

Exchange Report: Queen's University, Canada 2015 Fall Semester



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Part 1

Monthly Activity Log

September

I arrived at Kingston on 1st September, which was considered arriving early as the registration was on 8th. Yet, Queen's University International Centre organized an array of social activities and campus tours to get us know more about Kingston and the school, as well as expanding our social circles. I was lucky enough (as the tickets sold out pretty quick) to buy the tickets from the Centre to Toronto and watched the baseball game. Also, the ETC (Exchange and Transfer Community) held some orientation activities ranging from BBQ night to causal dinner. What impressed me most was the NEWTS week, an orientation week especially for incoming exchange students. They would put you in a group of about 20 students from the same field of studies. It was so much fun and it was a great chance to meet people from all around the globe. After a series of orientation programs, the school started on 14th and it was not difficult to adopt the academic environment, as it was similar to that in HKUST.

October

The libraries on campus were quite full at this time because this is the time for midterm exams. However, I still seized the chance to travel to Montreal and Ottawa with my floor mates from the residence. That was a perfect time to go around Canada as the maple leafs started turning red. And it was not that expensive and time consuming to travel around from Kingston by Megabus. Another highlight was the Homecoming tradition at Queen's. The school would have varied activities for their alumni (even for the Class of '66!) like Homecoming football games. It was the time you would immerge with their culture. However, do remember to line up for the tickets earlier as they are so popular.

November

The temperature began to drop in mid-November. Meanwhile, I got a chance to Toronto with my friends to watch my first NBA basketball game and we enjoyed it so much as the atmosphere was excellent in the stadium. What is more, I went to Niagara Falls on the next day where it was just 2 hours away from downtown Toronto. It was so much convenient as my friend drove me there. The scene in Niagara Fall was exceptional fine but we didn't have the time to join the boat trip, which would have been better. Despite travelling, I took part in the International Fair where exchange students hosted table for our home university and answered questions about our experience. That was a great opportunity to represent my school and introduce to some potential incoming exchange students to HKUST.

December

A wonderful journey had come to an end in December with classes ending on the first week. After taking a few final exams, I started my 1 week trip to the State, namely Chicago and New York. Fortunately, the weather was fine in mid-December with temperature around 17 Celsius in the region. However, it started snowing when it came to the end of the month in Canada. After the trip I returned to Toronto and went back to Hong Kong a few days before New Year's Eve.

Part 2

General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

There is no need to apply for a visa to enter Canada if you are a Hong Kong permanent resident, unless you plan to get a job there or stay more than 6 months. For this circumstance, a study permit is required. For anyone who wishes to visit the US, it is required to have a visa and it is better to obtain it from the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong before your exchange.

2) Orientation Activities

There are both optional and compulsory orientation activities for incoming exchange students. Some of the optional events are organized by the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC), providing chances for students to know more about the campus and meet friends, like campus tours and movie night.

Another organizer is Alma Mater Society which is a student-run club. One of their major orientation is NEWTS week, consisting of some Queen's traditions, paint party and carnival etc.

As for the mandatory one, it mainly focuses on academics, organized by the Smith School of Business. There are also some networking sessions so we could get an opportunity to know students that might study the same courses.

3) International Services & Activities

QUIC holds some trips to cities around Kingston occasionally. For instance, they offer trips to Toronto with baseball game tickets and Niagara Fall at a relatively low prices. What is more, they provide workshops and network activities very often during the semester.

4) Accommodations

There are both on campus and off campus accommodation. For on campus residence, the Jean Royce Hall is 20-minute on foot or 3-minute by bus away from the main campus. I would say staying in the residence is slightly expensive compared to the latter one. Yet, you would have more chances to make friends with other international and local students, as well as joining activities held by the residence community. One of the drawbacks is that sometimes the electronic devices could not connect Wifi in your room. As for off campus, you could rent a house in Kingston easily with your friends. Pay attention to the rent if it includes utilities and the internet. The school also offers community housing but it takes approximately 20 minutes to the main campus.

5) Courses Registration

The courses registration system Solus is similar to the SIS used by HKUST but they do not offer waiting list so keep updated with the system if you want to enroll classes that are full at the moment. For Commerce exchange students, the minimum courses take is 3 and the maximum is 5, with the restriction that the enrolled commerce courses must be more than the courses provided by other school (e.g. Economics courses by School of Art and Science).

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

Course Code	Course Title	Instructor	Assessment Method	Comments
COMM321	Derivative Securities	Prof. Louis Gagnon	2 assignment (30%) +Midterm (30%) +Final exam (40%)	This is a difficult course with a lot of numerical calculation.
COMM323	Corporate Financial Planning	Prof. Bill Cannon	3 cases analysis (45%) +Midterm exam (20%) +Final exam (30%) +participation (~10%)	An intense course that requires a more-than-expected amount of reading materials. The professor is experienced and knowledgeable.
COMM324	Investment and Portfolio Management	Prof. Blair Robertson	3 assignment (50%) +Midterm (20%) +Final exam (30%)	A relatively easy course in terms of content that offers chances for students to present their assignments in class.
ECON351	Introductory Econometrics	Prof. Allan Gregory	Highest among - Option1 (20% Midterm 1 +30% Midterm 2 + 50% Final exam) - Option 2 (30%Midterm	The course highlights the use of Stata, a statistical software and its interpretation, which is slightly different with the one offered in UST. The professor focuses on the theories in

			+ 70% Final exam) -Option 3 (100% Final exam)	class but not application so sometimes it is hard to follow.
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7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

The 3-floor gym facilities, a swimming pool, a couple of basketball and badminton courts and squash etc. are free to be used in the Athletic and Recreation Centre (as known as the ARC). And students could rent a locker for a year. But for one-semester exchange student, I would recommend and it is feasible to buy a lock and use it for some empty lockers.

8) Cost/Expenses

Cost Breakdown:

Expenses	Amount
Round trip flights (from HK to Toronto and from Toronto to Kingston)	~HKD\$15000
Travel in Canada (Niagara Falls, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal	~CAD\$700
Travel in USA (New York and Chicago)	~USD\$1000
Accomodation (On-campus residence)	~CAD\$3200
Mobile phone plan + internet	~CAD\$200
Groceries and meal plan	~CAD\$1500
Miscellaneous	~CAD\$1000

Approximate total in HKD dollars = \$75000

9) Food and Groceries

There are plenty of restaurants in Kingston, ranged from Asian food like Thai and Japanese to Western cuisine like American and Italian. Also, the dining halls on campus offers buffet meal plans for around CAD\$15 a meal. For groceries, there are a few supermarkets in the city, mainly Metro, Loblaws and Food Basics. Metro offers student discounts on both Tuesdays and Thursday and Loblaws only offers on the former day. There is Asian Market as well which is just next to Metro.

10) Transportation

Buses in Kingston are free with your Queen's student card. They basically cover all the places you would have to go, such as Downtown, Shopping Mall (Cataraqui Centre), outlets (King's Crossing Fashion Outlets), supermarkets and the coach terminal.

For travelling to other cities around Kingston, like Ottawa and Toronto, Megabus and Greyhound are some popular bus companies. They sometimes offer early-bird discounts, which means the earlier you buy the tickets, the cheaper the tickets are (even from \$1 if you are quick enough!).

Part 3

Items to Bring

- ✓ Letter of Acceptance
- ✓ Identification documents
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ Mobile phone
- ✓ Charges for electronic devices
- ✓ Adaptor
- ✓ Stationery
- ✓ Financial and scientific calculators if needed
- ✓ Formal wear
- ✓ Summer and winter clothing
- ✓ Local currency
- ✓ Credit cards
- ✓ Medicine
- ✓ Copies of passport and other identification
- ✓ List of emergency contact