



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

	Contact info available at the IO.
faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Comparative Literary Studies

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	01 / 09 / 2022
end date	31 / 12 / 2022

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

I'm not exactly sure how this compares to application procedures to other universities, but the process for Toronto was quite long and stressful. The initial UU selection part was fine and pretty straightforward (it happens in semester 1 already, so start thinking and researching early), but once UU let us know we were selected to apply, we only had a few days to get everything in order, so that was quite stressful. We had to send a full second application to UofT itself, so make sure you have things like reference letters already sorted out. It's also good to know that UofT only accepts IELTS or TOEFL tests as proof of English proficiency, and there are very few exceptions to their rules (the Netherlands isn't one of them, unless you are a native speaker of English), and only an exchange on Bachelor level allows for Duolingo as proof. Once this application was handed in, it took very (too) long for UofT to let us know whether we were accepted. I only heard in June. So while this might be a bit nerve wracking, make sure you start sorting things out already. I hadn't booked my flight yet because it wasn't certain I could go, many people did already, but I still managed to get an OK deal, but this is something you'd have to decide for yourself. Also, don't underestimate the amount of stuff you need to take care of to actually go to Canada, such as finding housing, getting a credit card/Canadian bank account, arranging your health insurance with UofT, getting reisvergoeding if you're a Dutch student, finding a good phone plan so you can use data in Canada (phone plans are quite expensive there), etc.

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

I didn't reach out to UU often personally, and when I did I always got helpful answers, but they are not always the quickest to reply, so make sure to take this into consideration. As I mentioned before, we only had a few days to prepare UofT's separate application, which was stressful, but ended up turning out okay. The exchange office was definitely helpful, so don't hesitate to reach out to them, it's always better to be sure about the process (especially UofT is strict with things like deadlines).

#### academic preparation

I was finishing up the first year of my Master's right up till when I flew to Canada, so there wasn't really any additional preparation for me. Practically though, UofT has a lot of different course lists, so check it all out to get an idea, but also make sure you look at the correct lists of courses that will actually be taught the semester you're there (the website can be a bit of a maze). Googling your department name and "course list" will already help. Schedule changes can occur quite late. It is possible to take courses in other departments as well (it was for me at least, this might depend on your department), but in my case courses filled up really fast, so it's smart to sign up for everything in advance. I think I signed up for my courses in June. If they're already full, usually you email both the professor of the course and the coordinator of the department. It's



okay to send your professor a message already to ask questions or show your desire to be in their course, this is normal there and maybe even smart.

language preparation

I'm used to studying and living in English, so I didn't have any additional prep. If you're not used to using English outside of an academic setting however, it might make you a bit more comfortable to also practice having regular conversations in English. I did have to take an IELTS unfortunately, so if you know you are not an exception, which you probably aren't if you're not a native speaker, plan this well in advance. You will only have a short amount of time to get your documents in to UofT after UU nominates you.

finances

I received a grant from the Holland Scholarship (UU will let you know how and when to apply for this). There weren't many other scholarships available to me (Dutch student), and those that might have been available required proof of admission at the start of Spring, but I didn't get accepted by UofT until June. If it's the same for you, there is thus a decent chance you won't be able to get much outside help, so it will be up to you to figure out your finances. Rent is very high in Toronto, so that will be a major expense, and some activities and food will also be expensive, but you can limit this by shopping at places like Dollarama and NoFrills, and buying smartly. Remember that tax doesn't show up till you're at the register, so you always pay more than expected. Another expense is tipping culture in Toronto: you're always expected to tip at least 15-20% when out, so this is something to take into consideration as well.

**STUDY ABROAD PERIOD**

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I was officially part of the Comparative Literature department, but only took one course there and took my other three at the English department. Everything was very organized, staff were very helpful, and so it was easy to figure out how to sign up for everything. UofT is big on mailing lists, so any topic you're interested in, there will probably be a club/centre about it and you can be notified of their events through there. When I was there, they organized a club fair during introduction period: definitely go there! The only organizational issue I had was that some departments store their information differently, so I couldn't figure out where my English classes were at before I knew where to look. So keep your eyes open for this and don't hesitate to contact your professors if you have questions.

academic quality of education activities

I really enjoyed my classes. The professors were incredibly knowledgeable and well-read, but very open and supportive as well. My classes were mainly discussions where we sat at round tables. The students mainly dictated the course of discussion, so we could explore our interests, and it always felt more like a conversation than a hierarchical symposium. Students were much more outspoken and confident than I was used to, which made for very vibrant discussions, and I learned a great deal of new things. Everyone was very approachable, so both academic quality and the vibe in the classrooms were great. It was also clear that more was expected of me than what I was used to: you will be expected to actively engage with the class discussion. While in my experience at UU it is more accepted to not speak as much, and we stick more closely to the material at hand and the professor's specific expertise, at UofT you are expected to have mastered the material on your own and we immediately go beyond it, a process to which you will be expected to contribute every class.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I didn't make use of any of this, but there were many information points, online resources, and flyers that could have shown me where to get support. I can't say anything about the quality this support would have, but UofT does very clearly show where you can get support, and it has many different types on offer.

transfer of credits



I'm still in this process. I just had to fill out a form to get UofT to send my grades to UU, which went very smoothly. Now I still need to contact the Examboard, so I can't say anything yet about that side of the process. Since I followed courses that are the same or similar to the courses I sent with my UU application, and which were approved by my course coordinator, I don't expect much trouble. So if you do something radically different than scheduled, maybe check with your coordinator to be sure, but probably it will all be fine.

### STUDENT LIFE

#### welcome & orientation programme

I think this is more a product of being a Master student and not having a specific college (like BA and residential students do), but there was not much of a welcome program. We only had an academic fair and resource market in one day, with a sort of welcome talk and question hour, which was nice. I also attended the club fair which I discovered through friends/social media. There were no social introduction activities for us specifically. At UofT, for Master's at least, most programs organize their own department introduction as well. For me this again had an academic focus.

#### accommodation

Accommodation in Toronto is hard to find and expensive, so start early, and beware of scams!! There are many scammers out there. As for University housing, there are only a couple options for graduate students. Most viable would be Graduate House and Tartu College, but the waitlists are very long. You should sign up as soon as you can, even if you have not officially been accepted yet. There are also things like Facebook groups for off-campus housing, which can work, but beware scammers. There are certain red flags you can watch out for, and always make sure to have video/phone call to get a sense of the place and renter. Many people also use Airbnb. I was going to rent via Airbnb too, but was offered a room by the landlord on there. This one had been posted on Craigslist (which is usually known to be a bit sketchy), and I was a bit nervous until I actually saw the place when I got to Toronto, but everything turned out to be more than okay. Make sure to at least call with your landlord, see how the communication between you is, and make sure they don't ask you for anything like security deposits, these are illegal in Ontario. Also, check the address on Google Maps Streetview.

#### leisure & culture

The club fair I mentioned before is a great way to meet people who are into the same things as you are, and to do these activities regularly. There are clubs for pretty much everything. The university is also big on sports, and games are free for students, so I really recommend going, it will make for a very fun night out with friends, and you will feel very much like a UofT student and get a whiff of the Canadian love for hockey. The Center for International Experience also organizes many both fun and useful (practical) events where you can get help and meet other international students. Toronto itself also has much to offer: there are plenty of events that are hosted throughout the year, there are many nice places in and outside of the city, there are a lot of food options, and even just walking around Toronto can be really nice. There is something to do basically every weekend. I'd recommend going to a sports game like at Rogers Center because the vibe is really great, going to the lakefront and Toronto Islands at least once, there are many nice pubs, ice skating at Nathan Philips Square in the winter, and there are lots of niche stores and clubs (like a fantasy bookstore and a country club with a mechanical bull). There's the TIFF, the author festival, I went to a Rodeo as well, and of course there are places like Niagara Falls which are really accessible by train. Toronto also has lots of cinemas that show older movies, which could be really fun, and there are also nice markets and shopping districts. Really just walk around and you will find fun things to do.

#### suggestions/tips

Say yes to things/invites :) And try to get out of the city too. I joined the Outdoor club for example and went on a cabin trip one weekend and a stargazing trip another; Canada is absolutely beautiful, and you will see



things you'd never see in the Netherlands. Plus it's a nice way to meet new people, and if you enjoy things like canoeing and hiking, you can definitely do a lot of that here. Make sure to go during fall as well to see the beautiful fall foliage, Ontario is famous for it.

## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

YES! I had a wonderful time in Toronto. I learned so much at UofT, my classes were amazing and invaluable and I think the academic culture there pushed me out of my comfort zone in a very good way and I could really explore my interests here. UofT also organizes so many activities, both social and academic ones, there are so many things to explore, it feels like a bustling place of endless possibilities. The city itself was also really fun to live in: there are so many things to do with friends, and if you enjoy traveling, there are many cool destinations nearby. Canada is beautiful and I felt really at home there, so I would highly recommend going there.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Don't underestimate the preparation required to go to Toronto. Have so much fun there, time will fly by, and make sure to get out of the city too!



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

	Contact info available at the IO.
faculty/college	Geosciences
level	bachelor's
name study programme	Natuurwetenschap & Innovatiemanagement

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	01 / 09 / 2022
end date	20 / 12 / 2022

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

Before applying, I started looking at which destinations I could go to (in regard to GPA, language, COVID, and so on). After creating an overview of my possibilities, I started looking at which countries really appealed to me and whether experiences (and ratings) about their university were positive or not. After doing this, I remained with a handful of universities I really wanted to go to and contacted some people who went there to share their experiences.

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

Support from Utrecht University was decent, but certainly not perfect. In general, your questions will be answered but it could take some time. Also, some points remained vague and could be explained a bit better.

#### academic preparation

The only academic preparation I have done was securing that my GPA remained above a 7 as I already knew that some Universities would only accept exchange students with a GPA higher than a certain amount.

#### language preparation

As Dutch students are exempted from doing an English test for the University of Toronto specifically, I have not done any academic preparation.

#### finances

Toronto is an expensive city. Before going I worked but certainly did not earn enough to live there for four months. Luckily, I received the Holland Scholarship and could borrow some money from third parties when needed. Expenses in Toronto will at least be 2000 a month in total.

### STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

#### study programme (content and organisational issues)

I followed five random courses that aligned with my current study and interests. Four of them were in the environmental section.

#### academic quality of education activities

The academic quality is really good in Toronto. Lectures are (generally) very useful and the facilities are outstanding. When comparing it to Utrecht University, the quality is definitely better in Toronto.

#### counselling & support at receiving university abroad



Counselling support is great. They normally respond in 24 hours and clearly answer your question.

transfer of credits

The transfer of credits went very easily. The University of Toronto sent me an email with some details about ordering a transcript. This was done in two clicks and free as the University of Toronto would pay for my purchase. They immediately send it to the University of Utrecht so that my credits could be immediately transferred.

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

Student life is great. There is enough to do and there are a lot of great international students you can come friends with.

accommodation

Accommodation is really hard to find. I was rejected for all the residences as I was a bit late and went for the Fall term only. Therefore, I had to rent an Airbnb for my whole exchange (which was a bit more expensive).

leisure & culture

Toronto is one of the most diverse cities when it comes to people. There are people from all over the world and the culture is great (people are very friendly). However, there is a lot of inequality and there are therefore a lot of homeless people.

suggestions/tips

Be proactive in the beginning when it comes to meeting up with people. You can immediately tell if they are alike you or not. That way, you will have a friend group very quickly and your exchange will be great.

**CONCLUSIONS**

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Yes. The quality of education is high, the city is beautiful, and the culture is great.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Assure to have enough money in advance as Toronto is really expensive.



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Faculty of Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Philosophy, Politics, and Economics

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	03 / 09 / 2021
end date	21 / 12 / 2021

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

The initial stage of the application, which encompassed submitting a study abroad request and preparing the study plan, was straightforward. It was relatively easy to navigate through the University of Toronto's online academic calendar and find interesting courses. Application-related assistance was available at both Utrecht University and the University of Toronto.

However, owing to the uniqueness of participating in an exchange during a global pandemic, what followed my admission into the University of Toronto could not be further away from smooth. Canadian bureaucracy had come to a halt, permits were not being issued and I did not even know until late summer whether my study abroad was going to take place at all. To my great surprise, my study permit somehow got authorized right on time.

Nevertheless, I expect that prospective students will not need to go through such an audacious process. Even if they do, they can at least find solace in knowing that the University of Toronto is highly competent in crisis management.

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

The exchange office sufficiently informed me about the specifics of the application process. I had no problems whatsoever with abiding by the deadlines. My questions were answered in a speedy fashion, and I made extensive use of the Exchange Office's resources. I never once hesitated before contacting them, which demonstrates how approachable they have been.

#### academic preparation

I did not make any academic preparations for the exchange. All the courses I would take were somehow related to my past studies. However, lurking on online forums, I was a bit intimidated by possible problems arising from the course load. I would take five courses during my semester abroad, which sounds a lot compared to my usual working week here in Utrecht, which has mostly been occupied by two courses. I would later be relieved to see that the increased course load did not entail anything I could not manage.

Still, I would recommend the ambitious student to read up a bit on their future professors' academic work to engage in substantial conversations with them.



language preparation

As an international student in Utrecht, I was confident that I already possessed the language ability needed to perform well in an English-speaking country. Still, it might be a good idea to acquaint oneself with various Canadian artefacts of culture. Since I talk a bit cryptic (as could be inferred from my writing up until now), I had to adapt to the casual conversational style. As a side note, I can confidently claim that the sentence “Have a good one!” will be the defining linguistic remnant of your study abroad period and will be ringing in your ears long after you have left Canadian soil.

finances

I applied for, and received, the Holland Scholarship which really helped me in terms of finances. Therefore, I would strongly advise future students to apply for this scholarship. Apart from that, since Canadian dollar is weaker than Euro, not paying for groceries/other stuff in the Netherlands meant that I had a sufficient budget for living in Toronto. In addition to living costs, students should immediately sort out their flight. Transatlantic flights are almost always expensive, so it is important to book a flight months in advance. Unfortunately, due to the hectic nature of my case, I was only able to book a flight a week before departure so almost half of the scholarship money vanished from sight thirty thousand feet above the Atlantic Ocean.

To compensate for this financial adversity, I mostly depended on Dollarama and FreshCo for groceries. I also picked up the cheapest communications option (a prepaid plan) from Chatr Mobile.

**STUDY ABROAD PERIOD**

study programme (content and organisational issues)

Due to the uncertainty of the academic calendar during my time there (which will probably not be the case for prospective students), my study plan had to entirely change, except a course in political science. When such a thing occurs, you should promptly notify the Board of Examiners at Utrecht University through an Osiris Case.

Once I settled in and got used to the new academic lifestyle in Toronto, I did not have any (significant) issues whatsoever. Still, if it so happens that you have a problem, you can simply reach out to your academic advisor from whatever college you have been registered in. I was not cognizant of the emphasis on collegiate system prior to my arrival, but you will receive informative emails from your assigned college so it is nothing to fret over.

academic quality of education activities

I think the level of academic activities was comparable to that of what students are used to at Utrecht University. There was less emphasis placed on seminars and the like, so most activities consisted of lectures. Yet, this was not the case for some third- and fourth-year courses where in-class participation is crucial.

Moreover, a working week at the University of Toronto is much denser than at Utrecht University. There are many bite-sized assignments that you should be on the top of if you want to receive a good grade. Speaking of getting good grades, establishing a closer relationship with your professor through office hours could also help your grasp of the course material and by extension, your course grade (and perhaps present the greater reward of getting into the cliquish inner circle that is academia).

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

In Canada (also in North American universities, I gather), learning independently is not highly prioritized. Instead, they stress repeatedly the availability of resources that enable you to perform better. For example,





there was a time when I had trouble with insomnia and needed some extra time to submit a paper. The lecturer and my study advisor were very understanding, and they authorized an extension for me to submit my paper. Since the University of Toronto is a busy school, they realize that people can sometimes be having some difficulties, so they strive towards accommodating everyone's needs.

transfer of credits

All my grades had been announced by early January, so I immediately initiated the transfer of credits. Both the host university and Utrecht University were helpful in terms of laying out what is needed to be done in order to get a transcript and have it sent over. I am still waiting for the transfer to finalize.

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

Unfortunately, the welcome & orientation activities were limited to online, which severely reduced their effectiveness. I never got the opportunity to properly familiarize myself with various clubs and societies, but I still found the orientation emails helpful. Also, fumbling about is my preferred method of orientation so I was not particularly affected.

accommodation

The housing situation in Toronto reminds one of Utrecht, albeit with greater scale and intensity. I lived on the infamous Sherbourne Street, a place where upper-class 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture clashes with the unfortunate victims of Canada's neoliberalization, namely, the homeless. Although it is currently being touted as an increasingly gentrified neighbourhood, I would advise students to keep their wits about themselves when they roam around this street should they decide to live there.

If you feel just a little bit more adventurous, you could look for places in The Beaches neighborhood. Danforth Avenue could also be an option. However, if you do not have a stringent budget, I urge you to call Bloor West Village home. It is lively and prides itself on having the best-reviewed restaurant in town (Goodfellas Wood Oven Pizza).

leisure & culture

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Toronto, and the lifestyle I had acquired there made me rethink my future to the extent that I am now exploring my options to get Canadian citizenship.

For starters, there is TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) which is almost as prestigious as film festivals found in Europe. I was lucky to see *Last Night in Soho* well in advance thanks to its premiere at that festival. There are also many small-scale independent art cinemas such as the Paradise Cinema. Next, the Art Gallery of Ontario, embellishing the outer side of Chinatown, hosts important indigenous and modernist art from different parts of Canada and the world. I had the pleasure of attending the temporary exhibition dedicated to Andy Warhol. The best part? Admission is free for everyone under the age of 25.

suggestions/tips

Please see the "additional comments" section at the end to see my suggestions.



## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I would recommend this university/destination abroad in a heartbeat. The city is great and the university is one of the best in the world. There is a good variety of courses available, the university boasts a huge library that is a prime example of brutalist architecture, a one-of-a-kind urban studies center, and a large array of clubs and societies. Nevertheless, note that this recommendation is only valid for the St.George campus. I would prompt you to steer clear of the Scarborough campus due to numerous reasons varying from convenience to aesthetics (the campus itself is alright, but I found Scarborough to be mostly depressing).

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you are going on an exchange in the Fall term, make sure to roam around the city and marvel at its natural beauty before mid-October. It is a magical time when you can explore hidden gems like Ontario Place, Greektown, and Roncesvalles Avenue as you trace the shadow of a retiring summer. September is also a great time to visit Toronto Islands, as most attractions found there close for the season in the first week of October. In my brave attempt to conquer the city on foot, I walked to all these places of interest (except Toronto islands) during my 33km-long urban odyssey in December (proof available upon request).

Also, if you like eating nutritious - yet cheap - salads, do visit *The Salad House* at 17 Hayden St and order a Large Chicken Caesar Salad with Chickpeas. If it is the case that you are a true fast-food enthusiast, then head to *Banquet Burger* at 940 Bloor St West and treat yourself to what is (in my highly informed opinion) the best burger in town. Craving for a milkshake? Well, you could order one while you are at Banquet Burger but I would suggest you to go to *Holy Chuck Burgers* at 1450 Yonge St and try their Nutella milkshake. Also, do not leave Canada without having tried the signature North American beverage of Root Beer! Order one at A&W's and kiss goodbye to all other soft drinks once and for all!



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Liberal Arts and Sciences

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	05 / 01 / 2022
end date	30 / 04 / 2022

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

I always wanted to study in North America and after doing research on the different exchange locations, I concluded that Toronto was the best/nicest option for me. After writing a motivation letter, the process of application was fairly easy.

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

The Study Abroad web page was very helpful in the process of finding a university to host my exchange. After I was accepted by UofT, most communication happened through them, and I rarely asked for UU support anymore.

#### academic preparation

Since I already finished my bachelor's programme, and extended my graduation to go on an exchange, I was able to only pick fun courses that might prepare me for my master's. Therefore, there was very little pressure on finishing all the courses I took, and I didn't feel the need to academically prepare myself for my time in Toronto.

#### language preparation

It wasn't necessary to make any language preparations (not just for me, but for Dutch students in general).

#### finances

Canada is a very expensive country, more expensive than the Netherlands. For instance, it is very unlikely that you'll find housing under 1000 Canadian dollars a month. I would advise saving up some money before going on the exchange. But there are also UU-grants you can apply for; in the end I received almost 3000 euros through the Holland Scholarship. This was, however, more than you would usually get; some exchange programmes to other universities got cancelled and therefore we also received the money that was meant for the people in those programmes.

### STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

#### study programme (content and organisational issues)

As said before, I already finished my bachelor's programme in Utrecht, which allowed me to just pick courses I found interesting. I ended up taking courses in nutrition, geography and German. In total, I took 4



courses; I would advise against taking more courses if it's not absolutely necessary. You don't want to spend all your time studying.

academic quality of education activities

Even though UofT has a reputation of being a very demanding university, I wouldn't say the level is higher than in Utrecht (if not a bit lower). However, this was only what I experienced. Some other European students, that took different courses, told me that they found it quite hard. In general, I would say that the workload is higher than in Utrecht, but the level is slightly lower.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I've never had any complaints about the contact with UofT, they helped me pretty well.

transfer of credits

At the time of writing, I have not transferred my credits yet. Therefore, I won't be able to say much about it.

## STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

In my opinion the first weeks are crucial; if you want to enjoy your time in Toronto (or on any exchange, for that matter), I would highly recommend being very active in the first weeks. Try to meet as many people as possible and go to as many events/meetups as you can. This might not always be enjoyable if you're not into big group activities (like me), but it's really worth it. If you meet a lot of people, chances are higher you'll also meet some very nice ones. I met almost all my friends in the first week.

In my year, there were WhatsApp groups for all exchange students and for all students in my residence. These groups are very helpful in the first weeks and usually you can find links to them on Facebook. All exchange students are very eager to meet new people, since everybody is in the same situation of not knowing anyone. This makes it way easier to meet new people, especially if you take some initiative. If you propose something, you'll find a lot of people willing to join you. For instance, on the third day I invited all students in my building's WhatsApp group over for dinner. I met a lot of people that day, including the person that became my best friend in Toronto.

accommodation

It's extremely expensive to live in Toronto. Like I said, it's hard to find a room under 1000 CAD a month. You could try finding a room on Facebook or on UofT's student website, but most people (including me) chose to stay at a residence. It might be slightly more expensive than finding a room somewhere else, but since there are a lot of students living at those residences, I would recommend living there. I think most people lived at either Tartu (very close to campus) or Harrington (where I lived, a 25 minutes' walk from campus). Both residences are good options in my opinion, mainly because there are a lot of students living in both of them, with Tartu being only for students. You will just have to accept that it's going to be very expensive.

leisure & culture

Since Toronto is a big city, there's enough to do. It might, in my opinion, not be the best city to visit as a tourist, but when you live there, you'll find enough things to do. If you're into sports, like me, it's nice to join a sports team. Either through UofT or through some other organisation. I played football (soccer) and table tennis. Gyms, sports fields and other UofT facilities are free to use for students, which is very nice. Within Toronto, Toronto Island was by far my favourite place to go. If the weather is good (which it won't be most of the year), it's an incredible spot to hang out with friends and the view of the city is great.

During my stay I went to a lot of sports games: I visited the Raptors (Basketball), the Maple Leafs (Hockey), the Blue Jays (Baseball) and Toronto FC (Football). Furthermore, I went to a couple of museums, had dinner



in a lot of different restaurants (highly recommendable to try a lot) and rented a car a couple of times to explore the areas just outside of Toronto. Going out in Toronto is also very cool. If you want to, you can go out every night.

During the reading week, I made a trip to Boston and New York with friends. And after the semester ended, I travelled to the west of Canada by train with other friends. There we visited Banff and Jasper, which are stunningly beautiful, and Vancouver. Also, I made a three-week road trip in a van in western USA after my time in Toronto ended and visited Niagara Falls, Montreal and Ottawa. So, there are plenty of possibilities to do some nice stuff when you're not studying :).

suggestions/tips

Like I said before: my most important tip is to be very active in the first weeks and try to meet as many people as possible. Once you made friends, your time will be so much more enjoyable. Also, I would say that you should try to make the most out of it while you're there, so don't only study (which is easy for me to say, since I already finished my bachelor's when I was there). It may sound obvious, but if you're there for one semester, like most people, your time in Toronto will be over before you know it. Semesters in Canada are not even 4 months long.

Because of that, I would also strongly recommend travelling after the semester ends. In my case, I had my last test mid-April, which gave me 4 ½ months until the next academic year started. But before or after you travel: stay in Toronto for a while! I'm now talking to people who'll do the winter semester in Toronto. From the moment you arrive up until the semester ends, it will be very cold and snowy. It's a must to experience Toronto when the weather is good; I spend two weeks there when it was 20+ degrees and those were probably the best weeks of my semester. Toronto Island in summer is just amazing.

My last tip would be not to spend too much time with other Dutch(speaking) people, to make the most out of your experience abroad. I had a friend from Utrecht that went in the same period as me, but we made an agreement not to spend too much time together. I think that was a very wise decision, because the experience will be sub-optimal if you still speak Dutch every day. There are enough Dutch people back in the Netherlands, so try and hang out with people from other cultures :).

**CONCLUSIONS**

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Oh yes, I genuinely had the time of my life and I already miss it. However, this had mostly to do with the people I met, I really made friends for life. Toronto as a city is not that special in my opinion, but there's enough to do. The university is very nice and prestigious, with some Hogwarts-like buildings and crazy sports facilities. If you really can't stand cold weather, I probably would suggest choosing a different university though.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I just want to wish you a wonderful time in Toronto! I'm a bit jealous of everyone going there in the future ;).



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	REBO
level	bachelor
name study programme	Rechtsgeleerdheid / Law

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	06 / 01 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	23 / 05 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	
	I applied for my exchange in December of 2020 and received the news that I was chosen for the programme relatively early (around the beginning of February 2021). I had to write a motivation letter and the rest of my application was done by Utrecht University. I experienced the application process as being quick and pleasant!
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
	Utrecht University was very helpful and proactive during the process of informing me about my exchange program. They had general information days for all students going on exchange and linked all the students going to University of Toronto, which was very nice since meant that you knew people before going away.
academic preparation	
	I didn't need a lot of academic preparation, since the academic level of Utrecht University and the University of Toronto is very similar. I would advise to look carefully at the entry level of the courses; some courses require you to have previous knowledge of a certain course.
language preparation	
	The courses at the University of Toronto were all given in English which meant I didn't need any language preparation, since the level of English was the same as at Utrecht University.
finances	
	Living in Toronto is much more expensive than living in the Netherlands. A lot of costs are excluding tax and when going out for dinner it is also required to give a mandatory tip of 15%. I think that if you are able to have some savings before going to Toronto, I would definitely do that. Furthermore, I would also look into scholarships that are available for students that are going to (North) America since you are not eligible for an 'Erasmus beurs'.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
	I followed the following courses: (i) Law, Technology and Culture, (ii) Psychology and the Law and (iii) Acting.
academic quality of education activities	
	The academic quality of the courses was good, but very different from the courses that I had followed thus far. At Utrecht University most courses have an essay and an exam. At University of Toronto, you have a lot of 'sub-



exams' that count towards the final grade, which means the courses are not much more difficult but do require more work.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The University of Toronto was very helpful when it comes to giving information and helping me with my course enrolment. They also advised me to not take a course that is perceived as very difficult by exchange students and helped me to switch to a course that would be better for me. I am very grateful for their help in the beginning stages!

transfer of credits

This was done by Utrecht University and went well.

## STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

Unfortunately, my exchange started during a lockdown due to Covid-19 but the University of Toronto made sure to organise online events for the exchange students to get to know each other. Furthermore, they organised WhatsApp group chats where we could keep in touch with each other and organise things to do in small groups. A month later in-person classes started again, and we could meet without any restrictions!

accommodation

I stayed at Tartu Student Residence, which was very near to the city centre, the University of Toronto and public transportation. I would very much recommend staying at Tartu!

leisure & culture

As mentioned, Toronto is a very expensive city. Luckily there are a few cheaper options for students which make things easier.

suggestions/tips

I would recommend looking into travelling outside of Toronto during the exchange period. For example: visit Montreal, Quebec, Vancouver, New York etc.

## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Yes! I loved my experience at the University of Toronto, made a lot of friends from other places in the world, was able to develop other academic skills and methods of studying. In general, I would recommend an exchange to everyone but more specifically to Toronto if you like a metropolitan city!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Prepare for the cold! In Toronto it can get around -26 in the winter.



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Faculty of Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Artificial Intelligence

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	8 / 9 / 2021 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	12 / 12 / 2021 (dd/mm/yyyy)

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	The application process went pretty smoothly. The UofT is not particularly quick with processing the applications and sending acceptance letters that could give you some delays if you need to request a study permit. Normally you won't need a study permit for an exchange of one semester, but during COVID-19 times the Canadian government had made this a necessity.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	We had a few meetings about the exchange. The rest was, for me, pretty straightforward.
academic preparation	I took courses that did not overlap with my major at the UU. I did however not have to prepare myself for any courses I took at the UofT
language preparation	The spoken language in Ontario/Canada is English. This hasn't been a problem for me at all especially since I've had courses at the UU that were also taught in English. Being from the UU a language test is also not required to attend to courses at the UofT (which you would normally have had to do).
finances	I had saved up a sum of money the year prior of my departure to Toronto since I already knew back then that I wanted to do an exchange. Furthermore, I had received the Inholland scholarship that had been a great additional fund.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	I took courses in Political Science, Psychology and French at the UofT. All of the courses were offered online due to COVID-19 which has led to more chaotic courses as most professors still had to find the best way to teach their courses.
academic quality of education activities	The UofT offers courses of high quality. If you were able to pass courses at the UU you should also be able to pass courses at the UofT without any problems, however I must add that when you have a full-time course load (5 courses) it might feel like more work that you'll have to do on a weekly basis. This is also partly caused by the fact that the semesters are shorter than at UU. Most courses will have weekly deadlines and coming from the UU having 5 courses at the same time might feel overwhelming at first as you'll have to be able to switch





between subjects quickly. It is however easier to receive high grades at the UofT compared to the UU
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
To be honest, the organization at the UofT was a bit messy. But this was largely due to the COVID-19 measures that made the university undergo difficult times. It had also been very unclear whether the exchange would be continued from the UofT
transfer of credits
UU provides a table where the UofT credits get converted into ECTS. This has still not happened to me. The fulltime course load at the UofT is 2.5 credits

<b>STUDENT LIFE</b>
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welcome & orientation programme
I went during COVID-19 times and unfortunately everything turned out to be online, except for a small meetup with 15 other exchange students that still had decided to go to Toronto. A lot of students had decided to not travel off to Canada or were not able to because of the strict government restrictions.
accommodation
I stayed at Harrington housing. To be completely honest I do not recommend this place. I had made a reservation for a room in the Liberty Village neighbourhood and 2 days before my arrival I received a message that my room would not be available anymore because of constructions and i'd have to choose between moving to an accommodation on Sherbourne Street or end up without any housing at all. No compensation was offered and furthermore they exploit their rooms. Some of the rooms have built in closets that function as walls which provide basically no privacy. I strongly recommend taking the time to find another place!
leisure & culture
I went during COVID-19.... The city was unfortunately still partly closed off and not a lot of activities were possible so it mostly ended up going to the beach with my housemates for example. I did move after one month to Montréal (Québec) since the covid-19 rules were more relaxed and I knew someone there, so importunately I can't share much... But of course classic trips as the Niagara Falls are still possible 😊
suggestions/tips

<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>
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would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
do you have any additional advice or comments?
During COVID-19 Times – check out the local rules since this has had a huge impact on my exchange.



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Social Sciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Psychology

destination city & country	Toronto , Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	05 / 09 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	20 / 12 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

### PREPARATION

exchange application process
It was really clear what needed to be provided for the exchange application, which was nice. It took a bit of time to write the motivation letter and to plan language tests to prove English proficiency, but it was definitely doable.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
The people from the international office were really helpful and were always available for any questions which was really nice. It made the process of applying quite easy!
academic preparation
I didn't specifically prepare for anything academically. But my knowledge from the courses I took in Utrecht definitely helped with my courses at UofT.
language preparation
You are required to get a sufficient score on the TOEFL or IELTS tests to prove your English proficiency. I took the IELTS, which was not too difficult to get a sufficient score on. I didn't really do any other language preparation, and I think your level of English needed at UofT should be fine if you took English in high school.
Finances
I had a Holland Scholarship which really helped and besides that I had an OV compensation, and had some money saved up. That was enough to get me through the semester financially.

### STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
Applying for the courses was actually quite easy (as long as you apply for them by the deadline) even though the international office said it would be harder to get into courses for exchange students. However, I got into all of the courses I originally applied for. A tip for choosing courses is to look on the ratemyprofessor website, most UofT professors are on that website and you can read about other students' experiences with the professors. I had only lectures in my courses and therefore the professor was quite important. Contentwise, the courses were way more focused on one specific topic than at UU, where they are more general. This allows for more depth in the courses at UofT.
academic quality of education activities
I found the academic quality to be similar to Utrecht University, but the main difference is that there is more to do in a week than there is at UU. At UofT a full course load is 5 courses, but I would say the course load for



one course in a week is similar to the course load for one course in a week at UU. I took 4 courses (which were all psychology courses) and I had to read a lot of articles and write quite a few papers. So there was definitely more to do in a week at UofT than in Utrecht. However, it is quite easy to pass a course (you only need 50% to pass an exam, which in my experience is not sufficient to pass an exam at UU) and you get good grades on your papers quite easily. So even though there is more to do on a weekly basis, I did find it to be easier to pass courses at UofT compared to UU.

I took 3 courses of the 300 level and one 400 level course. In my experience, the 400 level course was of the same difficulty (if not easier) than the 300 level courses I took. The only difference between the 400 level course and the 300 level courses was that the grading was a bit tougher for the 400 level-course.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I didn't really utilize the available counselling and support at UofT (because I didn't really need any), but there is definitely a lot of support available both from the inbound exchange team and other UofT services (there is a helpline especially for international students so you can talk to someone in your own language, and other mental health services, and help with other issues). The people from inbound exchange are really nice and helpful and you can always walk into their office or e-mail them for issues with your courses, health insurance, personal things, etc. The inbound exchange Facebook group also really helps for simple questions and for discovering fun activities to do with other exchange students.

transfer of credits

At this point I haven't transferred my credits yet as I am still waiting for the grades to be sent by the UofT international office to the UU international office.

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

If you are getting to Toronto by airplane, there is a UofT booth at the Pearson International airport, a student from UofT can help you with any questions there and will also help you with getting to your accommodation. The orientation day at UofT was right before classes started and was a nice way to get to know the campus a bit better and also to meet other exchange students. They also provide you with all of the information you'll need for your exchange and you'll be able to ask all of your questions.

Accommodation

I got a room at Tartu college, which is a student residence that is right outside the UofT St George campus. The location is amazing as you can walk to your classes (about a 5 to 10 minute walk depending on the building your class is at) and it has everything you need closeby. I paid 890 Canadian Dollars a month, which depending on stories from other (exchange) students at UofT was quite cheap. You rent a room in a suite with 5 other people (there are separate male and female suites). They place the international students in a suite together, so it is a nice way of making some more friends as well. Besides Tartu, I heard positive things about Campus Co-op as well.

Whatever you do, I would say try to apply early for your accommodation (I applied in April) because otherwise you'll be stuck with the expensive options or accommodation far away from campus.

leisure & culture

There is a lot to do in Toronto as it is such a big city, which is really fun. If you wanna escape the busy city for a bit, going to the Toronto islands in lake ontario is really fun (definitely nicer with good weather though) and I also went to Niagara falls which is about a 1,5 hour busride away from the city! As for the culture, I didn't experience it as much different from Dutch culture.

suggestions/tips



Opening a Canadian bank account is cheaper than using a foreign credit card (I couldn't use my dutch debit card there, only a credit card). You can open a Canadian bank account for free (some banks even give you money for opening an account at their bank) and you don't pay the costs for converting into a different currency. And again, check [ratemyprofessor.com](http://ratemyprofessor.com) to see if the professors of the courses you're considering are good teachers.

## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I would definitely recommend studying at UofT for a semester, the university campus is beautiful, they offer a lot of interesting courses and living in Toronto is really fun as there is so much to do and see! Also, Canadians are super nice and it is really easy to make friends with them!



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Humanities / Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	RMA Religious Studies

destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
name university abroad	University of Toronto
start date	01 / 09 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	20 / 12 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

The application process was less complicated than I expected. There are two different application procedures: one for Utrecht University and one for the University of Toronto. The information was generally clear and it was easy to contact the International Office for any questions.

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

The support at Utrecht University was good. It is easy to get in touch with the International Office and I found that the contact was generally very clear. I think the preparatory meeting for all the students who were going to North America was probably more interesting for bachelor students than master students, but it was still a good opportunity to ask all kinds of questions that you might have.

For me there was nevertheless a lot of confusion with regard to the amount of courses that students are required to take at the University of Toronto. While Utrecht University requires you to take four in one semester, I quickly found out that the normal course load among students in my department was actually three courses. I followed the recommendations of my graduate administrator at UofT in the hope that UU will give me 10 EC per course. Until this moment Utrecht University cannot give me any closure on how many ECTS I can receive until they receive my transcript. I have heard from other UU students who have similar experiences. I found this a stressful and time consuming process. Hopefully this can be changed for future students!

#### Academic preparation

I looked around for courses which were relevant to my interests and professors who I might like to work with. I nevertheless really set my heart on a course which I eventually could not take, so this was kind of a disappointment. I also found out that students usually work really closely with a professor at UofT. I heard about this beforehand, but did not really do anything with it and I do regret that. I would definitely recommend to get into contact with a professor or (PhD-)students before you go to Toronto. They may be able to recommend some courses that may apply to your interests and professors you might want to meet with. Since the university is so big it can sometimes be difficult to find your way, and people from the inside can definitely help you with that.

#### language preparation

For some reason I did not know that there were language requirements to go to UofT and this took some extra organization and e-mailing, but everything turned out fine in the end. All of my courses were taught in English and they were easy to follow. I saw that some courses at the Department for Religious Studies require knowledge of certain languages.

#### finances

Toronto is an expensive city, especially with regard to housing. Flight tickets are also expensive and when in Toronto you will definitely want to go out for lunch or dinner to try all of the amazing food! I was lucky to



receive the Holland Scholarship, so I would recommend to look around for scholarships like this to make your exchange a bit easier.

### STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

#### study programme (content and organisational issues)

In the first few weeks of the semester you can try out different courses, which is really nice, but I also found it a bit stressful because there is just a lot to choose from. My department at UofT was enormous when compared to UU and of course you can also take courses from outside of your department. When I had to choose my courses definitively I was feeling kind of lost. I could not take one course I was really depending on and other courses turned out to be different than I expected, so I had to reconsider my planning. Here I think it could also have been very helpful if I had already contacted professors before arriving to Toronto because they might have been able to recommend courses and other professors to me.

#### academic quality of education activities

I was told that the workload at UofT would be much higher than in Utrecht. I think this really depends on the courses that you are taking. Some courses definitely require more reading and work than UU courses, others less. The overall level of the courses is generally higher, however. This is probably partly because master students and PhD-students take courses together which makes the general atmosphere more serious. I think this structure is really great and I was very happy to learn from and together with other students in this way. Generally, I would say that you need to be a motivated student to enjoy UofT. If you get excited by the prospect of multiple enormous libraries where you can get almost any book you desire then this is definitely the place to go to.

#### counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I had great help from my graduate administrator at my department and was in contact with a PhD student. This really helped a lot! I did not really search for any other forms of support at the university, but I know there are all kinds of support available for international students.

#### transfer of credits

As already mentioned before, there was some confusion about the amount of courses I had to take. At the moment of writing this I have not received my credits yet.

### STUDENT LIFE

#### welcome & orientation programme

The orientation programme for international students was obligatory. It was nice, but after that I did not really engage any international students there. Looking back now I think it might have been nice to have made some more friends during my exchange by visiting more of the events and meetings for international students. I was very warmly welcomed in my own department and the people were very friendly. I went to an introduction meeting there, which was great. There are very few contact hours, however, so I found it a bit difficult to get to know people in class. In general, it can be difficult to make contact with people in a big city like Toronto. This does not necessarily have to weigh down on your exchange experience though. I personally love to explore cities on my own and I really enjoyed myself in Toronto because there is a lot to do and see.

#### accommodation

Toronto is one of the most expensive cities in the world when it comes to housing. Unfortunately, UofT does not offer campus housing to exchange students who only come for one semester. I tried to start very early with searching for a room by checking Facebook pages and Kijiji. This did not really work. The housing market moves very fast, so people only post available rooms a month or weeks before they become available. People also generally want you to see the room before you can get it, and this is good practice because there are a lot of



scams on the housing market, but it also makes it very difficult to find a room in advance to your arrival. There are some organizations that you can try to get a room at, like Tartu College (very cheap) and Harrington Housing. I was already too late for Tartu College, so be early with this, and for me personally Harrington Housing was outside of my price range, but I heard good things about it. I eventually contacted the graduate administrator of my department to ask whether she knew anything or could hang a note somewhere in the department that I was looking for a room. She sent around an e-mail to people in the department and I eventually got a room in an apartment that I shared with a working lady. This was nice because it was not expensive (for Toronto standards), it was a nice room and I could learn a lot about Canadian culture from my roommate. The room was located in a nice neighbourhood and it took me around 30-40 minutes to get to campus, which I think is pretty decent for a city like Toronto. Every living arrangement has its pros and cons. I would say, start very early if you want to get a room via some kind of organisation like Tartu. If that does not work you can try to contact someone in your department, or start looking a few weeks before you leave with websites like Facebook and Kijiji.

leisure & culture

I went to Toronto because I wanted to study at a well-renowned university and did not really care that much about the idea of going abroad. I nevertheless think that I also learned a lot from the exchange experience itself. Learning more about Canadian history and cultures really changed my perspective on a lot of things. I definitely recommend to take time to explore the city. Toronto has an amazing food culture with cuisines from all over the world and this really is a great way to get to know the city and its diversity of cultures. In September there is the famous Toronto International Film Festival, which is a really nice experience if you're into film. Personally, I really enjoyed strolling in High Park, visiting the Toronto Islands and just walking around the diverse smaller neighbourhoods of Toronto. Around Christmas time there are markets and skating rinks. I took a trip to New York and Montréal during my exchange. It's very nice to use your reading week to go out of the city for a while. Montréal is not very far, and it is nice to also see other parts of Canada while you're there.

suggestions/tips

Make sure you see and make use of the many enormous libraries that UofT has! Some of them are also just really beautiful and make your study time a lot more pleasant. I think this is really something different than universities in the Netherlands. The university also has sports facilities that you can use for free and training programmes which you can join for a relatively small fee.

**CONCLUSIONS**

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

UofT is a great choice for an exchange. It is a very good university, with great resources and facilities. Toronto is a very friendly city which is also very welcoming to foreigners. The fact that the main language in Toronto is English makes the city and the university very accessible.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

My main advice would be: don't be shy with contacting professors or students before your departure. This might be very helpful.



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

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

Destination city & country	Toronto, Canada
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of Toronto
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)	30/08/2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	17/01/2017

### Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

For me the application progress was quite easy as I already knew for sure that Toronto was basically my one and only choice. I had a clear motivation which helped in writing my motivation letter. Making a study plan was helpful to give you an idea of your possibilities beforehand. Keep in mind that your study plan will change multiple times as it can turn out that timetables overlap, courses are given in a different semester, or because you're not admitted to the course due to high demand or not possessing the appropriate knowledge. So the application itself went rather smoothly. However, the placement process did not as I initially was not selected (which was a huge disappointment). I started orientating on different destinations when I got a call from the international office that one of the students had dropped out and if I was still interested in taking the spot. Due to this being very close to the deadline of applying to U of T some things had to be arranged in quite a short time period, but as I was really happy I still got to go this was not a big deal. I could use many of the documents I used for my UU application to apply for U of T. I think that if you get chosen by UU to go, then there's little chance that you will not be admitted to U of T.

Counselling/support at home university:

The international office was very helpful and were always there to answer questions.

Academic preparation:

No specific academic preparation was required in my case. My knowledge acquired at UU was sufficient for studying at U of T. Although this may differ per study area.

Language preparation:

I didn't really do any language preparation as I was quite confident about my language skills.

Finances:





I was very lucky that my parents were willing to and were able to support me while I was abroad. Also, I could fly with airline staff discount which made the tickets significantly cheaper. I believe that in the end the financial plan that I made for my application was quite accurate! The Canadian dollar had a great exchange ratio during the time that I was there which made also made things slightly cheaper. However, I think that Canada is slightly more expensive than The Netherlands. Especially groceries and housing. Eating out, on the other hand, is cheaper than it is here (do remind yourself that taxes and tips are usually not included to the price on the menu).

#### **Study/placement abroad period**

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

As I mentioned before I had to make some changes to my study plan a couple of times. Finding courses was a pretty tough task as they aren't taught in nice timeslots like they are here. Therefore, courses often overlap partly or fully. Also, you really have to make sure that the courses you want to do are actually taught in the semester that you are there and that you have the appropriate requisite knowledge. Be prepared that there is a possibility that you won't be admitted into one or more courses that you sign up for. This happened to me with a course that I wanted to follow really badly (it was one of my reasons to go to U of T). If this happens to you, don't bother emailing the CIE (center of international experience, your first point of contact during your exchange). If you really wish to follow the course, try emailing the course coordinator to find out if there is anything you can do to catch up on the appropriate knowledge before the semester starts. I only mailed CIE and once classes started I met a girl who was in that class and she said that I should've contacted the course coordinator instead. I still regret that I didn't do that. The process of signing up for courses is pretty easy though and information supplied by the CIE is very clear. The maximum amount of courses you can take is 5 and the minimum is 3. I started with 4 courses, but about a month in I dropped one of them because I felt like I had to do too much work for that particular course and that it took away my focus on the other 3 courses. I was also there to have fun and I was already envisioning myself sitting in Robart's Library (you'll befriend this place as well) all day every day and that was not how I wanted to spend my semester abroad. For me it was not a big deal as I didn't need all 30 ECTS. Also, if I did need them, though, I would've still dropped it as I think it would have had a negative influence on my time abroad. Of course three courses doesn't mean you'll never be busy and won't spend some nights in the library.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

U of T is among the best universities in the world and this is also what I experienced during my semester there. I was afraid that the level might be higher than it is at UU, but this was not the case. I did feel like that the workload was higher than it is at UU. Pretty much every exchange student I spoke to agreed that the level was good, but the workload was just much higher than what we were used to.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Support at U of T was sufficient. The people at the CIE (who you will contact first if you need help) are very friendly and helpful.

Transfer of credits:

Transfer of my credits went really smoothly as I didn't have to go to the board of examiners. I discussed everything I had to do with my study advisor and she got me a fair amount of ECTS and



the grades were also calculated to Dutch grades in a fair way.

### **Student life**

Welcome/orientation programme:

Before arrival in Toronto, the CIE made a Facebook group that you could join. In the beginning people were mainly asking questions about practical stuff, but once people started to arrive in the city they started to arrange meetups or to go sightseeing together. We had a meetup on Toronto Island to have a picnic with approximately 30 exchange students which is the first time I met other exchange students. The next day I already joined some of them on a trip to a festival. Everyone is really eager to meet people and is very open so definitely try and say yes to as much as you can and join as many outings as you can! The CIE organizes a mandatory introduction meeting where all sorts of handy information (academically, practically, leisure activities etc.) is shared. It is also a good moment to meet fellow exchange students. The CIE also organizes a day trip to the Niagara Falls which I definitely recommend you to join! Apart from the falls being absolutely breath taking, it is a great way to meet other exchange students and immediately make memories with them! I signed up to join Frosh week at the college I had been admitted to (although I feel like they place you in a random college). However, no other exchange students I had met did this. I went there the first day to sign up but immediately felt like I didn't want to be there. Everyone was loud and shouting one liners in favour of the college and like all those American things you see in the movies. Also, everyone was basically a first-year student and many of them lived in the college residence as well so many of them had already met. I just didn't really feel comfortable and did not feel included. Besides, I knew what fun activities my new exchange friends had planned for the week and I figured I would rather spend my time with them as I wouldn't see the people at the college after Frosh anyway. I think I walked out after only having been there for maybe an hour. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a waste of money, but I'm glad I followed my heart and spent my time getting to know so many great exchange students and making memories with them.

Accommodation:

So for accommodation there are a couple of options. If you go for the full year or only the winter semester it is possible to arrange housing on campus. However, most of the housing on campus is expensive and they often have a mandatory meal plan. You could also join one of the Housing in Toronto facebook groups and look for private housing. My experience with this is that it is highly unlikely that you will find something that is in a decent distance from campus and is not crazy expensive. Then the options I would recommend. I stayed at Neill-Wycik (30 minute walk from campus and basically around the corner of Young-Dundas square and the Eaton Centre (biggest Toronto mall) so basically downtown). Neill-Wycik is great option as my room was quite spacious and affordable. The reason why it was affordable was that you had 2 community hours each month. These community hours could be spent by cleaning, donating food, helping in organizing events, etc. If you failed to do your hours you would get penalty hours. In the end I only needed to do hours for 2 months as at the Annual Members Meeting there was a motion that attendance to that meeting would earn you 4 instead of 2 hours. Obviously it was approved after voting ;). I shared the kitchen with 5 others and the bathroom with 2 others. You do have to get lucky with your roommates (mine were pretty dirty) but you will always have to take that guess. If you end up choosing Neill-Wycik, keep in mind to arrange it in time! I think I applied in early May, but I was on



the waiting list for most part of the summer. Application takes quite a long time because everything goes on paper (even though their site says there's an online application, there really isn't one). This means that you have to email them to send you an application package, you'll have to wait, say, a week and a half, you have to fill out your forms and send it back. So by the time your application is complete, you're probably three weeks in. Downside of Neill-Wycik: basically all residents are from Ryerson University (which is across the road). Where were most other exchange students staying, you may ask? Well, most of them were staying at Tartu College (across the street from St. George campus of U of T). Tartu College was more expensive than Neill-Wycik, the rooms are smaller, the beds were shit, and they had quite the cockroach problem. However, they did have a cleaning lady coming to clean their shared spaces once a week I believe. And as basically everyone was staying at Tartu, I spent most of my free time there as well. This resulted in having to pay fare for the subway every time and I think in the end this made the price difference between Neill-Wycik and Tartu College almost non-existent. Your third option is trying to get into a student co-op house. The Student Co-op organisation owns about 10 houses (I believe) that are close to campus and from what I've seen are quite spacious as well. I can't tell you anything about how expensive their rooms are, but as it is a co-op (so community hours here as well) I assume it should be affordable.

Leisure/culture:

Toronto is an amazingly diverse city. There is so much that you can do, from museums to shopping, and from sightseeing to lying on one of Toronto Island's beaches (as long as the weather is decent ;)). The waterfront is a really nice place to hang out. If you're into nature, there are also several possibilities in the Toronto area (Niagara Falls, Dundas Peak, Scarborough Bluffs, Algonquin Provincial Park, etc.) for both day trips or long weekends. I especially can recommend going to Algonquin for a weekend when fall colours are on their peak. This is a great park with many hiking trails with striking views, possibilities to canoe, camping, and seeing some wildlife if you're lucky (we saw a red fox!). Toronto is also relatively close to other major Canadian cities like Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec. We did a roadtrip to these 3 cities during reading week. We rented 2 cars with 8 girls and just went! It was great! From these 3 cities, I definitely liked Quebec the best, although we didn't spend enough time in Ottawa to get a good impression (just a few hours on our way back to Toronto). I also know people that took a greyhound to NYC or flew to Chicago. It is also possible to go to Boston. Keep in mind that plane tickets are really expensive in Canada, especially last minute. If you have some spare time after exams I can recommend flying out to the other side of Canada. We went to Banff National Park, Jasper National Park, and Vancouver and it was one of the best things we did! Please do keep in mind that in winter (we went early January) the temperature in Alberta can drop to -25/-30 degrees Celsius during the day. It is recommended to buy thermal clothing (small investment, but you'll love it once winter comes) and appropriate shoes. This also counts for Toronto itself though!! At the end of the fall semester temperatures will drop to sometimes -20 degrees and I can tell you that walking to campus for half an hour and not wearing any thermal wear is a really really cold experience.

Suggestions/tips:

Toronto Island, St. Lawrence market, Eaton Centre, Kensington market, the ROM, China Town, the waterfront, Niagara falls, Algonquin, the AGO, explore St. George campus (many great walks and beautiful buildings), go to a Maple Leafs/Blue Jays/Raptors/Toronto FC game, Quebec, Alberta,



Christmas Market, and I could go on and on and on.

### Conclusions

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

I would 100% recommend Toronto and U of T to anyone! Toronto and Canada are a really nice place to stay. People are very friendly, down to earth, and legitimately interested in you (not the fake interest that americans show). Toronto itself has an ideal location with nature and other cities within driving distance, and with countless opportunities to go out and explore. The many nationalities complement the look of the city and you can try quality food from all over the world. Also, the university is amazing. Academically, but also because the campus where you will probably end up (St. George) is right downtown and has some beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> century Victorian buildings. There is also free entrance into the university sports facilities and you could join intramurals (a university sports competition). I had the time of my life!

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Try making contact with Canadians in your classes as they can often show you many hidden gems or have other great suggestions besides all the classic tourist attractions. Also, of course it's fun to have actual Canadian friends instead of staying in you exchange students circle. Maybe you can try join intramurals or a club or something!