



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Alberta
Semester & Year of Exchange	Sem 2 2022 and Sem 1 2023
Otago degree(s)	BSc
Major(s)	Maths and Physics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
MATH225 – Linear Algebra 2	English	MATH202
ASTRO320 – Stellar Astrophysics	English	200 Level equivalent
MATH334 – Intro to differential equations	English	COMO204
MATH311 – Theory of functions of complex variables	English	MATH302
MATH325 – Linear Algebra 3	English	300 Level Math equivalent
MATH337 – Intro to partial differential equations	English	300 Level Math equivalent

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

Any comments about these papers?

All the papers were very similar in workload to what you would expect at Otago. I found the content covered was a little easier than the Otago equivalents however they were still at a similar level.

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

All the papers had weekly assignments as done in Otago so there was very little difference. The universities in Canada tend to make the papers a little bit less intense and rigorous which makes them seem easier than Otago. Midterms are a thing at the UoA which is different from the Otago papers. These tend to take the pressure off the final exams as the marks are spread out more throughout the semester.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Nîpisîy house. Exchange students have the option of staying in HUB Mall, Nîpisîy house and International house. While all are great options to meet both Canadians and exchange students. I found that most my friends in HUB said it was a bit run down and so I would definitely choose either of the other two over HUB. Nîpisîy was great and the majority of the students on my floor were exchange students which made it easy to meet lots of people. Nîpisîy house is a shared apartment style residence with either 4 or 6 bedrooms per apartment. Because I was staying a whole year, I got placed with all Canadian students which was a great way to meet some locals. However because local and exchange students have different work and travel priorities I typically hung out in other exchange student apartments. Of the three residences, Nîpisîy is the newest and definitely the most modern looking and feeling of them all. On the other hand for the second semester I was there, all the exchange students ended up in International house so I spent most of my time over there which was not a problem as they are a minute walk from each other. International house is more like a classic residence with rooms connected by a long corridor and is full of mostly international and exchange students. Overall you can't go wrong with any of the three residences but I would definitely choose HUB last out of the three. If I were to choose again I would probably choose I-house over Nîpisîy but both of them are pretty much the same for social life.

Money matters

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

Accommodation was around \$12500 but requires only two payments at the start of both semesters which can be a pain if you are on a student loan. I travelled there and back via Europe to travel around for a bit so my flights were much more expensive than they could have been had I flown straight to Edmonton. Most things are similarly priced to NZ however don't forget that tax is not included in prices and also tipping is required which adds to the overall costs. My insurance for the year including my Europe travels came to around \$1000NZD which was reasonably priced. Make sure you budget a lot for travelling around Canada because sometimes accommodation and hostels can be very expensive at peak times. One bonus is the university gets you massive discounts on car rentals with enterprise and petrol prices are much lower there than NZ. Another thing to consider is that during winter you are going to want a good pair of snow boots and a very warm jacket however if you look in the local OpShops you can find very good quality stuff for less than \$50NZD.

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

I used the WISE app which provides you with a travel card and makes it very easy to transfer funds to different currencies

Visas & Insurance

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

As I was staying for 2 semesters, I had to apply for a student Visa. This was a big pain because as part of the process you have to get your biometrics done and the closest places to do this are either Auckland or Sydney. This meant I had to buy a flight to Auckland and back from Dunedin in order to get my visa processed which was very pricey. Other than that thought the process was relatively easy. You do however have to have proof that you will be leaving the country after your visa expires (Return flight booked) and also need to prove you have the funds to stay for a whole year in Canada.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes. The university has mandatory health insurance called UAHIP which is included in your fees.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There's a clubs day with a massive selection of different clubs and sports so definitely check that out. The exchange office puts on a few trips to the Rockies throughout the year however I would recommend just doing it with your group instead as it is much cheaper and you have more freedom. Definitely spend as much time as possible in the Rockies as you can. During the summer there are plenty of hikes to do and when winter hits the skiing is amazing and completely different to New Zealand. There is also free ice skating at the stadium every week during winter.

What was the university/ city like?

The city itself is quite nice, it has the largest mall in north America which is a definite must see. Other than that there isn't too much going on but it is what you make of it. Edmonton is very hot in the summer sometimes reaching 40 degrees. Once winter hits however, the temperature drops and the entire city becomes covered in snow which completely changes the city vibes. Temperatures plummet to sometimes below -40 degrees. Winter also gives the opportunity to see the northern lights in the city which is an amazing experience

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

Definitely go to Banff and Jasper in the Rockies. We also did a road trip in the summer up to Yellowknife to spot the Northern Lights and were very lucky to see them. In Edmonton I would recommend the mall which has a theme park, waterpark and many other weird and wonderful attractions. In winter there is a Christmas market which is also cool to visit.

Any tips for future students?

Make sure you say yes to as many things as possible. Don't let yourself sink into the normality of Uni life and try to do something new every week. Overall the University of Alberta is what you make of it and I think it is the perfect place to do an exchange at.

Overall Experience

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

Going into exchange I was nervous that I wouldn't meet anyone and would be stuck in a foreign country with no friends for a year. However being an exchange student makes it easy to meet so many new people as everyone is in the same boat looking for friends. My time spent in the Rockies was amazing and I hope to go back very soon. Nothing will prepare you for the cold winters but this is just part of the experience and with the beginning of winter comes a whole new side of Canada which is just as if not even more fun than the summer.

Overall I think exchange is absolutely worth it and I wish I could do it all over again. The friendships and memories you will make are for life. If you are thinking about doing it but not too sure, I think just do it, you definitely will not regret it.

