

Study abroad – University of Victoria  
Study program: IBA  
Exchange semester: fall  
Academic year: 2018-2019  
Country: Canada

## **1. General information about the school**

### **The school and its surroundings:**

The university of Victoria (UVIC) is located in the City of Victoria, based on Vancouver Island. It is easily accessible by ferry from Vancouver (1,5 hours ferry ride, costs only 17CAD one way). It is a green campus, surrounded by a lot of squirrels and deer. The Campus has a lot of dining facilities, so there is always a place where you can get food. Mystic market is the main location for food, with different food chains offering their food over there. The library is big, a little bit outdated, but offers all the facilities you need. The newly build sport complex, called CARSA, is with an additional charge accessible for all students. I would highly recommend paying this fee (I thought 100CAD for the semester). The university is 25 minutes away from downtown, with a lot of busses departing from the university to downtown and vice versa. Downtown Victoria is absolutely beautiful. This is one of the main reasons I chose the University of Victoria. The harbor and the parliament building together create a stunning scenery, especially with sunset. The shopping facilities in Victoria are okay, but of course not as good as in Vancouver. For grocery shopping I would recommend going to Walmart, or to Save on Foods (ask for the more rewards card to get all the discounts). Another place you must visit in Victoria is Fisherman's Warf, if you walk along the harbor you will eventually end up there. It is a little village on water, with little floating houses. I would recommend going there in the beginning of the semester when it is still warm, and head over there for dinner (they have very good fish stands over there). Another good fish restaurant / food truck is Blue Fish, Red Fish. If you love Nacho's you should definitely head over to Local, since they have the best. For lunch my favorite place was Jam Café, the food there was absolutely delicious. The bars/clubs I thought were worth visiting in Victoria are: Upstairs (club), Distrikt (club), Lucky's (Every Monday evening they have a 90's party over there), Darcy's pub (live music after 9pm), and Sticky Wicket (bar). Most of the time we would have a few drinks at Sticky Wicket and then head over to Upstairs. You have to be aware though that the clubs / and bars are only open to 2 am, which means the party starts a little bit earlier. For Hiking I would recommend going to Mount Douglas (close to the campus). Other hikes / places I visited around Victoria are the Sooke Potholes (hike/swimming in the summer), Goldstream Trestle (hike), Tofino (a little surf town), Thetis Lake Park (hike). Other things I would recommend is doing a whale watching tour (in the beginning of the semester you have the best chance to see them) and go to the Butchard Gardens (nice in December, they decorate everything with Christmas lights).

## **2. Practical information**

### **Information before I left**

I had to submit my motivation letter for my top 3 universities before November 1<sup>st</sup>. I received the email that I was selected to go to the University of Victoria (luckily my first choice) in the end of November and received my pre-departure information in the beginning of February. In the end of March, I received an email from the Gustavson School of Business (UVIC), that I

was nominated and got some general information from them about the following procedure. The contact with them was very easily, they usually responded quite fast.

### **Visa procedure and arrival**

If you stay under 6 months in Canada you do not need a Visa, an ETA is sufficient enough. You can arrange this very fast and easy and the cost is quite low (I thought around the 8CAD). You can arrive in Victoria in two ways: you can fly to Victoria airport or take the ferry from Vancouver. I took the ferry and took the bus to arrive at my apartment (which was quite annoying with all my luggage).

### **Orientation/introduction activities**

I participated in two introduction activities. The first introduction day was a general international student welcome, this included exchange students from all the faculties. This day was not mandatory, but I would recommend going there, since I already made some friends that day. The other introduction was organized by the business school from UVIC. These 2 mandatory days were very useful. The “fun” activities you do are kinda lame, but it is a good way to meet new people, these 2 days I basically met all my friends over there. UVIC also provides a buddy program where you can participate in. I subscribed for it, had some contact with my buddy over email, but that was it. They did organize a few “buddy” activities, but I did not participate in this. It really depends on who your buddy is, since some of my friends actually became good friends with their buddy.

### **Housing**

You have 3 options for housing: you can stay with a host family, find housing yourself, or stay at the campus. I applied for a room on the campus but did not get assigned. They only have a few places, have a first-year guarantee, and give priority to study abroad students (so the ones who pay tuition), so it is hard to get a room on campus. When I heard I was not accepted I started to look for housing myself. They have an online Facebook group, just like in Tilburg, where you can look for rooms. I am going to be honest, it was super difficult to find a room. A lot of landlords are looking for people staying at least a year. But eventually I managed to find a super nice room, and it worked out perfectly in the end.

### **Living costs**

Housing is quite expensive, I paid 900CAD per month for my room, living with 2 roommates. Most of my money I spend on trips, for example a week in Hawaii. The supermarkets are more expensive than in the Netherlands, but when you buy the products on sale it is definitely doable. Alcohol, sadly, is a lot more expensive than in the Netherlands as well. In Canada it is not allowed to sell alcohol in supermarkets. It can only be bought in liquor stores, which is quite expensive.

### **Academic calendar**

I arrived mid-August to make sure if I did not find a room by then I still would have enough time to find one. The semester started in the beginning of September and ended at the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. My schedule was quite okay, Wednesdays and Fridays I never had classes. Around Thanksgiving (8<sup>th</sup> of October) you have some days off and the same holds for the Reading Break (beginning of November). The reading break is a nice opportunity to do some travelling, it is also called the Hawaii-week, since so many exchange students travel to Hawaii in that week.

## Social Activities

In the first week of the semester the university organized some parties (including the soccer opening game), and they had a fair with a lot of free stuff. Apart from that the university did not organize a lot of activities. A study association of the Uni did however organize a pub crawl which was super fun. I would definitely recommend it, since it is also a good way to hang out with a few locals who also study business. The places I travelled to were: Hawaii, Tofino, Seattle, Vancouver, New York and the Rocky Mountains. The Rocky Mountains trip was organized by an international study association and was one of the highlights of my exchange period.

## Culture and Language

I did not really experience a culture shock, since Canada and the Netherlands are both Western countries. The thing I liked the most about the Canadian Culture is that everybody is naturally so nice. They are always eager to help. The main language on Vancouver Island is English, so I did not have any troubles with speaking the language.

## 3. Academic Information

Course	Prerequisites	Exam	ECTS	Comments
<b>Com390 Canadian Business Environment</b>	None	Written	6	Easy course, consists of the basic business concepts. Although the Course is very boring, I would recommend it since it does not require a lot of work.
<b>Com446 Investments</b>	Finance course	Written	6	One assignment is a simulation where you have to invest in real stocks. That one I particularly liked. Mid-term exam is way easier than the final.
<b>Ent402 Entrepreneurship &amp; small business for the non-specialist</b>	None	No final exam	6	Practical course where you have to "start" your own business. The largest part of your grade is the group project. The best thing is that there is no final exam.
<b>IB416 International Marketing</b>	Organizational Behavior & principles in marketing	Written	6	I liked this course the most. It consists of a mid-term, final exam and a group project. Not too difficult, and the professor is really nice and interesting.
<b>IB417 International Finance</b>	Finance course	Written	6	This course was definitely the hardest one. If you are really interested in exchange rates, then this course is for you!

The academic level at UVIC is not as high as at Tilburg University. You will definitely not have any trouble passing your courses. The only annoying part is that all the lectures are mandatory, and you get a grade for participation. I skipped a few classes and did not participate that much, but still got a good grade for it, so don't worry too much about that.

**Tips for future students**

I would definitely recommend going on an exchange. It does not really matter where you go because you will have a good time anyway. If you love travelling, nature, and nice people then the University of Victoria is definitely the place for you!