

Exchange Report

Canada - Queens University



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Part I - Monthly Activity Log

Late August/September

I arrived Toronto airport on the 29th of August, because I had a friend there I stayed in Toronto for a few days before going to Kingston, where Queens University is located. 3rd of September was the official move in date for my residence, but I am not studying on Queen's University's residence. Queen's University ran out of residence space to offer me but somehow they managed to offer me a St Lawrence College Hall residence space. I got my ride from Toronto to Kingston through a rideshare Facebook group called "RIDESHARE Queen's University", something worth looking at because bus/train tickets are quite expensive in Canada. While classes started on the 11th of September, there was a mandatory orientation on the 4th that involves a talk and some bonding games with other exchange students. Registering for classes and organizing your timetable will not be new for HKUST students, especially because Queen's SOLUS is basically the same system as the HKUST SIS. Most if not all commerce courses will be taught at Goodes Hall, which is basically our LSK in HKUST. Teachers and students are both equally enthusiastic and interactive.

Since September is still the beginning of the semester, I had a lot of spare time. I took this time out to explore Kingston, from going to Wolfe Island, a attraction nearby Kingston that is accessible by a free ferry; to watching my first American football game, which is also free for Queen's students.



The QUIC, Queen's University International Centre also organized trips and activities throughout the semester which you will have to keep an eye for on their website. On Sept 24 they organized a trip to Niagara Falls which I went to.



October

There's no better time to explore Canada during the semester as the beginning of the semester. Me and some friends I met from Australia made a trip to Quebec City and Montreal together at the beginning of October over the long thanks giving weekend. This time we took the Megabus and Viarail which was not cheap but relatively comfortable. Both places were great with much to explore and eat and definitely worth a visit. I am appalled to say but the best Korean barbeque I've had so far in my life was in Montreal! Quebec City is a quaint, quiet place with a lot of beautiful scenic spots, while Montreal is more city like. It is safe to say that you can easily determine which photo is which location below. It is worth noting that both are French speaking cities but English is sufficient to get you around in restaurant and shops. In Quebec City I had my first taste of elk and rabbit meat!



In late-October, QUIC organized a pumpkin farm trip which I went to. The farm had a corn maze and a whole area where you can handpick your own pumpkin. Late October was also the time of Halloween, I went to Fort Henry, a famous halloween attraction in Kingston. Whilst it was enjoyable, I didn't think the three hour wait was worth it!



November

Work was starting to pile on with more assignment due dates and projects. I started spending more time in the Stauffer library which is 2 minutes walk away from Goodes Hall, the library opens until around 2am during weekdays! Whilst it was important to finish all my school work and start preparing for final examinations, i knew my exchange was coming near. Therefore, I took sometime to explore Kingston, spending a weekend the Cataraqui centre and also catching the Justice League movie at Cineplex!

December

My last exam was on the 7th of December, meaning that i had very limited time left in Kingston as i planned to leave on the 13th to travel the states before I went back to Hong Kong. I spent the remainder of my time with the friends I've made in Kingston. From Christmas parties to secret Santa, it really was a memorable experience.



Part 2 - General Exchange Information

1) Visa Procedures

If you are not a holder of a Canadian passport, and will not be staying longer than 6 months in Canada, you will not be required to apply for a visa. But you are most certainly required to apply for an eTA (electronic traveling authorization) to enter Canada, even if it is just a transit. The eTA costs \$7 CAD and lasts for 5 years, it is a simple procedure that will be processed almost instantaneously.

If you want to visit the US anytime during the semester, it might be a good idea to apply for the US visa whilst you were in Hong Kong just to be safe.

2) Banking

I opened an account in CIBC for a debit card. Paying with debit cards in Canada is much more common and convenient than cash compared to Hong Kong. Not only can you always pay the exact amount, it also saves you a lot of hassle of having to carry around a lot of loose change. All you will have to do is walk in to a CIBC branch and explain your situation, the whole process only took about 10 to 15 minutes. Don't forget to bring your passport with you!

3) Orientation Activities

Like mentioned above, there is a one day mandatory orientation that is organized by the Smith School of Business before the term. All related information will be emailed to you so you don't have to worry about the details on that. But on top of that, there is a student organization called NEWTS that organizes paid events for exchange and upper-year transfer students. While I did not personally participate, it is a good opportunity to meet people there.

4) International Services & Activities

Queen's has a QUIC, Queens University International Centre that which acts as a support service for international students/ international members of Queen's. They organize trips and gatherings throughout the semester, the Niagara Falls Trip I mentioned above was organized by QUIC. So it is worth keeping an eye on their website's calendar to keep an eye on things that you might want to participate in!

5) Accommodations and transportation

Queen's University's Jean Royce Hall, which is the West Campus is mostly for exchange students. Not only are the spaces limited, the prices are also higher compared to accommodations off campus. Most students will choose to rent a shared house, this might be a bit more complicated because it is harder to find someone who will offer a 4 month lease. Facebook and kijiji.ca are both great resources to find people to rent together/ people offering to rent.

As mentioned above, I stayed at St Lawrence College. St Lawrence College Hall is a college near by Queen's University which is quite easily accessible by public transportation, students from Queen's University are provided with a free bus pass as part of their student fees. But I would like to note that the bus does not run till very late, therefore if you do choose to stay out in the evening you might have to either walk it or take an Uber/taxi to get back to residence.

If you live in St Lawrence College I suggest you get your student card as soon as possible because that's your bus pass. You will have to get a sticker at the back of your card to show that you are eligible to ride the bus. If that is not possible, some bus drivers will be lenient if you explain your situation and not require you to pay. If you arrive before your student card is available to be picked up, it is also possible to get a wrist band from QUIC, the international centre that can also act as a bus pass.

To get to or leave Kingston, I strongly suggest you use the Queens Ride Share Facebook group, reading previous reports there does not seem to be any mention about this Facebook group at all. It is much cheaper than ViaRail and Megabus especially if you have more than one luggage with you.

6) Food

One thing to note about St Lawrence College is that it does not have a kitchen, therefore you will have to eat out a lot more often which increases your costs of living. A meal will cost you around 15 CAD, including tax. With the exception for fast food restaurants, most places expect you to pay a tip. The standard amount you tip in Canada is 15%.

Kingston also have a few supermarkets that you can purchase groceries at, the one that I think is most convenient is Metro. It is 24 hours and located within the main area of Kingston, but this means that it is slightly more expensive compared to the other super markets. It is worth nothing that Metro offer student discounts on Tuesdays and possibly Thursday as well which i am not entirely sure of.

7) Course Registration

The course registration system used by Queen's is called SOLUS. It is basically the same thing as SIS, so HKUST students should have little to no difficulty navigating SOLUS. Exchange student are required to at least three course and not more than five courses. We are also allowed to take courses in other disciplines but you must take two business courses to every one non business course.

8) Sports and Recreation

The Athletics & Recreation Centre, called ARC is free and accessible to Queen's student card holders. This is an impressive 4 floor building with very extension facilities. From having designated zones for specific fitness trainings to an indoors swimming pool.

9) Courses and Assessment Methods

Course	Equivalent Course	Assessment
COMM 161 (Introduction to Mathematical Analysis for Management)	Possibly Math 1002, still in the process of getting it approved by ARR	Online Assignments (WebAssign) Four Hard Copy Assignments Midterm Exam Final Exam
COMM 303 (Business and Ethics)	MGMT 2130	Retirement Speech Business Case Analysis Team Research Project: Presentation + Report Attendance + Participation + Participation Quality
COMM 492 (Managing Data for Business Intelligence)	Possibly ISOM 3260, still in the process of getting it approved by ARR	Individual SQL assignment Team Database Project Team Analytics Project Final Exam

10) Cost/Expenses

Item	Amount
Round Trip Tickets (Cathay through HKUST)	8000 HKD
Accommodation (including utilities and a 300 CAD meal plan and 250 CAD that is refundable)	3665 CAD
Travel Expenses (Including accommodation)	700 CAD
Textbook + Casepack	150 CAD

11) Climate

Luckily or unluckily for me, in the duration I was there, Kingston was experiencing a particularly warm year. The weather was extremely comfortable for most part of the semester, similar to Hong Kong's weather during autumn/winter. I did not even need to take out my down jacket that I brought over from Hong Kong. It only started snowing heavily the day before I left, therefore I don't think my experience is representative of Kingston's normal weather. It might be good idea to look through other exchange reports from a different year.

12) Communication

As I had a oneplus phone, I was unable to use my phone in the whole of North America because it is not unlocked. This is something that you should be aware of and that I completely forgot about if you are not using a flagship phone from a big brand. Regardless, data is much more expensive in Canada compared to Hong Kong. Most places have wifi and I was fine without data for the whole duration of my time in Canada. It might make planning routes/using Google maps a bit more difficult, but just remember to load the information you need before you leave a wifi area!

13) Health & Safety

Students are required to pay 204CAD per semester for UHIP, Canada's University Health Insurance Plan. If you have your own insurance with the equivalent coverage you can apply for UHIP to be waived.

Part 3 - Items to Bring

Letter of Acceptance

ID, Passport

Calculator

Clothing for both moderately warm and cold weather, Kingston is next to a lake!

Suit for presentation

Common medicine such as cold/cough/sore throat

Laptop

Bedsheet, pillow case

Adaptors

Cash

Beddings/blanket/pillow (I strongly suggest purchasing cheap ones over there instead of carrying it all the way)

Part 4 - Useful Links and Contacts

NEWTS Orientation Information

<http://www.queensu.ca/orientation/find-your-week/newts-week>

Queen's University - Off-Campus Housing Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1618611005028802/>

Another Queen's University - Off-Campus Housing Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HousingAtQueens/>

Queen's Ride Share Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/QueensRideShare/>

eTA information and application

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/eta/apply.html>

It is possible that I've missed out any information that you might be interested in knowing, feel free to contact me to ask for any specifics!