



CANADA – TORONTO

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE
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Introduction

Despite of the worldwide pandemic situation I was determined on following my dream of going abroad for one semester. My main goal of going on an exchange was to improve my English skills because we are living in an increasingly globalized world. It would be very beneficial to have these skills when engaging with different people and cultures from different backgrounds in the construction field today.

Your exchange adds value to your resume, where you can show the ability to navigate a new country in a foreign language, immerse yourself in a new culture and adapt to a new environment which can make you stand out from the crowd in the future.

I choose George Brown because of its great academic foundation, multicultural environment, and numerous networking possibilities. I made George Brown College (GBC) in Canada as my number one choice. I was thrilled to receive my acceptance letter from GBC, and I couldn't wait to begin my new adventure.

Experiences at the host university

Before I moved to Toronto, I knew that I would attend all my courses online due to the pandemic. I was then hoping for a little reopening later by the time started but that was not the case. Even though the entire course was delivered online, the faculty was extremely supportive and helped me find a study group. Unfortunately, we never got the chance to meet each other in person because of distance. The online issue made it very inconvenient for me to find friends to meet up with. So, I tried to be very open minded and attended all kind of social events I could find on Eventbrite, and by talking to people at cafés. In that way I managed to find other exchange students from different Universities of Toronto to do stuff together with.

I went on exchange on my 5th semester of studying Architectural Technology and Construction Management in Denmark. The education in Canada is called Architect Technology and consists of 6 semesters. Before you arrive, you will have to choose your courses, some of them are mandatory and already chosen for you and others can you choose by yourself. To pass the semester in Canada you need 15-18 credit hours which is 30 ECTS point compared to the Danish education system. I had 15 credit hours which was corresponding to 5 courses.

5) Architect Technology – 5th semester courses

2 credit hours: TECHNICAL REPORT WRITING

Technical report writing was a course where I had to write a technical report on a topic of my choice. I chose to write about determining the most sustainable and cost-effective roofing material which I found very interesting. Every week we had to write and submit a chapter for report. You should also be aware that the technical report incorporates secondary and primary research conducted so you need to make some kind of test / research along with the report. The professor was very helpful in this course and knew a lot about the report structure and settings, but she didn't know anything about the technical aspect in the report.

2 credit hours: PRINCIPLES OF BUILDING INFORMATION MODELING

I really loved this course because you could feel the professor's burning enthusiasm about the subject during the whole semester. We had three multiple choice tests and one presentation in the end of the semester. We were taught about the fundamental principles of the Building Information Modelling (BIM) process, and about BIM as a collaborative system.

2 credit hours: MATERIALS, METHODS AND COMPONENT 3

Third course was about materials used in high-rise construction and renovation of low-rise buildings. We examined sustainable construction materials, products and assemblies for their properties, function, application, and performance for the application in technical design problem solving. We had two assignments about creating a 2D and 3D detailed drawing followed by two multiple choice tests with the content you had been taught during the lectures.

6 credit hours: ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY AND STUDIO 5

The studio course was very similar to the course in Denmark where you had to join groups and work together on one big semester project; this semester was about a hybrid high-rise building. In this course you have three big assignments and one presentation of your work. All the working drawings are done in Revit and the presentation is a combination of Revit and Photoshop, so remember to install Photoshop, InDesign, or Illustrator on your laptop before the beginning of the semester.

3 credit hours: DIGITAL PRACTICES FOR ARCHITECTURE 3

This course could easily just be called Revit. We were taught different things in Revit which was very useful for our big semester project in studio class. We had 10 different group assignments so almost one each week. It was a big challenge to collaborate online on our Revit project, but we managed to work it out. Every class was recorded so I could go back and forth if there were some steps I didn't catch in the lecture, which was very useful to me. In the end of this semester, we had an individual test in Revit, where we should design an office building from sketch and incorporate specific steps from the entire semester.



Living at George Brown Residence

I choose to live at George Brown Residence to be around other students. Unfortunately, all the dorm room were closed due to the pandemic, so it was hard to meet new people. The residence is located in the new Canary District which is 12 minutes by bike and 20 minutes by public transport to downtown Toronto. The residence is only 5 minutes by foot to the Distillery Historic District which is a must-see tourist attraction.

I lived together with one roommate where we were sharing a bathroom and kitchen which only included a microwave, sink, refrigerator, and freezer; so, I became pretty good making food in a microwave. If you wanted to cook on a stove, you needed to use the common kitchen but be aware that you need to buy your own pot, frying pan, plates, and cutlery. I had my own room with a queen size bed, a desk and a chair to do my assignments followed by a TV and a cabinet to hang my clothes. You can buy your pillows and duvet at Walmart or at Winners which is an easy and cheap solution.



Social and cultural experiences

Toronto is an amazing city filled with many opportunities and places to explore. The city is famous for its ethnic and cultural diversity which is reflected in the different districts in Toronto. I especially loved walking around in Kensington District where you can find multicultural mix of supermarkets, street food, hole-in-the-wall boutiques and vintage clothing stores. Furthermore, I would recommend you buying a citypass and visit the RUM (royal Ontario Museum), Ripley's Aquarium of Canada, Casa Loma, the CN tower, and the Ontario science center. Use your time to watch the Blue Jays playing baseball at Rogers Centre or a basket game at ScotiaBank Arena.

Don't miss out on visiting Montreal in Quebec, it takes 5 hours from Union station, but the experience is worth it. On the way up Mont Royal hill you can see McGill which is a famous University. When you reach the top you will be amazed by a beautiful view of Montreal City. Another great cultural experience is visiting Notre-dame Basilica of Montreal and Old Montreal which has

dozens of dining establishments, night clubs, bars, and shops. Old Port is also a great place where you have the opportunity of getting a famous poutine which is a Canadian must-have dish made of french fries topped with cheese curds and gravy. Try to see if you can book a room at M Montreal Hostel it's a very modern hostel set in central Montreal just a couple minutes' walk from Berr-UQAM station.

Practical experiences

The public transport is very easy, you can easily buy a Presto card at Shoppers Drug Mart and remember to mention that you are a student to get a little discount. The Presto card works similar to Rejsekortet in Denmark where you can transfer money to. I also bought an annual bike subscription for CAD \$99 which was the only convenient option even though I only went for one semester. The bike subscription gave me the opportunity to use all the city bikes around Toronto. You are able to unlock the bikes through your app PBSC and then you could transport yourself around Toronto's streets. Remember that you only have the bike for 30 minutes and then you need to dock the bike and unlock another to continue riding without accumulating overage fees.

Conclusion

Every day in Toronto, I learned something new, expanded my skill set, and enlarged my circle by engaging with people from all origins and cultures. Time flies and I have now finished my program with knowledge and life experience gained. I definitely feel much more confident about myself since I first came to Canada, and GBC has played a significant role. My exchange in Toronto have definitely been a very important decision in my professional development. I can strongly recommend others making the same decision for your future professional journey and you will definitely get great memories that will last for a life time.

