

'Chemistry minor at McGill University in Montreal, Canada'

Course Year: 2018-2019	Study: Chemistry
Date report: 5-6-2019	Interviewee: Roy Steneker

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My name is Roy Steneker, and I'm a third year B.Sc. Chemistry student at the University of Groningen. After having lived all my life in the province of Groningen, it was the highest time for me to get some experience living abroad. I decided to go to Montréal, Canada because it is known to be a great student city and to have rich cultural heritage.

During my second year I started looking into the different possibilities of going abroad. I went to the minor information session that is given in the second year, and I went by the International Office. During these sessions I got a better understanding about what had to be done, and started with doing some research by myself. Online I found a list of partner universities of the RuG. (<https://student.portal.rug.nl/infonet/studenten/fse/international-office/where-to-go/>)

I debated if I wanted to go to Canada or Japan. In the end I choose Canada as the courses there interested me more than those in Japan. The university where I went to was the McGill University in Montreal.

Before going to McGill, I had some healthy nerves. I expected that it was easy for me to make friends and being able to travel around, but I also expected that the programme over there should not be taken lightly.

I had to take an English test beforehand, for the selection process from the International Office. This was the so-called TOEFL test, which is actually quite expensive (around \$200). So when you go abroad, carefully look if you really need an English certificate, or whether a statement that you study in English is sufficient. Next to this test I had to hand in several other documents like my motivation and CV, the reason being that there are only a set number of students who can go abroad. Most of the information needed came from the International Office, they were also able to answer all my other questions.

The courses in McGill were 6 ECTS, meaning I had to do a total of 5 courses. The Board of Examiners has to approve which courses you will do when you are abroad. Therefore, I chose more courses than needed, giving me the option to choose which courses I would do. This is important to keep in mind, as I was not able to do all the courses I originally wanted. I could not do these courses because some of these courses were scheduled at the same time. I wanted to do primarily chemistry courses.

I did a stereochemistry course, learning about how to control the stereochemical outcome of a reaction. Besides this, I also took a green chemistry course where the principles of green chemistry were discussed and exemplified. I also did statistics because we do not have it in Groningen and I wanted to do this. I did a biology course, as well as an undergraduate research project, where I joined a research group and did a small research project on organocatalysis. I asked a professor there if I could join his group.

Because I lived in a foreign country, I quickly became more responsible, as I had to do quite a lot myself. I got more confident in myself, learned some intercultural skills and got better in communicating with others. Next to this I was able to travel a lot in the weekends. There was quite a lot of scenery around Montreal.

If you go abroad you can apply for different scholarships. The one you could apply for are the Marco Polo scholarship, Hollands scholarship and the Groningen University Fund. I applied for the Marco Polo and Hollands scholarship. The amount you receive can depend on where you are going and it will not cover the extra costs you make while being abroad. But it is fairly easy to apply for them so I recommend looking in to it.

Some tips for if you want to go abroad, start early! It can be more paper work then you think. I had to hand everything in before January 31th. It is good to start a few months before the deadline. Look around to which city you would like to go. There are also reports made by exchange students talking about their experience in another country, these can be found on Nestor (study info → studying abroad → experiences from abroad). Keep in mind that going abroad is expensive, especially if you are going to travel a lot.

I would highly recommend going abroad for your minor programme, because it is an amazing experience, during which you get to discover more about other countries and cultures, and you even get to know yourself better! On top of this, you get to see how things are at another university, which essentially makes you more critical, which is a good skill to acquire in your educational career.