

Wong Tit-shing Student Exchange Scholarship

Exchange Learning Report



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Country: Canada

Host Institution: McGill University

Exchange Period: 5th September 2017 — 21st December 2017

This semester, I went on exchange to McGill University, Canada. The study and life experience in McGill and Montreal are quite enjoyable. This report will give a brief description and share my thoughts on different aspects during the exchange study.

I. Learning Experience on This Trip

i. Have the overseas learning experiences brought you any new insights/new experiences on learning?

I registered 6 courses under the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering which are related to telecommunication, communication system and computer vision. Similar to PolyU, the courses had lecture and tutorial sessions but I noticed some differences. McGill put the textbook at a very important place. During the lectures, the professor only talked about the basic knowledge about the course and it was required to read the textbook after class to obtain the detailed knowledge and the knowledge in the textbook was also in the scale of exam even if those were not mentioned in the lectures. I believe this can encourage students to learn actively rather than passively obtaining knowledge from the lecture and can also help students to learn more things.

The interaction between professors and students were very active. Professors always welcomed questions during the lecture whenever someone got confused and students could have chances to ask question even if the class was held in a big lecture theatre. And during the office hours, the office of the professor was usually filled with students. I found this was different in Hong Kong where students usually learn by themselves or with friends rather than asking professors. Although self-study is good manner, I believe that adequate communication with professors can make the learning more efficient.

ii. Have you built up any network with your counterparts?

McGill had a TEAM (Tomlinson Engagement Award for Mentoring) mentor program which was quite helpful to me. The professor would choose one of the outstanding students who had taken the course last year to work together with teaching assistance to help us on our academic related questions. Discussing with them gave me more useful information on the courses and had a deeper understanding of the knowledge from the aspect of a student.

As McGill didn't provide me a student residence, I lived in a third party student residence which limited my connection with my classmates. However, I still made some new friends during the exchange study. Most of them are the group members with whom I worked

on different group projects. We are still connected with each other through Facebook and Messenger.

iii. Have you completed any teamwork/projects during your overseas trip? Any interesting experiences to share?

Different from PolyU, the department in McGill is quite comprehensive which includes 3 different major programs and I had a chance to work and study with students from different disciplines. I worked on some group projects in the semester and from which I learnt some important things.

Firstly, the major language in Montreal is French but most of them can speak English as well. Once, in a group discussion, my group mates preferred to speak French. However, to get me involved into the discussion, they didn't say a single French word even if sometimes I didn't have some great thoughts on the topic.

Secondly, the students here were quite kind and open to new friends. When working on a telecommunication project, we needed to use a softwares which I hadn't used before. They patiently taught how to use it and finally we could finish the project together successfully. In addition, sometimes my English writing was not quite good which affected the quality of the final report. They didn't complaint on that and helped me to correct the mistakes in writing which moved me a lot.

Apart from what have been mentioned above, McGill treats academic very serious which is totally out of my thought. In the computer vision courses, 4 students were asked to form a group and worked on a group project. In the project, I finished most parts of the project as the rest group members didn't really care about the project. Therefore, in the final report, I included a work division part as what I usually do at PolyU. When the professor and TA noticed that the work was not divided evenly, they emailed us and asked us to send a work declaration to them. Finally, those group members didn't have the same mark as me. Even if the project specification didn't include the work division, professors always take that seriously.

II. Career Aspiration

i. Has this trip widened your thinking about your future and career path?

Different from PolyU's Work Integrated Education, McGill offered a Tech Fair for all undergraduate students in which they could hand in their CV and had an informal discussion with the companies they were interested in. Although I was not going for a job or internship, I believed that it was still a good chance for me to obtain some information about the job

market and know the trend of the area I was studying in. Plenty of companies attended the Tech Fair including Amazon, Cisco, Microsoft, etc. I had a short talk with some of the companies and knew some important qualities I should possess in order to get a job such as teamwork and innovative. With the help of the Tech Fair, I learnt something useful, made some contacts with the industrial and knew what I should do in later days to brighten my future.

In early November, McGill held a graduate fair for students who were willing to attend the graduate school. Several Canada, US and UK universities were invited to the fair. As I was planning to attend the graduate school, I went to the fair and had a discussion with those universities I was interested in to know what I need to do to get ready for applying for those universities.

Apart from academic, McGill offered a great number of such activities for students and as an exchange student, I believed that I obtained some useful information and truly benefited from those activities.

In McGill, I registered a computer vision course which could be the first high-level program-related course I have ever taken. Although it was not an easy course, I found that it was really interesting and I believe I will take more courses related to the area when I come back to PolyU.

ii. Have you learnt from those classmates in the host countries?

For sure, I learnt something from them during the exchange study.

Please refer to *Part I (i)* and *Part III* for detailed experience and information.

III. Views on Other Culture

Montreal is the second largest city in Canada and the pace of the life is not very fast. Their attitude towards new friends and strangers are quite different from the traditional Chinese education, do not talk with strangers. Every day, no matter in the building I lived in or at campus, people always held the door for the next person and expressed their gratitude to the person helped them. In the elevator, strangers would wish me good morning which made me feel strange at the beginning. In Montreal, I seldom heard the sound of car horns. The drivers always gave pedestrian the priority whenever someone was crossing the road. Sometimes it might take the driver a long period of time to get through the crossing, but to my surprise, they waited patiently seldom use the horn to urge the pedestrian to be quick. All of those made Montreal a comfortable city to live in.

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Before the semester commenced, I participated in the orientation activities provided by the student society and university in which I met a lot of friends in the group and I still keep in touch with some of them. Except learning, they had a variety of extra-curricular activities. Apart from the campus tour, they arranged some activities even at midnight at pub or restaurant. It could not be imagined that the student society ran a pub at campus and they had regular activities every week at the pub. One of the most interesting thing I met during the exchange was they held a fake aptitude test in the orientation period. When we were working on the paper, the group leaders ran into the theatre with horns and water pistols then we realized that it was a fake test. That was the end of the orientation and what they wanted to tell us was learning was not the only thing, there were various of activities waiting you in the university. Although I didn't participate in all of the activities, I saw their vigor and passion towards life.

IV. Conclusion

The exchange study, from my point of view, offers a lot of things to me. Apart from the knowledge, I experienced a different culture, worked with different groups of people and most importantly, set and cleared the goal for my future. I treat the exchange study at McGill as a valuable experience also want to show my gratitude to PolyU for offering me a chance to go exchange.

V. Detailed Study Schedule in the Exchange-Out Institution

My weekly class timetable during the exchange study in McGill University:

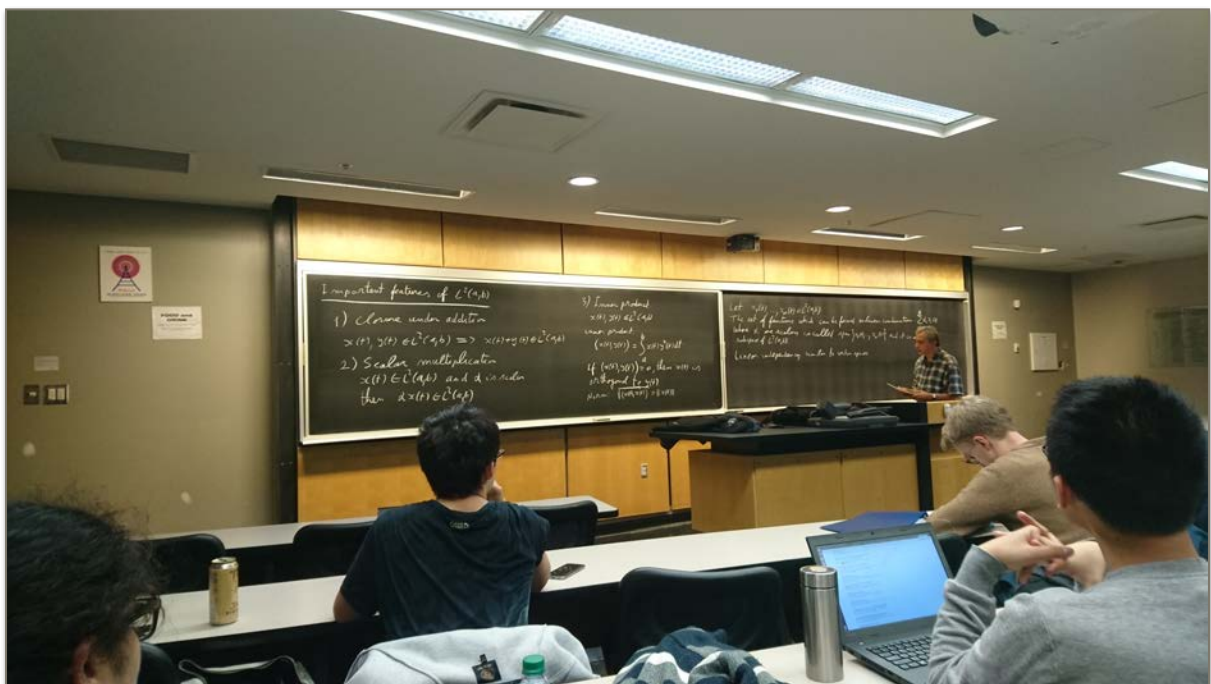
TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT	SUN
8:30 AM							
9:00 AM		ECSE 411 Lecture [ENGR 0060]		ECSE 411 Lecture [ENGR 0060]			
9:30 AM							
10:00 AM							
10:30 AM	ECSE 414 Lecture [ENGM 304]		ECSE 414 Lecture [ENGM 304]				
11:00 AM							
11:30 AM							
12:00 PM	FACC 400 Lecture [LEA 26]	ECSE 415 Lecture [ENGR 2120]	ECSE 411 Tutorial [ENGR 0070]	ECSE 415 Lecture [ENGR 2120]	ECSE 414 Tutorial [ENGM 204]		
12:30 PM					FACC 400 Tutorial [ENGM 304]		
1:00 PM							
1:30 PM							
2:00 PM							
2:30 PM				ECSE 415 Tutorial [ENGR 0060]			
3:00 PM							
3:30 PM							
4:00 PM							
4:30 PM	FACC 100 Lecture [MASS 112]		COMP 273 Lecture [ENGM 13]		COMP 273 Lecture [ENGM 13]		
5:00 PM							

VI. Appendix

1. Graduate School Fair



2. The Students and Classroom



3. The “Fake” Aptitude Test in the Orientation Program



4. Mount Royale — A beautiful mountain just next to the campus

