

STAP Experience Report

University of British Columbia –
Sauder School of Business
in Vancouver, Canada

Academic Year 2017/18
Fall term (September-December)

Program in Cologne:
M.Sc. Business Administration - Finance

Completed Courses at UBC within the MBA program:

- Managerial Decisions Modeling and Analytics (Term 1)
- Management Consulting and Corporate Decision Support (Term 1)
- Two-Party Negotiation (Term 1)
- Leadership Development (Term 2)
- Consulting Simulation (Term 2)
- New Product Development (Term 2)
- Supply Chain Analytics (Term 2)

Preparation:

After I was accepted by the ZIB of the WiSo faculty for a semester abroad at UBC in Vancouver, there were only a few things to be organized prior to my departure. As soon as we got the information on when the term and orientation days were scheduled, I booked a flight from Düsseldorf via London to Vancouver. As the term abroad lasts less than six months, no Visa is required to enter Canada, but only the Admission Letter of the UBC might need to be shown at the airport during the immigration process. If you plan on staying longer than 6 months in Canada though, you should take care of a Visa beforehand.

For all incoming exchange students, it is mandatory to take the UBC iMed health care insurance for around 250 CAD. There's no organization on your side necessary – you simply get an E-Mail at one point with the iMed pass and can pay the fee after your arrival at UBC. Additionally, the UBC provides the UPass for all buses and sky trains in Vancouver which needs to be validated each month and costs about 150 CAD in total for your stay abroad.

In total, the exchange coordination office of Sauder facilitates all organizational issues a lot – they provide detailed information on everything that needs to be taken care of and provide you with interesting tips and advice to make your arrival and stay in Vancouver as easy as possible.

University

Campus:

The UBC campus lies beautifully around half an hour out of town at the end of a peninsula, surrounded by beaches on the one side and separated from the nearby living areas through a large rain forest area on the other side. The beaches offer gorgeous views of the sea, the bay around Vancouver and the mountains of Vancouver Island in the background.



The campus is really large, having more than 50,000 students studying there, and appears almost like an individual town. It offers food malls, grocery stores, hospitals, pharmacies, libraries, coffee shops, restaurants and bars, gyms and other sport facilities like a football and a hockey stadium. A swimming pool including hot tub and sauna is free for students, as well as the beaches, museums or the botanical garden. You can spend multiple days with just exploring the campus and all the different things it offers. Of course, also a lot of (especially undergraduate) students live on campus in big housing facilities.

The Sauder School of Business is located quite in the center of campus. It is a modern building, well equipped with (almost) everything you need for your study life.

Uni life:

I arrived with 17 other exchange students from all over the world to take part in the MBA program of Sauder. All the courses were together with 2nd year students from the MBA program. The students are from all over the world, with a focus on India, Asia and South America. Of course, also a lot of Canadian and Americans do their MBA at UBC. Most of them did not do their bachelor in business, but quite often in engineering which offers interesting background stories and insights from their work life. Due to the required work experience before starting the MBA, students are generally a bit older, the estimated average age might be around 28.

You also get a buddy assigned from this bunch of people to help you get integrated and offering answers for frequent questions. We also were granted access to the MBA lounge, which is a big chill-out area with TV's, couches, a small kitchen and a pool and ping-pong table within the Sauder building. As a lot of the MBA students hang out there during breaks, it is very easy to get in touch with the locals. All of that helped us to integrate into the existing MBA group quite fast and make new friends. The program also organized a number of events off campus to have fun and hang out together. I for example participated in a harbor cruise and went to an NHL game with a lot of other MBA and exchange students.

Courses:

The MBA program is a bit different from the usual UBC courses. Opposite to the regular UBC calendar, the program is separated into two 6-week terms within one semester, with a two-week break in the middle. Each term has five weeks of lecture and one week of exams to finish up. The fall semester lasted from first week of September until mid-December, with two weeks off in October.

The classes usually have three hours of total lecture time per week, which can be once or twice a week anytime Monday through Thursday from 8am to 9pm. Friday is always free of class. Attendance is mandatory. A few weekend classes are offered, that are blocked from Friday to Sunday on one specific weekend during the term.

The courses are smaller and more interactive than in Cologne. Most courses were restricted to a maximum of 40 students attending the class. In the MBA program a lot of group projects are done, often to be handed in weekly and concluding with a final presentation or deliverable during exam week, which can cause a pretty high workload throughout the semester. But therefore, no exams need to be written.

Classes had to be chosen before arriving in Vancouver, course selection was open somewhere in July. The exchange coordinators at UBC were very helpful and informed us about everything important, especially the important dates, via E-Mail in advance. Unfortunately, by the time I could choose my courses, the local students had already chosen theirs, so the ones with high demand were already full or restricted. In multiple of my chosen classes, I was waitlisted and had to wait until the first week of class for other students to drop the class again. During the first week of class, you can attend every class you want and changes in your course registration are still possible. I attended a lot of classes to get a first impression of the prof, content and workload. With the help of the exchange coordinators, after the first week I ended up signed up for all my preferred choices.

A few notes on my completed courses:

Managerial Decision Modeling and Analytics (Term 1), Steven Shechter:

Takes place in the computer lab. Focused on problem solving by using different functions and programs within Excel (Solver, @Risk). Comparably low workload or preparation needed. Finished with an exam.

Management Consulting and Corporate Decision Support (Term 1), Phil Arrata:

Very interesting class with a very high workload! Phil is a former McKinsey consultant, still working in a senior position and teaching two classes part-time. Has a lot of interesting insights and tips to offer, especially if interested in a consulting career. The class is focused on cases, as a group you get new cases to solve every week and prepare a PowerPoint pitch for next week's class. This needs a lot of effort every single week. Final deliverable is an individual case to solve, which needs to be handed in during exam week.

Two-Party Negotiation (Term 1), Perry Atwal:

Easy class on different fields of negotiation. Simulating different situations in class, combined with some theoretic backgrounds given beforehand. Final deliverable is a journal you have to write about the negotiations simulated in class.

Leadership Development (Term 2), Daniel Skarlicki:

Very low workload. Course offered to help you develop leadership skills and giving some theory background on important factors of good leadership.

Consulting Simulation (Term 2), Phil Arrata:

Same prof as in Management Consulting. Blocked class over one weekend. Deciding on Friday which case you want to work on as a group and prepare the case throughout the weekend to hold a pitch on Sunday. Phil participates in some of your group meetings to help and give insights/ tips on how to handle the problems, especially in a limited amount of time. Simulates real world problems in consulting pretty well. Very interesting weekend, even if it was very intense. Final deliverable one week after the class is your updated slide deck, including feedback you got for your pitch.

New Product Development (Term 2), Tim Silk:

Very interesting class with a super funny but also very knowledgeable prof. Giving great background knowledge of what it needs for a new product to be successful. Middle to high amount of workload, as you have to develop a business plan for a new product/ service you pretend to bring to market and pitch during exam week. Some small individual essays on cases have to be handed in unregularly.

Supply Chain Analytics (Term 2), Greg Werker:

Really nice instructor, but concepts and tools were only broadly raised. Also, a lot of focus on Excel-solving of Supply Chain problems. Workload was moderate, having to hand in two case memos and two individual assignments during the term, as well as one final group project, where you had to consult a fake company on their Supply Chain/ logistic problems.

Life in Vancouver:

Vancouver:



Vancouver is considered one of the most liveable cities in the world – for a reason. It is without doubt one of the most beautiful cities I’ve ever been to, offering both mountains and water, as well as a downtown with multiple skyscrapers. Numerous outdoor activities can be done within short distances, from different hikes in the mountains, to kayaking, a bike ride in gorgeous Stanley park or a mere stroll on one of Vancouver’s beaches with beautiful views of city and mountains. As a metropolitan area, Vancouver also has

numerous cultural offerings, delicious restaurants, shopping malls, various nice bars and everything else you can ask for.

Vancouver is also proud of its multicultural and international population, while also representing the typical Canadian hospitality.

Housing:

Housing is one of the few problems in Vancouver, especially to exorbitantly high rents. Housing on campus is usually only for undergrads, why I was told better not to apply at all and save the application fee. I lived, as most other exchange students as well, in a house in Point Grey, with Kitsilano one of the area closest to Campus. I shared a house with nine other exchange students. I found and got to know my roommates in advance via Facebook, and we were able to find a house to rent on AirBnb. Because one of my roommates was already in Vancouver at that point, he was able to inspect the house and to make sure everything was okay.

The other most used platform is craigslist.ca, but due to a lot of scams and false pictures and promises, you should generally (also on AirBnB) not book a room in advance without visiting and checking it yourself in Vancouver. Most of my friends found an apartment in shared houses within two weeks in Vancouver, living in hostels or Bed and Breakfasts during this time. Living in downtown could also be an (expensive) option, but is 30-45 minutes away by bus from UBC.

Costs:

As already said before, especially housing is pretty expensive. You should plan to pay something between 800-1200 CAD (~550-800€) for a single room in a shared apartment with shared bathrooms. Single apartments are usually not to get or not affordable at all.

Groceries and every kind of alcohol is significantly more expensive than in Germany. Only fresh produce (vegetables and fruits) and most food in restaurants is comparable in prices to Germany.

It also needs some time to get used to the system of not including the taxes in the shown prices. This always adds up some amount at the end of your bill in both shops and restaurants. In restaurants you also have to tip always at least 15%, because waiters are very low paid and therefore very dependent on tips.

Travel experiences:

Vancouver is a great starting point for a lot of travel destinations. In the west you have Vancouver Island, reachable via ferry, with its beautiful forests, mountains and coastlines, as well as its very broad wildlife (bears and whales!). In the south the US awaits, especially Seattle is only a 3-4-hour bus ride from Vancouver. North of Vancouver the mountains start, offering numerous beautiful hikes, trails and lakes. Already driving up along the beautiful scenery of the Coastal Highway is almost worth a trip on its own. In Winter, Whistler with its world-famous ski resort is worth a visit. I've used days off to explore the surroundings of Vancouver, did weekend trips to Vancouver Island, Seattle and the Coastal Mountains around Squamish. But my personal travel highlight were definitely the Rockies around Banff and Jasper. I went there twice, once on a longer trip in summer, and again during the 2-weeks off in October. When in Western Canada, you need to see this stunning nature of crystal-clear lakes, creeks, forests, mountains and wildlife!



Conclusion:

Vancouver is a phenomenal city to live in, surrounded with breathtaking nature. UBC has a beautiful campus and a very high academical reputation and teaching standards. Congratulations, if you were chosen for a spot at UBC. It is hard not to fall in love with this city and country.