

# (WU) WIRTSCHAFTSUNIVERSITÄT WIEN VIENNA INNOVATION PROGRAM

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Jonathan Hung King Sang  
jonathanhks@gmail.com

## VISA PROCESS

Since I was a domestic student with a Canadian passport, I did not require a student visa for the program as it was for a period of less than 90 days. For more information on visa requirements for Austria, visit: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-embassy-ottawa/travel-information-on-austria/entry-permits-visa/>

The social component of the program does not require travel outside of Austria, however, some students decided to travel to neighbouring Slovakia, Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic on the weekend. It would be wise to check the visa requirements for these countries additionally if you are planning to make a daytrip on the weekend.

## INSURANCE

My healthcare plan covered emergency medical and I also had a travel Mastercard with additional travel insurance. I do not believe the host school provides any insurance coverage. For travel insurance ensure you read the fine print of the dollar limits and the duration you are covered for. Since I did not have the York University insurance plan, I cannot comment on whether the coverage is adequate. It is important to ensure you are covered for your entire stay, including if you decide to travel before or after the program. Also bring your insurance information policy and contact information in the event you may need it.

## ARRIVAL/AIRPORT

I arrived at Vienna International Airport and it is well connected to the city by train. Airport pick-up is not arranged but our course coordinator did a fantastic job of sending out schedule and train information well in advance of our arrival. At the airport, follow the signs to the train station and buy your ticket at the machine for just under 4 Euro. The train you need to take to WU is the S7 to Praterstern station. From there, depending on where your accommodation is, you can walk or take the metro to your final destination.

## ACADEMICS/TEACHING

Program: Class lecture time was approximately 32 hours in total in the mornings over two weeks. The balance of the time in the afternoon was spent working on project work. This project is with a real-life Austrian company to help put the concepts learned in lecture into practice to ensure you get maximum benefit from the program. We were put into diverse groups for the project based on our cultural and work backgrounds. The client for our group was very engaged in what we were doing, and we had the opportunity to visit their headquarters a couple times and work directly with them.

It will be said right from day one that this program is fairly intense academically. While it certainly had its intense moments with the group project, a Schulich MBA semester is by far more intense. With proper planning with your group, you should be able to enjoy some evenings in Vienna as well as travel outside of Vienna during the long weekend if you desire. Grading for the course was as follows:

- Pre-assignment (individual)<sup>1</sup>: 20%
- In-class assignments (group): 20%
- In-class participation (individual): 20%
- Final documentation (project): 20%
- Final presentation (project): 20%

The social program helped balance the academic component of the program and was well executed with a tour of Vienna, dinners, international cultural evening, trips to the State Opera, wine tavern, and Salzburg. This was definitely a highlight of the program and I felt I really got the chance to experience culture in Vienna.

The most important thing to keep in mind for lectures is that being on time for class is extremely important. Showing up late is disrespectful in Austrian culture and late attendance to class was noted.

Classroom: The make-up of the students in the class were mostly exchange students from Australia, the United States and Canada. The majority were doing full-time MBAs although a sizeable amount were also part-time students. Given this was a program on innovation, there were also some non-MBA students from Queen's that were doing their Masters in Innovation. The domestic students at WU were all non-MBA students doing thesis-based masters in innovation.

The classrooms are fairly modern but if you are using a laptop without a good battery, find a spot in the classroom with an outlet as they are available in limited supply.

Teaching: There were three instructors for the program that rotated teaching lectures. The style is not significantly different from Schulich in that it is a mixture of theory and cases. As already mentioned, a major component of this program is the project work with an Austrian company where the problem is defined and you work through innovating and eventually presenting to senior executives from the company on the final day of the program. There was one guest lecturer that was an alumnus of WU that came to speak to us one afternoon on innovation and provide us more insight into the topic based on his past successes. Overall, the quality of instructors was quite high, and you can tell a lot of thought went into putting the program together. Be prepared for going 2 hours straight with lectures with no break. For lectures that are in the morning, this can prove challenging so bring coffee with you to class from one of the cafes downstairs or the vending machines in the hall.

## INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

There was no official orientation program. Instead, a tour of the city was provided on the Sunday prior to the program and a campus tour was done on the first day. Because domestic students were also in the program, they in addition to the course coordinator were sources of information for whatever we required. We also got to know staff from the International office throughout our time and they were very open, welcoming and always willing to help us out. A program coordinator was specifically assigned that we got to see everyday and was always available on WhatsApp.

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<sup>1</sup> \*Pre-assignment was an essay that needed to be written prior to the start of the program based on a few assigned academic articles on innovation.

## HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

The university provides two options: Austria Trend Hotel Messe Wien (including breakfast) right next to the campus or student residence. The former costs around 1075 EUR and the later around 550 EUR over the two-week period. There are many that chose to stay in these accommodations and from what I heard, they were quite adequate. I chose to stay in an Airbnb close to the university and many people also chose this option too. If you wish to stay beyond the two-week time period, speak to the course coordinator, particularly for the hotel to see if you can get the discounted rate.

One of the major things that was lacking was accessibility to a gym. The gym on campus is not owned by the university so students from our program did not have access to it. Most gyms in Vienna also only sell yearly passes but our program coordinator suggested a gym called Fitinn that sold daily passes for 15 euro day if you ever felt the need to go to the gym during your time in the program.

## COSTS/EXPENSES

In addition to the cost of accommodations mentioned above, a program fee of 495 EUR is charged for transport/logistics, cultural events and social events. Beyond this, you are responsible for your food (breakfast for those not staying at the hotel, and the majority of lunches and dinners with exception of the days for social events)

## TRANSPORTATION

Getting around Vienna is super easy with an extensive subway and bus network. Transportation tickets are included in your program costs with exception of your arrival day which you pay extra for on your own. These transportation tickets entitle you to unlimited use of the metro in Vienna so take full advantage of this to explore the city outside of class.

## COMMUNICATION

In our welcome package, we were provided with a free SIM card that we could activate with a data or phone package for as little as 10 euro. I decided to opt for the data package which left me with a leftover balance that I continued to use for roaming outside of Austria in my travels around Europe after the program. During class, we had access to the school's wifi but outside of class, data was useful to have to continually stay connected with people back home when I was out in the city.

## FOOD

There are many great food options on campus. For super cheap eats, you can go to the supermarkets located on campus (Spar and Billa). The Mensa cafeteria is good value with Austrian food, pasta, pizza, salad and vegetarian options for as little as 5 euros. My favourite food place on campus is an Italian restaurant called L'Osteria that can surprisingly turn out pretty cheap if you choose to share one of their pizzas with someone else (they're pretty big).

## OTHER THINGS TO NOTE

- While the population speaks German, you should have no issues getting around Vienna. At the very least, I find it useful learning some basic phrases which the locals seem to appreciate.
- You will have access to the library and computer rooms on campus. This area is great if you want to do work in silence. The top floor of the library also has a good view of Vienna that you can

enjoy. Your program coordinator will provide you with a card for access to the facilities as well as for using the lockers (no bags are allowed inside the library, so they must be stowed in a locker area that is provided with your card used as the key). You do have some print credit which you likely won't use although I used mine to print a boarding pass for a flight.

- The city is very safe, and I did not feel unsafe at any point in time, even returning to my accommodation late at night. Take the opportunity to explore the city in your spare time. There is lots this city has to see. One of my favourite places to visit with classmates was the gardens of the Schonbrunn Palace. It is free to explore outside the palace and on a sunny day, is a prime spot to have a picnic on the hill overlooking the palace and the city of Vienna.
- Power outlets differ from those found in North America. Ensure you bring a plug adapter so you are ready to go from day one.
- The majority of stores and supermarkets are closed on Sunday so plan accordingly, especially if you are buying groceries. The Billa at Praterstern station is one of the few supermarkets open on Sunday, but this also means it is fairly busy on this day.
- Two ATMs are located on campus if you need to withdraw cash. Most places I visited do accept credit card, but it is a good idea to have some cash on you in case they don't.

## GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Vienna is known as one of the world's most liveable cities. It is a very nice place to experience culture, music and learn about innovation from a world class university. In my experience, it is the people that always make the experience. Although the German language that people speak here may sound harsh, the people of Vienna are some of the friendliest people I have met. Through my time here, I got to make friends and establish a global network with not only the locals, but also students from schools around the world and one of the major companies in Vienna. I now have a reason to come back to this amazing city and to visit other cities as far away as Melbourne. Most importantly, I think the international experience has provided an element that I feel is essential to an MBA program. Business is being done in more and more of a global context and it is through these kinds of programs that you really learn to appreciate and experience what that means.

In short, this is a program I would definitely recommend to my fellow Schulich MBA students. You will learn about the rapidly changing field of innovation through working with an Austrian company, experience Austrian culture in Vienna and build a global network with others that will last a lifetime. Come to WU at Vienna for the Vienna Innovation Program! You won't regret it! I certainly didn't!

For pictures I took from the program, feel free to add me on Instagram (jon\_hks). If you have any questions regarding the program and my experiences, don't hesitate to contact me by email or through LinkedIn.

