

A) Program of study

I am taking 6 courses that are varying in subjects and hours of class as well as method of evaluation. My first class is "Investment Banking" which accounts for 3 hours of class time in one session. 30% of that class is evaluated via group cases, there is a total of 5 cases which are weighted equally. The other 70% is attributed to an oral exam at the end of the year. This format of exam is, to my knowledge not used in the University of Ottawa and is somewhat interesting. The professor asks questions orally for only about 30 minutes during one on one sessions with students, and from those short 30 minutes 70% of the grade is decided. My second course is "cost benefit analysis", this course accounts for 2 hours of class time in one session. There is also a 30/70 split for the evaluation procedure. The first assignment is a critique on an assigned academic paper, this assignment is done within a group. The final is a cost benefit analysis on a current issue which is also done within a group. The third course is "Errors in Management" which accounts for 4 hours of class time separated by two different session. This course has 30% weight on weekly cases, and 70% weight on a group case that has to be presented at the end of the year. The fourth course is "Entrepreneurial Finance" which accounts for 4 hours of class time in one session. This course has a 100% written final exam. This course has two different professors who alternate teaching duties. The fifth course is "Corporate Restructuring" which accounts for 2 hours of class time in one session. This course has a 100% written final exam. The sixth course is "The CEO Perspective" which accounts for 3 hours of class time in one session. It has a 30% weight on class participation, 30% weight on weekly group cases and 40% weight on a final essay. This course has two different professors who alternate teaching duties.

B) Schedule

The academic year starts on the first week of February. Orientation week starts on the last week of January. I had until the 14th of February to validate my courses, which is two weeks into the academic calendar. There is one break which starts on April 6th and ends on April 21st. The academic year ends on June 22nd but may end earlier depending on one's personal exam schedule. The exam schedule extent from mid-May until late June. The university works on a 2 semester basis. In Canada, if I had a course start at 1:00 pm and end at 2:30pm, we would usually end at 2:25pm. Thus, we finish classes earlier to give students time to get to their next course. In Solvay, when classes are stated to start at 1:00pm they usually end up starting at around 1:10pm and finishing at 2:30pm. Courses start later and finish later, this is not always consistent, but a great majority follow that pattern.

C) Procedures to take upon arrival

Upon arrival, an international exchange coordinator contacted me and created a Facebook group with all the exchange students. There is weekly events organised for international students. These events involved drinking parties, museum visits and sightseeing. There is a great amount of communication within those groups and is very friendly in terms of welcoming foreign students. These activities and social group are organized by students the group. The exchange office, help when it came to making my schedule and taking care of registering us to our classes.

D) Budget

The plane ticket to travel to Belgium costed me \$1200, depending on how early and when the ticket is purchased the price may vary. Travel costs in Europe are fairly cheap, it is easy to get tickets for 100-150 euros to places such as Spain, Italy and what not. Meals are also fairly cheap on campus, being able to purchase full size sandwiches for 2 euros. There is no use of textbooks for courses, recommended readings are often online articles or PDF files put on display within the university portal. Thus, there is essentially no cost for textbooks, at least this was the case for the course I happened to choose. However, be mindful of the exchange rate when coming to Belgium as a euro is worth about 1.5 Canadian dollar. Also do not forget that tax is included within prices, thus if you see 2 euros for a sandwich then you pay 2 euros for said sandwich and not 2 euros plus tax. Also the tipping culture is vastly different. It is not seen as a rude at all to not give out a tip, and the service fee is often said to be included within the price of the food. People working in the service industry have the same minimum salary as other workers unlike in Canada where if you happen to be a server you'd get less then minimum wage but access to tip. Another difference is in Belgium you have to pay for water when being served at a restaurant, as it is unhealthy to drink sink water unlike Canada where they must give water for free. Lastly, you must usually pay to use public washrooms, often it just costs 40 cents but it may come as a shock if you do not expect it.

E) Visa application

It is very important to double check visa deadlines and make sure to prepare ahead of time. There is a lot of tedious documents that have to be provided in order to be within the guidelines of obtaining a visa, those guidelines may vary depending on the country and can be sometimes difficult to comprehend. But making sure to properly read the process and to obtain all the necessary documents weeks before the deadline is crucial to not cause undue stress on one's self. Course registration as explained before happen within the two first academic weeks. It is important to pick earlier as you miss quite a lot of course material if you happen to miss two weeks before switching or adding a new course, thus it is important to choose your classes or at least have a strong idea of which to use before the academic year starts. Housing deposit are usually equal to the first and last month rent of the place you are renting. This is apparently common practice in Belgium.

F) Housing

In Belgium, I am currently living in a single apartment in Forest, which is located in Brussels. In Belgium, you need to register yourself at the commune, where a police officer while verify that you live where you say you live. Once that is done, you will receive an ID card, which is apparently mandatory to carry on your person. My apartment, is located 40 minutes away from campus with public transportation and costs me 800 euros per month. The apartment has one bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom. I have heard that apartments closer to campus range from 1000-1500 euros for single occupancy, of course depending on the size of the apartment the costs may vary greatly.

G) Work term

Not Applicable for me, but if you do intended on doing a work term in Belgium or an internship be mindful that it is not paid and that you would be working for free.

H) Tips and recommendations

Belgium and Canada are of course completely different countries. The one thing I have been doing a lot more abroad is walking. There is a lot of walking to be done in Brussels, everything is at proximities. In Ottawa, I lived near South keys and it is impossible to get around without a car or the use of public transport. For instance to get grocers it is a 10 minute drive to the closest store. Meanwhile, in Brussels everything is at walking distance whether it be the hairdresser, the gym or the Pizza Hut. There is also a lot more family owned and diverse cultural cuisine present in Brussels. Ranging from, Turkish, Greek, Italian, Armenian, Thai and French restaurants amongst a few. As opposed to the more corporate feel of Canada. Also the night life is somewhat different. Clubs close at 6:00am instead of 2:00am which leads to most students going out at around 1:00am. Student parties are also often organized during the weekdays, as the majority of the students go back home during the weekend leaving the campus area empty. There is also much less use of Uber in Belgium, which means that taxi and the few Uber present are quite expensive.

Some cities that are recommended to visit while being in Belgium are the following: Gent, Antwerp and Bruges. Gent is known as a student city, where there is a great night life and interesting sights. It is a place full of life that will make for a good trip during a weekend. Another great city is Antwerp, also known as the diamond city due to the city's diamond mining history. It is also a place full of the latest fashion and designer shops. Great city to go for shopping and learn about the diamond industry. The last city is the most romantic one as it is often refereed as the little Venice. There is an abundance of rivers there and makes for a great place to bring on a possible love interest or just to enjoy the beautiful city with its beautiful atmosphere.

Specialities in Belgium are beers, chocolate and waffles. There is a lot of different beers in Belgium, a lot of different flavours. Just as an advice do not order Stella it is seen as a commercial beer and is far from being true to the taste of a real Belgium beer. Belgium has beer museums and beer tasting trips, it is a must to at least attend one of those during the trip as it is part of the country's pride. Who does not like chocolates? Belgium is filled with chocolates, just like the beers they also have museums dedicated to chocolate. There is a ton of small chocolate shops at La Grande Place. Belgium waffles are also hard to miss, they are often sold on the streets to pedestrians and the smell of waffles is amazing and will lead you to purchase one every time you pass by one.

I) Other comments

So far it has been great being able to be taught in a different system and learning about the economy in Europe. I have enjoyed having cases on European companies and taking a look at their perspective on key ratios and how to valuate companies. I also had the chance to be given a lecture by the CEO of a billion dollar Belgian Company within the course of "The CEO Perspective". All these changes have brought a

breath of fresh air and revitalized me. I had also the opportunity to meet international students from across the world and learn from various cultures beyond just Belgium. It has been an amazing experience so far and hopefully continues to be one.