Choosing a University

- Consider the climate, time of year and definitely the social structure of possible universities before making up your mind. In Canada do you want to be in the prairies, BC, Vancouver Island, French Quebec, the Maritimes? Would you prefer Ireland? Ask people what they thought of the residences (ask me in person!) and what they thought of the university. It’s a vital first step in making sure your experience is the best it can be. Ask lots of questions and make informed decisions!
Pre-Departure

• Getting into Canada is easy. Easy steps I would like to pass on to whoever comes next:
  • Travelling to Canada for less than 6 months doesn’t require a Visa.
  • You need a return ticket before you leave to prove you are coming home again.
  • Buy travel insurance.
  • Your NSW Drivers Licence is good enough proof of identity and proof of age for all instances I came across.
  • Have Canadian cash when you hit the ground.
Flight Details

- I found my cheapest flight was through Air New Zealand.
- A flight from Vancouver to Regina is $258, a bus is $120 and takes a bit over a day. The greyhound busses have a good reputation.
- I took a bus from the Airport in Vancouver to a hostel for a night. If you want to do this I took the airport shuttle: http://www.yvrairporter.com/
Insurance

- Saskatchewan is where universal health care in Canada began – you will be looked after well, so long as you buy travel insurance and look at what’s covered (eg. Make sure you have ambulance coverage).
- Shop around on the internet for travel insurance. The cheapest price I found was AU$610 for 6 months. Try AAMI as a starting point.
- The emergency phone number is 9-1-1.
- Canadians are generally very helpful people and the police are very approachable.
The View out my window
Accommodation - Apartments

- I recommend staying in a 4-person apartment. You will meet 3 people straight away.
- Self-catered, full kitchen provided.
- A grocery bus takes residents downtown most Saturdays for CN$2.10
- CN$ 2136 per semester
- Have food for the first few days on arrival, or go across the road to subway.
Accommodation - Dorms

- No fridge
- Don’t expect it to be as social as Bathurst – I didn’t meet any friends through my dorm.
- Catered (poor food services, esp. on weekends)
- CN$1912/semester + CN$1000 compulsory food card
Accommodation Continued

- More residence options at http://www.uregina.ca/residences/
- Also check out the Luthur Residences – has better food services and appears more sociable but rooms are cramped. Luthur is a 50m jog to main campus (wear a jacket in winter)
- College west seemed to be an older version of New Residences.
- You do your own cleaning; it’s no hassle though.
- Apply several months in advance. Don’t despair if you’re on a wait list, I was 70th on the list at the start of December and got in by January. Keep your options open and apply for Res and Luthur Res.
Campus

- Campus and Res are linked by walkways – don’t worry about the cold on the way to class, but invest in a warm snow jacket for outings.
- Subway (10% student discount), McDonalds, a corner store and some other takeaway shops are a 5 minute walk away (at the traffic lights out the doors of ridel centre). I did the walk in -40°C weather regularly. Just rug up!
Courses – Primary Education

- I got slipped right into the 3rd year group and had a blast. Content was perfectly applicable and curriculum is very similar, I was writing entire Units of work and analysing curriculum in my first weeks.
- Had trouble getting the Education department to enrol me but stay on their back with lots of emails until you get results.
- In-school experiences were offered in my Curriculum classes, and I was given references to show that I had taught in Canadian schools.
- The Canadian perspective on Cultural inclusion is interesting and the history of cultural struggle was thought-provoking and relevant to my teaching.
Courses cont.

- I found the content to be a comparable follow-up to my 2\textsuperscript{nd} year Math, PE and Culture classes and my level of knowledge to be at the same level as my 3\textsuperscript{rd} year peers.
Transport

- Town is 6km away. Bus services leave every 20 mins. Check the schedule at: [http://www.regina.ca/Page2145.aspx](http://www.regina.ca/Page2145.aspx)
- Route 3 takes you to the Cornwall centre – Big W/Myer equivalent.
- Route 22 takes you to Safeway (Woolworths) – this route may not be offered next year.
- Wait for the bus inside Ridel Centre and run to it when you see it coming around the corner so you don’t freeze!
- Have coins for the bus. No change is given. $2.10 per trip.
- Grocery bus on Saturdays.
- I found friends were happy to drive me down town all the time.
Expenses

- Food: CN$1300 got me through a semester
- Accommodation: approx. CN$2000 for semester
- Bus: CN$2.10 each week
- Factor in outings, prices for food and beverages comparable
- Tips only expected for taxi and Restaurant service, not for takeaway or over the counter purchases
- Flights: about AU$2000 return to Vancouver
- Bus from Vancouver to Regina: CN$120 each way (greyhound)
- Youth Allowance is still paid while you’re studying overseas but clear it with Centrelink first.
Travelling

- Travel, travel, travel!
- Hostels: CN$30 per night. Get a HI membership for discounts, buy it on arrival to your first hostel.
- Greyhound bus takes you to cities cheaper than by air but the ride is much longer.
- Moose travel Network has great trips for independent travellers. Lots of Aussies do this. Many tours only operate from May to September:
  - [www.moosenetwork.com/](http://www.moosenetwork.com/)
Social Activities

- Recreation Committee has heavily subsidised activities like Snowboarding, 5 pin bowling, curling, hockey, ice skating, Moose Jaw trips. Very worthwhile to get some friends together and take advantage of this.
- Karaoke Tuesday nights, Trivia Wednesday nights at Uni Bar.
- Try to join the sporting activities that are advertised – Residence Intra-muirals offer curling and volleyball among other things. Curling was amazing fun every Tuesday night. It’s where I made my best friends.
Social Activities cont.

- I made lots of friends – the hard part is meeting a few people at the start. By the end you will realise you know tons of people from residence. I was worried at the start because interaction wasn’t as forced as Bathurst, but things worked out because I made effort to get involved.
- International student activities take place weekly. Be there the first day to meet International students straight away.
- Chit, Chat, Chew is an international student group that is very friendly and welcoming to new people.
Curling
On arrival check in to the International Office – ask for a tour. Get acquainted with the people in the International Office and with the Campus. Walk around, find the best drink and chip machines, the free gym and pool, the place that makes the best sandwich and find the residence office. Ask an RA (they are at the foyer between 7 and 9 pm) about how to use the lifts, where the staircases are, how to use laundry cards and where the laundry is. RA’s, your roommates and the International office are your lifelines in the first few days. If you’re in a Dorm, introduce yourself to your neighbour. Get your food card from Res services and get you ID from up stairs Administration Humanities.
You will get lack of sun – consider bringing vitamins to counter this because lack of sun has adverse psychological effects.

Get in there and get involved in things to make friends.

Canada is a very multicultural place – expect to meet people of all nationalities and languages at the university.

You will miss home and go through rough times establishing social networks, know that everyone went through it. Push on through and make sure you have regular outings. And always remember that people love your accent.
Weather

- Best I can describe it is like living in a big freezer up until April.
- Canadian winter clothing is good quality.
- Very warm jacket is essential. I wore a jumper (sometimes two) under my winter jacket and a beanie and mittens during the colder months. Wore Jeans and normal socks.
- Occasionally I would wear thermals if I expected to be outside for more than ten minutes.
- Great internal heating – I could go days without going outside because residence is connected to classrooms. I walked around in shorts and t-shirt inside.
- Living in the white snow for months is an amazing experience.
What to Bring

- Warm clothes, and lots of them – think about what can be layered.
- I ended up giving away lots of my warm clothes before I went home because they didn’t fit in my backpack.
- My large, good quality backpack was very useful to me. Everything fitted in there for my trip after the semester.
- Laptop. Was a must-have for me. Scope out the computer labs though, not only in the library but in the education building I found some too.
What to Bring

- Expect to come home with more than you left with.
- Think about how many jumpers you can survive with – for example one hoodie is enough because you can’t layer hoodies, and bring sweaters to wear underneath.
- Clothing gets lost, and priorities are made that end up with items of clothing being discarded for the sake of making room in your pack.
- Photos – put them on your walls to make your room feel homely.
- Camera.
- Buy non-perishable food that can sit in your bag for emergencies.
What to Buy

• Keep in mind that Canadian jackets will be good quality and if you’re arriving in the new year there are sales. Just remember you need warm clothes to get down town to buy those clothes! Quality winter jackets are around CN$200.

• Res does not provide pillows, sheets, toilet paper or blankets. You will need to buy these things ASAP. I slept my first two nights without blankets or pillows, very uncomfortably.
Relationships

- Essentially friendships is one of the core reasons I decided to do an exchange.
- I spent the first half of the semester wondering what I would have been doing if I was in Australia – missing my friends and my comfort zone.
- I realised in my last week that I had made Canada my comfort zone, and It was harder to say goodbye to my Canadian friends than my Australian friends – You can always go home, you can’t have your time in Canada back. Live in the moment. Relationships form when you aren’t even noticing it.
Expectations

- I couldn’t predict what the exchange was to be. Each experience was unique, and many of them unexpected. It was different in ways I couldn’t imagine before living it. There were great highs and depressing lows. The first week I did not have a pillow, I was jetlagged and emotionally drained. There are times I questioned why I ever embarked on this journey. I feel it’s important to know that these times will happen, but are worth it. My only regret is not taking enough photographs. In the end I will remember the highs and forget the lows.