

Exchange experience at Schulich School of Business, York University

About the School

Schulich School of Business, part of York University, is located in the city of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The business school offers both undergrad and master programs. As for the masters, the school has 18 MBA/IMBA specializations for students seeking for different career options. These include Finance, International Business, Strategic Management, Business & Sustainability, among others. Their MBA program is highly prestigious both locally and international. It was ranked as the number one program in Canada for the magazine *The Economist* in 2019. York University has two campuses in Toronto, Keele and Glendon campus. The Keele campus is the largest one and it's designed as a community for the students with learning and recreational facilities , libraries, dormitories, convenience stores, restaurants, gym and medical clinic.

Schulich offers classes in Keele campus and also at the Miles Nadal campus, located in downtown. Most of the courses will be in Keele campus at the Seymour building, if you live in the dormitories it's a 10-15 minute walk. The Nadal campus is a popular option for local part-time students, since they attend night classes after work. If you choose to take courses in Nadal campus, you can interact with more Canadians and grow your networking. However, since the Nadal campus is located at downtown, it will take over 45 minutes to get there if you live in Keele campus. In addition, Schulich School of Business has two overseas campuses in India and China where students can pursue their first year of MBA program and then continue the last two terms in Canada.

The student body is diverse with majority of students coming from India, China and Canada, due to the location of the campuses. Yet, you'll find students from Africa, East Asia, Europe and Latin America. As an exchange student, you'll interact with a bigger international community, since most of the participants will come from different partner schools around the world.

As an IMBA graduate student from NCCU, I was enrolled in courses of the MBA program in Schulich Business School. Due to the different MBA specializations, Schulich offers an extensive catalog of courses in each term, including some mandatory for regular students. Some of these courses are elective and will have a prerequisite such as have completed the introductory class or have a certain academic background, since they expect the students to learn specialized skills and topics. Thus, each course will inform the prerequisites and also the exchange student's coordinator will assist you in which courses you can or can't enroll. Once you've been accepted in Schulich, the exchange student's coordinator – Cheryl- will send you a welcome email and also ask you to send a list with your top course choices from the catalog. She also asks how many courses would you like or need to take in the term. Cheryl will try to enroll you in your chosen classes in order of priority. If the class size

is big or there is more than one section, you'll be able to join your favorite topics. I was able to join my top courses. As in how to choose a course from all the options, the class syllabus is a helpful tool. You can find the syllabus from last term online, in case the professor hasn't published one yet. Although is a syllabus from a previous class, it will guide you on the course objectives, material, teaching methodology and examinations. Most of the courses will emphasize group projects, as they expect students to gain team building skills. Some courses will not have midterm or final exams, it will depend on the subject. In my case, since I took Marketing courses in my IMBA, I wanted to take advantage of Schulich's Marketing specialization to learn more in depth. Thus, most of my courses were related to Marketing. Furthermore, I've read that Schulich had a strong Business Suitability program, since I'm keen to environment protection, I decided to take a course in this topic. I was enrolled in four courses of the fall term. These were Marketing Research, Innovation Through Technology and Design, Social Media Marketing and Business Strategies for Sustainability. All of my courses were at the Keele campus, so I didn't have the opportunity to study at the downtown campus.

Marketing Research: This course focuses in the process of doing market research. It teaches the steps from defining the problem accurately to finding a solution. The professor Jane-Michele Clark has a lot of experience, as the founder of the Q Group, a consultant company that conducts research and aids other companies in their business strategies. Her teaching method was highly practical with in-class exercises every week that kept our attention. She provided students with tools and techniques on qualitative and quantitative research methods. In addition, she will promote the student's participation and class discussion, which enriched the experience as you can learn not only from the professor, but from classmates as well.

Innovation Through Technology and Design: The phrase "*think outside the box*" is the best to describe this class. In this course you learn about the disruptive innovation process, while you work every week along with your team to develop and create a new product or service. In addition to the lecture, professor Kelly will assign an in-class project or presentation to boost team building and public speaking skills. There were no exams in this class, as theory is put into practice in the final pitch of your team product.

Social Media Marketing: This course teaches how to successfully manage Social Media to design marketing strategies for companies. Every week, we learned a new platform from the most common used for companies such as Facebook and Twitter, to others less common like Snapchat and Reddit. The lecture will discuss about the platform, target users, content creation, best and worst practices, successful strategies and marketing metrics. Definitely a class to take if you are interested in Marketing.

Business Strategies for Sustainability: This class was an introduction of sustainability theories and how companies can apply the concepts into redesigning their business models. In each week, we'll discuss about a company case that reinvented their way of doing

business either by transforming the supply chain, the raw materials or the community in benefit of the stakeholders. The class discussions aim to challenge the conventional thinking and open the students mind with a new perspective of what are effective green strategies for businesses.

Cultural Experience

As I mentioned before, Schulich has a diverse student body. My classmates were mostly from India and China, with some Canadians and East Asians. During my term, the majority of exchange students came from Europe, mainly from Denmark and Germany. Having classes with students from other countries, enriched my exchange experience. I was able to learn about Canadian culture, but also about India and Europe. In the classes you'll have to work in teams, some are assigned by the professors, so you have to learn how to work with other cultures, the different types of communication and working attitudes from your team members. In addition, you'll improve your English language skills, specially in listening, as foreign students will have a different mother tongue than English.

Despite the fact that I'm from Latin America and studied in Taiwan, it was easy for me to adapt to Canadian culture. On one hand, when we arrived we had an orientation for exchange students about the do's and don'ts in Canada. They took the time to introduce Canadian culture and talked about the food, the people, places to visit and Canadian English words, such as "loony" -the name for the one dollar coin-. On the other hand, my Canadian classmates were really nice and polite. They were eager to suggest places to visit, things to do in Toronto and other provinces. They will also give advice about the weather and how to prepare for the winter.

Being in a foreign country as exchange student, you might feel a bit lonely at first without your friends or family. However, Schulich has a special student's club the "Open Arms Club", that aims to help exchange students in the transition of coming to the school. They also have a buddy program, organize field trips and give shopping suggestions. Since the members are MBA students, they can give feedback about the courses or professors from the classes you are interested in. So after your arrival, you'll be able to meet other exchange students and members from this club. In addition, Schulich has several student's clubs that you can join, either by becoming a member or attending their activities. In my case, I decided to join the Women in Leadership Club and Net Impact Club. Both clubs organized networking events, lectures and mixers for students to interact with Schulich Alumni or other professionals. I was able to make new friends with the local students, including first year students, who I didn't share classes with.

One of the main advantages of living in Toronto is its cultural diversity. The city has people from all around the world. You can easily find specialty food and cultural districts, such as Korean town, Chinatown, Little Italy, etc. This gives you the chance to buy groceries or food you are familiar with, or try a new cuisine. One of my favorite places to visit was Kensington

Market, an artistic village, where you can find small shops selling organic products and vintage clothes. In this market, you'll also find groceries and food from around the world, restaurants, bakeries and brewing pubs.

Another advantage of living in Toronto is its public transportation. The city has TTC subway, buses and trains. York University has its own subway station, conveniently located steps away from the Schulich building. There is also a bus stop close to the dormitories, that is helpful when you go to buy groceries at the nearest supermarket. From Toronto's Union Station, you can take the trains to visit the Niagara Falls and other cities like Ottawa and Montreal.

Canada has two official languages English and French. However, most of the provinces including Ontario -where Toronto is located- speak mainly English. People will speak French in Quebec province. Montreal and Quebec city are two of the most popular and beautiful destinations in Canada. You can reach both cities by taking a train from Toronto. Although people speak mostly French, you can still travel around. People at restaurants and hotels will speak English and the information at the public transportation and tourist attractions will also be in English. During my exchange, I visited Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City. The semester has a special week before exams call "reading week", when classes are suspended for students to prepare. Since some courses don't have exams, you may take advantage of this week to travel.

Living expenses are higher in Canada than in Taiwan. The cafeteria and restaurants around the school offer cheaper options for students, you could spend between 250-400NTD per meal. Eating outside is more expensive in Canada, so most of the students will cook their food. The school also has a food bank, where students can pick up groceries every week, such as noodles, juices, cookies, canned food, etc. The school apartments are equipped with a stove and fridge only. Other appliances such as toaster, microwave, rice cooker, tea pot can be purchased at Walmart -the closest supermarket-. Living in the school apartments is convenient to get to the classes and as graduate student you have your own room. The room also had a small dining table, desk, closet and sofa. You don't have to worry about the weather, because each room has a heater and air conditioner. The temperature is managed by the building and it switches automatically from cold to hot air depending on the season. Residents receive an access card to enter the building for security. There are also vending machines and ATMs at the dormitories.

Some tips and suggestions

- Due to the number of specializations, Schulich class catalog is extensive, which could make choosing your priority courses hard. To avoid feeling overwhelmed by the options, read over the syllabus and select the topics you are interested in. Then, ask your buddy or any member of the "Open Arms Club" if they can give you any insights

about the class or professor. Some of these students will also be your classmates and, in that case, they've already asked their seniors feedback about the course.

- Prepare suitable clothes for Canada's weather. Canada is known for its cold weather, and although dormitories and buildings have heater, you'll need to walk outside in the snow or rain. If you come in the fall semester, September and October will have mild temperatures and windy days, you'll still need a light sweater or fall jacket. By the first days of November, we had snow and the first snow storm came earlier than expected. To survive the weather, you need a weatherproof jacket and snow proof or waterproof boots. I've bought mine on sale when I arrive in September, so I was ready for the storm. Some other exchange students didn't have the weatherproof clothes and they had to go to the mall after suffering cold from walking to class on the snow.
- Where to live? It depends on your personality. I lived at the dormitories, which are closer to the Schulich building and library. Many Schulich regular and exchange students live there as well. However, it took me almost an hour to arrive to downtown and all the entertainment district. So if you would like to experience more of the city, then you may choose to live in mid-town or downtown, but the rent will be higher there. Whatever option you choose, my suggestion will be get a place close to a TTC subway station, so it's easier to travel around.
- Bring your favorite food from home. Although Toronto is a multicultural city and you can find groceries from all around the world, these will be more expensive compare to your home country. If you aren't keen to Western food or don't like to try new cuisines, it's better if you bring your snacks with you. Some exchange students brought their own rice cooker or special chili sauce.
- Join a student's club. You'll be able to make friends besides other exchange students and classmates. There are so many clubs at Schulich from academic to social and charity. Find one club that you think is interesting and go to the mixer or any events. Clubs will be selling tickets for the events, but these are affordable.



View from dormitory



Student Centre



Dormitory. Assiniboine Building