

CUSA Exchange Report
School of Business, Queen's University, Canada
Fall Semester, 2007

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Study year: Year 3 (2007-2008)

Introduction

Located in Kingston (in Ontario Province), Queen's University is one of the leading universities in Canada. The School of Business captures top international rankings for its academic and research programs and attracts elites from places all over the world. As an internationally renowned business school, Queen's School of Business endeavors to maintain academic excellence and cultivate leaders for society through a leading-edge curriculum.

Queen's official website: <http://www.queensu.ca/>

Queen's School of Business website: <http://business.queensu.ca/>

Visa requirement

Holders of HKSAR/BNO passport are not required to obtain student visa if your period of stay in Canada does not exceed 6 months. However, the immigration officers may ask you to show the admission letter from Queen's or the return air tickets for evidence, please remember to bring them along with you.

If you plan to travel to the United States, you need to get the U.S. travel visa prior to your departure.

Going to Queen's from Toronto

There is no direct flight from Hong Kong to Kingston. The closest international airport is in Toronto. The most economical way to go to Queen's University is to take Coach Canada from Toronto Pearson International Airport. You can purchase the coach tickets at the airport. It takes roughly 3.5 hours to arrive at Queen's.

Coach Canada website: <http://www.coachcanada.com/coachcanada/>

Local weather

The weather in September is quite hot and sunny. The temperature stays over 20 degree Celsius in the day. However, please be aware that the temperature difference between day and night quite large. It starts to get cold in late October. Winter in Kingston is chilly and sometimes damp. Temperature may drop to -10 degree Celsius in late November and -20 degree Celsius in December. (wind-chill effect considered) The first fall of snow in 2007 happened in November, which was being considered as an early snowfall. Although it is quite cold outside, indoor places are equipped with heaters. You will feel very warm indoor.

The weather network website: <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/weather/caon0349>

Accommodation

Despite higher accommodation fees, I recommend outgoing exchange students to reside on campus. Apart from more support and protection, living on campus provides good grounds for you to make friends with students all over the world. There are 2 options for exchange students to choose.

1. Harkness International Hall (co-ed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Located in Main Campus, close to classrooms- Close to downtown- No hall committee- No dining hall- More popular among exchange students
2. Jean Royce Hall (co-ed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Located in West Campus- Mix of local and international students (but international students will usually be arranged in the same house)- a Don (hall committee) is present in each house to take care of exchange students and arrange activities- With dining hall

Residences at Queen's: <https://housing.queensu.ca/residence/>

I myself lived in Jean Royce during my entire exchange period. In Jean Royce, there are 4 floors in each house. Each floor has 12 rooms. All rooms are single-bedded. 12 persons share a common room and a bathroom. Although Jean Royce is slightly far away from the Main Campus (20-min walking distance), you may take city buses (free of charge!) to go to class. I enjoyed the serenity in West Campus very much. Hall atmosphere is very friendly. The Don gave me much support in adapting to the new living environment.

Social events

I encourage exchange students to join the orientation activities organized by COMSOC (for commerce students) and the QUIC (for all students) in late August. These are the golden opportunities to meet friends before the semester starts.

For commerce students, you may join the buddy programme through COMSOC. Your buddy can tell you more about school life and the professors' expectation of each commerce course. It is advised that you do some research about the course before the add-drop period ends (usually the 3rd week of September), because workload and evaluation method vary among different courses. Your buddy will be helpful in easing your academic worries in Queen's.

The QUIC organizes trips to other cities in Ontario, celebration for Thanksgiving, ice-hockey matches etc. It also provides English support for students who want to enhance their oral speaking and writing skills.

For exchange students in the fall semester, please pay attention to the Homecoming events in mid October. You must not miss this important weekend which is thrilled with excitement and joy at Queen's. Throughout the semester, all sorts of social activities fill the calendar. Just be active and open-minded in order to get the most out of the activities.

Learning environment and courses

A lot of commerce courses are teamwork-based, requiring students to work on business case studies and make presentations. Professors demand high levels of student participation in class and they are receptive to our ideas and suggestions. Exchange students may also choose to take non-commerce courses. My friends took some interesting courses which are not being offered by CUHK.

COMM401 Business Policy (Professor: G. Bissonette)

CUHK equivalent: MGT4010 Business Policy and Strategy

Course description: This course focuses on the functions and responsibilities of senior level managers with respect to the development of organized and effective responses to issues and problems challenging an organization in today's highly competitive global environment. Key planning and application concepts are stressed, particularly with respect to strategy formulation and execution.

Course evaluation: 5 case studies, 2 presentations, 1 mid-term exam and 1 final paper

Even though the workload seemed great, I learned the most from COMM401 out of all the courses I have taken. The professor taught some important business concepts using international companies as examples. I am exposed to many renowned U.S. companies which I hardly heard of in Hong Kong.

PHIL158 Critical Thinking (Professor: N. Salay)

CUHK equivalent: UGD181A Critical Thinking

Course description: The course teaches students how to think critically. Students will learn how to evaluate arguments, claim, beliefs etc, as well as how to make solid arguments of their own.

Course evaluation: 4 online quizzes, 1 mid-term exam and 1 final exam

Tax and Banking

The government imposes sales tax on almost every purchase (with exception). In Kingston, the combined tax rate is 14% (8% provincial sales tax + 6% federal goods and services tax).

During my stay in Canada, I did not open a local bank account. As I am an account holder of HSBC, I can take cash from the ATM machines using my Hong Kong HSBC ATM card. Service fee is only HKD20 for each transaction, regardless of the amount. There are HSBC branches in Kingston.

Places to travel and tips

I recommend going to Montreal and Quebec City during long weekends. These two old cities in the Quebec province offer visitors appreciation of unparalleled natural beauty and picturesque architectures. These cities differ from Ontario cities a lot in their culture, which is worthwhile to make a trip. I also visited both the East Coast and California in the U.S. during my exchange period, the experiences were fantastic and unforgettable.

You may either join local tours or travel on your own. I recommend the latter option. Trip planning requires

a lot of energy and time, yet it allows better customization to your travel needs and brings greater satisfaction. The control of budget can also be more flexible. You may find the following websites useful.

For airticket reservations: <http://www.travelocity.com>

For hostel booking: <http://www.hostelworld.com/>

Expenditure (rough estimate)

Air tickets	HKD12800
Accommodation	HKD24000
Books and case materials	HKD2000
Living expenses	HKD15000
Insurance	HKD3000
Travel expenses	HKD18000
Total	HKD74800

*You may allow for downward adjustment as CAD appreciated a lot during Sept 2007- Dec 2007.

Final thoughts and my life in Kingston

As the former capital in Canada, Kingston is a quiet city with many historic buildings. There are only a few places for sightseeing and entertainment. Downtown is just a street, but you can get most of your daily necessities there. The tranquility in Kingston made me feel relaxed and allowed room for meditation about life and future. Words just cannot describe how great it is to live in a slow-paced place. Walking along Lake Ontario at night is one of my greatest memories, that I can see a boundless sky adorned with stars. During my leisure time, I often went grocery shopping with hall mates and we were eager to try all sorts of typical Canadian food. I enjoyed social gatherings with friends at night and we had a lot of sharing about our hometown.