



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student information

<b>Study programme WU</b>	Bsc Biology
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	10/01/2024 until 27/04/2024
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	Toronto Metropolitan University
<b>Faculty</b>	science
<b>Country</b>	Canada
<b>City</b>	Toronto

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

To experience living abroad, explore Canada, and to take different courses I could not have taken at the WUR.

### b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

I have always wanted to go there, especially to see the nature. It also seemed much more convenient to go to an English speaking country for a bachelor exchange as there would be no language barrier in the courses.

### c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

Mainly because they had many courses that seemed interesting to me.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

Make sure you fly to Pearson airport and not Hamilton, Hamilton airport is not actually in Toronto, meaning you will have to take 2 busses of 1 hour each or pay a lot of money for a taxi. Pearson airport is very close to downtown Toronto (from there I got an Uber to my house which cost about 50 CAD)

## 4. University and studying

### a. Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
<b>1</b>	BLG408 Viruses	6	Everything about viruses: their genetics, replication, diseases they cause etc.	4	Very interesting course with a knowledgeable teacher, you can learn a lot about viruses, and the exam is doable because you get to bring a summary sheet. However the lectures were quite dull and monotone.
<b>2</b>	BLG610 Data Science for Biology	6	Programming in Rstudio	2	They hired a new teacher for this course 1 week before the start of the term and as a result the program was quite disorganised. In the end I feel like I did not learn a lot.
<b>3</b>	BMS650 Experimental design	6	This was about different aspects of scientific experiments; making hypotheses, lab math, research papers, etc.	1	This course frustrated me endlessly, the teacher was very disorganised and unclear about deadlines and instructions, and there were sooo many assignments to be done, way too much work for the credits they were worth.
<b>4</b>	PSY324 Biological psychology	6	A course intended for psychology students to learn more about the brain structures related to different functions and conditions	5	This was my favourite course together with BLG408. The course material was interesting and not too complicated, the course is structured clearly with 3 noncumulative exams (so you only need to study 3 chapters of the book per exam) and 1 assignment. The lectures were also interesting, including little brain puzzles and youtube videos.

**b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):**

Yes, all courses were in English and there were enough to choose from.

**c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain):**

Yes, I managed to find enough interesting courses, however most of the courses I had found on the website beforehand that I wanted to take were not taught in the winter semester. (the semester in which the course is taught is not indicated on the website so make sure there are lots of courses you like)

**d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain):**

Yes, the level of the courses is similar to or less difficult than at the WUR.

**e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain):**

Yes, because I passed them all.

**f. What is it like to study there?**

*E.g. Study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material?*

Keep in mind that the course you select before you go there are not necessarily final, during the first few weeks you can still apply for different courses and drop courses that you do not like. Because of this, they don't teach you a lot during the first 2 weeks of classes.

The workload definitely comes in waves, generally you do not have a lot of contact hours such as lectures or tutorial (only about 3 hours per week per course), so there is a lot of time for self-study. There is not much to do some weeks, then suddenly midterms start and it is super busy; lots of assignments and exams, then it gets more quiet for a week or 2, and then there is another wave of assignments and exams.

I put in the same amount of effort as I would have for my courses if I was in Wageningen, at the WUR I would have probably got an 8-9 for that, at TMU I scored higher, mostly 90-100% (A+). To pass, you also only need 50%, so it is definitely easier to simply pass a course in Toronto.

**g. What is the culture of the university?**

*E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with WU?*

Way less contact hours so you don't see your lecturers very often but they are generally open to questions. I did not have to do much group work so there was not much engagement with local students.

**h. What does the university offer students additionally?**

*E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?*

You have free access to the gym, which also includes a small sauna and swimming pool. During final exam week they also handed out free meals at lunchtime.

## 5. Housing-traveling-living

### a. What are the possibilities for housing?

*E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?*

I stayed at Tartu college, definitely one of the cheapest options (still very expensive though, and we had a lot of construction noise). You have to sign up many months in advance (check the website). The university also send out a list of exchange students that were leaving their rooms for subrent, but that came later. Another option is HOEM on Jarvis, I know some students that lived there, super close to campus and they were positive, but it was also way more expensive than Tartu.

### b. What is the culture like?

*E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?*

Groceries are expensive, so many Canadian students eat out and order delivery food instead of cooking. When you buy groceries, everything comes in a really big packaging (smallest milk carton is 2L and costs about the same as 4L), and it is difficult not to waste food.

### c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

*E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?*

There is a subway and streetcars that together can take you anywhere for 3,33 CAD per trip. You can get a presto pass (make sure you sign up for the GO student discount if you plan to take more distant trips out of the city). In the end I usually walked to university to save money, as 3.33 adds up over time, and there are many strange people (homeless and/or junkies) at and around subway stations. In the end I usually avoided the public transport because of this, there would often be people shouting, sleeping, or begging in the subway, and I did not always feel safe. Late in the evening I preferred Ubers, they are relatively cheap and always close by.

## 6. Expenses

### a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	
Visa - if applicable	NA
Vaccinations - if applicable	NA
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	UHIP was mandatory from the university, about 253 CAD /170 eu
Daytrips/sight-seeing	
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	1300 CAD / 900 euros per month for Tartu college

Grocery costs per month	300 CAD (eating mostly canned beans though)
Public transport costs per month	
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	

**b. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands:**

Way higher, my rent was more than double the cost, and food was also more expensive, butter and milk were about 6 CAD each (4 euros). Your best option for groceries is going to metro and getting the 10% student discount at checkout.

Taxes and tips are not included in prices, so things are often more expensive then they seem, so you'll easily end up paying 10 CAD for a meal that was advertised as being 7 CAD.

**c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

Tim hortons is your friend for cheap coffee and snacks, also the IKEA is a good place for cheap lunch.

Get a Revolut account to convert your money to CAD and pay for things.

## 7. Free time

**a. What are must-sees in the area?**

*E.g. Nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?*

I went to Niagara Falls, which was easily accessible by train but honestly kind of a disappointment.

There are some national/regional parks in the area but they are only accessible by car.

A highlight was visiting Banff national park, it is on the other side of the country, so we did fly there and then rented a car and stayed in a nice lodge in Calgary. The mountains on the other side of the country are really beautiful, but the area around Toronto is very flat and not much nature there.

**b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?**

Evergreen brickworks and High park were my favourite places to visit in the city, nice nature to walk around and easily accessible by the subway.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

**a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?**

When I went to Calgary with friends during reading week (the week before midterms during which you don't have any classes), the airline that we flew with went bankrupt while we were there and our return flight was cancelled one day before we were supposed to leave. This was honestly one of the most stressful moments of my life as I was stranded on the wrong side of the country with nowhere to stay, no way to get back home, and an exam in 2 days that I would likely miss. In the end I found a flight from a different company, I did miss my exam but the teacher understood and I did a make up exam the week after.

A more general challenge would be the many homeless people and junkies all around the city (also on campus) that made me feel generally unsafe. I did have some unpleasant encounters but nothing really dangerous. Also the one time I went out clubbing I noticed that the men are a lot more touchy than in the Netherlands (grabbing your ass/waist/arm without your permission), which made it a not so pleasant experience.

**b. Best memory?**

Going to Banff national park and hiking up the mountains.

Encountering a fox, raccoon, or red-tailed hawk in Queens park while walking to uni at 7.30 AM (my class started at 8:10 AM).

## 9. Contact details

<b>Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?</b>	yes <input type="checkbox"/>	no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Name &amp; email address (if yes)</b>		