

# Exchange report

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## **Introduction**

In my second semester of the software development top-up I did an exchange program in Toronto, Canada. This report is a short summary of some of the social, cultural, academic, and practical experiences I made with the purpose of helping to guide future exchange students.

My host university was George Brown College in Toronto, Canada. I chose this location because it was one of the more exotic partner institutions KEA had, and I had always had a fascination with how Canada manages to meld different cultures together so well.

## **Experiences at the host university**

My experiences with the college were overall really good. There seemed to be a solid structure for everything we were doing and I rarely felt like I was missing crucial information. One of the biggest changes I had to get used to was the way grading works there versus what I'm used to in Denmark. Back home the entire grade is determined by the final exam, with certain prerequisites for being allowed to even go to the exam. In Canada it is almost entirely opposite. Almost every activity tied to a course will have some impact on your final grade. Lectures will usually end with a multiple choice quiz with about 5 questions. These quizzes will usually each count for 1-1.5% of the final grade. The same is true for weekly exercises, practical tests, and assignments.

This means that the strategy you employ back home for a good grade won't necessarily work there, as you need to be active and turn in material weekly for each course. This means that the pressure for the semester is more evened out, but (more) constant. There are still peaks in intensity around midterms and the final exams. It needs to be mentioned that some of these activities are rather forgiving. You can miss a couple weeks for some activities and still get the full grade.

My experience with the exams were also wildly different from in Denmark. All of the ones I took were multiple choice using a machine called a Scantron. You might have seen them in American media before. Everything being multiple choice does make the exams overall easier, but the two exams only count for about 50% of the grade.

## **Rundown of courses:**

### **COMP 3123 Full Stack Development 1**

This was my favorite overall course. The professor was great and really knowledgeable about the subject and I truly felt like we learned some concrete, useful stuff.

### **COMP 3122 Applied Data Science**

This course was a little slow to get going, but the last half was really interesting. The professor for this course was named Reza Dibaj and he was the best of them all. He bent over backwards to help you understand the material. I would recommend any courses with this professor.

### **COMP 1231 Advanced Web Programming**

This course was a bit too basic for the top up, the course name should have been 'introduction to PHP'. The professor was named Maziar Masoudi and while knowledgeable was horrible as a teacher. He said a lot of borderline insulting things to the student body as a whole, as well as encouraging some (with danish eyes) unhealthy behavior regarding work/life balance. I would try to avoid any of his courses if possible.

### **COMP 2129 Advanced Object-Oriented Programming**

This course was not what I had hoped. It was a basic introduction to Object-Oriented Programming with basic C# implementations. The Professor was named Andrew Rudder and he did a great job, it was the curriculum that I found lacking, as it basically covered the first semester of the datamatiker at KEA.

### **Social and cultural experiences**

My experience with the other students was overall good, but maybe a bit disappointing. Everyone was nice and would joke around and talk to people, but getting anyone from class to do anything outside of school work proved to be too hard. My biggest piece of advice would be to make friends with other students in your lectures, but also branch out and make friends in other circles for your free time. In my case I made some friends who I would go to a weekly pub quiz as well as do some of the more touristy things with.

For me one of the things I did there which wouldn't be possible back home was to go to american sports matches. I would sometimes watch hockey and basketball back home, but being able to go to games was really cool. For those who want to see a hockey match, but feel like Maple Leafs tickets are a bit pricey go see the Marlies instead. The atmosphere was still great and a lot cheaper.

### **Practical experiences**

My biggest piece of advice is for students to try to get into one of the college dorms. I failed to secure a spot and ended in a less than ideal room for a lot more than it should have cost me. If you end up in a situation like me I would try to avoid student.com. I had to pay for my entire stay up front, and after arriving to a moldy, cockroach-infested room I was kind of stuck with it.

If you do end up living a bit further away from campus you can rent a bike for 100 CAD/month. There are bike paths on most roads but it is a bit limited. Getting to and from the airport I would recommend the airport express to Union Station. Grocery shopping is a bit different compared to Copenhagen where we have a supermarket on every corner. People seem to use convenience stores which have the basics a lot more. I managed to find a decent size supermarket 1.5 km away which I used for my stay, but they seem to be spread out. For people going in the autumn I recommend bringing layers. September was 25 degrees C every day, while late November hit -10C. The weather is incredibly bi-polar so be prepared and pack for all four seasons.

### **Conclusion**

Overall my experience was great, but with a few hiccups. My apartment situation put a damper on the entire ordeal. If I were to do the same trip with just a few adjustments it would have been perfect on all fronts. I think having to deal with the problems I ran into helped me grow a lot as a person, as I didn't have the safety net I have back home to rely on and had to build a new network.

### **Photo album**































