



University of Waterloo Exchange Program (minor)
School of Architecture, Cambridge, Canada
Winter Term 2015 Jan. 1 – Apr. 25
Ashley Ramsey Travel Report

Preparations and Contact with my faculty

I went to the University of Waterloo, School of Architecture as an exchange student for the minor semester of my Bachelor. I really wanted to study abroad for a semester, so I did a lot of research on the website of the international office of the TU Delft and the international office of architecture. I read a few travel reports in the database (<https://partneruniversities.tudelft.nl/StudentExchange/#SEARCHPANEL>) and I went through the options of guest universities for Architecture (<http://studenten.tudelft.nl/informatie/studie-en-loopbaan/studie-en-stage-buitenland/>). I wanted to go to an English-speaking university, so that narrowed down my choices. I have always wanted to go to Canada, because of the stories I've heard about the country and because I have family living there. So when I saw that going to Canada was possible and read that the School of Architecture is the leader in design education and research and has been rated the greenest architecture curriculum in Canada (<https://uwaterloo.ca/architecture/>), I decided to apply for an exchange program at the University of Waterloo. I've searched for a lot of information about exchange, the universities, and the possibilities and so on, I've visited a lot of websites quite a few times and took all the information to make a careful decision – I didn't want to choose the wrong thing.

Once I got accepted by TU Delft's international office of Architecture I heard that I needed a certificate of an English proficiency test (IELTS or TOEFL), which I did not have. I completed an English level A2 from International Baccalaureate, but this was not good enough, so I had to make a TOEFL test. This is the reason why I went for the Winter Term of 2015 instead of the Fall Term of 2014.

The University of Waterloo has a very clear website for incoming exchange students:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/international/inbound/exchange-students/undergraduate-applications>

On this website I found all the information I needed for my admission, I didn't need any help to complete the admission.

I got my letter of acceptance relatively late, which resulted in some troublesome situations regarding the request for approval of free or external Minor. I had to send some more e-mails asking for the exam committee and international office to speed up my request. Also for the request of the STIR funds. In the end this all worked out fine, but my advice to you: start as early as possible with everything.

The official transcript is released one month after the last day of exams and deadlines at the University of Waterloo, so I have not been able yet to arrange my accreditation. The unofficial transcript can be accessed in the month directly after the last exams/deadlines, so I have been able to see my grades.

When I got accepted to the University of Waterloo, I got an email from Donna Woolcott, the Undergraduate Student Services Co-ordinator. She gave me information on housing and made clear that she was my contact for any questions. Before arrival and during my stay she was always available for anything and answered very quick and clear.

Study Programme

As stated on the website of the University of Waterloo, one undergraduate course at 0.5 credits is equivalent to 6 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The full-time course load is 2.5 credits, similar to the TU Delft's 30 ECTS per semester. Since the Studio Project had a workload of 1.5 credits, I only needed two other courses of 0.5 credits (the students of the University of Waterloo School of Architecture take the Studio together with 4 courses, exchange only need Studio + 2).

All the courses are given at the School of Architecture, which is not located on main campus, but in Cambridge; 7 Melville St S, Cambridge, ON N1S 2H4, Canada. The building used to be a Riverside Silk Mill, it was transformed to the School of Architecture to provide more studio space. The building had a lot of facilities; open 24/7, a big workshop, two lecture halls, a café, a library, computer rooms,

printers, lounge area, studio work space, a loft, meeting spaces, some kitchen facilities and a gym. Because I bought a fob key (everyone has to), I had unlimited access to the building and all of its facilities.

Note: because the School of Architecture is not located on Main Campus, it is hard to participate in anything there, including sports. It might be possible if you would own a car.

Courses:

ARCH392 – Design Studio (1.5 credits)

This is very similar to the design projects we get in the architecture bachelor at the TU Delft. We started with a group assignment, with four people we analysed a precedent and made a 10 minute video about our findings (<https://vimeo.com/search?q=arch392>). This assignments took place in the first two weeks of the term. After this we continued with the individual design project. We got a site of 190 by 70 meters in Toronto and had to design a building with offices, markets and shops as program. The school provided a study trip to Toronto to visit the site and some of the precedents; we had guest lectures on the 37th floor of one of the towers of the Toronto-Dominion Centre. The studio started out very generally, just massing and slowly went into more detailing and smaller scales. Each of the phases was about two weeks long and at was ended with a critique. Each of the critiques were marked and part of the final grade.

ARCH328 – Approaches to Architecture and Urbanism (0.5 credits)

This was an elective for the students there, so the group taking this course consisted of 12 students. This course is focussed on the trans-disciplinary overview to design approaches in architecture and urbanism, using image- and symbol-making as key activities in design environments. We could chose a topic from a list and had to give two seminars to the class during the term as a means to develop a personal design ethos. For the final submission we had to make a five-point document, related to 5 design ethos, related to urbanism. The assignment was very open and we were free to choose what to make. I decided to draw a five-paged comic about different urbanism styles around the world, combined with drawings of M.C. Escher.

ARCH364 – Building Science (0.5 credits)

This was a lecture-based course on the physio-technical factors that influence building design for performance: durability, efficiency, health and sustainability. During the lectures a lot of different building design construction problems, causes and solutions were examined though examples. Different materials were shown in how they work and calculations were made to decide on whether a building would perform well enough or not. There were two group assignments, two surprise quizzes, an individual final assignment and a final exam. Separate marks were given for these and they were combined to a final grade. All of the courses material was dealt with in the lectures. The content is quite similar to some first and second year courses at the TU Delft, only now applied to North-American conditions, which provided me with useful information if I ever were to study or work in North-America, or other extremer climates.

I don't know whether the programme has met my expectations, because I tried to go there without any expectations. I was the first student from the TU Delft to go on exchange to the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, so I just let it happen. It was very interesting to learn how they approach architecture in Canada/North-America, because the weather conditions, available resources and traditions are very different from the Dutch. Sometimes it was quite hard to understand or design some of the buildings, because even the precedents of average size are easily 1.5 times as big as the biggest building in the Netherlands. Studio takes up a lot of time, and even though the other courses are also worth 0.5 credits, the students there barely put any time in them. All of the time and effort goes into studio. And because there is not a wide range of activities to do in Cambridge, some people literally spend all their time working on studio, so it takes quite a bit of

effort to keep up with the other students. Even though exchange students take 2 courses less than the students there, sometimes I found myself having to work until very late at night to finish something. But you can make it as busy as you want. I have family in Toronto and made some friends at main campus and I managed to combine seeing them and doing fun stuff together with finishing the assignments.

Every term they have other courses, if you go during a Winter term, I would advise trying to get into the elective Woodworking. I didn't take this course, but my friends did and it was a really nice course (learning to work with wood and making a very nicely put together box). If you are interested in building science, I recommend taking ARCH364. If you like structure, especially steel and concrete, I advise ARCH 362.

Support and communication with both the Guest University and Delft were very good during my stay abroad. Most of the communication went through email, answers from Delft took a little longer than answers from Donna. I didn't experience any trouble or whatsoever while I was in Canada, so I didn't need to contact either that much, but any contact I had went fine.

The terms in Canada are four months long. This means the workload is higher than if it would be 5 or 6 months. I believe the workload is similar to what we have at the faculty of Architecture in Delft. During the term there isn't much time to travel far away, so I strongly advice planning a few weeks before or after your stay abroad to travel around Ontario/Canada, since it is a beautiful country and the cities are very interesting to visit. During the Winter Term you will have one holiday week – reading week, in which the professors would expect you to do a little bit of work, but it is very possible to travel for a few days (I went to New York City for 5 days).

Finance and other aspects

I only applied for the STIR fund, as I said before, arranging this before departure was a little tight, but the international office was very understanding and it all worked out fine. After being there a few weeks I received an email that the fund was arranged and with the requirements to receive the fund after my semester abroad.

Destination: University of Waterloo, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada

Study period: from Jan 1, 2015 to May 9, 2015

Expenditure		Income	
Flight to/from Canada	€ 797.67	STIR Grant	€ 400.-
Transport in Canada	€ 76.75	Student grants	€ 1540.-
Incidental Fees	€ 313.50	Health care benefits	€ 312.-
Accommodation	€ 1400.-	Parents' contribution	€ 2200.-
Visa	€ 0.-	Savings	€ 2000.-
Vaccinations	€ 0.-		
Study materials	€ 200.-		
NYC Trip	€ 1037.83		
Food	€ 1203.63		
Clothes	€ 757.94		
Fun	€ 415		
Total	€ 6202.12		€ 6452.-

Income

STIR Grant

Upon completing this travel report I hope to round up my stay abroad and receive the STIR Grant I applied for through the international office of the TU Delft.

Student grants

This is the standard student grant when living away from home for four months, and for three months I reimbursed my free student public transport.

Health care benefits

The amount of money I get from the tax authorities for health care.

Parents' contribution

My parents paid for my accommodation in Canada and gave me a little amount of money before I departed. Also, when the term ended my parents and siblings came to Canada for a vacation and a visit to family in Toronto and Ottawa. We travelled from Cambridge to Niagara Falls, Niagara on the Lake, Toronto, Kingston, Montreal, Ottawa, Algonquin Highlands and St. Jacobs. The accommodations for this vacation, travel (rented car) and food was all paid for by my parents, this is not mentioned in the list above.

Savings

The term start and end on different dates than the Dutch semesters, so in November and December I had time to work fulltime.

Expenditure

Flight to/from Canada

I booked a direct flight with KLM from Amsterdam to Toronto, economy class and with choice of chair number. I could take one 23kg. check-in luggage and hand luggage (suitcase + laptop bag + purse) of 12kg. I had a lot more luggage coming back, but because my parents travelled to Canada and we flew back together, I put a lot of my stuff in their suitcases so I didn't have to buy more suitcases.

Transport in Canada

My family has family and acquaintances in Toronto and Cambridge. The people from Cambridge offered to pick me up from the airport and I drove to Toronto with them a few times. There is a bus service (<https://www.greyhound.ca/>) between Cambridge-Toronto, tickets are approximately CAD30, it's best if you buy them online in advance. One of my friends had a car, so a few times when we went to Toronto we drove to the closest train station and took the train from there to downtown Toronto, these tickets can be bought at the station and are CAD11 for a one way.

With the University of Waterloo student card (you need one during your stay, you'll get it in the first week) you can travel on the Waterloo Region busses for free. And there are free cabs from the faculty to your house between 9pm and 5am.

Incidental Fees

You don't have to pay any enrolment or tuition fees, but there are incidental fees (insurance, school facilities etc.) that have to be paid before a certain date. You will receive emails explaining this, but not very clearly. Read through this carefully and have your (incidental) fees arranged in time, otherwise you might not participate in courses during the term.

Accommodation

As I said before, I got an e-mail from the Undergraduate Student Services Co-ordinator when I got my admission letter. In this email she told me where to find housing. I looked at the houses and send two e-mails for rooms that appealed to me, within a few hours my housing was arranged. This was very easy, most housing is between CAD450-CAD600. I do *really* advice you to live **as close as possible** to the architecture faculty. My house was a 15 minute walk (20min. in snow) away from the faculty, and this is considered very far away, it will be nicer and more convenient if you live closer to the faculty.

Visa

You don't need a visa if you go to Canada as a student and will stay for less than 6 months. Be aware that you do need to take your admission letter with you if you enter the country, together with a valid passport and it would be best if you take your housing contract and prove of flight home with you. You probably don't need the last two documents, but better safe than sorry.

When I went to NYC I had to apply for an ESTA (<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>) and when I got back I didn't have my letter of admission or anything with me, so I had a little bit of trouble at the Canadian border, but they were very nice and it all got resolved.

Study Materials

I didn't take anything with me, I advise to take a notebook with you, since they are very expensive in Canada (the fancier ones, with blank pages). There is an ACM in the faculty, they sell pens, knives, museum board etc. They also have big printers to print panels for presentations. I bought some modelling foam and bought a book for a course.

NYC Trip

During reading week (one week off in February) I went to New York City with two friends. We flew from Billy Bishop Airport to Newark Airport and stayed in an apartment for in the middle of Manhattan through AirBnB. The expenses listed include: return flight, 5 nights' accommodation, food, clothes, museums, fun activities, and transport in NYC etc.

Food

Food is more expensive than expected, even though one Canadian Dollar is only about 0.75 eurocents, I still spend a lot on food. Buying food at the grocery store was pretty expensive, where going out for dinner for rather cheap. Some types of food were suddenly much more expensive than in Holland while other types were a lot cheaper. I also bought quite a lot at the café in the faculty, which brought my food expenses up a bit more. Alcohol is more expensive than in the Netherlands, all the alcohol needs to be bought at an L.C.B.O. (licenced liquor store). The legal drinking age in Ontario is 19.

Clothes

I bought warm shoes, sweaters, pants and a coat in the first few weeks, and I bought a lot of new clothes in Toronto and when travelling.

Fun

I went to the cinema a few times, to a box lacrosse game in the Air Canada Centre, ice-skating, to the zoo, museums, did yoga for a month. But I also did a lot of things with friends, for example girls' night in etc. We also went to a friends' home for Easter. I also went to a Maple Leafs game in the Air Canada Centre, but we got the tickets from someone else, so those aren't included in the amount listed.

Accommodation

As stated above, you will probably receive an e-mail about accommodation. I was pretty easy to arrange accommodation in time, mine was arranged more than one month before departure. The housing is between CAD450-CAD600 and is all pretty similar; most of them are just houses with a few rooms for students, most of them (almost) fully furnished. You will stay in houses with other students of your year and/or first-/second-year students. The houses are typical North-American houses, they use a lot of wood so there isn't a lot of acoustic insulation, but if you're having a hard time in your room, there are a lot of places in the faculty where you can study quietly.

Language and Culture

As you can expect, everything is done in English. You might see and hear some French, since they speak French in Quebec, but that is still very far away. You need an IELTS or TOEFL to get accepted, if you have a passing grade for this, you will understand everything. I grew up speaking a lot of English, so it was no problem for me to understand the lectures. But with some of the architectural terms I had to ask other students what was meant, and some of the professors use words that I would never relate to architecture, but I got used to that. If you struggle with the English language, try to look up architectural terms for sure, knowing these will help during the first weeks.

The culture is very similar to the Dutch culture, except for that the people are very nice and might not say everything they mean. So having good people skills will help, but I didn't get into any weird situations because of culture differences. A lot of people in that area even have Dutch family, so they start to tell stories about their family. People are very open and nice. Most of the students at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture are not a hundred percent Canadian. A lot of people come from other countries around the world. The students do a co-op (internship) every other term, so they travel a lot and a lot of them have been to the Netherlands before.

Promotional activity

Presentation to students about the TU Delft. I organised a presentation for the all the students present at the faculty in the semester. A lot of students want to do a co-op in Europe or the Netherlands, so I provided them with information about the TU Delft and the Netherlands in general. Going on exchange is not very popular for them, so I gave them a bit of information about what it would be like to study in Delft.



Free time

I just interacted with a lot of other students in studio. We went for a coffee or dinner quite a lot. There are a few house parties organised by the students where almost everyone goes to. I met a few people on main campus on the international and exchange student information day, I met up with them in Waterloo a few times. There is a bar in Cambridge where a lot of architecture students go to every week. The students are very nice and I could join with everything. There are a few shopping malls close by, with cinemas and skating rinks. Canada also has Netflix. My house and the university had a good internet connection, so I could skype with family and friends a lot. I was still very much involved with Delft Lacrosse, even though I was living in Canada.

Travel

There is a cab that takes you from the faculty to your home between 9pm and 5am, if you don't want to walk. Public transport is not as how it is in the Netherlands, the distances are way bigger than how they seem on maps. The bus connection in the Waterloo region is pretty good and free with your student card. The Greyhound bus takes about an hour to get you to downtown Toronto. But it is harder to get to the train that takes you to Toronto, so I suggest just taking the Greyhound. In Toronto you can buy tokens (CAD3 each), you can use one token to get anywhere with the TTC (Toronto Transit Commission) – short or long distances in Downtown Toronto.

Miscellaneous

I would really love to work in Canada someday. The country is truly beautiful and the people are very genuine and kind. I have learned some of the approaches to architecture in North-America and think this term was very useful when I'll work in Canada. I have heard about not all companies accepting foreign degrees and sending their employees to a Canadian university. But I'm not worrying about that yet, since a lot of things are changing in both the Dutch and Canadian rules for architects etc. I have fallen in love with Canada, its nature, people, and culture and will definitely go back as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

If you are thinking of studying at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, don't hesitate and send me an e-mail, I'd be happy to help you out; a.c.ramsey@student.tudelft.nl

Weather: The weather is very extreme. When I arrived it was about -30°C and when I left it was +30°C. Prepare for the right weather and buy some of the clothing there, they are used to the weather so they have better clothes.

Housing: Get a room as close to the faculty as possible, especially in winter you don't really want to walk through the wind and snow.

Materials: take drawing materials with you, they do sell them in the faculty, but they have a smaller assortment than we do in the Bouwshop. It'll save you quite some money and you get to use what you're used to.

Computer: They do a lot (A LOT) with the computer, so having good Photoshop/InDesign/illustrator/AutoCAD/rhino skills will be very useful! At least have those programs on your PC and know how to use them, it'll save you a lot of time.

Useful websites:

TU Delft: <http://studenten.tudelft.nl/en/students/study-and-career/studying-or-doing-an-internship-abroad/>

TU Delft: <http://www.bk.tudelft.nl/en/study/exchange-programme/>

UWaterloo Arch.: <https://uwaterloo.ca/architecture/>

UWaterloo: <https://uwaterloo.ca/international/inbound/exchange>

UWaterloo Schedule: <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocour/CIR/SA/under.html>

UWaterloo Arch courses: <http://www.ucalendar.uwaterloo.ca/1516/COURSE/course-ARCH.html#ARCH999>

Canadian Visa: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/apply-how.asp>

US Visa: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>

Greyhound: <https://www.greyhound.ca/>

GO train: <http://www.gotransit.com/publicroot/en/default.aspx>