



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Toronto Scarborough
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2019
Otago degree(s)	BSc
Major(s)	Neuroscience

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Advanced Personality Psychology	English	/	13.5
Cognitive Neuroscience of Decision Making	English	/	13.5
Cross-Cultural Social Psychology	English	PSYC315 Social Psychology	13.5
Genes, Environment and Behaviour	English	/	13.5

Any comments about these papers?

Most of them were very interesting papers and the lecturers seemed to be very passionate about the topics they were teaching. The Behavioural genetics paper had a lot of second year content, so I didn't find it as interesting as the other papers and the lecturer also wasn't the most interesting to listen to.

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

A lot of their classes included a large amount of discussion during the lecture, which at first was a little overwhelming as I was used to the more passive style of lectures at Otago. They also tend to make participation about 10% of the final grade, which is quite different to the structure of most Otago papers. I also found that there was a much smaller workload, which was nice because I was able to do quite a bit of travelling without worrying about my grades suffering.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in a townhouse on campus during my exchange. It was nice not having to go too far when it was like -20 degrees and snowing outside, as it was only a short walk to lectures. My housemate was really nice and so were the RA's, so it wasn't too hard to settle in there. It was like living in an intermediate between a Hall of residence and a flat, which was nice as it gave me the comfort of living in a halls of residence type community, but with a little more independence. They also had events at the residence centre (also very close) which I found really fun and it was a good way to meet new people. I can't really think of any cons, as I really found my stay quite pleasant.

Money matters

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

Accommodation costs were possibly slightly cheaper than a Hall of Residence in Dunedin (it was like \$4500 CAD per semester), but the meals aren't included so that is an extra cost. Flights were quite pricey, as it is quite a long way to travel so it is best to book them as soon as possible. The Visa was relatively simple to get and didn't cost too much (if you are transiting through the US I think you also have to get a visa for the US, which costs about \$14 USD). Food seemed to be a similar cost to NZ when you take into the account of the exchange rate. I recommend sharing meals when eating out as not only does it decrease the cost, but the portion sizes are quite large so two people can easily share one portion. Insurance was not cheap, as you not only have to get the comprehensive travel insurance, but you also have to pay for their local health insurance.

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

I used a cash passport which I found really useful, as it was really easy to load and transfer whatever currency I needed.

Visas & Insurance

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

I did have to apply for a Visa, but it didn't take too long (it was just a short online form that had to be filled out) and it was processed really quickly. If you are staying in Canada for more than six months you also need to apply for a study permit, but since I was only doing one semester I was only there for about four months so didn't need to get one.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, they had a mandatory health insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

They had a lot of ski/snowboard trips, which I would highly recommend doing. They also had a trip to Montreal and Quebec City which was a great experience. They have a few other trips that you can go on during reading week (mid-semester break), and they would probably all be quite fun.

What was the university/ city like?

Everyone in the international department at UTSC are really nice and are willing to help with anything you need to help make your stay there easier. Most of the staff and lecturers there are also really nice, which is really comforting when you are adjusting to living in a new country. It is also really easy to get to Scarborough town Centre and Downtown Toronto, as they have really good transport (buses, trains and Subways usually run every 5-10 mins, so you don't have to worry about missing one). Downtown is quite cool as it is a much bigger city than Auckland, there is also a gigantic mall there which is great for shopping. It is never too hard to find an outdoor ice skating rink, and it only usually costs about \$10 CAD to rent some skates.

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

I recommend travelling to Blue mountain, Niagara Falls, Montreal/Quebec City, Banff, Vancouver and Whistler. I also recommend going skiing/snowboarding and ice skating on one of the outdoor rinks. It can be kind of hard to find good food places nearby, but there are some really great food places downtown. Poutine is a popular Canadian food (hot chips with brown gravy and cheese curds), it is something that is basically compulsory to try while you are there.

Any tips for future students?

Make friends with the other international/exchange students as it can really help to be surrounded by people who can relate to what you are feeling while on exchange. Also try to attend as many events and activities as possible, as you can make and solidify some really great friendships by doing this. It is also good to make friends that are locals, as they can be a really great help when you are confused about how to do something or where to go. Travelling while on the exchange is a must, it is so great to experience places outside of where you are living, it really makes the experience that much better.

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

I had the most amazing experience going on exchange. I made a lot of amazing friends that I am sure will be lifelong friendships and it was awesome to learn about all their various cultures. I went travelling with them to many different places including Montreal, Blue Mountain, Niagara Falls and New York, which was so cool to experience. Winter sports like skiing and ice skating are really popular there and I had so much fun skiing on a few different mountains and ice skating on a few different outdoor rinks. I also went to a maple syrup festival while I was there and ate a lot of maple syrup, which was definitely a fun experience. I also ate a lot of Poutine, which is present on almost all menus in all food places. It was really fun to experience all of the snow, as it was not something I have seen very much. I also really enjoyed going to lectures, as I found it all really interesting.

Toronto



Niagara Falls



Montreal / Quebec City



New York



Blue Mountain

