

A Beginner's Guide to Uppsala University

I'm sure that for the past few months you've been looking over the possible universities for your exchange, you've gone to all the information sessions and googled the places online. Yet, it's still a difficult decision and you still have more questions than you do answers. I hope that after reading this short paper you will understand a little more about where you want to go. More specifically, you will now add Uppsala University to your shortlist and hope you the opportunity to come here. As someone who has been in Uppsala for almost two months, I can say that when it comes to student life it doesn't get much better than Uppsala University.

Getting Started

Visa Info

Once you've been accepted to Uppsala University, there are a few more steps to follow before you get to go over to Sweden. Luckily it is easy for Canadians to get into Sweden, you actually don't need an entry visa. However you do need to apply for a student residency visa. Don't panic, it is very straightforward and the representatives from the Uppsala International Office will send you all the relevant links and documents. These representatives will also be available to answer any questions you might have and don't worry, they are perfectly fluent in English. Applying for the visa is easy but you do have to wait until the University sends you an acceptance letter to prove you're a student, there is also a \$150 fee with this. This letter is sent in the mail, so it takes around three weeks before it makes it to the University of Ottawa. This letter arrived for me in early November, so after receiving this I had to apply for the visa rather quickly. Make sure that you leave enough time for them to go over your application, as you do need it to be accepted before you arrive in Sweden. For me, it took them about three weeks and if your application has everything that they need in it, this should be the expected time for completion. Once you've been accepted into Sweden, they send you a document that you need to take with you to get past customs in Sweden. The next step is to sign up online for an appointment at the Swedish Migration Office, it is easy to do and don't worry about needing to do it right away. I went for my meeting about two weeks after I got there and there was no problem. Getting to the office in Uppsala is probably the most difficult part as it's on the other side of town from the university, but taking the bus or biking is a possibility. A few weeks after this appointment, where you get your fingerprints and photo taken, you get your residency card which you use to re-enter Sweden if you decide to leave. After that, your visa journey is done and you've successfully entered Sweden.

Classes

Anyways, once you've been accepted to the university, you need to then register for your classes and apply for housing. Uppsala University does things a bit differently when it comes to classes, first of all you need to take 30 credits worth of class per semester on your exchange, it may seem like a lot but most

classes are either 15 or 7.5 credits, so realistically you only have to take 2-4 classes per semester here. Also, you only take one class at a time, they usually for either one and a half or 2 and a half months each depending on the required credits. This is pretty useful as limited class time, about one lecture and one seminar per week (4hours), gives you a lot of time to do your readings or work on assignments. This light work load will also give you the opportunity to travel or get involved in student organizations if that's what interests you. Most classes focus mainly on group work, so be prepared to pull your weight as it is pretty much accepted that those who don't contribute get a zero on assignments. What's also different is that classes here have multiple professors teaching them, as each gives lectures and seminars on subjects that they specialize in. The passing grade for classes here is a 61, so make sure you pass in order to get your credits. If you do poorly on the exam, don't worry there is always an opportunity to retake. Overall I liked the teaching approach here and appreciated that all the classes are in English with professors and students that are willing to speak English as well.

Registering for classes can be a bit difficult as you aren't allowed to take classes that you have already taken at Ottawa U. Uppsala only offers a handful of class options and many have the same name as ones at Ottawa U, for example organizational behaviour and international business. However, you can apply to take masters level courses here that are much more specialized. You have to make your course selections before you leave, the exact deadline will be told to you by the University, make sure that you also get your courses approved by the International Office at Telfer, as you can't switch classes after you are registered in them at Uppsala. Following the instructions outlined by Ottawa U and Uppsala University is the best way to avoid any issues with classes while here.

Housing

As an international student, you are required to live in Uppsala student housing, you should look to apply for the locations you want as soon as possible, as spaces fill up quickly. The different residences are spread out throughout the city, and the most popular are Flogsta and Rackarberget. Flogsta is known as the international residence and is by far the most popular for exchange students. These apartment buildings are on the edge of town, about a 45 minute walk from the city centre, so it is highly recommended that you buy a bike if you choose to live here. The corridors are shared between 12 people and freezer rooms are shared between 2 corridors. It can be pretty hectic out there and corridor parties are quite common, if that sounds like your thing than that is where you should try to go. The other popular residence is Rackarberget, which is much closer to the city centre and Ekonomikum, which is where you will have your classes as a business student. This is where I live and I do enjoy it. It is close to everything you might need. (There's a grocery store next door, a second hand store in one of the buildings and a campus gym only a 10 minute walk away) It's a lot quieter than Flogsta with only 5 people per corridor with a shared kitchen, shower and bathroom. I would recommend this location if you enjoy having a quieter place to live and a short 2 minute walk to class. The rent here isn't too bad as well, it is about \$550 per month. With free services like laundry rooms and room maintenance readily available. I do not know much about the other residences except that they are spread far and wide around the city.

When you arrive

The first day in Uppsala can be pretty hectic, however representatives from the university will be there to help you out along the way. The exact date to arrive will most likely be different depending on the semester, for me however it was recommended that I arrive on either January 13-14. It's not necessary to arrive on the recommended dates, but it is helpful as the school arranges for a welcome desk at the airport, a shuttle to the university and a welcome reception at one of the student nations. If you're trying to get here on one of these dates you're most likely going to have to take an overnight flight from Ottawa to London and then quickly transfer to a flight to Stockholm. I arrived around 3 in the afternoon and if you're planning on coming during the winter semester prepare for a shock as the sun will already be setting when you arrive. From there it is easy to find the welcome desk after making your way through customs (make sure you have the proof of acceptance into Sweden and Uppsala University). A bus then takes you to Uppsala (about a 20 minute drive) and then you arrive at a student nation where you stand in multiple lines in order to get your room key, information about the university and a schedule of all the planned welcome events. This is going to be the most confusing and stressful day in Uppsala as everyone is trying to get what they need and get to where they need to go. I recommend that after you get to your room, take some time to go through the paperwork and get things organized as soon as you can to avoid future stress. There are lots of welcome week activities organized by the university and the business school so it's easy to meet new people. Again, the university will send you all the necessary information, so don't panic if you can't figure out what you're supposed to do.

My Recommendation

I would recommend Uppsala University to anyone looking for a new experience in a great student town. It is place where it is easy to make new friends and get involved in student life. There are student organizations known as student nations that are the core of this student life. There are 13 to choose from and each has its own unique collection of people, clubs, pubs and parties. I personally joined Smalands Nation, one of the smaller ones where it is easier to meet people and get involved. It can be actually be pretty fun working as a bartender in the pub or as a host for the weekend café. That being said, there are also the more party orientated nations like Stockholm or Snerikes if that's what you're interested in. In the end, it doesn't really matter which one you join as having a membership to one gets you into all of them, each membership just offers its own unique perks and discounts. Whatever you decide, the student nations are a crucial part of the student life here and I recommend you find one that matches your interests and gives you the best experience. Overall Uppsala, is a place made for students (the university was founded in 1477) everything from cheap groceries to top notch students gyms, from quiet pubs to noisy clubs, I can't speak highly enough of the quality of this exchange destination. Hopefully you put this on your list of five possible schools and more than that, make it your first choice.