



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	University of Essex
<i>Semester & Year of Exchange</i>	Autumn Term 2017
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	LLB and BSc
<i>Major(s)</i>	BSc majoring in Psychology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Social Psychology	English	Social Psychology	18
Developmental Psychology	English	Developmental Psychology	18
Family Law	English	Family Law	15
European Human Rights Law	English		15

Any comments about these papers?

All of my chosen papers were really interesting and were exactly as I expected them to be.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

All of the papers were taught in a very similar way to Otago. The psychology papers required quite a bit more reading and if you don't want to buy the recommended textbooks, the Essex library usually had a few copies. The law papers were really similar and probably had less required reading than Otago law papers.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

I had family friends who lived just outside of London and I was able to live with them at no cost and caught the train to Uni on the days that I had lectures (3 times a week). The pros were that I was

able to save a huge amount of money that I would have had to pay in rent and I was also close to London for exploring. The cons were that the train cost quite a lot and were often very late!

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

I travelled around Europe for about 3 months before starting uni in October. Travelling in peak season is obviously quite expensive and most of my money was spent on accommodation and train/bus tickets so make sure you book well in advance! I found eating out in the UK was expensive however I found groceries a bit cheaper than NZ. The London tubes are expensive!!! I got a 16-25 railcard which cut off 1/3 of the price so I'd recommend doing that if you plan on spending a lot of time in London!

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

I went to my bank (ASB) before leaving and talked to them about my options but ended up getting a "Cash Passport". I loaded all my money onto this "Cash Passport" in the amount of Euros and Pounds that I was roughly expecting to use and altered/added more along the way. I also had my NZ Debit Card and an emergency Credit Card but never had to use them. I would recommend having cards to use as back up because some ATMs around Europe reject them!

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

I applied for a "Short Term Student Visa" at the UK border when I arrived after travelling around Europe – it didn't cost anything, I just had to show that I had money to support my time studying and my letter of acceptance from Essex so make sure you have your paperwork ready!

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Essex didn't have a mandatory insurance, I just used Southern Cross.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

Essex has an amazing students union which organises a heap of fun activities and events. I joined the Essex Hockey team which was a great way to meet people and it was a heap of fun! The Essex Abroad office also organises lots of different things like weekend trips away and Christmas parties!

What was the university/ city like?

The university itself was really cool – everyone makes a real effort to be helpful and everyone is super friendly! It is also really easy to find your way around, they even have an app with a campus

map for your phone! There are mini supermarkets, a pub, Starbucks and a heap of cafes on campus too and on Thursday's they have a food market in the middle of Uni.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

I would definitely recommend taking time to explore Colchester and the surrounding areas. There is a pretty cool cycle track along the water from Wivenhoe to Colchester too which I did one morning before it got too cold! I absolutely loved London so that is also an obvious must to visit, especially the areas of Shoreditch, Soho and Covent Garden (there is an Allpress cafe in Shoreditch which I frequently visited)!

Any tips for future students?

Get involved as much as you can – I lived off-campus so I had to make a real effort to meet new people and make friends but by playing hockey and chatting to people in lectures, making friends wasn't a problem!

Travel as much as you can – although it is sometimes tempting to relax on the weekends, try to organise weekends away as much as possible – Essex is such a great base to travel from and I'd highly recommend trips to Bath, Bristol and Edinburgh which were some of my favourite places!

Save as much money as you can before going – halfway through my time overseas I realized that my money was running dangerously low so I had to pass on a few costly opportunities (e.g. paying to see the inside of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona). Make sure you don't underestimate how much accommodation and trains/buses are because it is more expensive than NZ and you don't want to be in a situation where limited funds are holding you back.

Overall Experience

My exchange to the University of Essex was everything I was wanting it to be and more. Not only was I able to travel for three months during the European summer, but I was able to attend a University that welcomed me with open arms and made an unfamiliar place less scary than it seems!

I didn't quite realize how daunting it would be to start at a Uni where I didn't know a single person on campus and seeing friendly faces around was definitely something I took for granted after my years at Otago. The exchange experience however made me grow hugely in confidence as I quickly realized I had to make a real effort to be outgoing and friendly in order to meet new people.

A huge highlight of my experience was the opportunity to travel that resulted from being based in Europe. I travelled with a range of people, visited some amazing places and was immersed in a number of different cultures along the way. It has definitely opened my eyes to how amazingly diverse the world is but also to how similar we all are despite our location on the globe.

I'd like to say a huge THANK YOU to the Otago International Office for making this opportunity possible and HAVE FUN to all you students who choose to go on an exchange!