



The Ontario/Maharashtra-Goa Student Exchange Program

2010-2011 **Guide for Students coming to Ontario** **from** **Maharashtra and Goa**

Prepared by the OMG Ontario Program Office

Updated August 20, 2010

Disclaimer

These notes are provided for your information and convenience only. We make no claim, expressed or implied, that the information contained in these notes are free of error, or that they will meet your requirements during your participation in the OMG Program. You are responsible for **all aspects** of your participation in the Program, including, but not limited to, your health, safety, lodging, course selection, study program, travel plans, legal status, insurance, and financial obligations. The OMG Program Offices in Canada and India; your home and host universities; and their representatives and agents assume no financial or other liability arising from or related to your participation in the Program.

**In Canada and US
For Any Emergency
Dial 911**

In addition, your university campus may have a special campus emergency number also. Note and memorise this number.

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Introduction

Congratulations! You have been chosen to participate in the Ontario/Maharashtra-Goa (OMG) Student Exchange Program, collaborative initiatives of universities in Ontario, the colleges and universities in Maharashtra and Goa, and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The exchange is a personal opportunity for you: to pursue your studies at one of the participating universities in Ontario, and to grow from the experience of living in a foreign culture.

These Notes gives you information that will help you make the most of your stay in Ontario. You should also consult the website of your host university for further information and practical advice regarding your time in Ontario.

We hope you will attend both the OMG Orientation Workshop (the three-day “incoming” Orientation

Workshop in Toronto, August 23-25, 2010, see Page 4) and the Orientation events organised by your Host university. Please also consult the OMG website and your host university webpage for details and updated information.

For the Orientation Workshop please arrive at the Glendon College campus of York University in Toronto by 11:00 a.m., Monday, August 23, 2010. You may have to arrive in Toronto on Sunday, August 22 in order to make it on time.

The OMG Program Office, housed at York University, is there to help you and to answer any questions you may have now and during your stay in Ontario. The contact information is listed on the inside front cover of this Handbook.

Expectations and Responsibilities

The Program Office will do all it can to assist you. In the interests of avoiding misunderstandings, please be aware of, and hold to, the following list of expectations and responsibilities:

You are expected to engage in **full-time, non-degree** study at your host university for a maximum of one academic year. The definition of “full-time study” may vary by discipline and level. “Non-degree” means that the courses you take at the home institution will not be counted towards a degree at the host university. Advanced students engaged in research are responsible for obtaining the approval of their home program for the type and amount of work to be done. Students engaging solely in course work should plan to be formally enrolled in **at least three courses per academic term**. **Note:** Attending a course as an “auditor” (also known as ‘auditing a course’) does not count as being formally enrolled.

You are responsible for keeping the Program Office informed of your current address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

You are responsible for **all aspects** of your participation in the Program, including, but not

limited to, your health, safety, lodging, course selection, study program, travel plans, legal status and financial obligations. The Ontario Program Office, your home and host universities, and their representatives and agents assume no financial or other liability arising from or related to your participation in the Program.

You are responsible for submitting a final report on your participation in the Program to the Program Office within 30 days of the end of your studies at the host university, and for responding to requests for information from the Program Office during the year.

As a student officially enrolled at **both** your host university and your home institution, you are expected to be aware of, and observe, the regulations of both institutions.

After you return home, we hope that you will stay in contact with the OMG Program, and that you will want to act as a mentor for Ontario students coming to your home institution.

A Travel Survival Kit

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements to Canada. The sooner you do this, the better chance you have of finding a relatively inexpensive flight.

It is a good idea to pack a “survival kit” with a change of clothes in your carry-on luggage. There have been many reports of checked luggage arriving days after the passenger to whom it belongs.

Arriving in Ontario: The Orientation Workshop

If you have ‘a manageable amount of luggage’, and you do not travel during the morning or afternoon rush hour, you can use the bus/ subway to travel quite cheaply from the airport to downtown, the bus or rail stations, or the Glendon campus. The total cost will be about \$2-\$3. Do remember to ask for a ‘transfer’, as

you can use it to change from bus to subway etc. without paying extra.

If you have much luggage, try to share a taxi from the airport to York University with other students. The total cost should be about \$45.00 - \$50.00.

Temporary Accommodation (General)

For temporary accommodation consider youth hostels in a number of Ontario locations: Barrie, Niagara Falls, Ottawa, Orillia, Peterborough, Sault Ste.

Marie (pronounced “soo saint marie”), Thunder Bay, and Toronto. See www.hihostels.ca/; other hostels

(www.hostels.com/ca.on.html) are in most university cities. There are many private hostels in Toronto, some of them right downtown (Church Street, King Street, Gerrard St. West, etc.). You can check their rates and facilities at <http://www.hostels.com/toronto/canada>.

These hostels are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and are busy in the summer months. In Toronto, wherever you wish to stay, book in advance!

If you wish to become a Youth Hostel member, check: www.hihostels.ca. Memberships cost \$35.00 +

Temporary Accommodation at Host University

Your host university (or other universities) may also be able to function as a short-term hostel in August. To find out whether this is possible, please contact the International Office of the university in

tax in Canada, possibly less in India. In addition, the following links may help you find inexpensive accommodation:

Ontario: www.travellerspoint.com/budget-accommodation-en-co-37.html;

Toronto: www.travellerspoint.com/budget-accommodation-en-ci-1288.html.

And don't forget these two sites:

www.couchsurfing.com;

www.hospitalityclub.org/.

Duration of Exchange Term

Although universities tend to admit exchange students for the period from September to May, students participating in the OMG Student Exchange Program may study for up to one full year (twelve

months), with permission from the host university. If you are told otherwise, please contact the OMG Program Office, though please remember that it is ultimately your host university that will decide.

Fees

International students pay approximately three times the normal tuition fee, which may be \$5,000 per year (5 courses per term). **As a OMG student you do not pay tuition fees.** However, there may be special courses that are not part of the regular curriculum (for example: English as a Second Language), you may be charged extra.

Some universities also require students to pay student activity fees. Policies (and prices) vary from university to university. Ask the International Student Advisor at your host university. And if, by some chance, your host university tries to bill you for tuition and you do not succeed in convincing them that this is a mistake, please contact the OMG Program Office.

Study Permit (Visa)

Your Host university International center will have the current study/ work permit regulations. To study in Canada, you must have a "Study Permit" (a kind of visa). Information is available at: www.canadainternational.gc.ca/india-inde/visas/study-etudier_canada.aspx?lang=eng.

If you need to have your Study Permit extended you can get the information you need at: www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/extend-student.asp.

When you have been formally admitted to an Ontario university, you will receive a letter to that

effect from the university. This is an important document that you will need for your Study Permit. Do not lose it.

Keep all documents with you when you fly and do not put them into your checked luggage, which you will claim only after you clear Canada Customs and Immigration

You will need a visa to enter the USA. Please visit the following website or consult the Embassy of the USA in Canada:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/temp_1305.html.

Health & Other Insurance

For any emergency situations call: 9 1 1.

For free and confidential health advice you can call a toll-free number 1 866 797-0000 You can speak to a registered nurse who will advise you on the best course of action.

The universities of Ontario have arranged for international students to be covered by the "University Health Insurance Plan" (UHIP; pronounced "you-hip"). UHIP covers you for hospital and medical services that you need to maintain your health in Canada. It does not cover the cost of most prescription medicines or of most dental services. If you plan to travel outside Canada, you need additional health insurance

Participation in UHIP is required for international students as well as their dependents. UHIP is regulated

by the Council of Ontario Universities. It is in effect at all Ontario universities except the University of Windsor, which has its own required insurance plan ("Green Shield

UHIP covers you for the time you are studying in Canada, beginning the 10th day of the month before term starts (i.e.: August 10). If you are arriving in Canada earlier than that, please ensure that you have coverage for the interim.

UHIP costs \$63 per month. You will pay for at least the first 4 months when you arrive at your host university. For more information on UHIP see: www.uhip.ca.

What to Bring with You

Clothing

When you arrive you may be wearing shorts and a T-shirt. Summers can be quite hot; but in winter it can get **very** cold. You will need a good winter coat, hat, gloves, and boots. Winter clothing available in Ontario tends to be better designed to protect from the Ontario cold, and is often less expensive than in India.

Electrical

Electricity supply is 110v 60Hz. Many electrical devices have universal power supplies (110 to 240v, 50 and 60Hz). So your equipment from India may work in Canada. Exceptions are equipment with heaters, such as hair-dryers, room heaters. You will need a plug adapter.

Finances

Your host university is the best source of information on the costs and other money matters in general and on your host city in particular. The exchange rate between the Rupee and the Canadian dollar is quite variable. As of August 2010, the exchange rate was 100 Rs = CAD \$2.23.

Expect to spend at least CAD \$1000 per month (around Rs 44,000).

Money

You should bring with you some **traveler's cheques** (\$1500-\$2000 is a reasonable amount) to tide you over until you can transfer money from bank to bank. Buy Canadian dollar traveler's cheques from your bank at home. If you use US dollar cheques, you will pay twice for the conversion. In addition bring some CAD-\$300 in cash. Once you get to your host university, one of the first things you should do is to set up a bank account. You might want to check with your bank at home to see if it has a correspondence or partner bank in Canada. Several Indian banks issue worldwide ATM cards, to be paid out of your India bank account. In the Toronto area there are branches

of the State Bank of India and ICICI Bank, both of which provide online banking.

Credit Cards and Bank Drafts

A credit card is almost a must if you are planning on renting a car; without one, the rental company may require a large cash security deposit. Canadians use credit cards to pay for everything.

Budgeting

You will have substantial costs at the beginning of your stay in your host city.

Accommodation;

Student Activity fee;
Bus Pass
UHIP;
Books;
Phone

Because you do not know your host city, you will not be able to live as economically as you did in your home university city..

It is important that you have a personal monthly budget and that you monitor it, especially at the beginning of your stay.

Advice and Support

The best way to get official information about (or from) your host university before and after you arrive in Ontario is to contact its International Office. All Ontario universities have one. This office can give you details on procedures, help arrange for a room in residence, and generally advise you on all aspects of academic life. Some offices have special "survival guides" for international students, and some sponsor inexpensive and interesting outings. Others have peer mentor programs that match you with a local student who can help you get oriented.

The Ontario universities recognize the need to give you special support, especially at the beginning of your stay in Ontario. Several modes of support are in place to help you.

Each Ontario university has designated someone as the "primary liaison person" for the OMG Student Exchange. Sometimes that person is also the university's International Student Advisor. These people will help you with some formalities you will have to go through during the first few days, including finding a room, paying any student service fees, obtaining a library card, and enrolling in courses.

Also feel free to contact the OMG Program Office at any time. The contact information is listed in the box at the bottom of the inside front cover of this Handbook.

The Orientation Workshop

The Workshop will give you a chance to relax and get over your jetlag and culture shock, provide you with important information about life in Ontario, and let you have some fun.

Unfortunately, we must ask you to contribute to financing the Workshop. With accommodation for two nights, meals, transportation in Toronto for two days, recreation, and programming, the cost per student is **CAD \$100.00**. The Ontario Program Office will cover

the rest of the costs for these days, except for some optional incidentals.

As the summer progresses, you will receive detailed information about the Orientation Workshop. Updated information will also be available through the OMG website. Please keep us informed of your plans, your time of arrival, and change of address.

Please note: Hotmail and Yahoo e-mail addresses may have difficulties with attachments. We advise

against your using these e-mail addresses. If you still wish to do so, make sure you receive all the documentation we send you prior to the Workshop. Again, if you are changing your e-mail address, please let us know.

If you have already gone to your host university and are returning to Toronto for the Workshop, we

Arriving at Your Host University

If you are going to your host university for the first time after the Orientation Workshop, you will appreciate the advantages of traveling light. On Wednesday, August 26, the Orientation Workshop will end around lunch time and you will have to find your way to your host university.

You should make an effort to contact your host university prior to your arrival. Find out where on campus to go and whether someone can meet you. Campus maps of most participating universities can be found at the following URL: www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/discipline/Cartography/maplib/cancam.html.

Most universities have their own orientation activities in the fall, most of which are intended for first-year students, colloquially referred to as “freshmen/women” or “frosh.” “Frosh week” can be a lot of fun, even for older students, although you must be prepared for a certain amount of immaturity, silliness, and even poor taste. In any case, it is an interesting phenomenon. Find out if your host university has an orientation, and when it is scheduled.

Accommodations: Living In (and With) Your Room

University residences are run directly by the university. On the one hand, this is an advantage: The universities have more direct control over residence space. On the other hand, residences are not subsidized, so the universities have to charge you what it costs them to run the residences.

Living in residence (“rez”) is very convenient. You are right on campus, and you don’t have to worry about getting to the university for classes. You also have a good chance to meet Canadian students. Residences tend to have a high proportion of first-year students (18-19 years old). They often need to “let off steam” before they settle down to university life, and a number of Exchange students have found the noise, drinking and other activities in residence a source of discomfort. (Others, however, have loved it in residence.)

Many residence contracts require you to buy a “meal plan” (see the section on [Food](#)). Residence students may also have to leave over the Christmas holidays (or pay extra): Ask about such conditions before you sign any contract.

Some residence rooms are in a suite but many are small bedrooms, with bathrooms and kitchens “down the hall.” Specify what kind you would like. Also make it clear that you are older than most Canadian undergraduates, and ask whether you can get a room in a graduate residence or in a residence which is quiet (we hear this is particularly important for those students going to Laurentian – make it clear you want to be in MSR: the Mature Students’ Residence). And

regret that we cannot help to pay for transportation to the Workshop.

Every year one or two students ask whether they can bring a friend or relative to the Orientation. Unfortunately, we are not able to accommodate extra guests, even if they were to pay their own way. We ask your understanding for this policy.

Depending on where you have studied before, you may not have had first-hand experience with a “campus.” There are more and less attractive campuses in Ontario, but all share the notion that the university is a special place that is different from the rest of the city. Campuses tend to have basic amenities such as a bookstore, bank, convenience store, and the like, but the level of development and the quality of the services vary from campus to campus.

Some universities are primarily residential; that is, most of the students live on or near campus. Others are “commuter campuses” where students attend classes much in the same way that employees go to work during the day and go home in the evening. Depending on the flavour of the campus, there will be more or less nightlife. In deciding whether to live “on campus” (in residence) or “off campus,” you should consider, in addition to the factors mentioned above, how easy it is to get to the campus in the winter (see the following section on [Accommodations](#)).

find out whether you can cancel the rental agreement if things don’t work out (or what the penalty would be). In some residences at some universities, you are free to cancel your rental contract at any time; in other situations, there can be heavy financial penalties.

If you are living in residence, you will probably be asked to pay several months’ rent in advance. Sometimes the International Student Advisor at your host university can authorize a deferment (postponement) of payment, although there may be a fee for this service.

Many students choose to live off-campus. The best solution is shared accommodation in a house. Find out whether your rental contract or lease will allow you to move out without penalty if things change. Be sure to get a written agreement spelling out what is included and what is not. Consider carefully the length of the agreement. The custom is to pay first and last month’s rent when you move in, and give a 60-day notice to the landlord/lady before you wish to move out. Your host university’s International Office can refer you to the proper place to help you find a room off campus.

When choosing off-campus accommodation, make sure it is conveniently served by local transportation.

There are many websites that offer shared accommodation. Check out www.roommates.ca. You can get advice on where to stay when you first arrive in Ontario from the website: www.settlement.org/sys/faqs_detail.asp?faq_id=4000326.

Eating, Drinking, Smoking, etc.

If you live in residence, you may have to participate in a “meal plan.” This means that you pay for food in advance, whether you eat it or not. You should enquire carefully about the meal plans offered by your host university. Meal plans can be convenient in that you don’t have to cook for yourself. On the other hand, they are not inexpensive, and the food is not gourmet. If you do take a meal plan, ensure you are not left with unused credit at the end of the year. Some universities also have “kitchen plans” which give you the opportunity (at a price) to prepare your own meals; and some universities have agreements with off-campus restaurants where you can use meal plan credit.

It’s hard to define “Canadian cooking”. There are regional specialties (like pea soup), foodstuffs (like

maple syrup), and ways of preparation. Since Canada is a multi-cultural society, Canadian cooking has a lot of variety.

Speaking of restaurants: In Canada and the United States the tip is usually not included in the bill. You are expected to tip for table service (as opposed to cafeteria service). The normal tip in Ontario is about 15%. Since the combined taxes on food usually come to 13%, some people leave a tip a bit above the taxes (“tip the tax”).

The non-smoking policy in effect at Ontario universities and in public buildings all over the province and in other parts of North America also applies to restaurants and bars. This means that smoking is restricted to certain areas (mostly outside).

Registering at your Host University

Once you arrive at your host university, you will have to do a certain amount of bureaucratic work. It is nothing terrible, but it may involve some standing in line. It’s important that you get your student identification card and that the university has your

address, etc. Remember, you do not pay tuition, but you may have to pay for student services. The most important thing is that you have to be through all administrative chores before courses start. You have to be ready to study as of the first day of classes.

Course Selection

Courses can be distinguished by their level, length, number of weekly contact hours, and type of instruction. Canadian undergraduate degree programs are typically referred to as either “three-year programs” or “four-year [honours] programs.” Some fourth-year honours courses can be as demanding as courses at the Master’s level. Learn how to read course codes.

Two examples:

York University

AS/POLI 4175 6.0A

AS = Faculty of Arts

POLI = Department of Political Science

4175 = fourth-year level;

6.0 = 6 credits, that is two terms (Fall and Winter)

A = section

The University of Western Ontario

Political Science 406G

A course at the fourth level meeting for one term (the letter “b” or “G” designates this as a winter-term course); the calendar further states that there are two seminar hours per week.

Courses that meet for one term only are often called “half-courses”; courses that meet for two terms

are often called “full courses.” The number of credit points attached to a course varies by university. For example, a one-semester course may be worth 3 credits at one university, and 5 credits at another.

Sometimes you will hear students or professors referring to courses as “third-year” or “second-year” courses. In most cases, this does not mean that the students are all in their third or second year. It simply designates the level of the course. Graduate course numbers often begin with a 5 or 6, but it is not unusual for fourth-level and fifth-level (that is: advanced undergraduate and beginning graduate) courses to be combined.

It will be clear from the two examples given above that course numbering systems, as well as the information they provide, vary markedly from university to university. The specifics of each university’s system for designating courses cannot be covered here, but you should be aware that you need to understand the system used at your host university. To do so you are advised to pay careful attention to the appropriate parts of the university’s Academic Calendar, in which the system is explained.

Lectures, Tutorials, Assignments

The principal mode of delivering information in lecture courses at Ontario universities is centralized (from the instructor to the students). But lecture courses may also have discussion or tutorial groups attached to them; and in any case, you will have to submit written work and/or take a mid-term examination or a final examination.

Tutorials in Canada generate more discussions than elsewhere. In general it is fair to say that in Canada the formal “type” of course is not as important as the kind of work that will be done and the size of the course.

You can find out about the kinds of assignments and the marking scheme from the supplemental calendar and/or the course syllabus which will probably be handed out at the first meeting of the course. Also, more and more professors use web pages or Course Management Systems such as Moodle, WebCT, or LotusNotes rather than hard copies to distribute course material.

The Program Office recommends that you look at a range of course levels and types.

Calendar and Time Table

How do you find out about courses? You need to consult several publications/ webpages.

The **calendar** lists important dates in the academic year, the academic and non-academic regulations. The calendar lists all courses which have been approved by the university Senate or equivalent body. In other words, it contains those courses which **may** be taught in a given year, not those which **will** be taught.

The **“lecture schedule”** or “course schedule” (which gives the times and places of courses scheduled for a given year); and

The supplemental calendar or **“mini-calendar”** of the faculty or department

Don't restrict your search for courses to a single department or faculty. The course(s) you need may be in a related department. For example, “Social Science” may house an exciting political science or sociology course. Explore! Introductory statistics may be offered by half dozen departments on campus etc.

Lecture schedules and supplemental calendars for the whole academic year beginning in September are usually available in the previous spring. Course and timetable information are found on the university web sites. This information is updated regularly, and may alert you to courses that are full or cancelled, or changes in meeting times or places.

Student Calendar/ Ratings

Sometimes student groups also issue “counter-calendars” or “anti-calendars” which give students' opinions on specific courses, often based on questionnaires filled out by students in the previous year. Although they must be taken with a grain of salt, they can often give a good indication of which courses

are really good and which are really bad. Student groups (for example: Engineering Students' Association) are another potential source of information. Talking about courses is also a good way to make contact with Canadian students.

Department/ Faculty Academic Counsellor

You should also contact the academic advisor of the department(s) in which you are interested, either when you arrive or by e-mail. These faculty members can be a big help if you are lacking so-called “prerequisites.” The existence of several course “levels” goes hand-in-hand with the system of prerequisites, or courses which you need to have taken in order to qualify for other courses. For example, you may find that in order to take a fourth-level seminar, you need to have taken a second-level course in the

same area. These restrictions are noted in the calendars, and they can prove frustrating to exchange students who have, after all, very little chance of having taken prerequisite courses. You need to “talk your way into” courses by explaining to the instructor or the advisor (1) what kind of work you have done in that field already, and (2) that you are an exchange student who will only have one opportunity to take the course.

Enrolling in a Course

Enrolling in a course is a formal procedure at Canadian universities. Students enrol themselves by computer or telephone; occasionally the department or registrar's office enrolls the student. In case of difficulty, your host International Student Office can probably help you.

When a course is full (as defined by the computer) no more enrolments can be accepted. But keep trying until the enrolment deadline. When somebody drops the course a spot becomes free.

You can always talk to the person who has the power to make exceptions. Sometimes that is the instructor, but very often it isn't. Talk to the instructor

first to see if there is some leeway. Suggest attending the class informally for a while. That way, if someone else “drops” the course you will be ready to “add” it.

Courses usually start at the time listed, and end ten minutes or so before the next class period. Some universities schedule their courses to start on the hour, some on the half-hour, and some may use a mixed schedule. Courses also meet for different periods of time (usually amounting to three hours per week for undergraduate and two hours per week for graduate courses).

Add/ Drop

Dropping and adding are important because students receive grades for all courses in which they are enrolled after a certain date (the “add / drop deadline”). By all means, shop around in the first weeks of term, but **be aware that (1) to get a grade, you must be formally enrolled in the course; and (2) in order not to get a grade, you must drop the course before the drop deadline.** If you simply stop

attending, or do not hand in the work, you will get a low, and probably failing grade (F) on your record.

Some universities or instructors will allow you to attend a course as an “auditor”; for extra courses of interest this might be a possibility. Advice: If you audit a course and do not do the work, you will not benefit much from it. Time management is essential, and you should prioritize courses in which you are formally enrolled.

Special Courses

If you don't find any courses to your liking, you can always try to persuade a professor to do an "independent reading course" with you or to let you participate in a project. You should also keep in mind that you can probably enrol in courses outside of your

major field; this year could be a good year to do something different – something that has always interested you but for which you haven't yet made time, or something that is unique to Canada.

Number of Courses to Take

You may be tempted to take a large number of courses, either because you want to take full advantage of the different kinds of courses available at your host university, or because you don't want to "waste a year." Obviously, personal choice plays a large role here, but for most students, three graduate and four undergraduate courses per semester are plenty to keep you busy. You can easily find yourself overloaded to the point where you miss out on a lot of the benefits (academic and non-academic) of being in

Ontario (see [The Rhythms of the Ontario Academic Year](#)). In deciding how many courses are right for you, consider the kind and level of course, and whether it is a "full course" or a "half-course": "half-courses" often have a more hectic schedule of reading, writing, and examinations than do "full courses." Be aware that if you take "too many" courses (e.g. more than 10 semester-long courses during your stay), your host university may charge you international tuition fees.

Books

You are expected to buy your own books for each course. Certain courses also put books and readings "on reserve" in the library, but the university's bookstore or local bookshops also order copies of the course books listed by the instructor. These books can be very expensive. Canadian students spend approximately \$1000 on books per academic year.

Here are some tips for purchasing books. First, you may find that too few have been ordered; thus, it is often advantageous to buy books quickly after the beginning of classes. On the other hand, this means standing in long lines. If you buy them before classes start, you may find that the book is no longer on the

reading list. Also for some courses you have to buy "course kits" that can be as expensive as books.

Sometimes you can find second-hand books which are highly discounted, but be careful to establish that you are buying the proper edition. If you buy new books, do not write or mark in them in any way until you are certain you wish to remain in the course. If you do decide to drop the course, you can return unmarked books within a set time limit (check with the bookstore) and get the full price back. If you use the books, you can also sell them back to the bookstore or book bazaar at the end of the course and recoup some of your money.

The Rhythms of the Ontario Academic Year

As in so many other aspects of university life, the rhythms of the Ontario academic year are not as uniform from institution to institution. Starting and ending dates differ by university, and so do the shapes of the year. Most universities have fall and winter terms (beginning in early September and ending in late April or early May), with or without a summer term in addition. But some are on other systems. Get a list of the "sessional dates" for your host university (check the university calendar or the web).

As an example, see the University of Toronto page listing sessional and financial dates, exam timetables, holidays, and policies for religious observances and "snow days":

http://www.students.utoronto.ca/Important_Dates.htm

Courses in Ontario tend to demand a fair amount of work on a regular schedule. If you are in the Humanities or Social Sciences you will probably find yourself writing more papers and submitting more assignments than you are used to at home. We will leave it to you to decide whether the value and level of the work are comparable to what you know from your home institution.

Work for a course must be handed in by a certain point in the term. You may be lucky and be enrolled in courses without a final examination. Also there are

"take-home" (done at home) and "open-book" (with documents) exams.

The disadvantages of the Ontario system are obvious, but there are big advantages as well: When you're done, you're done. You can go skiing (or scuba diving) over Christmas with a clear conscience.

Our advice, then, is to keep two things in mind: (1) Don't take too many courses; and (2) don't let things pile up until the last minute.

Remember, you are working in a foreign country and an academic culture with which you aren't fully familiar, and you won't be as efficient as you are at home, at the least at the beginning of the school year. So don't miss first day of classes and start studying from the very beginning.

The kinds of work demanded vary from course to course. Standard forms are the "paper" or "essay," which put less emphasis on secondary sources and more on your opinions; the mid-term examination; the final examination ("sit-down" or "take-home"), the test (a shorter examination), and the oral report. In the sciences, lab reports are also usual. In some fields (i.e. business) group projects and oral presentations are very important. And don't forget: Students in Canada produce all their papers on the computer.

Most Ontario universities have an academic counselling service, writing centre, or the like, which offers help on study habits and the writing of polished

papers. This is not to be confused with services which actually write your papers for you, a form of cheating which can get students thrown out of the university. Avail yourself of the services your host university

offers; you'll not only improve your studying and writing, but you'll get an interesting insight into the concept of the "essay" in Canada and how it differs from what you are used to.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Speaking of "cheating" and cultural differences, Ontario students may or may not cooperate readily on projects. This may have to do with a greater sense of competition, but in part it stems from a moralism that "everyone should do her or his own work" and that to collaborate is to be dishonest. Please keep these differences in mind.

In the past few years, with the increased use of the Internet, universities have reinforced their battle against academic dishonesty and more specifically plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as "representing someone else's ideas or writing as your own."

Some universities require that all papers be examined by some kind of plagiarism detection software (such as Turnitin.com).

Being accused of plagiarism can result in a long and painful university trial. Being convicted can result in a range of penalties, including an F on the piece of work and transcript notation. Make sure you fully understand the concept of plagiarism and know the penalties involved at your host university. If you are not certain about documenting sources, ask your instructor.

Working and Studying

To be able to work you need a SIN. It's your Social Insurance Number, and without it you can't work in Canada. As an international student, you can get a SIN. The number will start with a 9, indicating to employers that you need special authorization to work. **You need to have a job offer to apply for a SIN.** The SIN card is free. Please check the following website: www.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/sc/sin/index.shtml.

A **contract of employment** from your host university or from an employer on campus will allow Human Resources Development Canada to issue your SIN. This means that it will be easy to get permission to work on campus (though finding a job may be a problem).

It will be more difficult for you to work outside the university, either during or after the academic term. If you are interested in working during your stay in Ontario, you should speak to the International Student

Advisor at your host university. You will need a work permit, the fee for which is \$150. For more information see

workingincanada.gc.ca/public_html/content_pieces.jsp?category_id=74&lang=en.

For tax (and other) purposes, make sure that you leave a valid address with your host university when you return, so that the university can send you the necessary receipts. If you do earn money, be prepared for a relatively high tax bill: you will probably not be eligible for a number of deductions otherwise available to permanent residents of Canada. For this reason, you should save all your receipts relating to your travel to Canada (plane ticket, hotel bills, health insurance receipts, etc.). See next section on Taxes.

Taxes

If you are employed in Canada, you must file an income tax by April 30 of the year following the calendar year in which the employment took place. These forms will be available in the winter of 2010 for income earned in 2009, and in the winter of 2011 for income earned in 2010. There are special forms for international students. Your International Student Office may have the forms on hand, or you can contact the Canada Revenue Agency or the Canadian Embassy

in your country. For further information see: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tax/nonresidents/individuals/students-e.html

Canada has an add-on "Harmonized Sales Tax" (HST) which applies to a large number of items and services bought in Canada. The tax is currently 13%.

All prices in stores and restaurants are shown before adding the tax (and in restaurants, the tip). Don't underestimate your actual total cost.

Meeting People, Social Life, Recreation

It is natural for you to feel alone away from home. The Orientation Workshop in Ontario will ease your first shock of being in North America. You will get over this loneliness much more quickly - and go on to benefit much more from being in Canada - if you make the effort to meet Canadians, students and non-students. We cannot recommend strongly enough that you take the initiative to meet and make new friends.

Here is a specific piece of advice: Find a hobby-oriented or other interest group (drama club, chorus, environmentalist group, sports club) or volunteer work, and start participating! This is a simple and effective way to find Canadians who share your

interests. Even a job on campus can be a good way to meet all kinds of people. And sometimes, volunteer work might be countable as an internship.

Because of the pressure of the academic year, Canadian students tend to concentrate on work very early in the term. Also many of them hold a part-time job while studying. Partly for these reasons (but no doubt as part of our culture in general), Canadian students don't have the same kind of social life as do their colleagues elsewhere. Try to understand the Canadian way at the same time as you are sharing Indian ways with Canadians.

Stereotyping and Intercultural Differences

Finding out about differences between Indian and Canadian society and culture (academic and otherwise) will be one of the most interesting things about your stay in Ontario. One must always be aware that generalizations are dangerous; indeed, a short stay abroad is not a very good way to become aware of the subtleties of a culture.

Still, it is fair to say that Anglo-Canadian society (and to a certain extent North American anglophone society) can be quite prescriptive about “morals.” And “morals” are defined quite broadly. This Handbook has already informed you about formal rules regarding smoking and the consumption of alcohol, and about different concepts of “cooperation” and “cheating.”

Travel

Canada is the land of buses and planes. Intercity buses are a fairly inexpensive and fairly convenient way to go medium distances. For longer distances, you might be able to get some cheap flights. At several universities you'll find a branch of “Travel CUTS,” (Canadian University Travel Service) www2.travelcuts.com/ travel agency which specializes

in student travel and is owned by Canadian student organizations (this is not an endorsement). You can call them toll free at 1 866 246 9762 in Canada.

You should get an International Student Identity Card (ISIC card) in your home country, or you can buy it in Canada at any Travel CUTS location or at most Via Rail stations for \$16.00 (\$17.50 if by mail).

Air Travel

Look for “seat sales.” Major companies include:

Air Canada www.aircanada.com/

Air Canada Jazz www.flyjazz.ca

Westjet www.westjet.com/

Zoom Airlines www.flyzoom.com/

Air Transat www.airtransat.com/

and many more.

Trains and Buses

They are of course also very convenient. An ISIC card will get you a 35% discount on the full economy fare with Via Rail (www.viarail.ca/), without an advance-purchase requirement (it is often advisable to book in advance, as trains usually sell out at busy times). You can save 50% off regular fare with Via “6-Pack”: <http://www.viarail.ca/en/students/>.

Via Rail has a special website called Via Campus for students: <http://www.viarail.ca/en/students/>

Greyhound Canada (www.greyhound.ca/) offers a 25% discount on bus travel to students holding an ISIC card. They offer a special “companion fare” for students - see the website for details: <http://www.greyhound.ca/HOME/en/DealsAndDiscounts/StudentFares.aspx>. Keep in mind that trains are more expensive and less frequent than buses.

Drive-Away

You might also want to consider applying to a “drive-away” company, which arranges for cars to be delivered to their owners in various locations. You drive the car. The arrangements for your expenses and any fee you may have to pay will vary. You can try this

one in Toronto: www.torontodriveaway.com/. They offer Snowbird Seasonal Services. (“Snowbirds” are Canadians - usually retired - who spend the winter in warm climates. Common destinations include Canada East and West, Arizona, California, Florida).

Car Rental

There are many companies and many deals in Ontario to rent a car. Car rental is the cheapest and most convenient way of traveling if you have a minimum of four passengers. You have to be at least 21 years old to rent a car. If you are under 25, however, insurance will be more expensive. Gas is also becoming more expensive.

You can even rent a used car. Check the following website: www.rentawreck.ca.

Car rental companies like you to have a credit card. If you have the right one (check at home), your insurance costs may be covered automatically. If you will be renting a car, a card that covers insurance in this way can pay for itself quickly. If you do rent a car, make certain that you are fully covered by insurance (“no deductible”) and that everyone who will be driving the car is listed on the rental agreement. If a non-listed driver is involved in an accident the insurance company can and will refuse to pay anything.

Public transportation

Within cities, public transportation is available. In Toronto, the Toronto Transport Commission is known by its initials: TTC: www.ttc.ca. In Ottawa, there is www.octranspo.com/.

In Southern Ontario there is GO Transit, a regional service operating trains and buses.

Student discounts are not as usual, although daily and monthly passes are often available. Ask the International Office of your host university whether you can get a special student discount.

Cycling

Cycling is possible, but remember that whenever you use a bicycle you have to obey traffic rules, and the law requires that you wear a helmet. Winter

weather may also make cycling difficult and hazardous. Sometimes it's better to leave the bike at home.

Walk-Home Services

Every university has a type of "escort" service to walk you, by request, to campus destinations which are less safe areas.

For information on these services, check with student services, campus security, or the international office at your host university.

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

In no time at all the exchange is over, far too soon. It is not unusual for students participating in the OMG program to become so much a part of the life of the host university and society that they do not wish to leave. But, if you must leave, please leave a forwarding address with your host university and the OMG Program Office — we'd very much like to stay in contact with you.

When you arrive home, do not be surprised if you experience a "reverse culture shock." Some exchange

students report that they had to adjust to the "old ways" of being a student at the home university.

When you return to your home region and university, we expect you to share the experiences and knowledge which you gained overseas with your colleagues, teachers, and society. We also hope that you will help sustain the relationship between Ontario and Maharashtra and Goa by assisting newly-arrived students from Ontario who have come to study at your home institution.

Appendix 1: Common Abbreviations in Canada

#	“Number Sign” (e.g. on a telephone or before a number)
911	“Nine-One-One”: Common emergency number for police, fire, ambulance
CAD\$1.00 (August 2010)	CAD\$1.00 = Rs 44.00 (approximate)
CAD \$1.00 = 100¢	A nickel =5¢; a dime = 10¢; a quarter = 25¢; \$1 = a buck (coin = a Loonie); \$2=two bucks (coin = a Toonie)
401	The Four-Oh-One: highway between Windsor and the Ontario / Québec border
ASAP	As Soon As Possible
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BC / BCE	Before Christ / Before the Common Era. Also British Columbia
BIU	Basic Income Unit (universities use for counting students)
BYOB	Bring Your Own Bottle (drinks will not be supplied at a party)
CAA	Canadian Automobile Association
CBC / SRC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation / Société Radio-Canada
CBIE	Canadian Bureau for International Education
COD	Cash On Delivery (pay the delivery person for a package)
ESL / FSL	English as a Second Language / French as a Second Language
EDT	Eastern Daylight Time
EST	Eastern Standard Time (time zone)
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
F/T	Full-Time (see P/T)
FYI	For Your Information
GA / RA / TA	Graduate Assistant / Research Assistant / Teaching Assistant
GP	General Practitioner (family doctor)
GPA	Grade Point Average
GTA	Greater Toronto Area (City of Toronto + surrounding municipalities)
HST (13%)	Harmonised Sales Tax
ID	Identification (card)
LCBO	Liquor Control Board of Ontario (beer, wine store)
LLBO	Liquor Licensing Board of Ontario
N/A	Not Available, Not Applicable (e.g. information on a form or survey)
NHL	National Hockey League
OHIP	Ontario Health Insurance Plan
OPP	Ontario Provincial Police
PJs	Pyjamas
P/T	Part-Time (see F/T)
PTO	Please Turn Over (the page)
Q&A	Question and Answer (session)
QEW	Queen Elizabeth Way (Highway from Toronto to Fort Erie)
RCMP / GRC	Royal Canadian Mounted Police / Gendarmerie Royale du Canada
RSVP	Please respond to the invitation
SIN	Social Insurance Number
TBA	To be announced
T.O.	Toronto
TTC	Toronto Transit Commission (public transit; buses, subways, streetcars)
UHIP / RAMU	University Health Insurance Plan / Régime d'Assurance Maladie Universitaire

All of us with the OMG Program wish you a very good year!



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