

PQBA Overseas Internship Report

Internship Institution: Université de Sherbrooke (USherbrooke),

Interdisciplinary Institute for Technological Innovation - 3IT

Internship supervisor: Marc-André Tétrault, Assistant Professor

Faculty of Engineering, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

1. My preparation:

1.1. About scholarship

Starting from June 2020 (about one year before the internship):

I had regular online meetings with Prof. Tétrault and Prof. Nomachi to discuss the contents of the internship project and the scholarship for the internship.

I got the Merit scholarship program for foreign students (PBEEE)

<https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/en/program/merit-scholarship-program-for-foreign-students-pbeec/>

from Fonds de recherche du Québec (can be understood as Quebec Research Fund).

This annual scholarship is for:

- Doctoral research scholarships
- Postdoctoral scholarships
- Short-term research (4 months, I got this one)

There are also other research funds from Fonds de recherche du Québec for students and researchers in the Quebec region, which can be found at: <https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/en/>

My advice for the following students: Early contact the internship supervisor about the project and available scholarships.

1.2. About documents, Visa, Study/Work Permit

Starting from November 2020, I got from USherbrooke office about:

- Documents to submit to USherbrooke
- Internship Agreement between Osaka Univ. (OU) and USherbrooke. I got the form of the Internship Agreement from USherbrooke Office.
- How to apply for the Canadian Work Permit and Visa

About the Work Permit

I got the instruction from USherbrooke Office starting from January 2021. For my case, USherbrooke instructed me to apply for a Work Permit instead of a Study Permit. The permit may be different for other students.

Work permit application process

- USherbrooke office instructed me to start the application at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/come-canada-tool.html>. For questions about the application, I directly contacted USherbrooke Office for answers.
- Required documents: some of them are provided by OU, some are provided by USherbrooke
- Visit VFS Global, Osaka Office for Biometric information collection (face photo and fingerprint) after online document submission.
- When my application for the Work Permit got accepted, I sent my passport to Canada Visa Application Center in Tokyo (via postal mail because of COVID) to get the Visa for entering Canada. I got the Work Permit when I entered Canada at Montreal International Airport.

My advice for the following students: Ask the internship supervisor to contact an office of the institution that can support international admission. Then, the student just needs to follow the instructions of the office.

1.3. Coming to Canada:

I had my internship when the COVID situation was still difficult, so some of the following points may not apply to students travel in the future:

- General Travel Information: from USherbrooke office and <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19/visitors-foreign-workers-students.html> (should check the updates from this website)
- USherbrooke Mentor system: it is similar to the tutor system. The mentor is a student assigned by USherbrooke to help the new students/interns before and after their arrivals.
- Flights and quarantine place: When I went to Sherbrooke, the quarantine period in Canada was 14 days, including a 3-night mandatory stay at a government-authorized hotel near the airport where I entered Canada. I spent the rest of my quarantine (~11 days) at the USherbrooke Residence, a kind of university dormitory.

It took me about a month to decide the flight and quarantine schedule:

- o Transit outside or inside Canada: → transit in Paris, France to arrive at Montreal International Airport, the closest international airport to USherbrooke.
- o Travel from the hotel to the quarantine place (USherbrooke Residences): → shuttle bus, about a 2-hour drive
- o Support during the trip to USherbrooke Residences: Departure and arrival dates of the flight was during weekdays. Travel to USherbrooke Residence was on the weekend because the Reception desk at the Residences still worked on the weekend. I got the phone numbers of the internship supervisor and the mentor for emergencies after office hours.
- Housing: I contacted the USherbrooke Residence more than one month before my internship for the quarantine and lodging places for my 4-month internship. I got a room for my quarantine, but no room was available for my whole internship. I will mention more details in the next section: Advice for students planning to have internships at USherbrooke
- COVID test, insurance, etc.: When I came to Canada, there were some requirements about COVID-19 Negative Test Result, insurance during the internship, and other documents.

My advice for the following students:

- Carefully consult the internship institution and the Canadian government website mentioned in the General Travel Information. From what I know before leaving Canada: a 3-night stay at a hotel is currently not required, and a vaccination passport may help reduce the quarantine period.
- During the discussion time with the internship supervisor, ask ahead about housing information at the institution. It may take a few months before the internship to reserve a room.

2. Advice for students planning to have internships at USherbrooke:

2.1. Internship period

At USherbrooke and other universities in Quebec, there are 3 terms/semesters in an academic year. Each lasts about 4 months: Fall (Sept to Dec), Winter (Jan to Apr), and Summer (May to Aug).

It is better to fit the internship in a single term if not exceeding 4 months. (The PBEEE scholarship for short-term research mentioned above is also for a 4-month internship.)

To start an internship at USherbrooke in a term, one needs to enroll in a program of that term. My 4-month internship lasted from 1 term to another. I did not notice when my enrollment for the 1st term got expired, so I got some problems with the bus access. The bus access and other benefits (gym, pool, medical insurance, etc.) are included in a program's enrollment. It was possible to apply for another program in the 2nd term, but it took time and an additional enrollment fee. For my case, my internship lasted less than 20 days in the 2nd term, and I just needed bus access, so I decided to buy separate bus passes.

2.2. Accommodations

Rental start date and period: The rent contract usually starts at the same time with a term of the university and has a period of 4 months (1 term), 8 months (2 terms), or 1 year (3 terms). It may be hard to find a rent room or an apartment when arriving in the middle of a term or when the renting period is different from those mentioned above.

University Residences: USherbrooke offers rooms in dormitory-like buildings called Residences. Room availability:

- Summer term: many rooms available for periods less than 4 months up to the whole term
- Fall and Winter terms: rooms usually reserved for students with 8-month or 1-year contracts.

Renting outside the campus: People in the neighborhood around the campus usually have extra rooms for students to rent. Apartments are also available in the area. Where to find:

<https://www.uni-logi.com/rechercherLogements.do>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/324321370955399/>

https://www.kijiji.ca/h-sherbrooke-qc/1700156?siteLocale=en_CA

My opinion:

- Short internship (less than 4 months): it may be better to fit the internship within the summer term and stay at the residence

- Long internship (more than 4 months): staying outside is better. It is possible to negotiate the rental period if it is different from the usual periods. The rent payment is quite close between a rent room outside and a room at the Residences (around 300 – 400 CAD/month for both), but one will share the bathroom, kitchen, and laundry area with fewer people.
- Once decided the internship period, one should have more than one month to contact the Residences or look for a room outside the campus.

2.3. Some initial payments

Enrollment fees and rent payment for the 1st month are required at the beginning of the internship. Cash or direct transfer from a Canadian bank are the 2 possible payment methods.

I believe most scholarship payments will come after the 1st month, so my advice is to have enough cash or have a credit card that allows international withdrawal.

In my case, I did not have enough cash, and I could not withdraw money from my credit card also, so I had to borrow money from other people. It was not a good experience.

2.4. Phone with internet access

Sherbrooke is a French-speaking city, but nearly everyone can speak English. However, most of the written information (e.g., announcements from the university) is in French, so having a phone with internet access for translation is a good option. A phone with internet access is also useful when using a map or a bus.

How to apply for a mobile plan: My experience is that most brands offer online registrations, but it requires a Canadian Credit card. One can also visit a shopping mall (<https://www.carrefourdelestrrie.com>) to register for a mobile plan at the store and get supports from the staff.

2.5. Others

Food: In Sherbrooke, I could not find convenient stores like those in Japan. Preparing the food by oneself or finding a rent room near a supermarket are good options.