



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	The University of Texas at Austin
Semester & Year of Exchange	Fall 2018
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Computer Science

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
EE 422C: Software Design and Implementation II	English	No exact equivalent	18 points 300 level COSC
EE 461L: Software Engineering and Design Lab	English	No exact equivalent	18 points 300 level COSC
E 379R: Binge-Watching: A Cultural History	English	No exact equivalent	18 points 100 level Arts
PED 106C: 7-Weight Training	English	No exact equivalent	None

Any comments about these papers?

The Electrical Engineering courses (Course code: EE) were very difficult, and my expertise from Computer Science at Otago did not translate to being well prepared. Additionally, EE 422C was a prerequisite for EE 461L, yet I somehow ended up doing both of them.

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

There was a much stronger focus on internal work, with more regular small assignments and less weight placed on the exams. This was difficult to adjust to, however it was nice to not have so much riding on the final exams. There was also more of a focus on attendance, with missing classes resulting in loss of points, demoting of letter grades, or even the possibility of immediately receiving a failing grade.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in a Cooperative housing environment, which I enjoyed thoroughly. It was to be as I immediately had a social circle and social calendar that helped me adjust to being in Austin, and the labour system - (all residents did 5 hours of labour a week around the coop e.g. cooking, cleaning etc), meant that housing was affordable and gave everyone who lived there a sense of ownership and working as a collective. There was often disputes in the coop, and it was a very unique way of living that took some time to adjust to, however overall it was an amazing experience.

Money matters

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

Accommodation was relatively cheap, as the labour system meant there were no hired staff living in the coop. Flights and the Visa process were very expensive, yet this is to be expected. Food was a bit cheaper, and insurance was quite cheap (health was covered by UT Austin, and belongings insurance was cheap)

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

I used a cash passport, with a credit card on hand in case of emergencies.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, I had to apply online filling out a large number of forms, then arrange an appointment at the US Consulate in Auckland. This was a very irritating process, as the appointment times fill up very quickly and I could not get one until just a few weeks before I planned to leave, resulting in a great deal of stress regarding if my visa would arrive in time. Thankfully it did, however I would strongly urge the exchange office to heavily emphasise the importance of booking this appointment months in advance.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, UT Austin had mandatory health insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There were so many organised activities available to students both through and independent of UT Austin. I would recommend anything that involved being outdoors, as Austin is a very beautiful city and the nature both in Austin and around Texas are fantastic for outdoor activities.

What was the university/ city like?

There was a strong student culture, and students took great pride in being Longhorns (their equivalent of Scarfies). You will see a LOT of burnt orange if you go to UT Austin.

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

There are so many good restaurants, here are some that I really liked: Pluckers, Torchys, Shake Shack, Whataburger, In-N-Out.

Any tips for future students?

Do it!! But be prepared to put on a little weight 🍔

Overall Experience

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

My exchange was incredible! It didn't take me long to feel comfortable in Austin and start getting involved in the Longhorn culture. If you're looking for a classic American College experience, UT Austin is the perfect example of this (I even won Homecoming King, doesn't get more American than that!) You could go for the food, the culture, the travel experience and you'd soon realise that there is so much more in store for you in Texas. I cannot recommend UT Austin enough! Hook 'Em!



