



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Western Australia
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1, 2023
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Law
Major(s)	Botany

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
EART1105 - Dynamic Planet	English	-
ENVT3306 - Coastal Conservation and Management	English	-
SCIE2204 - Marine Systems	English	-
SVLG3003 - McCusker Centre for Citizenship Internship	English	-

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

Any comments about these papers?

I would recommend any of these papers if you are studying a life sciences degree. There is a lot of cross over between the content which helps consolidate what you learn.

Marine Systems had a snorkelling field trip and easy quizzes and assignment. The course load was fairly heavy with three lectures a week - a large number of these were not held in person, only uploaded online.

Coastal Conservation and Management was very engaging and interactive. There were tutorials every week where the class would discuss various topics. You would also be given assignments most weeks. There was a field trip on the Swan river on a boat that included a bbq - very fun. This class had no exam so was all internally assessed. Overall, I found this to be my most challenging class but I learned a lot.

Dynamic Planet is super interesting if you have never learned about tectonic plates, volcanoes, earthquakes or geology in general. The weekly workshops were a highlight of my week. They were always fun and interactive. All the lectures were held online over Teams. It's a first year course so there is a lot of support and a lot of people enrolled in the course.

The McCusker Centre for Citizenship Internship is valuable if you are interested in working with a not for profit and getting some experience in an office environment. I found this to be my most time consuming unit. There are a large number of requirements and seminars to complete. Although the requirements aren't challenging they take up quite a bit of time. You must also work at your designated internship office for at least eight hours every week. If you miss a week this can put you behind in your requirements and it can be hard to make up for the lost time. My placement was an hour away and I had to take two buses which added to the time commitment. There are quite a few compulsory seminars to attend throughout the semester. I found the indigenous awareness seminar really interesting as well as the talk about youth in the justice system. I would recommend this unit if you are passionate about your organisation and willing to make the large time sacrifice.

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

I found a lot of similarities between UWA and UoO regarding student events, clubs, general vibe of campus. UWA was incredibly welcoming to exchange students, they hosted an amazing race and welcome bbq where you could hold snakes, pet koalas and swim in the pool. These events were great for meeting people.

I found there was a strong focus on internal assessments instead of exams compared to Otago. I thought this was beneficial as you were required to stay on top of your work and revise throughout the semester. I also found the classes to be much more interactive, there was a lot of engagement with the lecturers and the students seemed really interested in what they were being taught. There was also a lot more group work than Otago. However, this could depend on the classes you choose.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in one of the student accommodation providers in the city called Campus Perth. I loved my stay here, I shared a room with three other girls (all students), this type of room was called a Campus 4 (there are studios, twodios and other options available). I paid \$180AUD/week (this price increased after I left) which was the cheapest option (significantly) out of all the student accommodation options. You are located right by the city which I found to be a perfect location as you are close to the bus/train station, all the shops and the nightlife. The bus into uni was super easy and never an issue, you could also bike along the river which is beautiful.

The building would host various social events, some of these were really good, others were less good. Management wasn't great and the fire alarm would be set off by accident fairly often which meant the whole building would have to evacuate. There was also issues with the lifts being broken and you were required to bring your own bedding and cooking equipment.

Despite these issues I really loved staying at Campus Perth and would recommend the Campus 4 to anyone looking for cheap, social accommodation in a great location.

Note: Accommodation was really hard to find, the rental market was pretty impossible so try to find student accommodation early or be prepared to do a lot of searching when you arrive in Aus. I know people who stayed in hostels for several weeks as they looked for a rental to stay in.

Money matters

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

I found living in Perth relatively comparable to living in New Zealand. Rent was more expensive than Dunedin, but this greatly depends on where you live, I paid \$180AUD. Food was fairly similar price,

petrol is cheaper ~\$1.70AUD. If you get a job the pay is really good, I knew people earning \$30/hr in hospitality. My flights from Wellington cost ~\$600-\$700 and my insurance was ~\$200-300.

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

I mostly used ANZ debit card for all my transactions, this worked well for me. I would also, highly recommend getting a Wise card (especially if you plan to do further travel). This allowed me to transfer and receive money in any currency (really useful if you are lending/borrowing money from people. You can also get a physical card that allows you to make payments just like a normal debit card. This gives you the best exchange rate at that point of time. **Super useful!!**

Visas & Insurance

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

You only need your New Zealand passport.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, I think they required health insurance. Do lots of research into the insurance plan you choose to ensure you are sufficiently covered and aren't spending money for no reason.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Many of the activities they held were similar to Otago, such as O-week, clubs day and themed weeks. Every week there were events at the Student Tavern on Campus, including a party bus every Wednesday that would take you to a bar off-campus. There is a gym and swimming pool, however, you have to pay for membership for both of these.

There is a good range of clubs for all different interests. Many of these offer the same types of events, such as sundowners, bbqs, social nights and networking events. If you are interested in the outdoors the best club is the Outdoors Club, they have loads of events throughout the semester for rock climbing, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, rogaining and some (small) hikes (all of which are cheap). These tend to fill up really quickly but there are always plenty of events and I found the events I attended worthwhile. There is also a scuba diving club, however, I found membership to be expensive and the dive trips are not very cheap/gear rental is tricky as you have to transport it yourself to the locations.

What was the university/ city like?

The campus is beautiful, the buildings are made from limestone and there are heaps of trees and birds around – it feels like you're walking through a tropical jungle. It is also really easy to navigate, there's one long path down the centre of campus and everything is along this path.

I really love Perth, the city feels safe and is somewhat quiet for the size of it. Definitely not a clubbing city but it has lots of greenery, nice old buildings and a strong mining presence. It's fairly easy to move around using public transport (a bit more difficult to get anywhere far away) you can get cheap fares with the student Transperth card. There are plenty of great food places all over, Northbridge has great Asian food. UWA and Perth feel a lot more international than Dunedin, I met so many people from different cultures and backgrounds which I loved.

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

I would highly recommend going on a road trip down south and up north. Down south I went on a road trip to Albany but if you can get all the way to Esperance I think it would be worth it to see the national park, lucky beach and pink lake. Try to go down south in the summer months as this is when you'll have the best weather for the beaches.

I also went a road trip up north to Exmouth where I swam with the whale sharks. Swimming with the whale sharks is a bit expensive (\$500AUD) but so worth it! The road trip is beautiful with heaps of national parks along the way, beautiful beaches, snorkelling spots and so many freedom camping spots (we didn't book any accommodation for our trip except in Exmouth). The best time to go would be the cooler months, April – August as it isn't crazy hot during this time. I would also recommend visiting Rottneest island while its warm and either going snorkelling or scuba diving.

Any tips for future students?

Make the most of your time on exchange as it goes fast. Get out of your comfort zone, meet lots of people, say yes to new opportunities, find classes that interest you and try not to fall behind.

Overall Experience

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

Before I went on exchange everyone told me how much they loved it and I was afraid it wouldn't be the same for me but my time at UWA exceeded my expectations in every way. I met so many amazing people from all over the world that I made a lifetime worth of memories with. Studying in a different country gave me access to new opportunities and a range of courses and leading researchers that I wouldn't have back home. I learned so much about planning trips, travelling and different cultures. I loved the warm weather and spent a ridiculous amount of time at the beach. However, what I didn't realise is that you still have to study and it's important to prioritise and balance the things you want to do with your studies. There were times I had to say no to some great opportunities as I let myself fall behind in my studies. So, although it's a lot of fun don't forget about your classes, you're paying a lot of money to be there, make the most of it and it's okay if you have some bad days or even weeks, it isn't going to be amazing all of the time but I guarantee it will be worth it! :D

Pictures are much more fun than words, so here are a few that give you a glimpse into my time in Aussie.



