

CAFCE International Committee
Student Engagement Sub-Group
Draft Questions for Student Profiles
March 8, 2011

First Name: Guillaume Courcy

Institution: Concordia University

Where did you work abroad: Brussels, Belgium

When did you go abroad: September to December 2010

Which work term: 1st

1. What motivated you to seek out an international work term?

Mostly the thrill of travelling. I have been traveling since a very young age and I love it, I do not miss an opportunity to go when I get one. Joining my engineering education to a trip was the best thing I could possibly do. It is also a good addition to my resume.

2. How did you fund the travel and other costs associated with this opportunity?

I received my student loans and bursaries just as if I was at school since co-op gave me the full-time student status. I also received the mobility bursary from the ministry of education. The living costs such as transit, food and apartment were covered by my employer.

3. Can you tell me what steps you took to secure your co-op position? Did you feel it was hard to secure your co-op position and how would you advise other students to make the same effort?

I contacted the employer through a friend of mine who had worked there before. I then dealt strictly with the employer and he told me I had the job. There was no securing involved, just clear discussion between me and him. I would advise to speak directly with the employer as soon as possible and make a good impression, it is the best way to get your message across.

4. When conducting your job search did you find that many of the jobs available were in specific sectors? (ie: corporate, non-profit, government, etc.) Where, or how, would you suggest other students focus their search?

I did not really do a job search. I heard about the opportunity of going to Belgium to work for ULB and I took it. I did not look for other jobs.

5. Tell me about the cost of living in (city or country). How did your expenses compare to your income based on the salary you were earning? Were you able to save any money and where did you find savings or discounts which reduced your expenses?

The cost of living was a little higher because of the different currency. The money I had from the bursaries was enough given that most of my expenses were paid for. I used the leftover money to travel around so I did not save any. I did have a great time though!

6. How did you find accommodations and what rent can you expect to pay in (city or country)?

The rent was paid by my employer. He provided me with a room in a castle. It was an amazing experience to get to live in such a palace, but it was far from work.

7. What, if any, cultural barriers did you have to overcome and what were some of these challenges?

It was my third time working in Europe, so I did not have any problems blending in.

8. Did you find it difficult to meet new people? What steps did you take to integrate yourself into your new surroundings and make yourself more comfortable in a new setting?

No. To integrate the group, I just went forward and talked with them, ask questions, tell stories, etc. I looked at their routine (ex: lunch) and followed it to get a chance to bond. Then I would go to parties with them and bring up activities. The friendships I made was the best part of my trip.

9. Overall, what advice would you give co-op students who are seeking international opportunities?

The best advice would be just to go for it. It might be scary at first but it is a great life experience. The best way to find any job is by contacts, so do not underestimate the importance of good relationships with everyone you meet.

10. Is there anything else you want us to know about your experience?

Overall I had just an absolutely great experience.