

Max Houliind - Exchange report

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Humber College

Toronto, Canada

BA Architectural Technology

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Why I wanted to study abroad

I decided to study a semester abroad in my fourth semester.

We were the first students that got the opportunity to go abroad in our fourth semester.

For me that was just the perfect semester to go on exchange.

Third semester felt a bit too soon, and in fifth, I did not want to miss the study trip and the biggest part of our self-chosen course at KEA.

Originally, I applied to go to Aberdeen in Scotland. But it was mainly because I thought it was too much effort to apply at a school overseas. Then Sophia told me that it was just the same, and that they had a spot open at Humber College in Toronto.

That got me very excited and I decided to apply at Humber College the next day.

My main reasons to go study abroad was to travel and experience, to get some new inputs and a break from the school back home. I also wanted to get better at the English language.

The former students, who chose to go to Toronto, went to George Brown College. So we were the first students from KEA BUILD that went to Humber College. Therefore, we didn't have the chance to read anything from former students about the school. Actually, it was kind of nice that we had to make our own experience and wasn't affected by any recommendations.



The view from the top of Scarborough Bluffs.

Experiences at Humber College / Living at residence.

Architectural Technology at Humber College are taught very different then it is at KEA.

At KEA everything is pretty much decided for us through the whole education and we only have our big project through the whole semester. When applying at Humber College you have to choose five courses to add to the “learning agreement”.

The learning agreement will be sent together with your final application.

I chose the following:

- 1) Drafting & Detailing
- 2) Digital Communication
- 3) Materials & Methods
- 4) Principles Of Management
- 5) Sustainable Design

1) Drafting & Detailing was our main course. The things we are taught in this course are similar to what we do at KEA. However, in many ways it was still different.

First of all, instead of getting all the presentation drawings from the start, like we do at KEA, we had to buy a manual with all the basic information about the structure and building code about the building, but other than that, we had to design the building ourselves.

We had assignment-drawings that was due every second week.

We had many lectures about building code, and design ideas.

In the beginning, I found it very tough with all those assignments. However, as soon as I got used to it, I actually thought it made good sense, and as long as you did some consistent work, it really wasn't that hard.

The teacher Michael Guido was a very passionate and informative architect, and he was always helpful with questions and helping you understand something better.

In general, I think this was a very good course, and I recommend everyone to choose it.



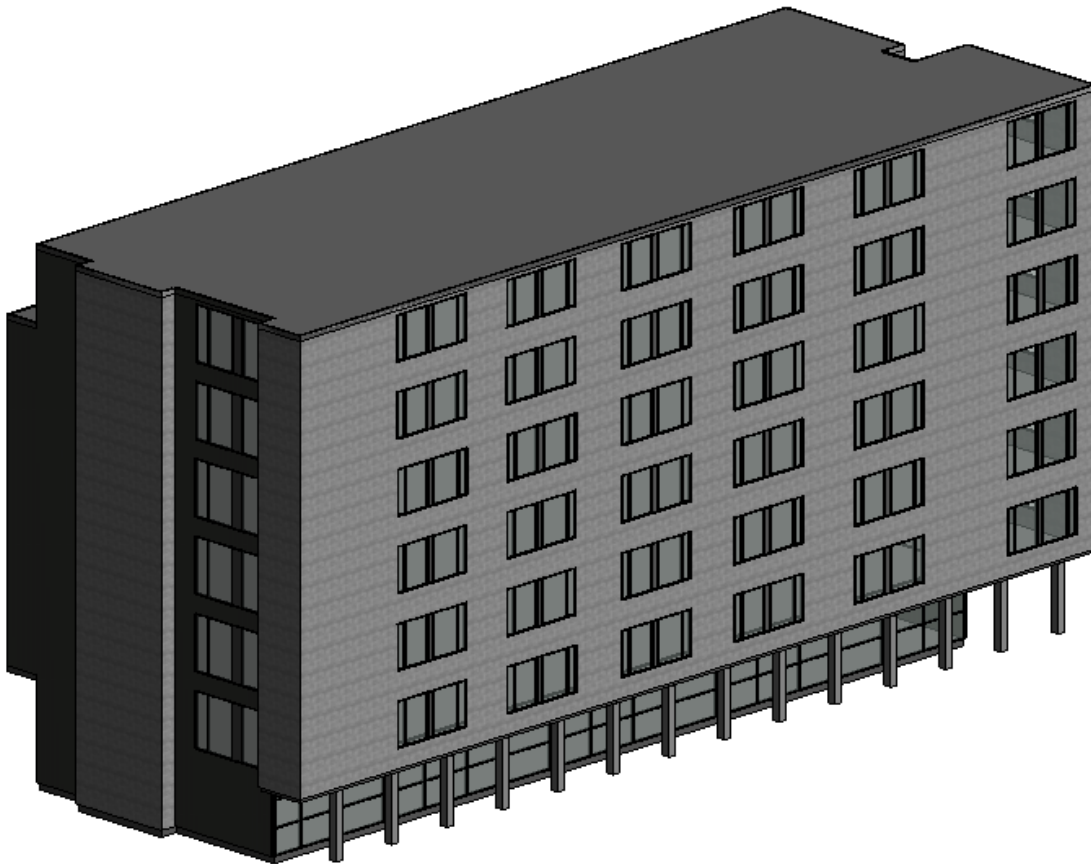
Our Office-building in Drafting & Detailing.

2) Digital Communication was our revit course. Actually, I thought this course was a lot more about BIM, but it turned out to be mostly about Revit.

In the beginning, I found this course pretty easy, and I'm not an expert in revit at all. However, as we moved along it got more and more challenging.

Nevertheless, that didn't matter to me, I just found it nice to finally get some lessons in revit and all the smart tools to use, and just having a teacher that actually was good at revit and who you could ask about almost everything. The teacher Jason Pinhay was nice, and very relaxed about everything, and it was nice to feel that our level of revit was just a piece of cake to him, so you knew how much better you can get, as long as you put in the hours.

Since we have to learn revit ourselves at KEA, I would recommend everyone to take this course too. Even though you may find it easy from time to time, it is just nice to get a lot of thorough lessons and tools you would never know how to use, if not shown to you. I also had many gaps at my expertise level in revit. Now I feel my expertise in revit is much more sufficient.



From one of the assignments where we learn about the tool conceptual massing.

3) Materials & Methods was by far my favorite course.

On fourth semester, the main theme was concrete. We learn everything from how to make concrete, to all the different ways concrete are being used, both in an architectural aspect to how it is being used as foundations and the load bearing part of a building.

We also learn about masonry, roofs, steel, excavations, footings, and glass.

The teacher Bruce Taylor was also my favorite teacher, he had more than 30 years' experience in the construction industry, and was specialist in concrete.

I also recommend everyone to take this course, as you will learn a lot you can use for your office-building project in Drafting & detailing.

4) Principles of Management was as the name indicates about all the basics in management, and how to become a better leader / manager.

In my opinion, the course was too wide compared to how short the semester was. It felt like you mostly learn by heart for the tests, and not to actually learn the stuff, simply because you did not have enough time.

The teacher Shantanu Wadadar was a nice, and was very interested in our exchange program, Denmark, and Europe in general. However, I think he lacked some teaching skills. Most of the times, he ended up talking way too much, and most of the times, about stuff that wasn't even relevant to the lecture. That often resulted in losing half or more of the class through the lecture. Instead of choosing this course, I would recommend taking the add up course called project management. I was told by one of my friends, that this course is much more about management in the construction industry.

5) Sustainable Design was one of our electives, and I was really looking forward to this course, since I care a great deal about sustainability and the environment.

Back when I decided to take the course, I thought it was a six-semester course, but it turned out to be second semester.

That was actually fine, since we don't learn that much about sustainability at KEA.

The sad thing about this course was that it was scheduled for Friday afternoon, and we were about six-tee students in the class. Therefore, there was often a lot of noise, which I had some trouble managing sometimes.

Other than that, I think it was a good course, it definitely taught me many interesting ideas about sustainability, and most imported, how many different aspects there actually are when you want to build something sustainable.

The teacher Anais Deragopian was also a very good teacher, she cared a lot about us exchange students, and always made sure we understood the lecture.

She even arranged coffee and cake for the whole class when we had our final presentation, which I think was really nice of her.

If you care about the environment and learning about how to be more sustainable, and how to build more sustainable, you will find this course very interesting and beneficent for your future education.

Humber is by far the biggest school I have ever seen, and a big part of the school is brand new, called the LRC building (Learning-Resource commons). The indoor environment there was really nice, and we often spend time there to work on our assignments.

Besides studying at Humber, there is plenty of other things to do there. The gym is free of use. We joined a student club for people studying our program. There is also a student bar, mostly run by students, open all week. We often went there on Thursdays. You can play pool there and they always show all the hockey and basketball games on the TVs.

There is a beautiful garden/forest with a river running through it. We often went there for a walk and just enjoyed the nature.



The LRC building seen from the north.

Living at residence.

We decided to live at the residence at the school.

Apparently, it is mostly first year students living there, and since almost everyone over there start college right after high school, they were a bit too young for me. I used to work as a carpenter, so I am a bit older than some other people. I am 27 years old now, and most of them were only 19.

In addition, when you are used to living in your own apartment and making your own food, I think it was tough living there. The rooms are small, you don't have access to your own bathroom, they have way too many rules, the hygiene there is bad, and the food at the cafeteria is too expensive compared to what you get, and also unhealthy.

On the plus side, if you are young or if you don't care about young wild teenagers, and have lots of money, it is very convenient living at residence. The school is just on the other side of the parking lot, and if you don't like to make food yourself, you don't have to do that the whole time you are there.

But I would recommend you to search for a room in a house to rent near the school. Some of my friends over there did that, and they paid a lot less than we did at residence.



The entrance of the residence. Just a parking lot away from the school.

Social and Cultural experiences.

Toronto is the greatest city I have ever visited. Even though I lived there for four month, I still felt like I had more places to see.

There is always something happening there, and the different areas of the city are very different from each other. You should look up the website Blogto.com every time you plan to go downtown. They put up all the events and stuff happening in the city.

To name a few of my favorite restaurants and bars, I visited while I was there, I can mention Parts and Labour, own by the famous chef from the TV channel Vice, Matty Matheson The tavern at spadina and the pub at Madison avenue.

If you decide to look for a place to live near the school, you will have a 45 minute travel downtown. But that is how it is, when you live in a city of that size.

We often took public transportation down there and an Uber when we went home.

Uber is cheap over there.

Also, be sure to visit Scarborough bluff, Toronto Island, the aquarium, the zoo, the rom (royal Ontario museum) Kensington market and Queen Street. In addition, go watch a basketball, Hockey, and Baseball game, they put up a great atmosphere there and it is really entertaining, even if you are not that into sports, you will not regret it.



One of many funny looking streets in Kensington market.



The view from Toronto Island.

Practical experiences.

If you want to save some money, don't buy your books right away, wait and see how much you are going to use them. I made the mistake of buying all my books, because the teachers told us that we were going to use them, but we only used the books in like half of the courses. Some of my classmates did not buy any books, and they did just fine without them.

If you decide to live at residence, there is a lot of stuff you have to buy when you get your room, unless you bring it with you.

What I think you should bring is:

Internet cable

Sheets

Towels

A lock for your locker

Coat hangers

Converters for the plugs

you will also have to buy pillows and a duvet. However, unless you have a lot of space in your backs, you might as well buy that over there.

Conclusion.

I must say that my experience with studying abroad at Humber College has been beyond my expectations. It was a lot different than I imagined, but not in a bad way, just different.

As I already mentioned, the city is just great. You can never get enough of it.

Our education was taught a bit different over there compared to what we are used to. However, I think it was interesting to get another perspective on everything, and I learned more on this semester than I ever imagined possible.

I am very grateful for all the new friends I made on this trip, it is so inspiring to meet different people from all over the world.

Even though it was tough sometimes and you had to make some difficult decisions, I think everyone should take the opportunity and go study a semester abroad. No matter who you are, or where you decide to go, you will grow and learn so much about yourself.

The best advice I can give, is to start planning for your trip long time ahead, decide where you want to go, and start saving and make a good application for applying for grants.

Seize chances you get to go out of your comfort zone, go travel and make your own experiences.