



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Western University
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester 2 2022
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	BASc
<b>Major(s)</b>	Psychology and Neuroscience

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
PSYCHOL3224A -Neuropsychology and cognitive psychology	English	PSYC313
PSYCHOL2043A -Exceptional Child Psychology	English	Unspecified PSYC 200 level
CLASSICS2043A – Crime and Punishment	English	Unspecified CLAS 200 level
ANATCELL4451F – Integrative Neuroscience	English	ANAT336/337

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

Any comments about these papers?

- It is definitely way easier to sort out papers when you have more flexibility with what you have to take e.g. I had to take a certain number of papers for each of my two majors which was difficult as some classes (especially psychology) had large wait lists and no priority was given to exchange students
- You do not sign up for your papers yourself, the exchange department at Western does this. I had to chase them up a few times on it because I was scared of missing out but it worked out in the end.

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

- The papers I took overseas were really interesting and engaging. My favourite paper was Exceptional Child Psychology which is something that is not offered at Otago so I thought it was a really cool opportunity to do it overseas
- Much smaller class sizes for the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year papers which I really enjoyed and some of them had marks for participation which isn't something that I have personally had at Otago.
- A lot of there 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year classes do not meet enrolment demand like at Otago so they filled up pretty quick with the number of spots they chose to have! I wasn't able to take quite a few papers as a result of this.
- They have their own version of Blackboard but I found it really easy to navigate and upload my assignments to etc.
- All the professors were really helpful and understanding! All had office hours too which was similar to Otago.

## Accommodation

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

- I stayed at Alumni House, which was a on campus residence that was nearly solely exchange students and anyone else was a mature student. It was great to meet other exchange students and other people who wanted to travel Canada and beyond!
- The accommodation itself wasn't the most glamorous but it was nice living in an apartment style place with 3 other flat mates which had a shared bathroom, kitchen and lounge. All the rooms had double beds which were awesome. Side note: I recommend heading to Walmart and just buying one of the bedding packs – so cheap and did the job for a semester as it gave sheets and duvets.
- The communal lounge/main common room next to the reception was awesome and had table tennis and a pool table which me and my friends would play in most nights.
- I did the meal plan as the residence did not provide any cooking equipment (not even a fork!) and I didn't want to invest in anything since I was there for such a short time and planning on travelling lots too. The meal plan was great as I made friends with people in my residence that did the meal plan also. You could probably do it cheaper yourself but I personally wanted the convenience of not having to cook for myself and also not having to rely on ready meals or things that required limited resources. Also another perk about the meal plan was that there were flex dollars which you could use in the USC (like a food court and mini mall on campus) which had Tim Hortons, Subway, Booster Juice, The Spoke and The Wave (student council run café and restaurant), cafes in some of the libraries, kebab shop and pizza just by Alumni House and much more.
- If you want to meet more Canadians I would say that Alumni House is not really the place for that but I met some nice Canadians in my classes. None of the other residences were for older students so other residences would have much younger university students (from 17 years old) which I personally wanted to be with students closer to my age. The other option I would go for if you don't want a residence is a flat near campus – there are facebook groups you can use to find places to sublet and you can also ask the international office

## Money matters

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

There was a fixed fee for the accommodation/residence I was in (can be found on the website and likely changes each year).

Visa was less than \$25 dollars.

Insurance was about \$700 with the provider offered with endorsement by the university called StudentSafeNZ (with a discount which was great). This covered my travel before, after and during my exchange. They were really helpful.

I got the meal plan which covered me for breakfast, lunch, dinner and even snacks which I thought was really convenient although you could cook for yourself for cheaper.

Tips are a big thing in Canada so ensure that you take that into account! Food out was more expensive than it is in Dunedin but fast food was cheaper!

\$1000 grant from the university helped for flights and I booked them in advance.

Save lots for travelling around Canada and beyond!

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

- I had a cash passport card just because I already had one from previously travelling but I recommend getting a Wise card – way better value and not as many fees as Cash Passport card.
- If you are only staying for a semester you can't open a Canadian bank account on the ETA visa so have some sort of travel card sorted.
- I also had a credit card for emergencies.
- I had a eftpos card that could be used globally (it had a particular sign on back) but still had to convert to the currency every time so wasn't great to rely on.
- Also I really recommend getting Splitwise which is a free app where you are able to split costs with people whilst travelling etc. it gets quite difficult with trying to bank transfer with lots of different global accounts so it's a good way of keeping track and being able to do less transactions.
- Cash was good for tips!

## Visas & Insurance

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

I just applied for an ETA because I was only there for a semester. It was super easy and it came through within 30 minutes of me completing it and it was attached to my passport number. I recommend printing it though just in case! You will need a different visa if you are staying for longer than a semester though!

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Yes it was called UHIP. I also had my own health insurance on top of this because I wanted to cover my other travel before and after. UHIP gave you access to the on campus facilities (except dentist). I will say that prescriptions were not subsidised so try get your medications in advance if you can – learnt the hard way!

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

- Global café was amazing to learn other people
- International Office held orientation/welcome events to all the exchange students which involved free Food Trucks and bingo!
- Orientation for all students (Frosh Week) was absolutely awesome!
- Outdoors club was great!

- The college sports were awesome as well because they were social competitions and allowed you to meet new people (I did American Flag Football which was so fun)
- Definitely volunteer around London!

*What was the university/ city like?*

- University was massive which was slightly daunting at first but the grounds are really cool!
- City is known as the forest city so definitely get out and about in the outdoors.
- The bus is the best way to get around as everything is quite spread out.
- The gym on campus was epic!
- Similar to Otago as it definitely felt like a student-city as the university is the main portion of the population in London which I really liked.

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

- Eat pizza at King Richie's
- Poutine at the Kebab shop next door was unreal!
- Westminster lake in the fall
- Ice Skating at StoryBrook Gardens was pretty fun! My friends also did it in Victoria Park which looked cool too!
- Join some new clubs and volunteer!
- Visit the bars and clubs in London like Delilah's
- Go travel around Canada especially loved Banff and Vancouver!
- The university hosted their student hockey games which were free and great to watch!
- Go to the orientation events with some of your new friends it was really fun to experience
- Go to the homecoming events and load up on all the free food and merch

*Any tips for future students?*

- Sign up for as many things as you can! They have great resources and facilities at Western so definitely use them.
- Sort your visa stuff early and have everything printed! Don't forget about the ArriveCAN app!
- Book flights as early as you can and do some travel on your way to exchange and back from exchange!

## Overall Experience

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

My time in Canada was an absolute blast and I wouldn't trade it for the world. I have made friends that I will have forever and we travelled throughout Canada going to Toronto, Niagara Falls, Vancouver, Calgary, and Banff. Banff was my favourite and was one of the most picturesque places I have ever been and definitely want to go back in the summertime in Canada to see both sides of it. Going on exchange made me more confident in future trips abroad and hopefully one day working overseas. Whether we were catching a hockey game or eating poutine all together in the common room or going out with new friends, every day brought new things to try and unforgettable memories. I am forever grateful for the adventures and the mates I made along the way. Please do yourself a favour and go on exchange – you will have the best time ever!



My friend and I at Western Homecoming!



Western Campus in the Fall!



Niagara Falls!



Banff in the winter!



Representing the flag football team with the flags of our residence during our inter-residence competition



The amazing grounds of Western University Football!