

My Exchange report

Student

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Host institution

George Brown College, Toronto, Canada

Host institution's contact person

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Period of study

Fall semester 2021 (07-09-2021 – 17-12-2021)



Where and when did you study abroad?

I studied at George Brown College, which was located in Toronto, Canada. George Brown College has several locations in Toronto, and I was scheduled to study at Casa Loma, which was uptown, but sadly the whole program was online due to the Covid-19 situation. I studied at George Brown College for the fall semester of 2021 and the exact dates was from the 7th of September till the 17th of December.

What KEA program did you attend at the time?

At the time I attended the KEA program called Datamatiker, which is a 2-year program, where you after can top-up with 3 more semesters to get a professions bachelor. At George Brown College I attended the program called Computer Programming and Analysis.

What classes did you take during your semester abroad?

Because I started my program in Denmark at wintertime the semesters at KEA and George Brown College were staggered, which meant that all the courses from the 4th semester I was supposed to attend, was not available. I had to pick 5 courses to get the right amount of ETCS-point, so I had to pick courses from 3rd and 5th semester. The 5 courses I selected was Advanced Web Programming and Advanced Object-Oriented Programming, which were from 3rd semester and then Mobile Application Development 1, Web Application Development Using Java and Full Stack Development which were from 5th semester.

Please briefly explain what each class was about.

Advanced Web Programming was about programming small web-based application in Visual Studio using the programming language PHP. This Course was really difficult, because it was a language I had never heard of and the content about it on the internet was very limited.

Advanced Object-Oriented Programming was about programming small application in Visual Studio Code using the programming language C#. In this course we also went over a lot of programming logic and did some UML-diagrams as well. I liked this course a lot, but mainly because we had an really awesome teacher.

Mobile Application Development 1 was about programming small mobile applications in Android Studio using the programming language Java and also switching over to the programming language React Native later on in the semester to create more advanced applications. Good course, where we created useful applications.

Web Application Development Using Java was about programming web-based application in IntelliJ using the programming language Java. During the course we programmed 1 application and then just kept building onto it. This course was okay, but nothing special, because the pensum was something I went over at KEA on the semester prior as well.

Full Stack Development was about programming small applications in Visual Studio using the programming language JavaScript and React JS. This course challenged me a lot, because it was something new to me and also because the teacher had a strong accent, which gave me a hard time following along. Fortunately, the teacher was very helpful so overall it was a good experience.

Academic Experience

How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

They were really helpful I would say. I emailed back and forth with my contact person prior to semester start about picking courses and a lot of other things and she even reminded me about deadlines, so I didn't miss them. Before I left Denmark there was small communication-issue because of the time difference, so sometimes you would have to wait till next day to get an answer but otherwise no problems.

What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

I would say Mobile Application Development 1, because of the applications we created. It was really fun to create something for mobile, which I had never tried before. I would also like to highlight Advanced Object-Oriented Programming. This is 100% due to the teacher. He was so passionate and was really good at getting you to understand the logic behind programming, so you understood fully what was going on behind the scenes.

What classes/study experiences did you find least relevant or least valuable to you? Why?

I would say Web Application Development Using Java, but mainly because I already went through the pensum at KEA. Full Stack Development also had a too wide pensum, where you didn't get to go in depth with anything in my opinion.

What classes would you advice other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I would advice other KEA students to pick Advanced Object-Oriented Programming, because in my opinion it is worth to learn C# which is used a lot in the IT-world. Another course I would advice is Mobile Application Development 1, because it is great to get an introduction to creating mobile applications. If you already have completed the course at KEA about creating web-based application using Java I would not recommend picking Web Application Development Using Java.

Cultural/Personal Experience

What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

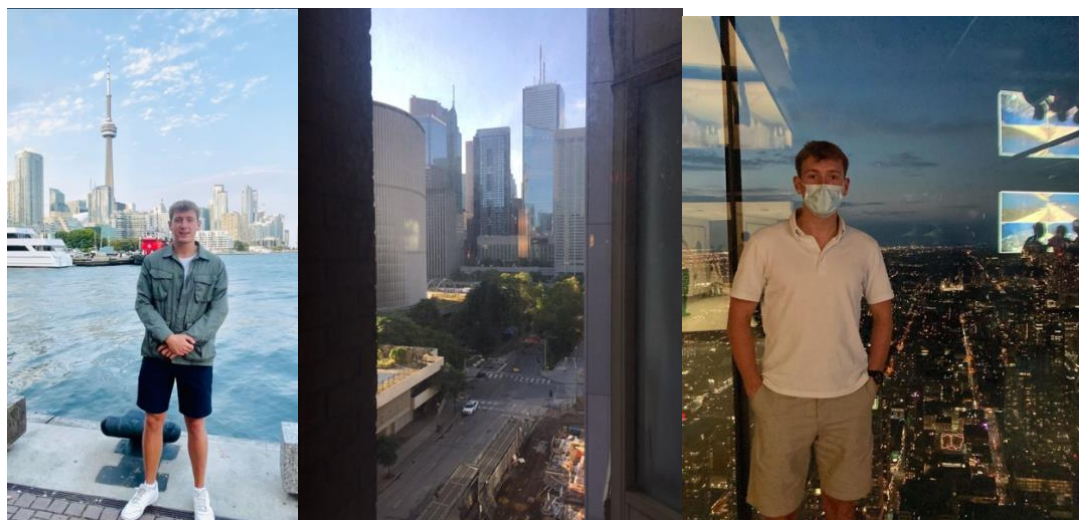
I lived at the George Brown College Campus, and you had to live with a roommate. Prior to my departure they had something called roommate-matching where everyone had a profile and then you had to write back and forth with people to find a roommate. Sadly, my roommate was not who he described to be, and we did not get along at all.

How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

I didn't reach out to the school about it, because I just found other people to hang around and, in the apartment, you had your own room and just had to share the kitchen and bathroom so it was a big problem.

What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

In general, the city of Toronto has a really big diversity, which was really interesting to experience. I met so many people from all around the world and it was an eye-opening experience to hear about their country and culture in a positive way.



What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

Make sure you choose your roommate wisely and establish solid contact to your upcoming roommate. In general, I would advise all KEA students going to study abroad to have an open mind and when you are there, say yes to everything you have a chance to attend. Of course, focus on school, but also remember to take as many experiences as you can with you home, because school is not the only reason you are there.

Practical Experience

How was the application process?

The application process was a bit long, but I guess there is no way around that. It was a lot of writing back and forth with my international coordinator in Denmark and with the hosting schools contact person. They helped me with every question I had so the process went smooth, but there were just a lot of waiting. I had the pleasure of finding another student from KEA, who was also going to the same school as I, so it was really nice to have somebody to talk to about the application process and we also used each other with reminding about deadlines. The worst thing about the application process in my case was that to get your study permit to enter Canada you had to travel to Stockholm, where they would take your fingerprints and take photos of you. This could not be done in Denmark so that was a bit annoying.

What did KEA help you with?

My international coordinator at KEA helped me with the application process and answered every concern and question I had.

What help did you receive from your school abroad?

The contact person at the host school helped me with getting onto all the relevant systems prior to my departure. During my stay she also kept in contact with me to make sure everything went as smooth as possible. We also hopped on a few online-calls where I could ask questions and she could answer to the best of her knowledge.

Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your destination?

Not at all. I arrived in Toronto 10 days prior to when I could move into the apartment at campus, where I stayed at a hotel. If I had any concerns, I could just reach out to my contact person.

How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

They were great. They made sure I could login to all the relevant school systems and were always available.

Where did you live?

I lived at The George, which was campus apartments. I lived downtown and I would say that you could ride on a bike to the center of the city in 10 minutes, so it was a really great location.



Was it difficult to find accommodation?

I had a bit trouble with finding accommodation due to that the school campus only offered stay of minimum 2 semesters, but it got sorted out and they let me stay there for only 1 semester. Toronto is one of the most expensive cities in the world to live in, so if you decide to go, I would recommend to do a deep search on the market to find the cheapest option depending on your budget.



Was it expensive?

I paid around 7000kr a month for accommodation which is around the same amount I pay in Denmark, but in general Toronto is really expensive.

What kind of expenses did you have in general?

My general expenses were food/drinks which were around the same prices as in Denmark, maybe even a little bit cheaper if you shopped bigger quantities. Other expenses were clothes shopping and tickets to sports events and gym membership.



Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

My budget was around 100 thousand kr. and it ended being close to that. I didn't keep track of my spending's but in general I would say that you can live for the same budget that you have in Denmark, but remember you will probably use a bit more on going out and attending events etc.

What kind of transportation did you use to get around at your exchange destination?

In Toronto you can get around in 4 different ways.

First option is to take the train/metro, which is the most popular one, I think. You buy something called a presto card and they charge you around 3\$ for a ride.

Second option is to use Uber/Lyft service. This option is really expensive in the long run but can be used if you are out till late and have to get home.

Third option is to use the bike sharing service. All around Toronto they have a lot of bike stations where you can pick a bike and then when your finished you can return it to the same or another station. Bike sharing service has a subscription you can buy for 100\$, where you get unlimited rides for a year. I used this option, because I am used to in Denmark to be biking everywhere I go. Disclaimer for this option is that even though you are a great/safe rider in Denmark, Toronto can be a dangerous place to ride, because they in most cases don't have any bike lanes so be aware when you drive around.

Forth option is just walking around. I would not recommend this option without combining it with another option.



Social and cultural experiences

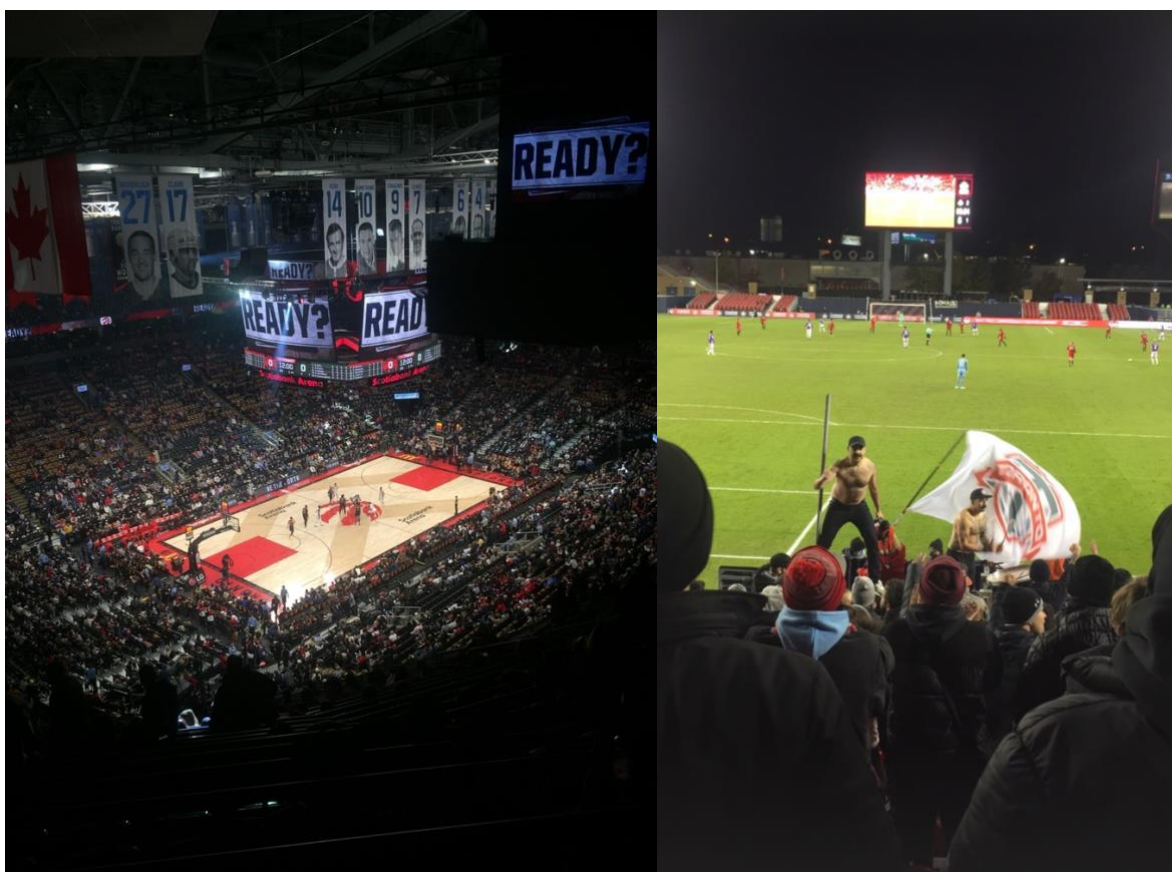
A description of your social experiences.

Luckily there was another student from KEA that went to the same destination as me, so I spend a lot of time with her. When we moved into the campus apartments, I also became friends with her roommate. Then there was a guy at the campus front desk I became really good friends with and also some of his coworkers. I also went on a trip with a girl I met through the exchange student social group. That's really it, because the second half of the semester I spend a lot of time inside in front of the computer because we had so many school projects and I felt that the general level in class increased.



What to do in the city.

The opportunities are unlimited, but in my case, I tried to have something I did everyday like going to the gym, go for a walk or a bike ride, go for swim, play tennis or go out to eat. For the weekends I would usually attend sport events. Toronto has a lot great teams in a variety of sports. They have the Toronto Raptors for basketball, the Toronto FC for soccer, the Toronto Blue Jays for baseball and the Toronto Maple Leaf's for ice hockey. The opportunities in my case were a little bit effected by the covid-19 situation, so there were some things that were closed sadly.



How to find friends and how to network.

Look up for social events on the web or use apps and social media. I found a big group formed by other exchange students, that arranged a lot of meetup and just social activities in general. As an exchange student you should always be open-minded, because you'll never know what small things can lead too, so say yes to every opportunity you get.

Conclusion

To what extent were your expectations met, both professionally and culturally?

I am so glad, that I decide to take a semester on exchange. Professionally I feel like i have gained a lot of useful knowledge that will affect me positively later in my career. Even though I was scared to go from 3 courses to 5 it all worked out in the end, and I can now proudly say that I have gotten an introduction to many new programming languages as well as increasing my knowledge of programming logic. The cultural aspect of the exchange was great too. I've met many interesting people from all over the world, that I still stay in contact with. I would advice every KEA student, that has the chance to do a semester on exchange, because even though it cost a lot of money, the outcome you get out of it in the end is so worth it.

