



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	University of Toronto (UofT)
<i>Semester & Year of Exchange</i>	S1 2018
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	Bachelor of Science
<i>Major(s)</i>	Psychology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Psychology and the Law	English	Psychology in Legal Contexts	18
Theories of Psychotherapy	English	NA	18
The Treatment of Psychological Data	English	Quantitative Methods	18
Cognitive Development	English	Developmental Psychology	18

Any comments about these papers?

I was quite limited by requirements for my psychology degree at Otago for what I could take on exchange, but I enjoyed these papers. You should also be aware that four exchange papers translate back to three Otago papers, with some Toronto students taking five papers (which would translate back to four). However, I found the workload for these to be the same as Otago papers, so I would highly recommend only taking four Toronto papers.

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

I would say the workload in Toronto was heavier than at Otago, and students seemed to care a lot more about their academic success. I didn't have any lab classes which was unusual for me, but labs are separate courses, so I chose to take only lecture courses. All of my lectures were three hours long, which is the standard at Toronto - if you are there in winter, it's actually nice to get a class down for the week without having to go into uni all the time. I was a full-time student but I only had three days at university every week. I'd say the teaching style was more expectant of student input than Otago, and I felt like I got to know my lecturers more as all of my classes were around 30 students, so you felt more pressure to pay attention in class, which is probably a good thing.

Accommodation

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

I stayed with Campus Co-op (<http://www.campus.coop/>), which is like a student led housing cooperative, with about 20 houses near the main campus. If you want a place there I would recommend inquiring earlier rather than later; I know someone who left it until two months before and they were completely full by then. You can set preferences for which house you would like to be placed in, but at the moment the pictures on the website are very outdated, and I didn't get any of my preferred houses anyway. All the people in each house are students at various universities, so it is a good way to meet a range of Canadians, and the cost to live in Toronto itself is pretty high, so staying here was very cheap in comparison. The houses are generally large (mine had 13 people) which can mean they aren't always the cleanest or quietest, but you are also likely to find people in the house you'll get along with, and when you're in a new place it can be great to have lots of people around who know the city a lot better than you do. The office staff are also very nice, the office is on campus, and all of the houses are close, so I'd recommend Campus Co-op.

Money matters

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

For me, flights were quite expensive, because I didn't book a round trip. They were about \$1500 each way, but I have seen them for that price roundtrip if you can get the sales right! My accommodation came to about \$150 a week, including power and utilities (they pay for water in Toronto), which for a place in the centre near Downtown was a very good price. Expect to pay up to \$250 a week for a place depending on how you find it and what sort of living situation it is, but I'd recommend somewhere that includes power and utilities to make it easier. Food was a similar price, though supermarkets are few and far between in the downtown area; I'd recommend making the trip out of town to places like No Frill's, which have very reasonable prices. Kensington Market (Chinatown) also has very reasonable fresh produce, I could buy 1kg of strawberries for about \$5 in the middle of winter, which I thought was amazing.

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

I opened a bank account in Canada as I was going to be there for 6 months, and because my card worked at least half the time in the States too. I used Scotiabank, and all I needed was ID and proof I was a student (your acceptance letter) and they allowed me to open and hold an account for free. I then just transferred money from my NZ account when necessary. Even if you're only going for one semester, I would highly recommend opening an account, because it made buying things so much easier, as well as booking things like buses and flights, or ordering things online.

Visas & Insurance

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

As New Zealand is part of the Visa Waiver program, you don't need a visa. If you are staying for longer than six months, you will need to apply for a student permit, but if you aren't, all you need is an electronic travel authorisation (ETA). I had to apply online on the Canadian government website beforehand, and I think it costs \$10 (or a small amount) and should only take a few days to process. I'd recommend getting the ETA a month or so before you travel just to be sure, as it is linked to your passport (make sure you get an ETA after a renewal), and you will not be able to board a flight to Canada if you don't have an ETA.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, UofT requires insurance known as the UHIP. The amount will show on your Acorn account (like eVision), and if you have any problems with paying it they have helpdesk hours weekly where you can go in and ask about it. Unfortunately, the UHIP doesn't fulfil the requirements for insurance required by Otago for your exchange, so you basically need double insurance. Most notably the UHIP does not cover dental work, so be aware of that as dentists may say they cover students, but exchange students are not counted in this.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

UofT, much like Otago, had heaps of clubs and organised sports you could join. Although I think it was a little harder to find things as I came in the middle of the academic year, you can find things by looking around on the ULife website, or by visiting UTSU (like OUSA). I joined the poker club, which was quite fun if very sporadic; there are heaps of clubs to join, and they are a good way of meeting Canadians rather than other exchange students.

What was the university/ city like?

I love Toronto, and I even picked up the east-west coast rivalry and would say Toronto is better than Vancouver. I was at the St. George campus at UofT (they have three!) and I would highly recommend it. The other two campuses are both about an hour's transit east or west of the city, and I know the students who were there found it challenging to come into the city for exchange events, which were all held in downtown Toronto.



Campus in winter

The campus itself is just north of downtown Toronto but being a big city there were definitely things going on and perks to every neighbourhood. I lived in The Annexe, which is just north of campus, and I walked into university every day. If you want to visit the tourist attractions, it's possible to walk from campus, but when I arrived in winter I preferred the subway because it was -20 even in the day time. The TTC, or subway, in Toronto is fairly expensive at \$3 CAD a ride, and that's provided you get a transit pass called a Prestocard (which I would recommend). The TTC was very exciting for a Kiwi, though be warned it is notorious for delays, weekend closures, and being packed during commuter hours. I also used the buses a few times, but I liked to walk when the temperature was above 0 (which wasn't very often). Overall, the university is well located, there is no shortage of eateries or things to do in the city, and it's all pretty accessible.

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

Toronto is so big it's kind of hard to recommend anything. There is an impressive number of food trucks just on campus itself, and that doesn't even begin to cover the eateries around Toronto. In saying that, there is a food truck outside of Robarts library (the main campus library) that does a well-priced and pretty good poutine. Otherwise, for cheap eateries and cheap groceries I'd head to Kensington market (Toronto's Chinatown), which is just west of campus. Bloor Street, which runs the north end of campus, has a lot of food options too. I'd recommend liking BlogTO on Facebook, or at least looking at the website, because they have endless lists for all types of foods and price ranges, as

well as things to do in and around Toronto. I didn't visit at least half of where I wanted to in Toronto because it really is that big, but I'd recommend Ontario Place (they have Winterfest in winter) and people also recommended Toronto Island (though I never made it there myself). Toronto also has lots of gardens, such as High Park (cherry blossoms in spring!) and Allan Gardens (conservatories which were heaven on a cold day). If you like history I'd recommend doing a free walking tour of Toronto, which leaves from Nathan Phillips Square (another place worth visiting). There is also Toronto Eaton Centre, which is the largest mall in North America; I found it mainly to be the big (expensive) brands, but it's an experience and a good respite from the cold.

Any tips for future students?

I know every student says this but go to all the exchange events. They are mostly in the first week (though they also do a fortnightly bar night on Thursdays), and although you'll be jetlagged and a bit lost, everyone else is too so you can bond over that. I know a lot of my first conversations were regarding weird Canadian things and finding out how Canada and New Zealand differed from other countries. Also, don't be afraid to invite yourself along to things, or invite other people to things with you; I wish I'd made more of an effort at the start to just join other people even if I didn't know most of the people going. Also, talk to people in your classes; all the people I talked to thought it was so interesting I came from NZ, and it was great to have study buddies and people to ask about assignments. I'd also recommend doing lots of things in the first few weeks before the workload hits, because it can be hard to schedule with people once you've passed the first month or so.

Overall Experience

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

I think I've pretty much covered it in the above, but if you are doubting going on exchange, just do it! Cliched as it is, I will never regret my decision to go on exchange, and I tend to reminisce almost every day about my time there. Although the weather when I arrived was a shock (it didn't get above -10 for a month, and on New Years Eve it was a balmy -40 in the city), the snow and cold temperatures did make everything more exciting. It was nice to always have something to do, or somewhere you wanted to go; if you go over only aiming to pass your papers, you'll find no shortage of adventures. In saying that I also encourage as much travel as possible. I went to Montreal and Ottawa in reading week, and I'd highly recommend Montreal (though maybe not so much Ottawa, perhaps Quebec City instead). I also had three weeks between my exams, so I went on a trip to Washington D.C, Philadelphia, New York and Boston, which were amazing in April because all the kids are still in school, but the temperatures start to warm up a bit. I also travelled up the west coast of the States from LA to Seattle and went to some national parks along the way. I also went to the west side of Canada, to Vancouver, and to Jasper and Banff national parks. Jasper and Banff were possibly my favourite places on my whole trip, they are incredible, and if you are going to Canada I would say don't leave without seeing them. However, a lot of Canada is frozen and snowy between about November and June, so be warned of that. Overall, I loved every minute of my exchange, and although it's cheesy you do gain a lot of confidence in yourself and your decisions. I miss Canada every day, and I'll be forever grateful I got to go.

