

## Retour d'expérience de ma mobilité internationale

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# [CANADA] – [Cape Breton University]

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## I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

*How was your experience abroad? If you could go back in time, would you go to this university and why?*

My experience in Canada has helped me grow as a person. Three years ago, when I decided to go to France to study at the university, I left my comfort zone and discovered another culture while improving my French. Even so, the experience of going to study in Canada has allowed me to get out even more of my comfort zone, gain more autonomy and get to know a totally different culture from the European one. In addition, the quality of the education at Cape Breton University is really great, in most courses we did projects directly with real national enterprises that allowed us to apply the theory in real cases. Besides all these positive aspects of Cape Breton University, during the winter season, there are almost every day snow and ice storms, and it is very cold so transportation and visiting the surroundings is quite complicated. Moreover, during my stay there we were still in pandemic and most of the campus activities were restricted and it was difficult to meet people. In general, from my experience and how I have felt during my semester abroad, I think the best time of the year to go to study in Canada, concretely in Cape Breton University, would be in the summer since the island is not very attractive for international students during the winter time. Therefore, if I could go back in time, I would like to know all these things and, even if I really enjoyed the university and found all the courses really interesting, if I had known that the campus was so far from the city and that transportation is difficult in bad weather, I might have considered going to another European destination for my semester abroad. But still, as my dream had always been going to study in Canada, I do not think I would have changed it, even though, the experience was not at all what I expected.

## II. Before the travel

### A. Preparation

#### 1. Visa

*Do I need a visa? If yes, what is the process?*

If you stay in Canada for up to six months, then you do not need a visa, but you need eTA (Electronic Travel Authorization), which is a requirement for visa-exempt foreign nationals travelling to Canada and it is valid for five years. I personally stayed in Canada for four months, so I did not need a study permit, but an eTA.

In order to obtain the eTA, you have to access the Canadian Government official website, enter at the section *Immigration and Citizenship*, then go to the section *Visit* and finally, the section *Apply for an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA)*. Once there, all you have to do is answer all the questions and pay the CAD \$7.00 fee. Also, in order to properly fill out the form, you need your passport, as well as, the date of your arrival in Canada and your approximate departure.

In case you have doubts about whether you meet the requirements for an eTA or for a study permit, there is a section on the official website of the Canadian government called *Find out about eTA and if you can apply* where you will find answers to most of your doubts.

Here it is the link to the Canadian Government official website <https://www.canada.ca/en.html>

## 2. The flight

*What flight did you take (the company name, airport etc.) and when did you take your flight ticket.*

In order to get to Sydney, I had to take a total of three flights. I personally bought the tickets through a travel agency in Spain approximately one month before my departure because with all the Covid-19 pandemic the international travel was quite complicated. For the departure journey, my flights were from Toulouse to Brussels, from Brussels to Montreal and finally, from Montreal to Sydney. For the return trip, the flights were from Sydney to Montreal, from Montreal to Munich and lastly, from Munich to Barcelona. For the round trip I flew with Air Canada, and in total, the flights cost me around 1,500 euros.

## 3. My luggage

*What to not forget in the luggage (what was useful and what you would like to have taken).*

As I said, the winter season in Canada is quite tough, there are practically storms every day so I recommend to bring warm clothes and boots. I personally bought a high-quality anorak before leaving, the ones used for skiing, thermal clothing and boots. Although it is not necessary to take a lot of clothes because inside the buildings it is warm and that on campus, they clean the sidewalks and roads every day, in my opinion a good jacket, thermal clothing and boots are essential to combat the cold (approximately between -15 and -20°C) and walk to go to the university in the snow.

## 4. Bank account

*Did you have to change bank? To respect some amount requirement on the bank account etc.*

I personally did not open any bank account in Canada as my stay there was for about four months and I used my personal bank account in my country and paid by credit card. Even though nowadays we can almost pay for everything by card I recommend to bring some Canadian dollars in cash because sometimes some places do not accept cards, for example, some cabs only want cash. Thus, I recommend you to ask for Canadian dollars before leaving your country, because I for example, did not have time to ask for them before leaving and even if I was able to take cash in Canada, they charged me a lot of bank commissions.

## 5. Insurance

*What insurance did you subscribe to?*

I subscribed in a specific insurance for international student travel. As I am Spanish, I did it through a Spanish insurance company called RACC, and the insurance covered me up to 100,000 euros of medical fees, 10,000 euros of medical expenses for Covid-19, repatriation, among others. In addition, I had another private medical insurance that I have always had in Spain and that also covers me abroad. Even so, the truth is that I ended up using the medical insurance offered by the Canadian university itself. First my intention was not to subscribe to the insurance called GuardMe which is offered by the same university and costs CAD \$495. But in February I had to go to the emergency service and I had to use this insurance. Although I think it is quite expensive, it allowed me to go to the emergency service without any problem and then to subsequent medical visits on campus for free. In my case, I had to end up using the insurance GuardMe because even if I had used the other insurance I subscribed in my country, they would have reimbursed

me for the doctor's visit, but they surely would not have covered the first costs of registering at the emergency room and other additional costs that was worth about CAD \$1,000.

I think that if when you subscribed a repatriation insurance, they already include the insurance of medical costs you do not need to subscribe to the insurance of the university, but if by bad luck you have problems and you have to go to the doctor I think it is more useful to have GuardMe because it is an insurance of the country and both the university and the medical centers of Sydney are used to work with this company and the procedures are much faster.

## B. Housing

### 1. Where to live

*Do a google maps capture and circle the area you recommend to live in (and the one you do not recommend)*

I personally recommend living on the university campus because even though it is a little more expensive than living in the city, I think it is much easier. Even though living on campus has some negative aspects, mainly with the fact that it is far from the city and there are no supermarkets nearby, I think that with the issue of public transportation and storms, it is much better to live on campus because many times even when the weather was not good the classes were held so for some students it was complicated to get to the university and they ended up doing the online classes.

Below is an image of the university campus where the residences are located and you can also see that the campus is located between the city of Sydney (on the left) and the town of Glace Bay (on the right), two of the places where you can also find an apartment to live during your stay abroad.

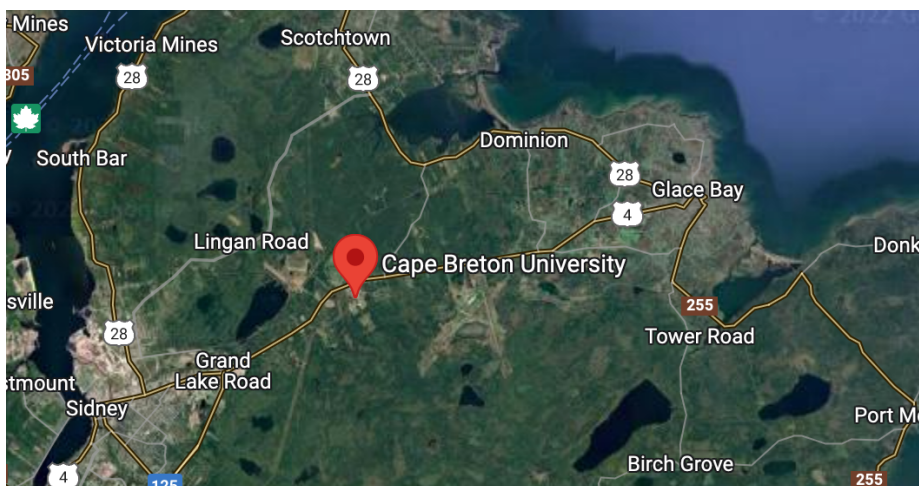


Figure 1: Cape Breton University Campus

Source: Google Maps <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Cape+Breton+University/@46.1478398,-60.2582545,41735m/data=!3m2!1e3!5s0x4b67e385609f367b:0xfdd8a0736f3534f9!4m5!3m4!1s0x4b67e38f6c1fd1d:0xdd22556c24e222d6!8m2!3d46.1685256!4d-60.0921936>

### 2. Find a flat or a room

*How did you find your flat? Do you have any recommendation?*

I was in the residence on campus, I was assigned a room in Cabot Residence where I shared an apartment with two other students. I had to apply for the residence about two



months before I arrived in Canada, that is to say I applied in November through the university's website. During the process, you cannot specifically choose a room, but you can put the type of residence you prefer, i.e. as you can read on the university website, the campus contains three residences. Firstly, there is Harriss Hall which consists of single private rooms for students with shared washroom facilities and you have to go to the restaurant to eat. Secondly, there is the Alumni Hall which consists of five-bedroom apartments and students live in two-bed shared rooms, and one bathroom. Finally, there is Cabot Residence which consists of different apartment-style which each of them includes four private rooms, two bathrooms and a shared kitchen. And among these three options, when you make the application, you can put which is your preference. In my case, I was lucky and they gave me a room in the residence I wanted, but I did not know which was my exact room and apartment until I got there.

### 3. Cost

#### *How much should I plan for a room?*

I was in an apartment-style in the Cabot Residence and I paid CAD \$3,267.50 for the semester plus CAD \$400 for the meal plan. The Cabot residence was the one in between in terms of costs, the Alumini is a little cheaper and the Harriss Hall is more expensive because they are single rooms and you have to eat in the restaurant. To know exactly the prices, you can check the university's website where there is a table with the fees for each residence and the meal plans. Here is the link <https://www.cbu.ca/current-students/accommodations/on-campus-residence/residence-dining-fees/>.

## III. When I arrive at the university

### A. Inscription at the university

#### *How was the process, what did you have to do?*

Concerning the university inscription process, you only have to complete the admission process through the university's platform, choose your courses and if you live on campus or have contracted the health insurance GuardMe you must pay it before the end of January to be fully enrolled in the university. Everything is done online, except that when you get there, you must contact the IT center of the university to pick up your student card, for the rest everything is very simple and done it online.

### B. Information on the university

#### 1. Courses

#### *List the different courses, and for each course, describe the format, the content, the exam, what did you like and not like, would you recommend it for the next student?*

I enrolled in five different courses: Business Finance, Introduction to International Business Management, Organizational Behaviour, Human Resource Management and Nature of Entrepreneurship.

From my point of view, the methodology in Cape Breton University is really different from the one in MOMA. In Cape Breton University all the courses were formed by around thrity or fifty students, most of the courses are not only formed by theory classes and they are more focus on interactive projects and activities while at home there is more work,

readings and reports. All in all, I enjoyed experiencing a different way of learning and discovering new perspectives.

### Business Finance

For this course we had a total of two and a half hours of class each week, spread over two days, one and a quarter hour on Mondays and Fridays. The classes were held in a hybrid classroom, therefore the class could be held both in person and online, so that students with symptoms of Covid-19 or various difficulties could attend the class online, through the Microsoft Teams platform.

In addition, for this course we had to buy a finance book through the New Connect platform where we also took the exams for this subject. The teacher also used this platform together with Moodle to provide us with additional material on the subject and to expand our knowledge, as well as additional exercises to practice.

The evaluation of this course was divided into three exams, the first two were worth 30% each of the final grade and the last one was worth 40% and this final test was taken during the exam week in April.

### Introduction to International Business Management

For this course we had a total of two and a half hours of class each week, spread over Monday and Wednesday. In this course the classes were hundred per cent face-to-face and normally of the one hour and a quarter class the teacher would give about 35 or 40 minutes of theoretical class and then a half hour of some current topic, such as news related to international business, inflation, how the Ukrainian war affected the world economy, etc. I believe this is really interesting because it allowed us to see clearly how what we learned in class could be applied and analyzed in real life.

For this course I also had to buy a digital book and every Monday afternoon we had an exam of the chapter discussed in class through the Moodle platform. So, the evaluation of this subject was one part these exams, another part two individual papers that we had to do one in February and the other one in April, and finally a group work that consisted in analyzing a country and doing a written paper and a presentation. Thus, for this course I did not have a final exam as such.

### Organizational Behaviour

For this course I also had two and a half hours of class per week, divided between Monday and Wednesday. The class was also hybrid like other courses, so some students attended in person while others were online.

In this course in addition to the theory worked in class, the teacher used the TopHat platform through which we had to read a book and answer several discussion questions before the next class which were part of the participation grade and represented 20 or 30% of the grade of the course. The evaluation of this course also included two individual assignments which were reflection papers and finally, a group assignment called RIIPEN project where we had the possibility to work directly with a Canadian consulting company that worked with the indigenous communities of the Cape Breton area and we had to analyze the company and the market situation and give them recommendations for action according to the topic addressed by each group, in my case it was employee retention. Personally, I found this work very interesting because I was able to apply the theory and do additional research on the topic while applying it to a real situation and company. Even so, my group did not work well, I had no luck with my classmates and talking to the teacher, I ended up doing the work alone because the others did not take responsibility for the project, but everything ended up going very well.

### Human Resource Management

For this course I also had two and a half hours of class per week, divided between Tuesday and Thursday. The class was also hybrid as I mentioned before. Personally, I liked this course very much and I loved the way the teacher dealt with the topics and made us participate in class and created a very pleasant environment.

The evaluation of this course was divided into two individual reflection papers on topics covered during the course, discussion questions that we had to prepare as a group on the topics that we were going to discuss each day in class in order to go beyond what we learned through the book and to be able to resolve any concerns we had about the topic to be discussed, as well as, a group work with a Canadian company to analyze soft skills, a project that was also part of the RIIPEN program and that I also found very interesting.

### Nature of Entrepreneurship

For this course we also had two and a half hours of class time but this one was hundred percent online, through Zoom. For this course we also worked with the TopHat online platform where every week we had to watch two recorded lectures of the teacher on two different topics and answer discussion questions that were part of the participation grade. Then these videos of about an hour each had to be worked on and studied well because during the first fifteen minutes of class on Mondays we had a quiz on the topics. We also had to do an individual work that consisted of an interview with an entrepreneur and finally, a group work that consisted of thinking about a business idea and preparing a lean canvas and a pitch. I also liked this course very much because it allowed me to discover new visions of entrepreneurship.

#### 2. Advice on “contrat d’étude”

*What would you recommend for a student when picking its courses?*

At the beginning I was a bit lost with the subject of the courses, I was afraid of not choosing well and that MOMA would not validate my “contrat d’étude” but in reality, it is not so complicated, you have to choose according to your interests and your preferences for the future, always taking into account that they are in accordance with your studies at MOMA. Also, any doubt you may have, I recommend you to talk to the international relations service of MOMA or to the person in charge of Licence 3 IM, they will help you and will be able to solve any doubt you may have.

## IV. When I life there

### A. Safety

*Is it safe? Is there areas or times I should avoid*

Canada, and concretely Sydney is a safe place with a great community. I never had any issues and I felt really safe during all my stay there. In addition, the university provides a security service on campus that you can contact in case of need, but as I said, both the campus and the city are safe places.

### B. Phone and Internet

*How to be able to call and have internet.*

With regards to the phone, I used my contract with the Free company in France because my tariff allowed me to make international calls and access Internet with no additional cost. Even so, to call my family, friends, etc. I always used FaceTime or WhatsApp via wifi.

Both the residence and the entire campus allows access to wifi, but I recommend having a mobile with which you can have data and use it because many times with storms there were power outages and some days I had to use the option to share data with the mobile to the computer to finish some work that was due, and also to visit the surroundings or to leave the campus I think it is better to have access to Internet and not rely only on the campus wifi.

### C. Events

#### *How to know about the events?*

During my time in Canada, there was still a lot of Covid-19 there, so most of the time campus events were pretty restricted. Still, towards the end of the semester they did some activities. As for the residence events, the person in charge of the residence informs us via email about the events, I also recommend to follow the social networks of the Student Union and the CBU Recreation because they also inform about sport or general events on campus.

### D. Sports

#### *What sport can I do? and how?*

I personally did not play sports during my stay there but there is a gym on campus, and there is a basketball, soccer and ice hockey team, and also, I know that there were some sports competitions where there was also volleyball and other activities. What I cannot tell you clearly is how to join it, but if you contact the Student Union center, they will be able to help you and inform you about it.

### E. Eating

#### *Any recommendation? Or good tips (e.g. aninternational house buffet)*

Concerning the food, since I lived in an apartment-style and had a kitchen in the apartment, practically every day I made my own food, even though on Mondays as I had class both in the morning and in the afternoon, I used to go and buy something to eat in the campus. With the meal plan that cost CAD \$400 I could access the Tim Hortons on campus, the restaurant in Harriss Hall and the cafeteria (which was only open the last weeks of the Winter semester due to Covid-19 restrictions). I used to make my own food because the truth is that I preferred to prepare my own healthy food at home. I recommend you to plan how to spend the meal plan throughout the four months because what happened to me is that I did not have time to spend all the money and I left about CAD \$90 on the card because these CAD \$400 are not refundable and I did not spend them all, so this is my main recommendation regarding food if you choose to live on campus.

### F. Go to the university: bus, car, bike

#### *How did you get access to the bus, car or bike*

As an international student, I only used the public bus and cab to go shopping or visit the city. To get on the bus you have to carry just the exact money or buy tickets that you can get at the same store on campus. Each trip to the city costs \$1.25. Also, for those students who must use the bus daily, the Student Union provides the option to buy a monthly bus pass, allowing them to save money, but if your intention is to use the bus only one or two day a week then it is not worth it and it is better to go to the campus store and buy individual tickets. Personally, I did not use the public transport too much as I lived in the



residence on campus and the university was only about a ten minutes' walk, depending on the building where I had course.

## G. Travels

*What do you recommend and what do you not recommend?*

The truth is that with the winter weather almost everything is closed so I honestly did not visit much, just a little bit the city and the port area. Sydney is far from everything and without a car you cannot visit much, besides the bad state of the roads with snow and ice. One of my roommates was Canadian and she explained to me that in summer there is much more tourism and there are many more activities and things to visit, so I would recommend, if possible, to go to study in Canada not during the winter semester but during the summer or fall semester.

## H. Any other information you would have liked to know about

*What would I liked to know if I could have gone back in time?*

As I have already mentioned, my experience in Canada has not been as I really expected because despite the positive aspects of the university and the quality of education, the issue of storms, power outages and the pandemic have not allowed me to live the full experience because many events were restricted, it was difficult to meet people and I felt quite lonely most of the time.

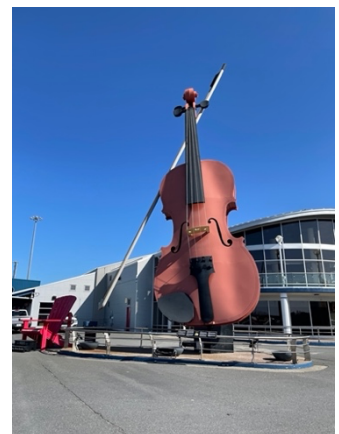
I already knew that Canada in winter is cold and there can be storms, but what I did not expect is that a country like this was poorly prepared for storms because many times classes were cancelled and there were also many power outages, I remember that once we were three days without electricity and in the residence it was very cold. If I could go back in time, I would also have liked to know that the campus is far from the city and that it is quite difficult to visit the surroundings during wintertime.

In general, I do not regret going to Canada but I think it would be better to have the possibility to go during the summer or fall because it is really hard in the winter time.

## V. Photos

Here there are some of the pictures I took during my stay in Cape Breton University.





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