

Carolyn Whitten undertook a twelve month exchange to Queen's University, Ontario in Canada for the Canadian academic year 2001-2002.

At UNSW I am now in my 5th year of study in the B Planning program. I was originally only supposed to be going to Canada for one term but applied for an extension within a week of arriving!

Queen's University is a university with a very good reputation. Kingston is a city of approximately 130,000 people. It is an attractive city with many buildings constructed during its brief period as Canada's national capital.

My particular interest in Canadian universities was the fact that the majority of their planning programs have a gender type planning class. I wanted to write my thesis on a gender based planning topic and felt that I would be really able to develop my interests there. At Queen's I took a class called *Feminist Approaches to Planning* which I found to be really interesting, and more about minority groups than just straight gender. I was also able to take undergraduate classes from the geography department which were gender based.

Most planning programs in Canadian universities with an exchange agreement with UNSW are graduate programs. As a result at Queens I found myself mainly studying in the Graduate School of Urban and Regional Planning. This meant a higher standard than what I was used to that in the graduate classes which I took. The length of assignments was considerably longer. My shortest essay was 20-something pages long and I had one class presentation which went for an hour. I tried to stay away from technical subjects in the program as a result!

I found that the assignments I undertook at Queen's allowed considerable freedom to pursue personal interests. Assignment outlines were often quite broad. My undergraduate classes were all very interesting but I did find some of the graduate classes - which had a lot more theory - to be a little dry.

Travelling as a planning student is also a great experience and one of the great things about being an exchange student. It exposes you to a wide variety of problems and possible solutions in many different situations. My classes too opened up new perspectives. Although I did not take any formal classes in Canadian planning law, I was able to learn about laws with quite significant social ramifications. For example, there are statutes which restrict the amount of unrelated people allowed to live in a dwelling together (i.e. no more than two). On a gender based level it prevents single mothers from living together and sharing child minding, thus making the ability to work even harder. It prevents a mix of family sizes and ages within communities and is therefore not conducive for a sustainable community environment. And it provides interesting problems in university towns where the majority of students rely on rental housing.

With regards to the social side of my exchange I have an unquantifiable list of things that I could say to convince you that going on an exchange is an absolutely fantastic way to spend 6 or 12 months of your university degree. Queen's University is quite a bit older than UNSW and the architecture and age of the buildings at my campus was amazing. Attending a university in a smaller town and experiencing the varied

traditions is also fantastic. For instance 'Frosh Week', which is the equivalent to O-week, involves all the faculties having their own dress traditions. The engineers, for example, dye their skin purple and wear kilts, with their hair dyed and spiked. For starters, they slap their Queen's leather jackets on the ground and make cars drive over them!

There were numerous different bars on campus which are all very different. Other events such as the home-coming weekend, Halloween, Thanksgiving and a white Christmas were also a great way to learn about North American culture.

I learnt to ice-skate and would go skating three times a week at the Queen's sports rink and it was free. I had a few attempts at Ice Hockey and I also went and watched the Maple Leafs Ice Hockey team play, and I couldn't even skate when I arrived in Canada.