



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	xxx
First name:	xxx
Student number:	xxx
Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Language and Culture studies

Destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	York University
Purpose of exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	24/08/17
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	28/12/17

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The application process was very clear to me. There are several meetings at which the university provides information about applications. Communication throughout the process was clear as well. I was kept up to date in regards to deadlines and also received emails about the progress of my application. You can also check the status of your application in Osiris.

Counselling/support at home university:

Academic preparation:

Since the courses I planned to follow were more or less in line with my program in Utrecht I felt confident I didn't need any specific academic preparation.

Language preparation:

None, my English was proficient already. There are language requirements I think but if you've followed some courses in English at UU you can definitely also follow the courses at York

Finances:

I had support from my family and was still eligible for StuFi. This in combination with the money you get from the OV was enough for me to get by. The exchange rate for Canadian Dollars is in our advantage, but prizes are a bit higher than in the Netherlands. In the end I think living costs were a



bit higher, especially groceries (and in particular fresh produce such as cheese/yoghurt/vegetables) can be expensive. And, rents in Toronto are crazy.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

I would say the level at Yorku is more or less the same as at UU. Students are maybe a bit more motivated and more focussed on getting high grades. I did courses in history and political sciences for which I usually got assigned a couple of readings per seminar and had to write an essay and make a final exam.

Placement in Yorku is different than at UU. There is much more freedom in choosing your courses, it's a bit like a marketplace. You can just enrol for courses, go to lectures for a couple of weeks and then decide whether you want to continue with the course or not. So do not hold back and enrol for all the courses you're interested in, as long as you pay attention to final deadline for disenrollment. You will find that quite some have courses entry requirements, don't let this take you from trying to sign up! If you send teachers an email explaining you're an exchange student (always mention you're an exchange student, this works miracles really) and explain why you want to follow the course there's a big chance they will let you enrol. In general I found teachers and university staff are extremely helpful and they really try their best to make things work for you.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

As I just said, people are very helpful. Sometimes it takes some effort to find out who's the right person to contact though. There are different offices you're probably gonna encounter. The International Offices is probably the one you will be in contact with most. Aside from that there's the Housing Office, which is responsible for your housing and meal plan.

Transfer of credits:

Still in procedure

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

If you've applied for a room on campus there will be a move-in day with a program to meet your roommates/flatmates. All the exchange students are in the same apartment building together with mostly Canadian first years students. I found this a pity; the orientation programme for exchange students is the same programme first years students follow. I think many of the exchange students didn't feel a connection with the Canadian students, simply because of the age difference and because the programme is really designed as an introduction to university. However they also give you a tour around the campus and there is an introduction ceremony with fireworks and Canadian high school mascots. Very over the top – it's fun.

Accommodation:

Yorku offers campus housing. The rooms are standard but comfortable, you get a bed, a desk and a wardrobe for your clothing. There's a shared bathroom but no kitchen, unless you chose for the apartment option in which you live together with three other people (this is a bit outside of the



campus though). Rules for the apartment building are pretty strict, you're only allowed a certain amount of guests and there's security at the door checking your id when you come in. I stayed at campus for two months and then decided to move to a room more downtown. The campus is pretty far from the city (although with the new subway that opened last December it only takes 30 minutes or so to go downtown) and there's not much to do. Living on campus is good way to make friends, but you will have less of a feeling of living in Toronto.

Leisure/culture:

Toronto is a lively city with a lot of fun bars, good museums, great parks, interesting architecture (at the times extremely ugly, but there's a good variety of it...) and good food. There are many different communities in the city and diversity is really celebrated differently than in the Netherlands – you will see very specific stores or restaurants selling specializing in one particular kind of pastry or dish. If you find a room downtown it's definitely worth it to buy a bike for the time you're there. Toronto is known for its groves and big parks and there are more and more bike lanes. Also make sure you visit one of the natural parks up north! Algonquin park or Kawartha Highlands are beautiful and you can easily drive there for the weekend. And, Torontonians are incredibly kind and open, I found it was very easy to meet new people!

Suggestions/tips:

If you want to experience the city and have the feeling of living in a metropole try to find a room off campus. It will take some effort but it's definitely worth it.

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yorku is a friendly university with motivated students and very helpful staff. Aside from that Toronto is big but still relaxed city with lots to explore, friendly people and always something going on. I can definitely recommend going here on exchange!

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

If you want to move away from university life a bit and escape the exchange students bubble, try to find an organization where you can volunteer! I helped the local Food not Bombs with cooking meals for homeless people and made some cool friends there ☺

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions! maxoxenaar@hotmail.com



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	Bachelor
Name degree programme:	Postcolonial & Gender Studies

Destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	York University
Purpose of exchange	study/courses
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	01-09-2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	16-01-2017

You are requested to write on the following topics.

Text boxes will expand automatically while typing.

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

York University has a very easy online application. You need to write a short motivation of about 500 words. The process was pretty quick.

Counselling/support at home university:

I went to one meeting to prepare for the exchange after being placed which was useful. It was nice to hear the two student who already went to Canada speak about their experiences. Next to this I did not have any other counselling from my home university, but this was not necessary either.

Academic preparation:

If you are in your third or fourth year no preparation is needed, the academic level is similar or even a bit easier at York University, so you will be alright.

Language preparation:

If your studies are in English this should not be a problem. If not, I think it is pretty easy to catch up on your English while you are at York.

Finances:

Housing and the meal plan are pretty expensive, but if you saved some money it is affordable. Make sure you have some extra spending money because the exchange students are always going on trips to New York, National Parks and French Canada, which is pretty expensive, but you don't want to miss out on that!

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

If it is feasible with the ECTS that you need for your program, I would recommend taking 4 instead of 5 courses per semester. While the academic quality of the courses are lower than in Utrecht, you



still have to read a lot per course (I would say as much as in a 7,5 ECTS course at Utrecht University, so basically you are taking 4, easy 7,5 ECTS courses at the same time in a time span of 4 months) next to this all the mid-terms and final exams/papers were due in the same week, which means that you have two very stressful moments if you take 5 courses.

York U has a lot of interesting courses, I would recommend not settling for the first course that you find in your own field of studies, but to search a bit more under unexpected programs. I found a very interesting course on South-Asian Female Literary Activism under Asian studies for example.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

It was not hard to get good grades, although there was a lot of reading. The academic skills of York University student were not as good as in Utrecht and therefore the class discussions and group work projects were a bit boring and sometimes frustrating. But the professors were very nice and inspiring.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

There was one meeting at the beginning of the semester that was useful. The exchange student counsellors encourage you to visit them and come to them with ideas and questions. But I did not make use of that. Except when I needed help with getting money back from the university, they were very willing to help me.

Transfer of credits:

Make sure you ask for a transcript that has number-grades on it and not just the letter-grades, because it will be hard for yourself to deduct what grade you got, as for example an A goes from 8.3 till 10. And on the UU website it says that one course is just 3 ECTS but the course load is way higher than that. I would say it is 7.5 ECTS, just as normal course at UU. As there are as much reading and as much test-moments/assignments/papers as in a UU course.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

DON'T SIGN UP FOR FROSH WEEK! It is very expensive and all the exchange students did not go to any of the events. It is a nice week for first year students that will from that week on be part of a certain college, but as an exchange student this is not interesting. Make sure you go to the first international student meeting and to make contact with other exchange students there and plan your own activities and parties together with them.

The exchange student counsellors are very sweet and if you come to them with ideas to organise events for the exchange students they will be very enthusiastic to help you, but they don't organize any events on themselves.

The buddy program started when the semester was almost over so if you want to participate in that make sure that you e-mail them that you want to be in a group that starts early because you will be leaving in December.

Accommodation:

I had a room on campus. The campus is nice because you are close to your classrooms and the library and because you can easily meet up with other exchange students to eat, party or hang out together. The campus was nice in the summer, but when it became colder it became pretty depressive, very grey, no nature. I did not have a kitchen which was awful, because I was forced to



take a meal plan and all the food on campus was very unhealthy and there were not that many options especially when you are a vegetarian or have any other diet. So I would recommend getting an apartment in Toronto, because Toronto is really beautiful and interesting, the only disadvantage is that YorkU is more than an hour away with public transport and you might get a bit lonely then.

Leisure/culture:

Canadians do confirm their stereotype, they are very sweet and open but only to a certain point. The Canadian students are at YorkU to study not to make new friends. They are very easy to talk to, they will talk to you and always help you if you have any questions, but if you want to really become friends with them it will take a lot of effort from you.

Another culture difference is the food, there is not that much healthy food, it is very American-like, fast-food-like in that sense.

Suggestions/tips:

Make sure you go on a lot of trips and get to see a lot of the nature in Canada, it is so beautiful!! Don't take any first or second level courses, they are way too easy and have a lot of small assignments.

Pack or buy really warm clothes, especially if you are staying till January/February, it gets really really cold!

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

I would not necessarily recommend York University to anyone. The campus is slightly depressing; it is very far away from downtown Toronto. Toronto is very beautiful and interesting but I would recommend trying to apply to Toronto University then, they are located really central and it has beautiful buildings. The academic skills at York University were very low and it was pretty easy to get high grades, which was nice because there was a lot of time to get to know people and go on trips etc. I met some really nice exchange students, I still have a lot of contact with them and I have some nice addresses in and outside of Europe to visit now. So I would recommend going abroad and going outside of Europe to everyone. But not specifically to York University. Even though I did have a really nice time and do not regret going.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

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Contact details Student Services / International Office

Visitors' address: Bestuursgebouw, Heidelberglaan 6, Utrecht

+31-(0)30-253 7000

exchange@qdesk.uu.nl (information) / verslagen.internationaloffice@uu.nl (report)

www.uu.nl/students/exchange



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Musicology

Destination city & country	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	York University
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	01-01-2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	28-04-2016

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The exchange application process wasn't too difficult. Just make sure you know your deadlines and honestly, even though I'm also a big fan of this strategy, make sure you have some time left between the actual deadline and the deadline itself. There's always something that will go wrong lastminute, like getting your study plan approved (officially stamped) for example. Also, when it comes to your motivation letter, just don't forget to write it from the heart, but obviously don't forget to fit your story with the exact host university/city/country that you're applying for.

Counselling/support at home university:

Decent. I suffered a lot of difficulties when I just arrived: Apparently I hadn't enrolled in my courses properly, there were problems with my personal accounts and I had no access to a working Wi-Fi connection to fix any of the above. With some help from my newly made friends (my neighbours on campus) I managed to contact Utrecht University. Time differences and the unavailability of a direct contact link from one university to another simply made it almost impossible for UU to do anything directly and instantly. It was just basically a matter of waiting. But I think it would have helped if all different contacted parties had actually responded to my e-mail requests.

Academic preparation:

Don't be too hard on yourself prior to your departure. Don't stress yourself out by forcing yourself to successfully complete your running academic courses. It's likely you suffer from pre-departure stress. And that isn't strange or weird. It happens. So just make sure you act to your limits.

Language preparation:

I didn't really prepare for that. Actually, not at all. My English was already pretty good when I left home. But I did install the Google Translate app on my phone – just in case.



Finances:

Worked two jobs to secure my finances. Prepare to spend a lot more than you expect to spend beforehand, trust me. So be clever, and if you can, just maximize your student loan a few months prior to your departure if you're not so sure you'll have enough money at hand. You never know what happens, and you don't want to be broke, all by yourself in a foreign, unknown country.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

As stated above, there were quite some difficulties that required immediate action. Utrecht University had said during the application process to pick courses from the current academic year of the host university. But at York University, courses change every year, so I ended up having chosen courses that were cancelled, formatted or replaced to an entirely different timeframe. So basically I had to form a study plan all over again on arrival. I had no idea what to choose and how to choose since they handle a different weight system for their courses, and because of the drop-in-drop-out system you could choose from all courses offered (except restricted), which on one hand made it more likely for you to find something and change your courses in the first few weeks, but it is incredibly stressful. I ended up having my holiday extended for two more weeks before finally being able to enrol in courses, hoping I would be able to find something that would eventually also be approved by the exam commission after my exchange and basically just trust my instincts and do what seemed best on point. Luckily, in the end it turned out pretty good after all

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The educational system is oddly different to ours. Extensions on your deadlines are normal, if you just e-mail your teacher, you 'obviously' don't attend every class and if you actually do all the work well you have secured yourself an A++, but with a little less work you can easily receive an A. You have to do a lot of homework and hand in a lot of assignments, but they are not very hard. It's just a lot of work. For me, it was extraordinarily easy to receive straight A's, even though – in my opinion – it was barely worth a 6+ at UU.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Bad. Tried to contact the international office many times, visited all student centres available, and now a single one was helpful or even responded at all.

Transfer of credits:

While choosing my courses I had absolutely no idea how the course credits would be transferred, so here's how I've figured it out for myself now: You have 3.00, 6.00 and 9.00 courses. 3.00 courses are single semester courses, 'half' courses. I've been credited 6 ECTS for these. 6.00 courses are then considered to be 'full' courses, so they will get you about 12 ECTS. 9.00 courses are considered to be courses that are shortened versions of year-long courses adapted to fit in one semester. I had none of these. To get the full 30 ECTS while abroad to have to find yourself two 6.00 courses and one 3.00 course, or one 9.00 course and two 3.00 courses, as long as they fit your time schedule – you yourself are responsible for this when you're signing up for courses. Tip: DON'T choose five 3.00 courses. This is just impossible to fulfil, and in the end, you don't want to be studying all day and night while abroad, do you?

Student life



Welcome/orientation programme:

There was no welcome or orientation programme – apparently they only did that prior to the start of the fall semester. That was pretty unwelcome. Just find yourself some friends asap that will show you around on your first days. If it wasn't for my friend Khalil to walk me around campus all day from student centre to student centre, I think I would have caught myself a plane home.

Accommodation:

Decent. Apparently my hall was being renovated this summer. And that was highly necessary, according to the duct tape on my window sills.

Leisure/culture:

Simply great. Everyone just wanted to be off campus and downtown as much as possible, so we did. The public transport system is good, so use it to your advantage. If you're going to go study at York next year, you're also probably very lucky, as the TTC metro is expanding as far as right in front of Vari Hall, center campus, which will take you directly, fast and straight downtown. No more 704 express vehicles to Downsview station!

The people are absolutely super great. Everyone is always willing to help you so don't fear asking people for directions for example. Also, just go out there, go find yourself some friends off campus, find the place that makes you happy, like a coffee place, a bar that fits your taste (Graffiti's at Kensington was my favourite, if you're into punk, rock and underground music) and make some friends.

Suggestions/tips:

Go downtown. Don't stick to the campus site and don't be afraid to go out there and make yourself some friends in Toronto. Torontians are simply great people. Other places I really enjoyed was TOT the Cat Café (if you miss your pets at home), Second Cup (Great to study, and their sweets and sandwiches are actually super great), Lee's Palace and Smiling Buddha (bigger but still very cosy music venues) and you HAVE to visit Sneaky Dee's at least once (Great food, a lot of it, reasonably priced, and if you're lucky you can just walk upstairs and attend that night's concert!). If you are a fan of great sushi, go to 'Sushi on Bloor'. It's sushi, on Bloor Street, and it will be the best sushi you've ever had for an extremely reasonable price. Get yourself a lunch deal until 15.00 and for as much as 14 CAD (Incl. tip, about 8 Euro's) your stomach will be satisfied for the rest of the day. Also, if you like authentic Italian pizza, go to Via Mercanti at Kensington Market. If you're looking for lovely vegan food, try Lucy's Pie In The Sky, also at Kensington. You won't even notice you're eating vegan. By the way Sushi on Bloor also has great vegetarian and vegan dishes, if you happen to bring a vegetarian friend to a sushi place.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

In the end, I would. It was a fun experience and I would recommend everyone to go abroad like this for a few months at least once in your life. The experience was not always pretty but pretty experiences won't make you grow as a person. Develop yourself in an unknown country and make the best of it. It's gonna be different, but great.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Just do it. Go for it. I left a piece of my heart in 'Turonno'. Cause only foreigners speak out



Universiteit Utrecht

'Toronto' with a hard 't'. Good luck on your exchange!



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	bachelor
Name degree programme:	English Language and Culture

Destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	York University
Purpose of exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> study/courses
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	04-09-2015
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	23-12-2015

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The process consisted of sending a letter of recommendation, a signed transcript of my grades at UU, writing a letter of recommendation, and my CV to York University.

Counselling/support at home university:

We received one pre-departure preparation session. Personally, I feel like one session was not enough. To prevent/diminish a culture shock, students should be more informed on the cultural differences they are going to experience. Since I was the first one to go to York University, the teacher couldn't really give me information on York University, which I found really strange and uncomfortable.

Academic preparation:

I had to maintain a 3.0 average. My average, however, had always been higher than a 3.0, so this wasn't really an issue.

Language preparation:

No language preparation was necessary (as an English Language and Culture major).

Finances:

I did not receive a grant as no grants were available for students going outside of Europe.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

I took four different courses. Actually, I had to take five, but found that this was not really do-able if I also desired to have some time off to explore the city and other cities in Canada. All the other exchange students I spoke to, though, also only took 4. I, thereby, would like to stress that taking five is really too much. I understand that York University

Academic quality of education/placement activities:



The quality of the education was good. The teachers had a lot of knowledge on the subject they were teaching.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Three of my four teachers had office hours. There was a York International office where you could go for support.

Transfer of credits:

Still waiting on this. It takes a long time to get your transcript. I still don't have it, even though it is already March.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

A week program for all students and an hour orientation for exchange students (bit short..)

Accommodation:

In residence

Leisure/culture:

There were bars on campus. And every Wednesday, you could go to the museum for free.

Suggestions/tips:

Go to Kensington Market

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes! I want to go back again in September; it was so good.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Humanities/ Department of History and Art History
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	History

Destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	York University
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	29/08/2015
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	29/12/2015

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

After you have been chosen to go to York you will have to send all kinds of forms to York [e.g. your cv, a letter of recommendation etc.]. I would not worry about this, it is more of a formality. If you go to study in Canada for less than six months you do not need a study permit. Dutch students do not need a visa either. Just take the letter that York sends you, and show it to immigration officer at the airport.

Counselling/support at home university:

The International Office is helpful when you need them. However, I arranged a lot of things by myself. Therefore, I did not really have much contact with the International Office.

Academic preparation:

At York I took classes from the Political Science department, mostly about topic such as international security and global conflicts. Since I took history courses about these topic as well, I had no trouble with the courses at York.

Language preparation:

Since I had already taken courses in English at Utrecht University, and had no trouble with this at all, I have not done any language preparation. However, I do highly recommend taking English classes before going to Toronto. This is especially useful for practicing your academic writing skills. If you are pretty good in French, York offers courses in this language as well.

Finances:

To begin with: your exchange in Canada is going to be much more expensive than you think beforehand. So, take this into account. If you are stuck with a meal plan, food is going to be way more expensive than in Utrecht. If you are in a suit-style residence or living in The Village, the groceries will be just as expensive as in The Netherlands.



It is also very common to pay with your credit card in Canada. However, I found it much more convenient to pay cash [your debit card might not work in a PIN device]. If you use your credit card frequently it is hard to keep track of your finances. You will find a lot of ATM machines on the campus, even some residence buildings have their own.

Furthermore, if you are going to eat out, keep in mind that a 10 to 15 percent tip is common. Do not look offended if the waiter/waitress almost asks for a tip, just smile and wave. Also the taxes on goods [HST, the Canadian equivalent of BTW] are not included in the price tags. So, on everything you buy will come an additional 13 percent. Taxes on alcoholic beverages [which you can only buy in LCBO stores, there is one located at the North-East side of the campus] are around 25 percent, but these are included in the price on the price tags.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

You have to register for the courses via the York course website. If you login with your Passport York you can register for the courses. Some courses [especially from the 4000 level] are restricted. In this case you can either contact the department [see their webpage], or the professor directly. Most professors are more than happy to open up a place for an exchange student.

I took the courses POLS 3200, POLS 3240, and 4260. On top of that I wrote my bachelors thesis at York.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

I would say that the York's course levels are pretty much equal to Utrecht's. However, the 3000 and 4000 courses do have a pretty high workload. The courses 3200 and 3240 consisted of a weekly three hour lecture, the 4060 course was comprised of a weekly 3 hour seminar [a combination of a tutorial and lecture, with a lot of emphasis on the student's own contribution]. If you do not fall behind with the readings, and put effort in your assignments, it is definitely possible to get good grades at York. They put a lot of emphasis on effort, sometimes a part of your mark is determined by how well you participate in class discussions etc. In the end I got two times a B+ [7,5] and an A [8,5].

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

York's International Office is located above the York Lanes shopping Mall [enter via the door next to the Apple Tree Medical Center]. Apart from organisational issue before arrival and the orientation I have not really had much contact with them. However, I know that they are always willing to help you with anything. So, if you ever have a problem, do not hesitate to go there.

Transfer of credits:

York's courses are either 3.0 units [semester courses] or 6.0 units [year courses]. Utrecht University views 3.0 units as 6.0 ECTS. However, I think the course equal 7,5 ECTS when it comes the work load. So, I recommend that you do not take more than 4 courses [most exchange students do this]. This gives you time to explore the country as well.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

York's International Office offers a short mandatory introduction. It takes in the International Office. It offers some practical information, for example about your YU card. My advice: get your YU card as soon as possible. You have to pay your meal plan with it [if you do not have one, you can still put some money on it to use in the restaurant on campus], you can use it to pay the laundry machines and the printers, and it is also your access to the gym and your identification for the Intramural League. You can get your YU card at the William Small Centre.

There is also an introduction week, this is called Frosh. It is a week with typical North American 'school spirit' activities, games, and parties [it will cost you around 100 dollars to participate]. To be honest I found a bit childish, so I did not participate. Some exchange students did, but they did not follow the whole program.

What was really helpful in meeting other exchange students in the beginning was a Facebook group. I think it still exists. Especially in the first three weeks it came in very handy to meet new people, and arrange activities. If it does not exist anymore, make one yourself and sent it to the International Office. They will send the link to all the incoming exchange students.

Accommodation:

I spend my exchange in Tatham Hall, an undergraduate traditional dorm. I had a single room, just like all the international students. There are four double rooms on each floor though. The building was pretty old [it is getting renovated now], and definitely of less quality than most student houses in Utrecht. However, you'll get accustomed to this, and I did not find it troublesome. Nevertheless, the obligatory meal plan that comes with staying in the traditional dorm rooms is quite expensive. You also do not have a real kitchen in Tatham [apart from a micro-wave]. Also we had a lot fire alarms over the course of the semester [all of them were pranks, the building itself is really safe]. Waking up at 3AM three times a week to get out was not the best part of the exchange. Overall, it was doable to stay here, I was most of the time away to go to classes or do fun stuff anyway.

Because of some reasons above, it might be nicer to stay in a suit-style dorm room. This is a dorm in which you will live with other students, and share a kitchen with them. I have heard that the Bethune Residence is a good one to stay. If you are 21 or older, I recommend that you stay in the Assiniboine apartments. These are a bit more expensive, but you will have your own washroom and kitchen, and a bigger living space [you can give a small party].

The final option is living in The Village, a small neighbourhood next to the campus [5 minutes of walking]. However, you have arrange this by yourself since the houses are privately owned. You will have to search on the internet for this.

Leisure/culture:

Toronto is an amazing city, explore it as much as you can! Take in mind that York is in the North of the Greater Toronto Area, and that it takes about 45 minutes to get to downtown. Take bus 196/196a/196b from York Lanes to the Downsview subway station. From there you can easily get to Downtown. It will cost you 2 dollars for a one-way trip, no matter where you go off [prepare to save



coins, or buy tokens in York Lanes]. If you are taking a streetcar after your subway ride, simply get a transfer ticket on your way out of the subway station. You can show this to the driver, so you do not have to pay the 2 dollars again.

Interesting things to do in Toronto are:

- Visiting all the different neighbourhoods: see <http://www.seetorontonow.com/explore-neighbourhoods/>
 - Visit the city's sports teams: the Maple Leafs, the Raptors, and the Blue Jays are quite expensive. But the Toronto Marlies [icehockey] are quite cheap and fun to go to. These teams are really part of the city's identity, so I recommend that you visit them. Sports in North America is a completely different experience than sport in Europe.
 - Visit the Toronto International Film Festival [TIFF] in October. You can even volunteer at this event.
 - Visit the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario.
 - Go out and party: the Madison is the place to be! Another nice club is Tequila Jacks. Although the alcoholic beverages are expensive [6 to 8 dollars for a beer is common] the clubs are nice and friendly. Keep in mind that most clubs in Toronto close at 2AM, so go on time. The subway stops running at 1:30AM, thus you have to take an Uber back to the campus. Go back with four people, and you will pay approximately 8 to 10 dollars per person.
 - If it is warm in September [it was still around 30 degrees when I was there] go to the beach at Lake Ontario. Or go to the beaches at Toronto Island, there you can see the beautiful skyline.
 - Go to the CN Tower. Best view ever!
 - Go to St. Lawrence Market. This is an indoor Market with all kinds of interesting fresh food. In the basement level you have some places where you can eat [take the Italian sandwiches].
 - Eat poutine at Smoke's Poutinerie.
 - Go to Hyde Park to picnic/play football or soccer [when it is still a bit warm], or to see the coloured leafs [October], or the snow [most likely in December].
 - Go take pictures at the Graffiti Ally.
- Go to Canada's Wonderland at Halloween. The park has fright nights with zombies and haunted houses, it is a unique experience.
- If you want to do something close by, go to the movies at the Yorkdale shopping center. It is the second station after Downsview.

I also did a lot of things outside the city as well. I recommend the following:

- Go to the Niagara Falls. You can either go with an organised trip, or rent a car. I did the last, which I think is nicer [beware, sometimes you have to pay extra if the driver is under 25]. When you are at the Falls, skip the touristic town and go to the typical Canadian village of Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- Visit the Algonquin Provincial Park. Rent a cabin in the woods [you can find them on AirBnB] and explore the park. It takes about 5/6 hours to get there by car. Go in October to see the beautiful coloured leafs. The Park is also good for hiking, spotting a moose, and running away from bears

[seriously do not leave any food outside your cabin, bears will find you].

- If time and money allow it go to other Canadian cities like Montréal, Ottawa, or Québec. You can organise it yourself, or go with an organised trip [York International will tell you about this].

On campus thing to do:

- Stay healthy! Go to the gym! It is about 10 dollars for a year.

- Grab all your international friends and convince them to participate in an Intramural League.

These are intra-university sports leagues, and take weekly place on campus. I participated in the soccer league. P.S. If you win the title, you will get an awesome t-shirt!

- If you do not feel like leaving campus on a Thursday or weekend, go the Shopsy's Sports Bar in York Lanes, or go the Absinthe Pub beneath Winters College. You will have great time in both.

- Interact with your professors! Although York does not have the world's best reputation [only due to its administration], the professors are really good. They will help you with anything during their office hours, and are really friendly in general.

A lot of exchange students do some travelling after their exchange:

- I went to New York with Christmas.

- You can also go to Mexico [Cancun is an affordable popular destination], or Cuba.

Suggestions/tips:

- It is possible to book a welcome service. People from York will meet you at the arrival hall at Pearson. They will also book a taxi for you. It is quite expensive [around 80 dollars], but very convenient. If you do not want to pay this, you can also take a bus from the airport to the nearest subway station, and from there on travel to the Downsview subway station. From there you can take bus 196 to York.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes definitely! Academically, York offers a broad range of interesting courses! The campus might look a bit 'concrete' in comparison to Utrecht, but you will get used to this soon. The campus is almost like a small village with all its facilities. I met from all over the world here [York is pretty multicultural], which makes it really interesting.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

When it comes to the weather in Toronto things can be pretty difficult. In early September it can be 30 degrees. In October it starts to get colder, think about 5-15 degrees at daytime. Sometimes November and December are really cold [minus 20-30]. However last year was the warmest winter in years, and it has not been colder than minus 10. But be prepared for colder weather. When it gets cold, you will need something like a skiing jacket to survive. Since they take up a lot of space in your luggage, you can buy one in Canada [Canada Goose is a popular brand], but these jackets are really expensive regardless of which brand you take.

I think the above offers a good overview of York and Toronto. In case you have any questions, you can always email me at reinhardvandesteeg@live.nl.



Universiteit Utrecht