

Ecole des Sciences de la Gestion
Université du Québec à Montréal



Host university: **Université du Québec à Montréal - École des sciences de la gestion**

country: **Canada**

study programme: **undergraduate – economics – STAP Bachelor**

selected courses: **International management & culture**

Doing business in North America

Financial Management

Management of SME (small and medium enterprises)

Exchange student: **Lennard Lang – Lennard.l@gmx.de**

Preparations and arrival

Before I chose the Université du Québec à Montréal - École des sciences de la gestion with the city Montreal as my exchange university, I surely did some research before applying over the WiSo Exchange (WEX) platform for my semester abroad. Montreal is a typical student city with about 1.7 million inhabitants, four big universities and about 180 000 students. As the city is based in Quebec, the francophone part of Canada, also French is the main language for the people. Still, the city is completely international and you get along just with English quite well, which is not a case in the countryside of Quebec. For me it was clear that I'm going to take my courses in English, as I think it's much more important for business purposes. But the possibility to improve my French, which I had seven years in school, was a very good opportunity and convinced me even more of the UQAM university.

When my application was successful, my next step was to book the flights and the visa for Canada. Because of a tip of a fellow student, I booked my flight from Paris, which made it much cheaper than from German airports. It is actually very convenient, as the train connection to Paris is very fast and booked in advance, super cheap. With this I really saved a lot and on my flight back I was with three other friends out of the programme, so not even alone. The VISA, to be able to study in Canada is very easy for students, who are just staying for one semester, as they are allowed to do this with the eTA (Electronic Travel Authorization). You can easily apply online, it costs 7\$ CAD and you receive your confirmation usually within 24-hours. Important for entering the country is the confirmation mail for the visa (just for proof, as the eTA is linked to your passport), as well as the confirmation letter of the host university which proves that you are just going to stay for one semester.

The host university (UQAM) offers two residences where you can live in (east and west residence). Both have single studios, multi-3-apartments and multi-8-apartments. In my case, I have chosen to apply for the east residence in a multi-8-apartment. Here fore, you fill out the already prepared form to block the room for you and you have to transfer the rent for the first month. Actually, the money transfer is the part which produces the most problems as North America is not using the IBAN system, so make sure you use a bank for the transfer, which has experience with this kind of transactions.

When you arrive, the first volunteer students are waiting for you at the airport and provide information about the city Montreal, the local transport system and all kind of useful information. All in all people in Canada are super friendly and the responsible organisers of the exchange program are totally engaged, motivated and help you wherever they can. There is a lot of "infrastructure" for exchange students, as Montreal hosts about 15000 of them every year. There is a bus for 10\$, which takes you from the airport to more or less all the accommodation spots in the city. Uber is another kind of cheap alternative.

Accommodation

As already mentioned, I lived in the students residence of the UQAM university in a multi-8-dorm, which means you share 2-3 bathrooms as well as the kitchen with the others, but you have your own room, which is equipped with a bed, a desk, a desk chair, a fridge and a wardrobe. Surely, it is a student residence, so it's not very modern and not super clean. Everything is very easy made, the kitchen is not really equipped, but there is a store called Dollarama, where you can buy everything very cheap. Nevertheless, I would definitely recommend staying there, as there is a list of advantages. First, the

university is just one minute by foot, which is especially in the winter with -15 degrees and less a blessing. You just pay 450CAD for a place completely downtown, a perfect spot for going to events, restaurants and clubs. Also the gym of the university, which you can use for free is directly next to the residence, so you don't even have to leave the house. The gym in general offers you not just a fitness room, they have a pool and with time variations, you can join other people by playing badminton, soccer, basketball, climbing and so on. In the beginning of the semester you can also apply for courses for just small money – but still, most of the activities are completely free as a student at UQAM.

The best of living in the residence is the possibility to meet and interact with a lot of people every day. Parties, predrinks, movie nights and sport activities. You will always find motivated people and you never get bored. It's super easy to get to know people and make good friends. Surely, living with a lot of people causes some troubles and you can't be friends with everybody, but for me it was definitely the best choice to live there.

The difference to the west residence is just, that the west residence is newer and therefore a bit more modern, but it is also about 10 minutes by walk from school. Most of the other people I knew, who were living in flatshares, with people they met in facebook groups – the recommended district here for is le plateau – where also a lot of bars and restaurants are. Still, prices are usually higher than in the residences. (600-750CAD)

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As Montreal is actually a more French than English speaking city, the UQAM university is a mainly French speaking and teaching university. If you are very good in French, you should totally take some courses in French as it will help you for your language skills much more than just the language courses. But attention, as the Quebecoise accent is sometimes really really hard to understand and you will probably be in these courses with 95% locals. There is a variety of courses offered in English, as also around 20% of the exchange students are barely speaking French. Before starting your day to day student life, you have some information activities and an introduction day, where you meet all the people from the program (550 exchange students just at ESG), you learn about the university and you receive information's about travelling, visas for the USA and so on. Again, the welcoming team is really good prepared and gives you everything you need. Usually, you have your courses once a week for 3 hours, they calculate, that for 3 hours in school, you have to prepare and follow-up six hours.

The courses I took were:

International management & culture

A course which taught us cultural differences between countries, how work is done all over the globe and how you can manage an international workforce and to what you should be aware of, by doing so. We also learned bit of the history of corporate cultures and how the system is changing within the companies. As the teacher was an experienced tradesman, who is still working with south America, Africa and Asia – he also told us a lot about his own experiences and you could see that he knows his

topic very well. The midterm in this course was a group work of a case study, we had to hand in an assignment, related to our course topics and in the end we had to consult a real company about their international work force, how one could be useful and how they could improve their working environment etc. A final exam is always a duty in every course, also in this one. I definitely would recommend this course, as especially while interacting with so many different cultures (we were around 15 different nations in this courses), a topic like this is totally interesting and would never been offered at a german university.

Doing business in North America

This courses was taught by a very young, super energetic and positive teacher and was more or less about entrepreneurship in Canada. The final task in this course was with a before formed group (created by the teacher) to work out a start-up idea, write a business plan and pitch it in the end of the semester in front of a jury. It was very interesting to participate, but in the end also a lot of work to write the full business plan, create a good presentation etc. Other duties were to write an assignment about an assignment and as well the final exam. Very cool in this courses was, that we had guest speaker out of the practice every lesson, where you could ask questions and learned a lot about the north American entrepreneurship. This course a lot based on team work, so I would just recommend it if you know, that you are able to work within groups and you are not afraid of doing a bit extra work.

Financial Management

To this course is not that much to say, it I basically kind of similar to the course “Investitionen und Finanzierung” of the University of cologne. But it has to be mentioned, that it is more and applied to the Canadian law system. You will have two exams and two group assignments in this course, and if you are good in financial mathematics, it shouldn't be the problem. Nevertheless it has to mentioned, that this course was the one with the worst average grade of my course, the teacher was not that good and sometimes confusing, as he used to difficult calculations and sometimes mixed numbers etc.

Management of SME (small and medium enterprises)

My last course was Management of small and medium enterprises. The teacher by itself was and entrepreneur in his past life and really passionate about the topic. You learn about the difficulties, advantages and characteristics of SME's, as well as how you should manage it. In this course we had two exams, an online simulation, where you had to run and manage a golf course with a group and competed with the other groups of the course, as well as a group work, where we had write an industry analysis about a special topic and present it afterwards in class. Especially for people, who are interested in founding a company and being an entrepreneur, this course is very helpful and interesting.

All in all, I was very satisfied with my chosen courses, the teachers are usually more close to the practice and tell you a lot about their experiences. In comparison to my studies in cologne, it has to be mentioned, that you have to work during the whole semester, as you always have assignments to do and midterms to write, whereas in cologne, we usually just write a final exam.

Day to day life and travelling

Basically living in the student residences and living in Montreal is very convenient. The city is super safe, you have a lot of students and an international nightlife as well as food from all around the world. Generally while the cost for rent is not that expensive for a big city, the costs of living in case of food and especially alcohol are higher than in most European countries. Alcohol sales are regulated by the government and therefore more expensive. Also food, especially products like cheese, meat, milk and sausages are more expensive as they don't have a culture of discount shops as we have in Germany.

You can party actually every day, there are festivals and events during the whole year and the city is organizing a lot for their inhabitants. You can't get bored !

In case of travelling, there are the common options of taking buses or renting cars (an international driving license is always an advantage). Most common places are Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara falls, Boston and New York City. You easily find travel buddies to go with. Another must are definitely the national parks around Montreal and in Quebec. You can do canoeing, climbing, skiing, whale watching and so on. If you prefer to go with a group, just follow Interstude on facebook. They are organizing a lot of one day or longer trips, to the US and other cities of Canada. There is so much to see and to do, you 3,5 month won't be enough to do everything, so you should do some research before and start travelling as soon as you arrive, as especially the warm month are perfect for enjoying the Canadian countryside and nature.