Exchange to Canada
The University of Regina
Pre-departure

• I applied for exchange through the CSU Global office at Bathurst – where the staff were extremely supportive and helpful.

• You do not need a visa to come to Canada from Australia. However, you can get a visa/study permit if you want;
  • If you plan to be in Canada for less than 6 months you do not need to get a study permit
  • If you want to be in Canada longer, or you’re not sure about your travel arrangements before or after your exchange you should get a visa. It is around $300AUD and can take 6-8 weeks to process so make sure you are organised to get it as early as possible before you want to leave. I didn’t have time to get a study permit, because my acceptance documents came from UR very late (other exchange students told me this also happened to them, so you really need to organise asap).
Travel

• Be aware that flights to Canada are pretty expensive. I paid around $3300 for return flights.
• There are some good deals out there if you are prepared to search for them.
• I didn’t go through a travel agent I bought my flights online with Air New Zealand (after considerable time searching and comparing).
• I would definitely recommend Air New Zealand, as they have direct flights from Auckland to Vancouver, this was a benefit to me as I didn't want to have lots of stop over's (especially stopping in America, sometimes their security policies are pretty extreme and the airports are huge! Also if you enter the US you start your 90 day Visa Waiver so if you plan on going back to visit later, it starts counting down from when you enter).
• I flew premium economy as I got a really good deal, which meant I could take 2 pieces of luggage - up to 64kgs as well as 2 pieces of carry on luggage. However, I flew home in economy which still allows 2 pieces but for a maximum combined weight of 46kgs – so be aware of what your brining and what you might want to take back. Also consider that if you take domestic flights in Canada the weight allowances change again.
Insurance

• I choose to use CSU Travel insurance, it was by far the cheapest and most convenient option for me, $300 for 5 months is the best deal I found and it has very good inclusions.
• It is also less hassle to organise, as it can be taken care of through the CSU Global office (Louise was very helpful!).
• There are no vaccinations, shots or medical tests you need to have in order to go to Canada – however if you want to have a check up before you leave it might be a good idea to get advice and extra prescriptions if you need them (or have prescriptions valid for when you get home).
The University of Regina’s campus is really fantastic. It is a very new and modern campus with all areas easily accessible. I did my exchange in Winter with temperatures frequently at -40° but the campus is all connected and it is a constant 21 ° -22 ° so you won’t be cold at all!

Apply for residence VERY EARLY, if you aren’t worried about losing $50 if you change your mind then I would suggest applying even if you haven’t made up your mind 100% on whether you’re going to exchange.

It is also worth applying for an apartment in Collage West (5 room sharing same sex) and at Luther Collage (single rooms – shared bathrooms, meals included/compulsory). There is no application fee to apply at Luther Collage and all applications can be done online (Check the UR website).
The U of R green/commons at night

The Gym (its amazing!)

Riddell centre
Course choice and preparation

- This part of the exchange preparation was very easy for me, as I am doing an Arts degree and the U of R is basically a big Arts university (bearing in mind that the university system is different in Canada/North America, everyone does lots of very different courses, it isn’t as structured as CSU – you can do astronomy and biochemistry if you want!).

- In this way, the system at UR is quite different to CSU, I actually found my course levels to be not what I expected, for example; my first year subject was at about HSC level, or easier, and some of my second year subjects were at CSU first year level, at the same time one of my economics courses was third year standard.

- You should start organising this very early; I actually looked at the subjects before I really looked at anything else, as your doing an exchange you need to have the subjects approved by your course co-ordinator before you can do anything else.

- My course co-ordinator was fantastic and as I am doing an Arts degree I could basically do whatever I wanted within my Major/Minor selection. However, it might be tricky finding courses to co-ordinate with UR – So start researching and emailing early!

- You will get a course advisor when you apply and are accepted, so feel free to email this person and get extra information if you need it.
Transport – on and off campus

• This wasn’t a big problem for me or many of the other exchange students at UR. Regina has a very good transit system, which can get you pretty much anywhere in the city without and major hassles. There is even a website for you to plan your trip, I would recommend using that as it is very helpful [http://infoweb.regina.ca/](http://infoweb.regina.ca/)

• There is absolutely no problem with getting around the campus here, it is very simple, its even colour coded! It is all enclosed, so unless you live in Luther or have classes there. There is no reason to go outside (I found this very helpful as I did my exchange during the -40° winter!)

• The campus is one big circle, and if you have a look at a campus map for the first week, you won’t have any problems at all.
For me, expenses and finances was a big deciding factor in doing an exchange. However, if you want to exchange to Canada you have the opportunity to apply for a $5000 scholarship through CSU.

You can also apply for an OSHELP loan of up to $5,500; this isn’t a scholarship, it is a loan which will be put on your HECS debt, the benefits are that it will not accrue interest but will only be indexed to the CPI (inflation) every year. Which means it is a much better deal than any bank.

Lastly, you will (probably) be eligible for Centrelink Youth Allowance so you will have to go and see them about having that continue while you are away.

I was successful in my scholarship application and took out the OSHELP loan as well as having some personal savings. All this meant I did not have any major money issues whilst in Canada. However, I would advise someone to have a budget and stick to it, many things such as food, drinks and clothing are much cheaper in Canada relative to Australia, so don’t be scared in packing a bit less and buying some things when you get there.

The accommodation costs will set you back about $2400CAD for the semester if you live in the North or South Towers, it is a little cheaper in Collage West and in Luther Residence you have to be on a compulsory meal plan so it's a bit more expensive. But you can find all the rate and inclusions/exclusions on the [www.uregina.ca](http://www.uregina.ca) website – so I REALLY recommend you check that out.

You shouldn’t have any university fees, unless you are taking a science course or you have lab fees, but you don’t pay any other fees as you still pay your fees at CSU.

I would advise keeping an eye on the exchange rate and buy your money in bulk to save on fees, charges and conversion costs. I bought a pre-paid travel money MasterCard (through the Commonwealth Bank) and it was very good I would definitely recommend it.
Holiday travel

• I did not organise much holiday travel as I considered my whole experience to be a kind of holiday. Also there are only short breaks – one week in February for the winter semester and an extra day off for the Easter long weekend is all you’ll get. However, I still managed to fit in many activities whilst in Canada and took short trips to places with friends.

• I would recommend visiting Vancouver, I spent about a month here, a week before semester started and 3 weeks after semester ended before flying home, it really is a beautiful city (but make sure you have an umbrella!).

• Something to be aware of is that flights are very expensive in Canada, not as cheap as in Australia and when you have a few bags of overweight luggage it becomes very expensive (from Australia you can fly to North America with 23kgs in each bag – when you get into Canada and fly domestically you will have a different limit – so be careful!).

• I would recommend travelling by Greyhound buses, they are good value and go everywhere in Canada with many different stops, I travelled from Vancouver to Regina by bus and back – but be careful it is a VERY long journey (2 days).

• I would absolutely recommend visiting Banff in the province of Alberta, I went there with some other exchange friends in the semester break, we rented a van and drove (car rentals are good value in Canada, but make sure you have an international drivers licence – you can get these through the NRMA for about $50 – be aware the rules change when you change provinces and also be prepared to drive on the wrong side of the road!). I ended up going skiing with some friends and there is truly nothing like skiing in the Rocky Mountains! It was an amazing experience...
Lake Louise/Banff
Mid-semester break
Social activities

• There are many different social clubs, societies and sports teams you can participate in at UR.
• There are a list on the website if you want to have a better look, but they offer sign up at the beginning of the semester so be sure to sign up early so you don’t forget later.
• I personally didn’t end up joining any of the clubs or societies at UR, as I tended to just hang out with friends and organise our own things to do.
• However, there are a lot of activities organised by UR International and by the Residences, so be sure to participate in these. I had a lot of fun at these activities and UR International organises some uniquely Canadian experiences which I wouldn’t have been able to participate in had they not organised it. These included; ice skating (on a real frozen lake) and curling. The Residence office also had a trip to Moose Jaw and the hot springs there, which I would absolutely recommend participating in (if you go in winter especially!).
Learning to Curl

Learning to Skate

A FREEZING day in Moose Jaw!!

Re-learning to Ski

My hair freezing in the hot springs – in the water 40°ish out of the water -35°ish
Cultural information

• As Canada is an English speaking country I didn’t experience any real culture shock, it was mostly just word usage and terminology (consider the word choice of ‘Thongs’ when you are in public, also ‘Roots’ is a famous clothing brand).

• Mostly it was the small things which were different, Canadian money has one cents and 25 cents (no 20c or 50c) and they don’t include tax in their prices, which is very annoying so don’t be shocked when they tell you what your buying is a higher price than what it says on the shelf.

• Also something which confused me right from the beginning was that the toilets in Canada are abit different from Australia – they flush differently which means they have much more water in them that at home. I thought they were all broken, so I kept moving to new cubicles – so heads up ;).

• Also North America drive’s on the ‘wrong side’ of the road, so be careful crossing the road, remember to look right first!

• The biggest cultural shock you might experience might actually be from the other exchange students, I was friends with many of them and I had to get used to their cultural traits and assumptions!
Weather - coping with extremes

• Well, I came to Canada in winter, so that is extreme.
• You will need to have a very good winter jacket – I had a lot of trouble finding a good warm jacket – remembering in the northern hemisphere the seasons are opposite. It is quite difficult to buy good winter gear in Australia, even harder when its summer – so keep your eye out.
• In the end I bought a ski jacket and it was fine, it didn’t look out of place at all since everyone wears them.
• The trick to the extreme cold is learning how to layer, if you go outside in -35° you should be wearing thermals, I got a gift of good quality rubber soled ugg boots (which saved my life!) and I would ABSOLULEY recommend you bring some. They were without a doubt one of the best items I brought with me (but remember to waterproof them).
• During the winter months; January, February and half of March, there is always snow – some snow would be taller than you are! As its so cold you probably wont be going outside a lot. But living on campus its not a problem, as the entire campus is connected with walkways and it is VERY well heated at a constant 21°+ so you could walk to all your classes in a t-shirt and shorts if you really wanted. I brought way too much cold weather clothing so really consider what you might want to wear and maybe what you want to buy here.
Things to buy...

• I brought a lot of unnecessary clothing from home, so you should be really aware of what your packing.
• I would suggest packing lightly, as you will mostly likely buy some things in Canada and want to take lots of things home (I brought a whole new bag back).
• I exchanged in Winter so I brought a lot of winter layers, which in hindsight were unnecessary, as I didn’t need to be so worried about the temperature as I thought I would.
• I would recommend bringing some photos and even videos from home, to help with home sickness and to show your new friends your home and family.
• Something to be aware of is that the power in Canada seems to be much lower than at home, so things take a lot longer to charge up and some things may not work properly eg. Blow dryers or hair straighteners. Also remember to bring a few adapters to leave in your room and take with you when your are about campus with your laptop (although there are computers available at UR I would very much recommend bringing your own laptop).
• You will need to buy (or bring); a towel, linen, blankets and pillows for your room and maybe an alarm clock if you want. You should check what size you need for your linen as the different residences have different sized beds.

• You can borrow irons from the residence office but it might not be necessary if you use the clothes dryers and a fabric softener (I didn’t end up ironing anything, if you fold things straight after the dryer you won’t have any problems).

• Other things you might need to buy are cutlery and some basic kitchen appliances (I just borrowed off my roommates, so don’t buy too much until you meet them!)

• Other than that anything you might want to buy should be available in a shopping mall in Regina, so you won’t have any major problems finding things.
Writing this still in Canada, I can tell you that its true what people say, that leaving home won’t be nearly as bad as leaving your new friends in Canada (or in my case, from Canada and around the world).

I have met so many amazing people both Canadians and other exchange students, it will be very hard to leave them, since they end up being your UR family. But who knows, you will make friends for life here so you can always make an excuse to go and visit them again – or have them visit you! (I have standing invitations for staying with people on almost every continent!)

Things like skype, facebook and msn will be very helpful for keeping in touch back home, but remember to consider the 17/19 hour time difference! Facebook and emails are really good for dealing with the time difference because you or your family/friends don’t have to be up at 3am!
My UR Family