



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Queen's University, Kingston, Canada
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Fall Semester 2022
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	DipGrad endorsed in Exercise and Sport Science
<b>Major(s)</b>	Exercise and Sport Science

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>
KNPE335 Healthy Aging	English	Unspecified SPEX points
KNPE366 Race, Sport and Physical Activity	English	Unspecified SPEX points
KNPE400 Professional Issues in Allied Health	English	Unspecified SPEX points
PSYC350 Developmental Social Neuroscience	English	Unspecified PSYC points

Total Otago credits gained: ☒ 54 points ☐ 72 points ☐ 108 points ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments about these papers?

I really enjoyed all my papers, especially KNPE366 Race, Sport and Physical activity, which discussed very topical issues on race, gender and religion in sports and media. The KNPE papers focused mainly on Canadian research and statistics which was a interesting new perspective. I took the PSYC350 paper as an interest paper as I have a BSc in Psychology and it turned out to be my most challenging paper, however very applicable to the post-graduate research I am doing now. Overall I really enjoyed the papers and the courseload felt very manageable! However, I had quite a bit of trouble getting into the courses as KNPE has very limited spaces. As an international student who wasn't taking these papers as part of their core degree I was put on the waiting list for all of my KNPE papers and, after only managing to get into 2 of the 4 I applied for, I had to quickly adjust my plan and coordinate with the School of Kinesiology Undergraduate Chair – she was very understanding and helpful which made the process very stress-free. During my time at Queen's everyone had my best interests in mind and wanted to ensure I had the best experience, so I found it really easy to contact my department with any questions and talk to my lecturers when needed.

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

Overall the course load felt similar to Otago, if not slightly easier. Despite travelling and socialising a lot while in Canada my grades were much better than expected. It is common for Queens students to take 5 courses so taking 4 felt very manageable. Unlike Otago I only had 2 lectures per week for each course which meant I had plenty of time to finish work during the week and travel or party in the weekends. There was quite a few small assignments each week which weren't too difficult to complete but I had to manage my time well to maintain a good balance and not get caught out cramming before exams. Assignments were largely group based and quite diverse - for example I made a 30 min podcast in KNPE366, an infographic in PSYC350, multiple group presentations in KNPE400 and a self reflection assignment in KNPE335. This definitely made me more adaptable and my university experience very engaging!

## Accommodation

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

- I stayed in a house (they don't call it 'flat' in Canada) with 8 other exchange students from around the world – 2 French, 2 Austrian, 2 Australian, 1 Dutch, 1 Belgian and me! The cost of our house was slightly higher than the average in Kingston. I paid \$1000 CAD per month for my room, including electricity, heating and water. Costs of accomadtion can range from ~\$500 - \$1000 depending on location, size, number of rooms etc... I arranged to be in the house by joining the facebook group 'Queen's University – Off-Campus housing'. Luckily I had made a connection with one of my Australian housemates while attending a 'Australia/New Zealand Exchange students heading to Canada' Zoom seminar and she offered to keep me in mind while searching for a place to live in Canada. She managed to find something and signed me up too, which I was very grateful for. My advice would be take all of the opportunities to connect with other students before you get to Canada as it might come in very handy!

*Pros of my accommodation:*

- The house was a 10 min walk from the centre of campus, similar to student housing in Dunedin.
- Living with 8 others meant I never felt alone and I instantly had friends. This cured my homesickness very quickly and I formed some life long friendships. We all became close friends (mostly) across the whole 4 months while we travelled, socialised, cooked for each other and hung out together. I now have best friends in Europe and Australia that I am excited to visit one day!
- Our house rent included heating, electricity and water which meant there was no extra expenses to divide among us and we were extremely warm when the temperature dropped well below freezing!
- Our house had plenty of space – large bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 3 fridges and a large basement/lounge where we all hung out together.
- Our house was located opposite Victoria Park, a large park with playground, baseball field, tennis courts, basketball half court and in winter a ski rink! This was a beautiful view to wake up to in the morning, and we used the facilities a lot! (Plus it looked magical in the snow!)

*Cons of my accommodation:*

- Managing meal/cooking times and laundry with one kitchen and washing machine/dryer was difficult at times.
- Some housemates were notoriously messy – but this comes with flatting in general no matter where you are in the world. But I do recommend, if you're not a fan of parties at your house or messy kitchens, try to live with only a couple of housemates!

## Money matters

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

**Accommodation** - \$1000 CAD per month, paid monthly (the bond was the final month paid in advance). We also split the wifi cost of \$80 per month and some of my housemates paid less/more for the size of their room.

**Flights** – To Toronto I paid \$1600 NZD and to get home in December I paid \$2600 NZD – I suggest don't wait to buy your return flight, refer to the exam dates and book a ticket for after that period – you can always buy a flexi ticket if you think you might change your mind. Otherwise they get very expensive over the Christmas period!

To get from Toronto to Kingston (and vice versa) with all your luggage you typically take the [VIA Rail train](#) direct from Toronto Union Station to Kingston Station and then a 20 min drive/taxi/uber to the university campus area.

**Visa** – The Canadian Visa ([eTA](#)) was \$7 CAD and the US visa ([ESTA](#)) was \$21 USD. Make sure you go through the government website and be wary if you are paying a lot more than these prices – it is easy to get scammed!

**Food** – The food prices are equivalent to New Zealand. I budgeted to spend around \$100 CAD per week on food, including eating out. Look out for 'student days' where you get 10% off at the supermarket with your student ID.

**Insurance** - \$650 with Insurance safe NZ – I ended up having to claim because of flight cancellations due to a storm in Vancouver before Christmas and they were very efficient at approving the claim and sending me the money – highly recommend!

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

I used a [Wise Card](#) which was very easy to use and applicable in the US. There is a easy-to-use app that you can control your finances with. The card costs \$14 to buy and then everything else is very low cost. I would transfer money from my NZ bank account to my wise card for free (typically took 2 hours or less), into the NZ currency account. From there I would convert money into the Canadian or US currency accounts via the exchange rate with a minimal fee (e.g., \$1.32 NZD for a \$300NZD transfer). I was a bit overwhelmed with organising my finances internationally but the Wise Card was so simple and easy – highly recommend!!

## Visas & Insurance

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

As I was only staying in Canada for 4 months I didn't have to apply for a study permit. Instead I just applied for a visitor visa/eTA which cost \$7 CAD. The process is very simple – follow the steps on the government of Canada [website](#) and you can get it approved in minutes!

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Queens Uni has a health insurance called UHIP that is compulsory for exchange students. This costs \$252 CAD for one semester and it covers clinical/hospital visits, lab tests, x-rays, surgery, mental health and more, within Ontario. As an international student you are automatically enrolled but you must pay through SOLUS (an eVision equivalent at Queen's) or at the Bank of Montreal (in Downtown Kingston).

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Orientation week was by far the most fun I had on exchange! Sign up for Orientation week opens mid-year so keep an eye out on the queens socials for this. Exchange students are part of the NEWTS (New Exchange Worldly Transfer Students) orientation week (occurring in the first two weeks before university starts). Events include a paint party, semi-formal night, tamming ceremony (getting officially welcomed to the University), Mystery Road trip, concerts (including Yung gravy) and helpful seminars! I highly recommend signing up and getting the overalls included for the paint party (it's so much fun!)

There are also various sporting, academic, social and cultural clubs. These are advertised at multiple clubs expos in the first two weeks so you can easily sign up to whatever takes your fancy. The outdoors club is very popular as it allows you to borrow camping, tramping and ski gear for a small cost (similar to Unipol) so you can do some more exploring at a fraction of the cost! Keep your eyes peeled for their overnight trips too which are well organised and an easy way to make friends!

Intermural sport is also very popular and a great way to make friends. By signing up to a team or making your own with a group of friends you can play socially or competitively each week in sports such as football, volleyball, Waterpolo and basketball – I highly recommend joining one of these teams, I did social volleyball and had so much fun!

There was also lots of opportunities to go to events or on trips with other exchange students. We had a whatsapp group for exchange students which made it easy to connect with others.

*What was the university/ city like?*

Kingston was similar to Dunedin in population size and university/drinking culture. The university is 10-15 min walk away for the majority of students. The University is just as old as Otago with many beautiful stone buildings. The student culture and university pride surrounding sports and homecoming is unmatched! Support at sports games is amazing to witness and can feel like you are in a movie! It is very common to see students wearing full Queens Merch and there are various stores selling everything Queens branded you can think of – clothes, teddy bears, coffee mugs, hats, bags, golf balls and more! You feel part of a big community and there are students everywhere you go. I loved the university life at queens and Canadians are some of the friendliest and most supportive people you'll meet.

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

Within Kingston, I recommend trying a bagel from CoGro (common ground) located in the gym – they are a student run café and the bagels are delicious and very reasonably priced. I also recommend dairy queen blizzards, Tim Hortons, swimming in Lake Ontario in summer, ice hockey games, try poutine, go to Pizza Pizza after a night out in Stages Nightclub, eat at Crave café (very popular!), Tommy's diner for dinner or all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast, the Mansion for karaoke on Wednesday nights, and the Brass Pub for drinks (Country music on a Monday night!)

Outside of Kingston I recommend hiring a car to explore Rock Dunder lookout, Frontenac Park and Algonquin Provincial Park – especially in fall as the colours are outstanding!

I also recommend budgeting for trips to Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City. Also NYC is so close that it is well worth it, if you can make it work! Some of my housemates also travelled to Boston and Washington which they recommended!

*Any tips for future students?*

Save as much money as you can before you leave – the experiences are endless and having that extra \$1000 really makes all the difference in being able to try everything! Also I recommend every once in a while pausing to realise where you are, how far you've come and the awesome experience you are privileged to be having – its not everyday you get to live in a new place with all new people, experiencing new and exciting things.

Tipping in Canada and the US also took some getting used to... ontop of the exchange rate you also have to factor in tips which can be 10-20% depeneding on the service. General rule is follow suit of those around you and most eftops machines will give you options so choose the most reasonable one :)

Also be prepared for all weather – I expeired warm summer weather when I arrived in the fall semester. I found it to be very hot and sunny (perfect time to join all the students swimming down at the lake!) Then as fall comes the trees are beautiful and this is an ideal time for travelling! Heading into late November/December the cold starts to hit and the snow falls! Be prepared with atleast one very warm jacket (preferably brought in Canada as most NZ jackets are not quite up to Canadian Winter standards) and some good quality shoes.

## Overall Experience

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

I was once, just like you, reading through previous years evaluations and one comment really stood out to me – 'take the chance, you wont regret it'. I cannot stress that enough. Embarking on this exchange was a huge and terrifying thing for me but if I could go back and tell myself anything it would be that I am about to have the best experience of my life, so just go for it! I cannot express how much I enjoyed my exchange to Queens and I hope you get to experience it too. I have met the most amazing life-long friends and travelled to places I didn't think I would ever go to. I am very grateful for all the opportunities on my exchange, and I urge you to say yes to every opportunity and take a leap out of your comfort zone. It has truly been the highlight of my University degree and has made me much more confident of myself and what I want to do in the future. The time on exchange seriously flies by and I am already missing my time in Canada – now it's your turn... take the chance, you wont regret it!





Semi formal during Orientation Week



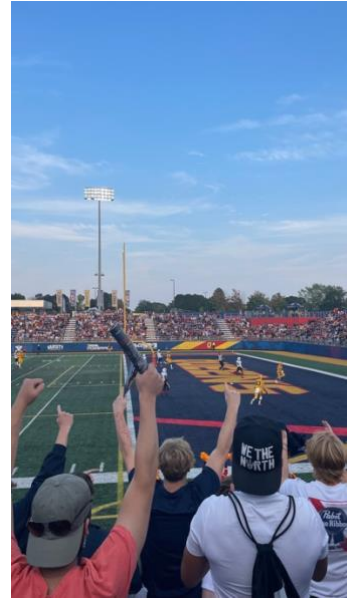
Autumn colours  
in Montreal



Sunrise at Rock Dunder Walk



Tamming Ceremony



Queens University  
Football Game



Paint Party!



Homecoming celebrations – all  
dressed up in Queens colours and  
partying on the streets





Christmas tree in  
Downtown Kingston



Australian  
and NZ  
exchange  
students in  
the snow!



Very competitive  
Queens Uni  
Engineering vs  
Commerce  
basketball game at  
the Leon Centre



Queens Uni in the snow



Ice Hockey  
game at  
Madison  
Square  
Gardens,  
NYC



Totem Poles at Stanley Park,  
Vancouver