

**A) Your program of study (courses, assignments, course format). Add the exact number of class hours per course.**

I am enrolled in the Cross Cultural Business Skills Minor (CCBS). I chose this single minor, as opposed to most students who would choose individual courses. The minor comes as a sort of pre-bundled package of 30 ECTS (equivalent to a 5-course full load of 15 credits in Ottawa). As such, my classes sort of come as one as well. Individual courses at HvA are similar to Ottawa in that different professors teach them and they all have their own different assignments. In CCBS, I have only two professors who work together to teach the minor, and we and the professors all work toward one same project throughout the semester.

The CCBS course schedule is only two days a week: Tuesday and Thursday. On both days, there is an afternoon lecture for 1h40m and there is an evening lecture for 3h20m. More often than not, both the afternoon and evening lectures finish quite earlier than scheduled. One professor works with us in the afternoon lecture, the other professor teaches the evening lecture. The afternoon lectures have more of a lab/workshop feel. The lecture takes place in a computer lab. The professor lectures about the more practical side of the project, such as conducting research or gaining respondents, etc. The evening lecture is exclusively about a different culture every time (for example, France, Australia, Russia). The professor talks to the class about the unique aspects of the selected culture/country and discusses what it is like to do business in it. The evening lecture is usually quite interesting and fun. The professor in charge of this minor is friendly and funny.

As mentioned, anyone involved in this minor is working on one project throughout the semester. Every semester, the goal of the minor program is to publish a new book about doing business in different countries. This book is written by the students throughout the semester. Students break up into threes, which becomes their group for the rest of the semester's work/assignments. Each group then picks the country they will work with for the rest of the semester. Each group produces one chapter of the book that speaks specifically about their chosen countries. Students are allowed to pick the country they want, but from a specific list of countries that the professor has created for that semester. The professor also encourages groups to pick a country that they have some kind of affiliation to. This could be anything from knowing locals in that country, speaking the local language, or having family heritage in that country. Following this tip is actually quite useful because it helps with the assignments that come along during the

semester. The assignments of CCBS are all geared toward building your chapter. In other words, the chapter is broken down into different parts, and these different parts are then given deadlines throughout the semester.

Something to be aware of is that CCBS is extremely hands on. The majority of the research you do for your chapter is primary fieldwork (as opposed to secondary research in books or online). There are several parts to this. Your group is to reach out to as many locals as possible for two reasons. The first is that you must complete two interviews with two different locals who are involved in the business world in that chosen country. The second is that your group must collect as many local respondents as possible to complete the minor's standardized survey (which is on the topic of doing business in their particular country). The interviews and the survey seem to be the hardest parts of the minor. It seems that almost all teams have trouble or face many challenges when trying to find true locals from the countries. Finding, contacting and (even more so) getting locals to actually participate in either of these things prove to be difficult. However, this is your main source of information and research. Much of the content in your chapter will come from this primary research conducted by your team.

There is one other aspect of the minor, and it is individual (all of the above-mentioned is group work). The individual portion stems from the 'streams'. There are several streams to choose from, and all of them are work that is focused on furthering the program, book or lectures. For example, the following are some options: event management, native English editing, and global acquisition. Students in the event management stream work together to run the events that CCBS holds throughout the semester. The native English editing stream has more work toward the end of the semester when the groups have finished their chapters, and it is now their job to go back and proofread the chapters (as many students in the minor are international and English isn't their first language). The global acquisition stream students work on acquiring the contact information of local individuals, universities, companies (etc.) of different countries to enrich the primary research portion of the book. At the beginning of the semester, you'll choose which stream you want, and then you work on it throughout the semester (with guidance from the professor).

Lastly, there is a midterm exam and a final exam. The midterm is a one-hour multiple-choice exam on a computer. It is not based on lectures. Rather, it is based on three chapters from the textbook that you must read on your own. The final exam is two hours. In CCBS, there is also the exceptional offer to be exempted from the final exam if you choose to participate in the school

trip to Georgia. This is a weeklong trip with students and the professor, where you attend some lectures at the university in Georgia throughout the week. You have the full discretion to either write the final or complete this trip.

**B) The timetable (academic calendar, registration dates, orientation, beginning and end of classes, exams, holidays, number of semesters, etc.) Please submit the precise dates so students will know when to book their flights next year.**

The winter semester runs from the beginning of February until the beginning of July. Arrival day in 2018 was January 31. Orientation was the following 3 days (in this case, February 1-3). Classes then start on the Monday (February 5). There are only 3 weeks of class before the first of two weeklong study breaks. The first break was February 26-March 2. The second break is from April 30-May 4. There are a few holidays in between. There are no lectures on the Friday and Monday surrounding Easter. The following days are holidays (no lectures): April 27, May 10, May 11 and May 21. Final exams are written throughout June. Exams may be retaken and this takes places during the first week of July. In the case of CCBS, the semester (final exam included) is fully completed by the end of May. Because of this, the first weeklong break at the end of February is removed for CCBS students.

**C) Procedures to follow upon arrival. List and description of services offered by the International Exchange Office of the host institution. Registration and course selection. Social activities.**

HvA is quite organized when it comes to arrival day. Prior to departure, you can sign up for a pick-up service on arrival day. This includes many things. Once you land at the airport, you go find the HvA desk to check-in. There, they will give you the info to find the buses that will bring you to a first location. At this location, the school has set up several different desks where you are to get many things done in terms of practical matters upon arrival. You pick up your public transit card. You pick up your goodie bag for the introduction week activities. You set up an appointment

with the bank to create a bank account. You register with the municipality (which is necessary to receive your citizen number). You pick up your student card and your housing keys. Also, for Canadians, the visa process is handled at a later date (the next day at Introduction, they give you all the necessary information to set up an appointment with the immigration department). As you can see, there are many things to be done at this stop (it took me around 1-2 hours), and it is a little bit chaotic as there are many students who are trying to figure out their way. However, it is very useful to have the school help you with all of these practical matters as opposed to figuring them out on your own later. Once you finish up there, you get on another shuttle bus that drops you off at your residence.

**D) Budget outlining the cost of studying abroad (i.e. airplane tickets, housing, vacation and daily travel costs, textbooks, meals, etc.).**

Flying out of Montreal, it cost between \$600-\$700 for a one-way ticket to Amsterdam Schipol Airport with a stopover in London. I chose not to book round trip because I had plans to travel indefinitely after the end of the semester. Flights from Amsterdam to other European city destinations seem to sit between \$100-\$200, depending on when and where you are going and if it is round trip or one-way. Buses are the cheapest (but longest) option, easily under \$30 almost every time. Trains can be a bit more expensive (especially if you're taking the high speed trains), but it's worth it on the time you save on the journey and it's also a bit more comfortable. However, there are great student rates for trains. Intercity trains can also be quite cheap. For example, I paid 6 euros to go from Brussels to Bruges in Belgium. Hostels seem to sit around +/- 30 euros per night for a shared dorm.

Daily travel costs are variable. You have to check in AND out of the metro/bus/tram, and the price therefore varies depending on how far you've travelled and at what time of day. It can range from 20 cents to 2-3 euros, for example. You use the same transit card to use the metro, bus and tram. You load up the card with a specific amount you choose and then it just deducts from that amount every time you scan your card. So transport costs in Amsterdam itself really will depend on how much you use public transit. A lot of people don't spend too much because they chose to buy a bike at the beginning of the semester.

Housing also has a range of prices depending on which residence you apply for. In Fraijlemaborg, which is the main residence building that international business students stay in, I would say the average monthly rent sits between 400-500 euros.

The textbook for CCBS is inexpensive compared to textbooks at home. There is only one textbook to buy for the semester and it costs 29 euros. I heard of students buying textbooks second hand for cheaper, so that is also an option.

**E) Application procedures before your arrival (visa deadlines, documents required for visa, course registration, housing deposit, etc.).**

In terms of the preparations before leaving, the process started around mid-October (when HvA first contacted me). I was invited to apply for housing on November 1<sup>st</sup>, where you pay for one month's rent as a deposit plus an application fee.

Course enrollment opened on November 10. The enrollment process is simple. Prior to enrollment, you have to choose your first choice classes and second choice classes as backup. Then, once enrollment opens, you log on to your profile and simply select the courses you chose and indicate them as first or second choice. Then you save your preferences and wait for the school to contact you with your schedule (which could be weeks later). The school advises you to not book any flights until you start receiving official approvals or notices that you will be attending the school, so I booked my flight around the end of November.

HvA makes it clear that, for Canadians, the visa process is very simple prior to arrival. Before departure, all you need to do is make sure you have your birth certificate and insurance. Then the process actually starts only once you arrive in Amsterdam.

**F) Address and description of housing. Cost of housing.**

I live in Fraijlemaborg (this is the name and address of the building) in Amsterdam Zuidoost. This is about a 15-minute metro ride outside of the city center. This student residence is located directly next to the Fraijlemaborg university building, where most business classes take place in the classrooms. So, most students who stay in the Fraijlemaborg residence have a two-minute walk to class. I pay 450 euros per month for an apartment-style unit in the building. My unit has three bedrooms, with a shared kitchen and a shared bathroom. There are other similar units in the building with 2 bedrooms or 4 bedrooms. The majority of the building is studio apartments, where one person lives alone with a private bathroom and private kitchen. I believe these studios are on the higher side of the price range mentioned above. Overall, Fraijlemaborg is a great building. There is a nice common room downstairs equipped with large speakers, a projector screen as the TV, couches, tables and a foosball table. This makes for very fun parties. There are 7 floors in the building. Bike storage and laundry for the building are in the basement. The bedrooms in the apartment-style units are quite large. Each bedroom has a large window (two door-sized, side-by-side windows that can be opened wide like a door). My bedroom in particular is 14 square meters and therefore has two of these large windows. It makes the bedrooms very bright with a lot of natural light. The bedrooms come with a single bed (with linens), a wardrobe, a shelving unit (like a bookcase), a nightstand, a desk, a lamp, a lounge chair and a chair for the desk.

**G) Work term (if applicable).**

**H) Other comments or recommendations.**

Cell phone plans are quite cheap here. Upon arrival day, you receive a free Dutch SIM card for your phone from the school. You can go online to buy a plan and/or top it up. There are several options to choose from. The most expensive is only 30 euros, which includes something like 8GB of data and 1000 local minutes. (This is with the Lebara KPN NL phone company).

**I) Add a description of about five to seven sentences summarizing your experience.**

Amsterdam is a beautiful city with so much to see and do. All the students here are really friendly and ready to have fun together. School is interesting, and while still a challenge, it is a good amount of work where you don't feel too overwhelmed and you still have time to travel and do fun activities. It's really fun to feel at home in a European city and it's even more amazing to travel to and see all these incredible places around Europe. It's been a life-changing, eye-opening, huge learning experience for me.