



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Texas at Austin, McCombs School of Business
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2 (Fall) 2019
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Marketing and Accounting

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
ACC327 Financial Statement Analysis	English	ACCT310 Financial Statement Analysis	18 points
MKT372.27 Reputational Risk/Crisis MGMT	English	No exact equivalent	18 points
MKT372.14 Pricing and Channels	English	No exact equivalent	18 points
EDP350L Human Sexuality	English	No equivalent	18 points

Any comments about these papers?

Pricing and Channels had quite a large workload compared to other marketing papers, however the professor Ben Bentzin was a really great teacher and an interesting guy, head of marketing at Dell before going into teaching.

A requirement of UT is that all full time students must take 4 papers, however I only needed 3 to complete my degree so took Human Sexuality as a fun, easy paper. If you're in the same situation I highly recommend taking Human Sexuality with Karen Rayne. Class is entertaining and easy to do well, try find some friends to do it with.

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

The style of teaching was very different from Otago, especially marketing as the classes were a lot smaller and discussion based. All 3 of my papers at McCombs had participation credits so speaking out in class was required. This was a little intimidating at first, however you get used to it very quickly as it is the norm and the professors are generally nice, they won't pick on someone.

I found that there was a higher workload at McCombs as there were more small assignments throughout the week. I preferred this as it meant I had no final exams. I also found that it was easier to do well, a lot of students get A's. I found classes a lot more interesting and engaging than classes in Otago.

Accommodation

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

I stayed at Pearl Street Co Op which is popular for international students. It is a house of 110 students, with about half international and half American which was a great way to meet both students in the same boat as you and locals. It is probably one of the cheapest accommodation options and only a 12 minute walk to campus. Everyone is assigned 4 hours of labour a week which may be cooking, cleaning, gardening, party planning, maintenance etc. The house is quite run down and runs into a few problems but this was the best decision I made as it was so much fun and an easy way to meet people. There is a big industrial kitchen which you can always help you self to, however lunch and dinner are made by the assigned students each day. As there are so many students it is very loud and there are people who are always keen to go out, so if you prefer to be in your own quiet space Pearl Street probably isn't the right place.

Money matters

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

Pearl Street - \$3,830 USD one semester for a single room (or \$2,950 for a shared room). Food and utility bills are included in this.

Insurance – A lot of us did not know about the \$1,000 USD so beware of that. Otago exchange gives all exchange students \$1,000 NZD so you can put that money aside to pay for insurance.

Flights – Vary but expected to be \$1,000 - \$1,500 NZD one way.

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

I opened up an American bank account which I would highly recommend. Makes it easier to transfer money to Americans as PayPal charges relatively high fees. I went with CHASE Bank as it is very close to campus and there was student plan at the time which gave you a free \$100 (check if that is still happening)

Visas & Insurance

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

This process is quite lengthy so get onto it as soon as possible. When I went to sign up for an interview, all slots before my departure date were taken. This was quite stressful however I just kept checking the website and eventually slots became available. If you do not live in Auckland, then you will have to travel up for the interview. There are fees associated with it.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes \$1,000 USD, sorted out during orientation in Austin.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Lots of international students sign up for Planet Longhorn. This club puts on events to meet other internationals. However, there are so many different clubs you can sign up for depending on what you're interested in. During orientation week they have stands set up around university.

The international office puts on different events and excursions, I signed up for the NBA trip to watch the Spurs vs. Thunders which was fun and not too expensive.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is very big with a lot of facilities. The gym is especially great, there are 4 large pools, one of which is purely for leisure, which was great as Austin weather is always very warm. I wore shorts and a t-shirt 98% of the time, as university attire is very casual. West campus is a neighbourhood in Austin and where all students live as this is where the university is. It is similar to Dunedin in the sense that everyone lives only about a 15 minute walk from campus, so the student life is great.

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

Austin is a great city, there is a lot to do and see. It is ranked as the top city to live in the states.

- Barton Springs/ Zilker Park is a great place to swim, walk and just hang out.
- Austin City Limits – If you're going in Fall (semester 2) definitely get a ticket to ACL which is a 3 day festival. Some of my friends volunteered which required them to work 4 hours a day for a free ticket. Each year the line-up is really good, Childish Gambino, Tame Impala, Lizzo, Cardi B, Fisher and many more performed when I was there.
- Austin is the live music capital of the world so there is a lot of nightlife – Rainey Street is particularly good for this. 6th street has live music and bars as well as 'dirty' 6th street which is the main student area.
- Lots of great food in Austin, they especially love TexMex which is the Texas spin on Mexican, Torchy's Tacos is a must. Texan BBQ is huge (if you eat meat), some places you have to wait a couple of hours in a queue as it is so popular.
- Watch the bats fly out from underneath Lady Bird Lake (Fall semester) and kayak down the Lady Bird.
- Texas two-step dance and line dancing.
- Definitely get the big ticket if you're going in Fall semester (if you like sport) it gets you tickets to all home football games which is a big part of UT. The stadium is the 9th largest in the world, everyone wears Texas merch and there are tailgates beforehand. Even if you do not understand football (like me) it is such a cool experience. The big ticket will also get you to all home basketball games later in the semester and for semester 1 students.

Any tips for future students?

Try and get involved as much as you can and talk to lots of different people. Travelling around the states is a lot of fun but also make sure you see and experience Austin as much as you can as there is always a lot going on.

Overall Experience

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

Going to Austin for my exchange was the best decision I could have made and it couldn't have gone better. The student life is great fun and the school spirit is something you'll never experience outside of the states. Austin is always warm (especially in Fall semester) with temperatures at 40 degrees when I first arrived. It is just like the movies, with the Fraternity and Sorority life which is fun to see. Texans are so friendly and welcoming which made it easy to meet people. Couldn't recommend Austin enough.

