can be very hard to find a room in the city for four months only. I was assigned to a room in the Atkinson residence and I shared the bathroom with another Dutch girl. Unfortunately, we didn't have a common living room or a kitchen. We were obligated to buy a meal plan, so I had to have breakfast, lunch and dinner outside my room, which could be a bit annoying sometimes. On the other hand, having a meal plan can be nice as well as many other exchange students had a meal plan too, so we usually met for dinner with other people. Living on campus is very convenient, you can walk to your lectures and it is easy to meet with other students. Next to taking care of housing, I had to choose courses. This was quite a challenge, since many (economic) courses at York require prerequisites. This means that you have to proof that you are able to take the course. This can take a bit of time, but usually you are accepted to take the course. Another thing I had to think of was a VISA. Fortunately, I didn't need one, since I would study in Canada for less than 6 months. However, I did have to apply for an ETA, but this takes a few business days only and is around 6 Canadian dollars.

Arrival

I arrived in Canada on the 20th of August, two weeks before my courses would actually start. The first week I stayed in a hostel in downtown Toronto, because I wanted to see the city first before I would start to study. It was actually my first time that I was travelling outside Europe and also the first time that I was travelling on my own, so I was a bit worried. However, I met so many nice people in the hostel and I have seen so many great things during that week in the city, that I can only recommend doing this too. After one week, I moved to campus. I had a short information session, in which I met some other exchange students. However, the university didn't organize any introduction activities for exchange students, so we usually organized our own activities, which was very nice as well. Before I moved to Canada, somebody from the exchange team of York University started a Facebook group with all the exchange students, which made it very easy to meet new people or to ask questions about any inquiries.

Courses

I took the following courses at York University

- Global business economics – 6 ECTS
This course was mainly about international trade relations and about the differences between countries regarding their economies. The course seemed very interesting at the beginning of the year, but the quality of the lectures was (in my opinion) quite low. The teacher was not so passionate about his course, which made it hard to be enthusiastic about this course myself. The content of the course itself was very interesting, but just the way of teaching was a bit disappointing.
- International trade – 6 ECTS
This was the hardest course that I had, but it was very interesting and challenging. The lectures were well prepared and very useful. The course was mainly about how countries trade with another and about how the traded quantity is determined.
- Growth and development economics – 6 ECTS
This was the most interesting course that I took. It dealt with developing countries and it mainly explained why poor countries are poor. The teacher was very good and the lectures were very interesting. I would definitely recommend taking this course.
- Exploring the functions of business – 6 ECTS
This was a first year course and I mainly took it because I also wanted to have a course that was not specifically about economics. Since this

was a first year course, a big part of it was about developing academic skills, which is of course not very useful for us. Nevertheless, it was a nice way to learn something about Canadian businesses.

The courses that I took didn't provide tutorials, so I had lectures only. This also meant that I had a lot of free time, I was free on Monday, Thursday and Friday, so my weekends were very long.

Finances

Going on exchange has cost me a lot of money, but it was totally worth it. Living in Canada is quite expensive in general and you should be aware of the fact that the prices you see displayed in the shops do not include taxes. I had the cheapest meal plan, but this was okay for me, only for the last two weeks I had to pay my dinners myself, because there was not enough money left on my meal plan. My plane ticket was relatively expensive. This was mainly because I could take two suitcases with me and my departure airport (New York) was different from my arrival airport (Toronto). I choose to do many trips during my time in Canada, which cost a lot of money as well, but this is completely personal of course, you can also spend your money on something else. The TOEFL test was relatively expensive, but just after I had made the test, I found out that it was possible to make a cheaper one on campus, so I would definitely check that out.

Room on campus and meal plan	± 3200 euros
Plane ticket	± 1000 euros
Travelling	± 1000 euros
ESTA	± 5 euros
Mandatory health insurance (UHIP)	± 100 euros
Books and other school stuff	± 150 euros
TOEFL test	± 230 euros
Sports facility	± 10 euros
Public transportation	± 200 euros

Daily life

My life in Toronto was very different from my life in Rotterdam. I had more free time, which I usually spent travelling, exploring Toronto or hanging out with friends. No day and no week were alike during my exchange. A 'regular' day of school looked like follows: I woke up and would have breakfast in York Lanes (a small shopping mall on campus), then I would go to my lectures and afterwards I would usually meet my friends to have lunch. Next, I would study a bit and I would have dinner with my friends. My friends and me sometimes conclude the day with a beer in one of the

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bars on campus. I usually spent my weekends travelling or going out with friends. Toronto is a great city to stay: it has a lot to offer and it's close to many other beautiful and cool places. We usually used public transportation or rented a car to go somewhere. The public transportation system in Toronto is similar to the Dutch system, but it is way bigger and you can basically go to every part of the city by riding public transportation. Sometimes we used Uber, which was a convenient and fast way to get somewhere.

If you have any questions about going on exchange to Toronto, I am happy to help you!