



University of British Columbia

Vancouver, Canada

Experience Report
Bachelor Business Administration, 5th Semester
Study Abroad Programme



Moraine Lake, Alberta

COMM 205 – Introduction to Management Information Systems
COMM 371 – Investment Theory
COMM 405 – Real Estate Finance
COMM 498 – International Business Management

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First Step: Application

I went to UBC in my fifth semester of my Bachelor studies. Applying for a semester abroad was one of the best decisions I've ever made!

When I started my studies in Cologne, I knew I wanted to go abroad for an exchange semester. Thus, after my second term, I began with a deeper research on the WiSo faculty's partner universities. The International Relations Center (ZIB) supports you a lot in terms of informing about the different unis and answering all the questions you have. Also, the big folders in the office are very helpful, especially the experience reports of former exchange students. I can only recommend reading them before you choose your priorities. You should also have a look at the courses which you can take abroad and compare them with the courses in Cologne. If you don't want to extend your studies here because of your exchange semester, you should make sure that all the courses you take abroad can be transferred to Cologne.

Since I preferred an englishspeaking country and wanted to go further away (not Europe), the only possibilities were Canada and USA. While informing myself about the few partner unis in these countries, I quickly realized that the University of British Columbia in Vancouver would be the absolute dream: located in the heart of Vancouver, one of the most liveable cities in the world, on a beautiful campus, next to the ocean and close to huge mountains, with a big variety of courses and an excellent reputation among American business schools. Unfortunately, there's only one place for Bachelor students each semester. Thus, I put a lot of effort into my application documents for the ZIB, especially the motivation letter.



View from Stanley Park on Downtown Vancouver

After the deadline, due to the huge quantity of applications, we had to wait for almost two months until we got the results via email. „We are happy to inform you that you have been selected for a term abroad at the University of British Columbia, Sauder School of Business, Canada for fall 2015/16. We hope this offer meets your expectations.“ YES YES YES!!!! I was so incredibly happy.

After that, I had to accept the offer online on the WEX platform. A few weeks later, I got nominated at UBC by the ZIB, so Canada officially knew I was coming! Soon after, I received mails from UBC telling me what I needed to do for my online application. I had to send various supporting documents to UBC, including a certificate of proficiency in the English language, which caused some trouble for me since UBC actually required the TOEFL (or similar) but I only had a three year old Cambridge Certificate. Luckily, after talking to Mrs. Kimmich and to the UBC

GoGlobal team, they accepted my language certificate in the end. However, this issue was very nerve-wracking and I would recommend you to make sure early enough that your language certificate is accepted by UBC.

Preparation of the Semester Abroad

Visum, Passport:

After I met the first challenge, the application, I started to inform myself about the documents required in order to go abroad. For Canada, if you stay less than 6 months and don't want to work there, you don't need a visum. However, what you'll definitely need, is a passport which is valid at least until the end of your stay, the longer the better. If you think of renting a car in Canada (you need to be at least 21), an international drivers licence might be helpful, but is not required. I brought mine but I never actually used it in the end. The normal German licence is enough.

Health Insurance:

Moreover, you should think about international health insurance. UBC automatically registers you for iMED, which is a mandatory health insurance for all exchange students, and costs about 250 CAD. After looking at the specifications of iMED, I decided to get an additional international health insurance by ADAC.

Credit Card:

Having a credit card, either Visa or Mastercard, is the most convenient way to pay in Canada. You can use your credit card almost everywhere. After some research I opted for the German bank Consorsbank, which – at that time – offered free international withdrawals and no foreign currency fees. Others decided to get a bank account at the Deutsche Bank which also has great deals for international students.

Semester in Leave of Absence (“Urlaubssemester”):

You have the possibility to take a semester in leave of absence while you study abroad meaning that you don't need to pay the semester fee in Cologne. However, if you do so, you can't take any exams in this semester anymore after you come back.

Scholarships:

An exchange semester can be quite expensive in the end. Fortunately, there are some institutions which support you financially if you meet their requirements in terms of study grades and/or other engagement. PROMOS, for instance, is a scholarship program offered by DAAD especially designed for an exchange semester. They pay 300€ per month of studying abroad plus a fixed amount for flights etc. (1300€ for Canada). Since living and travelling in Canada is pretty

expensive, PROMOS is a huge help, so you should definitely apply and try to get a scholarship.

Also, you generally have higher chances to get “Auslands-Bafög” than the normal Bafög, so go and check this as well.

Housing:

You basically have two choices: Either you live on-campus in a UBC residence, or you look for an off-campus accommodation on your own. I applied for on-campus housing at around May and got the offer in July which I was really happy about. Living off-campus might be cheaper in some cases, but most of the exchange students live on campus, either in Walter Gage, Marine Drive, or Fairview Crescent. The latter is the one I lived in. It has the feeling of a little village, a real community. I loved it. Walter Gage is really nice as well, it's a three tower building and feels a bit like a hotel with a huge lobby. Marine Drive is quite expensive, but has nice rooms. However, people who lived there said that they often found it too boring there. So my top 3 list of residences would be: 1. Fairview, 2. Walter Gage, 3. Marine Drive.

Applying for Courses at UBC:

At around June, I had to apply for the courses I wanted to take in Canada. The Sauder School of Business offers a great variety of different courses so you will be able to fulfill your personal wishes and needs. Even though the course descriptions on the website often list prerequisites, you should not worry about that too much. You will most likely be able to take and pass the course well without having taken the prerequired courses beforehand. To be sure, you can write an email to GoGlobal or to the professor's office.

Also, you should go to the WiSo “Anrechnungszentrum” and request a “Vorabanrechnung” for the courses you want to take in order to make sure that they can be transferred to your home degree.

Flight:

I booked my flight with STA Travel since they had really good offers. Three weeks prior to the official move-in date I flew with Air Transat, a Canadian airline, from Amsterdam to Vancouver and went on a Rocky Mountains trip with Moose Travel. STA Travel can inform you about the various trips this organization offers. We saw the breathtaking nature of the Rockies, the multiple deep blue lakes, and had a lot of fun while exploring British Columbia and Alberta.

Since I wanted to take a roadtrip along the west coast of the USA after my studies at UBC, I booked my return flight from Las Vegas for the end of January.

When you arrive in Vancouver before you can move into your housing, you need to find good (and cheap) accommodation if you don't want to be homeless. A lot of people stayed in the Samesun Hostel on Granville Street, others in the HI Downtown, like me. Both are good destinations where you will most likely meet some of your fellow exchange students already.

Welcome to UBC

A few days prior to the start of the term at UBC, you can move into residence. I was really excited to meet my new roommates and to see the place I would be living in for the next four months. I loved it right away.

At the first day on campus, you have to pick up your UBC card and your compass card with which you can ride the bus or the skytrain as often as you want.

What you will definitely need for your room/unit: bedding and kitchen tools. You can either buy all the stuff at the bookstore

on campus or you can go to IKEA in Richmond (1.5 hours with public transportation) to get everything you need.

UBC also offers some welcome events for the new students, such as a welcome barbeque at the residences. At the first day of school, you take part in the so-called Imagine Day where you are put into small groups and are then told everything you need to know about studying at UBC. The guides show you around campus and explain to you how to get to your faculty buildings. This day was really helpful and I would strongly recommend you to take part in it.

In the afternoon, all the clubs are presented outside on Main Mall, and you can choose which one(s) you would like to attend. There really are a lot of opportunities for you to engage yourself and make new friends.



Wreck Beach, UBC Campus



Elfin Lakes

COMM 205 – Introduction to Management Information Systems (Usman Aleem)

This course is aimed at second year students, but you can still take it even though you are in a higher year. COMM 205 gives an overview of computer technology and terminology and teaches the use of computers as managerial and administrative tools. Also, Prof. Aleem talked about the management of computer resources and the influence of information technology within the organization.

My instructor was very interested in the success of his students which made his course one of my favorite ones at UBC.

There were two non-cumulative exams at 30% each and five assignments at 4% each (online, no written essay). The remaining 20% were composed of class preparation, activities, and participation (in-class exercises and iClicker response rate). The iClicker is an electronic device which some professors use in class for testing their students' learning progress.

Credit transfer for the Cologne course "Basismodul Grundlagen der Wirtschaftsinformatik" (PO 2015) is possible.

COMM 371 – Investment Theory (Sajjad Nemati)

Prof. Nemati teaches the basic concepts of finance, including security valuation, security markets, and financial decisions concerning risk and return. The course assessment was composed of eight online quizzes (1.5% each), four marked assignments (4% each), one midterm exam (30%), and one final exam (42%). Furthermore, there were non-graded weekly practice problem sets about the topics we had discussed in class before, so we had the chance to test our learning progress.

Even though the instructor wasn't really the best since his way of teaching was quite boring and monotonous, I did like the course due to the interesting topics it covered, including various security options, the CAPM, how to hedge interest rate risk etc.

Credit transfer for the Cologne course „Ergänzungsmodul Bewertungstheorie“ (PO 2015) is possible.

COMM 405 – Real Estate Finance (Thomas Davidoff, Tsur Somerville)

This course is aimed at fourth year students with a major in Real Estate. Thus, background knowledge in finance is definitely required. Prof. Davidoff and Prof. Somerville share this course, so the first half was taught by Davidoff, the other half by Somerville, each counting for 50% of the final grade.

We learned about the role of mortgage markets, the mathematical analysis of return and valuation issue, and methods of dealing with lender and borrower risk exposure. Davidoff's grading consisted of regular problem sets, class participation, and the midterm exam. Somerville's grading consisted of a private equity assignment, small online quizzes, and the final exam.

This course was by far the hardest one I had at UBC. The background knowledge required from you is pretty broad, so only having had „Introduction to Finance“ in Cologne is actually not sufficient. However, I managed to pass the course with some help of my nice fellow students.

Credit transfer for the Cologne course „Schwerpunktmodul Studies Abroad“ (PO 2015) is possible.

COMM 498 – International Business Management (Masao Nakamura)

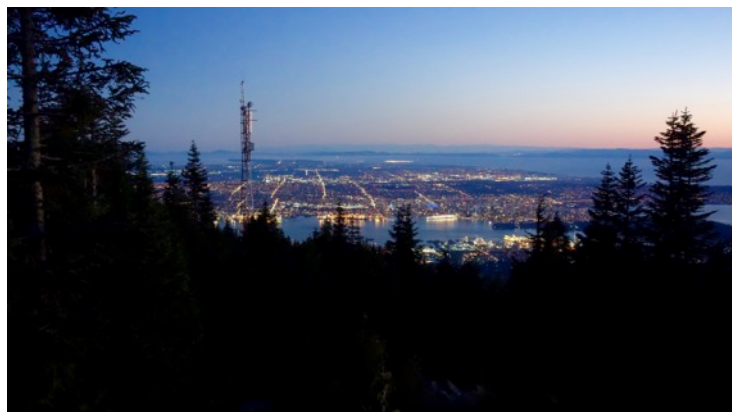
In this course, we discussed and developed a general environmental framework for international business studies by drawing on international and development economics, research into government-business relations and studies in comparative socio-cultural systems and political systems.

Grading consisted of two exams, one small assignment, a group paper, and class participation.

Mr. Nakamura is an elderly man from Japan with a strong accent which sometimes made it hard to understand him properly. His grading, however, was very generously. Credit transfer for the Cologne course „Schwerpunktmodul Studies Abroad“ (PO 2015) is possible.

Life in Vancouver

Here are some typical features of life in Canada, as well as some tips concerning your stay abroad.



Grouse Mountain

- Tax is not included! To almost every given price in a restaurant, supermarket etc., they add tax. So don't be surprised when the cashier tells you a sum which is a lot higher than expected ...
- Tips are appreciated and ... highly expected! You have to tip for pretty much every service, usually between 15% and 20%.
- In order to find your way in Vancouver by public transport, google maps is very helpful.
- Living in Vancouver is very expensive. Food prices are enormous, and you will probably be shocked when you walk into a grocery store for the first time ;) The “cheapest” way to get groceries is at NoFrills near Jericho Beach. Also, don't forget to get a free shopping card from Safeway, SafeOnFoods, and other grocery stores – they offer great discounts.



Whistler

there are a few very nice and cheap Asian food places downstairs. Check them out!

- In the little “village” on campus, near McDonald's,

- Don't miss Pit Nights and Koerners Club Exchange Student Nights on campus, they are legendary!
- Become a member of the UBC Exchange Student Club ("Go hard before you go home."), they offer cool trips and you get to know a lot of awesome people from all over the world.

Places you should definitely see & things you should definitely do:

- Rocky Mountains (Banff, Jasper, ...)
- Vancouver Island (Victoria, Nanaimo, Tofino)
- Whistler, best ski resort in northern America: It was amazing! Get the student pass (comparably very cheap) and enjoy the ride. You can get second hand gear and clothes at Sportsjunkies for good prices.
- Lake Garibaldi
- Whale Watching
- Elfin Lakes (especially beautiful in winter, but don't forget to bring snow shoes)
- Numerous hikes: Lynn Canyon, Deep Cove, ...
- See Vancouver! Granville Street, Granville Island, Waterfront, Stanley Park, Kitsilano, Jericho Beach, Capilano Suspension Bridge, ...
- Grouse Mountain: Only 2830 stairs to get to the top of the mountain ;) But the view totally compensates for the effort.
- Explore the huge campus, e.g. Wreck Beach



Vancouver Harbor

Why Canada was one of the Best Times of my Life

One thing I learned in Canada: It's all about the people you're with. You can be at the most awesome places on earth, but if you're not with the right people, it's not as incredible as it could be. And at UBC, you'll meet a lot of amazing people from all over the world. The exchange students community and their solidarity is inspiring – you never feel alone.

I learned a lot about myself, who I am, what I stand for, how other people see me.

While spending half a year abroad in a foreign culture among international people, you automatically overcome initial prejudices you might have had before. You talk with a lot of different people from different places all over the world, and you learn about other cultures, other values, other lifestyles, which broadens your horizon and enriches your life.

I saw amazing places and breathtaking beauties of nature, I ticked things off my bucket list, I travelled a lot, and I partied a lot as well with the other exchange students. We fully enjoyed our time.



Garibaldi Lake

Finally, you should keep one thing in mind: Don't fear change, don't stay where you feel safe, don't invent excuses for not doing things you're not familiar with. Just go out there and do it. Take the step, test your limits, embrace change, and leap into the unknown.

Because life begins at the end of your comfort zone.