

Majors: English and Mathematics
Degree: B.Sc.
Host Country: Canada
Stay abroad: 29/08/2018 - 24/04/2019 (expected)
Host university: Bishop's University
Identification code: CAN-2018-b8u9l-f

Since one of my majors is English, I have always wanted to spend one or two semesters in an English-speaking country in order to improve my language skills, particularly my pronunciation and ability to speak fluently. I was particularly interested in going to Canada because my program in Freiburg mainly focuses on the US and the UK in terms of literature and culture.

Although I wanted to practice my English, I named Bishop's University, which is located in Sherbrooke, Quebec, i.e. in a rather francophone region, as my preferred host university. One of the main reasons for this decision were the many very enthusiastic experience reports about Bishop's by former exchange students from Freiburg which I had read on the website of the International Office. Bishop's seemed to be a small, but very lively and open place, where you can easily feel at home. Naturally, I was very happy when the International Office nominated me for Bishop's and I started to organize my exchange by thinking about how I was going to finance it. As I hold a scholarship of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes), I received additional funding by the Studienstiftung for going abroad. Furthermore, I applied for the Baden-Württemberg-Stipendium, which is open to everyone in Freiburg. I can highly recommend applying to the Baden-Württemberg-Stipendium. The application process is rather easy and you should be able to reuse most of the documents you had to hand in at the International Office. Late in March, I received my official Offer of Admission letter from Bishop's. Consequently, I applied for my CAQ (*Certificat d'acceptation du Québec*),

which is necessary if you want to study in Quebec for more than one semester and a prerequisite for your Study Permit. I received the CAQ at the beginning of June and applied for the Study Permit shortly after, which I was granted mid June, but which is only printed once you arrive in Canada. At the same time, I booked my flights and started to look into possibilities of living around Bishop's. Since I did not know when exactly I would come back from Canada I booked a ticket with a flexible return flight, which meant that I could change the date of my flight back for free. Originally, I wanted to live in one of the residences on-campus. However, exchange students were not allowed to live on-campus in the academic year 2018/19 since one of the residence buildings was being renovated. At first, I was sad because I had looked forward to the full Canadian campus university experience. However, it turned out that living off-campus was actually the better option for me. I got to know three other exchange students who were facing the same situation in the Facebook group for new Bishop's students. Together, we found a spacious, fully-furnished apartment for four people on the Bishop's Housing Website, which was only a 10-minutes-walk away from Bishop's and much cheaper than a small, shared room on campus. Furthermore, we were able to prepare our own food, which meant that I practically never ate in the campus dining hall. The food in the cafeteria is not bad, but I've heard that it gets rather dull after some time and it is incredible expensive. It is mandatory to buy a special health insurance for international students, which you can pay through your university account. However, I also purchased an additional health insurance with the ADAC, because the Bishop's insurance does not cover everything and I also wanted to make sure that I would be insured in case I stayed in Canada longer than the semester. In June, the International Office of

Bishop's informed the incoming international and exchange students about the Welcome Plus – Accueil Plus program at the airport of Montréal. If you register online for the program, students from Montréal will welcome you at the airport and, more importantly, your study permit will already be printed, which means that your immigration process will be much faster. I took the shuttle service Aeronavette, which you have to order online in advance and which drives you to any address in Sherbrooke. Since I arrived late in the evening, I slept in the Motel Lennoxville for one night and moved into my apartment the next day.

Generally, I felt at ease in Canada. The Canadians I met were really friendly, warm and welcoming. My international friends and I were invited by several of our Canadian friends to stay at their families' houses over the weekend and explore the area they are from, which is how we got to see Ottawa and Quebec City. I also had the impression that most people in Canada were very helpful, communicative and interested in learning more about life in Germany. Sherbrooke and Lennoxville, the borough of Sherbrooke where Bishop's is located, are really lively and student-friendly places. In Sherbrooke, there are many restaurants, pubs, cafés and a really nice old cinema. I can definitely recommend leaving Lennoxville once in a while to explore the city center of Sherbrooke. Both, Lennoxville as well as Sherbrooke downtown are rather small so that many things can be done on foot or with the local busses that run pretty reliably even when there is a snowstorm. Lennoxville is more or less anglophone due to the English-speaking University and you can surely survive there without speaking a word of French. In Sherbrooke, on the other hand, most people speak French and here as well in many other parts of Quebec, having at least rudimentary knowledge of French comes in handy. Bishop's turned out to be the

open, diverse and friendly place that I expected after having read the previous experience reports and I really enjoyed seeing the beautiful campus of Bishop's every day.

One of my academic goals for my stay abroad was to explore my majors in more depth and to focus on the aspects I find most interesting since my double-major program in Freiburg consists mainly of obligatory classes and my choices are very restricted. Bishop's definitely gave me the opportunity to explore my English major. I took three very interesting classes in literature and film studies: *Studies in Directors: Alfred Hitchcock*, *The Gothic Tradition* and *Post-colonial Literature*. They had a theoretical approach slightly different from my program in Freiburg and allowed me to gain knowledge and to improve my skills of analysis. Concerning Maths, I had to realize that Bishop's unfortunately does not really have a good program. There were only a few maths classes offered each semester and their level was much lower compared to my classes in Freiburg. For that reason, I took only one math class, where we learned how to solve mathematical problems more independently and creatively. As an alternative, I took some interesting classes outside of my majors such as a music, a drama, a French and a history class.

My classes were considerably smaller and more intimate than in Freiburg. As a result, the relation between students and teachers was less hierarchical and more personal. At first, it seemed strange to me that students and teachers almost appeared to be friends. However, I started to really appreciate having teachers who are interested in their students, in their opinions and beliefs. Furthermore, I had the impression that the students were more motivated and the discussions we had in class were much more interesting and enriching than

in Freiburg, since more students contributed and they were used to developing and sharing clever thoughts during class.

Generally, my stay abroad has been a very positive experience and I have gained a lot from it personally as well as academically. I think that my main goal, i.e. improving my English skills, has been achieved. My German accent has reduced considerably, I am much more confident in speaking and writing English and my vocabulary has grown. Furthermore, I have learned a lot about Canadian culture through my everyday life in Canada and my interactions with my Canadian friends and acquaintances, but also through some of my classes. For instance, we discussed several short stories by indigenous writers in Canada in my class *Post-colonial Literature*, which taught me a lot about the complex relation between indigenous peoples and European settlers in Canada. Personally, I feel that I have become more confident, independent and courageous during my stay abroad. It has been a great and unforgettable adventure!