



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of British Columbia
Semester & Year of Exchange	Term 1 UBC (Sem 2 Otago), 2022
Otago degree(s)	LLB & BCOM
Major(s)	Economics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
CONS 210; Visualising Climate Change	English	Unspecified 200 level
COMM 293; Financial Accounting	English	ACCT 211 / BSNS 115
COMM 371; Investment Theory	English	FINC 202

Total Otago credits gained: ☐ 54 points ☐ 72 points ☐ 108 points ☐ _____

Any comments about these papers?

CONS 210 was a paper in the forestry department that was interesting but also relatively easy. It was all internally assessed which was great because this meant I had no final exam. There were also a lot of guest speakers which made the paper feel like it was more practical. COMM 293 is a compulsory accounting paper that commerce students must take, however, they take this in their second year and thus it is more an intermediate paper between BSNS 115 and the 200 level equivalent at Otago. COMM 371 was a paper I found very difficult, particularly because finance wasn't my major back home. They had quizzes almost every second week that equated to 30% of the paper and would not be released until a Saturday morning and due on Sunday night. This was particularly annoying given I was often away doing trips in my weekends.

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

Because Sauder business school is competitive entry, this means that the calibre of students within Sauder is pretty high. The lecturers are all very well accomplished and provide a very engaging lecturing style. I particularly enjoyed my accounting paper because it was quite practical with a lot of guest speakers and case studies. The accounting paper required a high level of engagement throughout though because there were quizzes, assignments and group assignments very regularly. I think the finance paper would follow a more similar format to the Otago equivalent. All in all, exchange students in Sauder would likely expect to have a heavier workload relative to exchange students in other departments. I only did three papers at UBC as opposed to doing five back home, and these were all electives which is something that I would recommend doing.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Fairview crescent. I would highly recommend this to all exchange students. I requested to flat with a fellow Otago exchange student that I met just before leaving NZ. Living with him was a huge bonus as we both got on really well and could relate to each other easily given our common background and culture. We opted to live in a mixed flat, with three boys and three girls. The flats can be hit and miss in terms of your flat mates and although our flat mates were nice, they were all European's who had a tough time trying to understand our accents and we didn't have a whole lot in common. This was fine though because we met a lot of other exchange students in Fairview who we got on with really well, and formed a solid friend group very early on who we started doing most things together with. Fairview is great because it's like a small village so you can just walk round to you friends flats whenever you like. We started doing dinners with a Scottish crew which was super fun. You would often pre in the flats and there were some parties there too which was great. The other main place for exchange students to stay is in Walter gage. I had a few friends from Walter gage, but my friends were predominantly from Fairview. Walter gage is good, but is just a different atmosphere from Fairview because it is bang smack in the middle of campus and is a high rise building with flats within that.

Money matters

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

I think accommodation in Fairview worked out to be roughly just shy of \$5000 kiwi. If you are staying for a term like me you are only required to get an ETA (visa), which is very cheap and pretty easy to obtain (just make sure you do it in advance and not a few days before your flight). The drawback to the ETA is it doesn't allow you to work in Canada. Whereas if you get the study permit, which is compulsory if you are here for a full year, this allows you to work legally in Canada. For me it was annoying not being able to work because I was very tight on money, however at the same time I had far less free time than I expected and so I may have missed out on a few spontaneous social things if I had been working. Food is expensive in Canada. There is a supermarket close to Uni called save on foods. Ironically, this is anything but cheap. I would only go there if I didn't have much time. Otherwise there is one called NoFrills, which is meant to be cheaper. I do think it is cheaper but not by much. I actually found Safeways to be have some really good deals, and there were some Safeways in Kitsilano which were only a 15 min bus away. If you have a car, which I had access to, then it's worth doing bulk shops at Walmart. This is the cheapest. Alternatively, you can order food from them online. Flights was hard to gauge because I spent 7 weeks in Europe before coming to Canada in September. My flight from London to Canada on the 1st of September cost \$630 kiwi

which was by far the cheapest on the market and only had one tiny stopover in Calgary. My flight home in February cost \$1380 kiwi, plus an additional two checked in bags (three in total) for another \$235 Canadian. I think because this was a one way flight they sting you more than a return fare. This was the cheapest I could find but it was all up 22 hours: Vancouver - San Fran - Auckland - CHCH.

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

I predominantly used a wise card which I would highly recommend. I also set up a student bank account with Scotia Bank (they have one on uni). This was helpful if you wanted to transfer people in Canadian dollars and did not cost anything to set up.

Visas & Insurance

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

It cost \$7 for the ETA and the process was relatively straightforward, just make sure you do it at least a week in advance, not two days before your flight as this might not leave you with enough time.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes they had imed insurance which cost about \$350 Canadian. Otago university also made us purchase Student Safe Insurance NZ, which cost be \$800 NZ but this included worldwide coverage and skiing off piste which was really valuable because insurance companies can charge you a lot for ski insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Students could compete in intermural sports like dodgeball or football, which seemed like quite good fun. I didn't get involved because I had a bad hip injury. However, I did join the UBC ski and Board club which I would highly recommend as an exchange student. Not only do they host a lot of parties throughout the semester which is a great way to meet other exchange students and local UBC students, but they also do some great ski trips. I was at UBC in term 1 (Sep-Dec) and got tickets for the Condo Cram trip to whistler for the opening weekend in late November. This is an amazing weekend, and was probably my favourite weekend at UBC. By this point you'll have a great friend group, and so the partying is great fun and the apres skiing in Whistler is a great experience if you have only ever skied in NZ before. If you are here in Term 2 they organise a trip to Revelstoke early on in mid January. Less tickets are available for this so it's hard to go, but this is a world renowned ski field so I would recommend this trip if you are a big skiing enthusiast. I was also part of the VOC (varsity outdoor club), which organises trips almost every weekend, ranging from tramps, climbing, kayaking, to ski touring and mountaineering. This club is very unique to UBC and really good for outdoorsy people. They also have amazing deals to hire gear. You only pay \$40 for the membership and then can hire pretty much any outdoors gear for free.

What was the university/ city like?

The university was great. It is a massive campus with a lot of awesome sports facilities. There are many places to get food on university, however I tried not to just to save money. There is a pub at uni called the Gallery, which is rooftop so is really nice in Summer. They had a reasonable happy hour so we would often go there with our friends, and some of our nights there were very spontaneous and fun. The uni is very close to Wreck beach, which is a lovely place to walk down to in the warmer months. It gets great sunsets. However beware for the nudity because this is a nude beach and a lot of older people take advantage of this! The city is really beautiful, especially around Stanley park and coal harbour. Gastown and Yaletown are two places that are cool to go to on a night out. We would mainly go to Roxy's on a night out, which was a club downtown. It is worth noting that there is a serious homeless crisis downtown, and this can be quite disturbing. The actual CBD has less people walking around then I was expecting for such a big city, which I personally think detracted from the atmosphere slightly.

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

Good bars: gallery, kingshead Kitsilano, Elwoods Kitsilano, The Local Kitsilano, Goodco Kitsilano (\$3 beers on a Tuesday!). Good places to eat: The Local, Nook (Italian) Kitsilano, Cardero's Restraunt Coal Harbour, Lift Bar Grill View Coal Harbour. Places to visit: Kitsilano, North Vancouver, Stanley Park, Wreck Beach, Jericho Beach, Spanish Banks Beach, Grouse and Cypress mountain for nearby hikes. Definitely explore the Whislter and Squamish region as much as you can. Vancouver island is meant to be beautiful. I didn't manage to make it but all of my friends did and I would highly recommend. The UBC surf club does a trip in term 1 to Tofino which I think exchange students should definitely do even if you are not that into surfing (I couldn't because I was sick). I did a Canadian Rockies roadie with my parents and ticked off Banff so was pretty lucky in that sense. However, it is common for students to go there in the reading break (mid semester), and by that point the mountains are normally just opening. Instead we went to America in our reading trip, which is also a great option. We hired a car and visited Seattle, Portland and finished off with a night in the University of Oregon watching an American football match which was a real highlight. Being close to the American boarder is a real cool perk that I didn't think about too much before arriving. We also did a day trip to a ski mountain in Washington called Steven's Pass which was super fun.

Any tips for future students?

Overall Experience

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

I would highly recommend going to UBC. This a very prestigious university within the world rankings so it is great to be able to say that you have been here. The quality of education is great, and although it is only pass fail if you really want to get the most out of the education there are some great opportunities. Personally, the main reason I came to this university is because of the outdoors. I am big time into skiing, which was the key driver, and also love tramping, mountain biking, etc. UBC is unique in that a lot of students are also into the outdoors, both amongst the local Canadian students and the exchange students so you will find a lot of friends that are always keen to head away and do outdoors activities in the weekends that I particularly enjoyed. I don't think many other universities would replicate this same atmosphere.

I did a trip to Whistler in the warmer months with a group of friends and hired an air B&B. I think it is great to explore Whistler before it gets to winter, because there is still plenty to do there with amazing lakes, hikes and other activities. My parents visited and we did a roadie from Vancouver to Whistler, Revelstoke, Banff, Canmore and Calgary. We did this in September which meant the scenery was great because often if you do this in the winter it can be overcast and you can't see as much, but that's not to say it isn't still beautiful. This roadie was a particular highlight and is something I would recommend doing if you arrived in Canada before your exchange starts. However, it is something that would also cost quite a bit which is something to bear in mind. Once the ski season kicked off most weekends revolved around this. Opening weekend was in late November. Students can get a season's pass at Whistler for \$600 CA. This is a great deal and I would definitely recommend. I decided against it for two reasons. I spent all of January skiing in Revelstoke, which is known for steep terrain and great powder (sadly they had an off season with powder when I was there). I bought the early bird for this which cost me \$1280 kiwi. In between opening weekend and finishing exams in December at UBC, there are only a few weeks you can ski. The main time I wanted to ski Whistler was over the new year's period. The student seasons pass has a blackout period from the 26th Dec - 1 Jan, which meant I wouldn't have been able to ski over this time. As a result I decided to pay a 5 day epic pass which cost \$480 Canadian and allowed me to ski the blackout period. I was then a bit lucky and managed to also get 7 days at Whistler on mates seasons passes when they weren't using them. All up I had 12 days at Whistler, a weekend ski touring at Brew Hut, a day ski touring at Mount Seymour in North Vancouver, a day trip to ski Steven's pass in Washington, USA, and 24 days at Revelstoke. The skiing was definitely a real highlight for me and I was stoked with what I got in before leaving Canada on the 4th of Feb. I would have liked to have stayed longer to remain skiing but had a grad job to return to NZ and was massively in debt to my parents haha. I would say that you may get a bit of a shock with how much things cost in Vancouver and it is probably one of the more expensive places to go on exchange so this is something to bear in mind. In saying that, most places are more expensive post COVID so I think it is best to prioritise going to a place that aligns with your interests and goals in terms of what you want to get out of exchange.