



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	UCSB
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2025
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Finance and Economics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Business Strategy – TMP120	English	Unspecified commerce
Negotiation – TMP191N	English	Unspecified commerce
Managerial Accounting – ECON137A	English	Unspecified commerce
Personal Economics – ECON152	English	300 Level economics
International Finance – ECON181	English	300 Level economic
Venture Capital/ Private Equity – TMP191VC	English	Unspecified commerce

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

Any comments about these papers?

TMP papers (technology management) are very discussion based which I really liked, with interesting guest speakers.

ECON137A I thought was more upper level accounting but was pretty basic (although had very cool guest speakers, CFO of NVIDIA and COE of Bank of America)

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

I would say it is easier, the equivalent of full time is 3 papers, and still have lots of spare time.

- Papers are more assignment based and participation/attendance and less heavy on exams.
- Compared to Otago everyone was eager to contribute and lecturers would ask students lot of questions.

Accommodation

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

I was in a student flat which I found on a Facebook group. This house had 9 girls (7 Americans and 2 kiwis) and was a part of a 4 apartment complex. Our house had 3 bedrooms and each room had 3 girls. I was in a bunk bed and the room was relatively small. Although it was small and squished it was really enjoyable and having shared bedrooms made it easy to join in and not feel lonely at first.

- The cons to this living situation was that there were definitely different cleaning patterns and cultural differences compared to NZ and my previous living conditions. But maybe this was just my particular flatting group.

Money matters

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

Accommodation – \$1,165 USD per month (for 6 months) + Bond (one month's rent)

Visa - \$700 NZD (Sevis Fee + Application)

Flights (got scammed on the way over as I booked very late, \$2,000 NZD), way back was complicated as went home Via Europe but around \$2,000 NZD round trip.

Food – Very expensive, supermarket isn't too bad prices, similar to NZ prices maybe a bit cheaper but in USD, going out and take out food was relatively expensive especially when converting to NZD.

Insurance – also got scammed a little bit

Had to pay UCSB health insurance (can get waived but very difficult due to the requirements) - \$1,300 USD x 2 (Winter and Spring quarter required their own insurance) – VERY EXPENSIVE

Also brought the Student safe outbound travel insurance (\$650NZD)

Also be prepared – if you are wanting to do weekend trips with friends this does add up (food, car rental, accommodation)

SPRING BREAK (obviously optional – was so fun would recommend, but was costly)

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

Wise card – Very useful used it for everything

Was quite helpful one of my NZ friends had an American bank account so we could transfer her NZD and then she was able to transfer other people for us as it got a bit tricky and came with added costs transferring money internationally.

Visas & Insurance

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

Visa process was very complicated – took a while and thought I was doing it wrong the whole time.

- If you need help I am happy to help (just a bit complicated written in a document)

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes – a mandatory health insurance of \$1,300 USD each quarter which I didn't know until after I had brought the required Otago travel insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Joining clubs – they were huge, everyone was in clubs and it was cool to be in them.

- Also going to sports games and events.
- The Exchange office also put on lots of events at the start for exchange students to mingle.

What was the university/ city like?

Very cool – I would describe it as an Otago equivalent (student town) but in the sun and on the beach. People were surfing every day, out walking and enjoying themselves.

It was very work hard, play hard. Everyone was very studious but also had time partying and at the beach.

The university and the campus itself was amazing (it was huge and such amazing facilities) – a stand out for me were the sports facilities, the gym and pool in particular.

- The university town is called Isla vista and is only 30 mins walk around pretty much, the university is in this town on the water. With a handful of shops in the centre.
- Goleta isn't too far away a 10 min bus or bike and has big supermarkets and target.
- Santa Barbara downtown is 30 min bus away and so easy to get to, this is pretty with great shopping and restaurants, a bit more sophisticated and expensive than Isla vista.

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

Visit a lot of California, we did Yosemite, San Diego, LA and San Francisco, each were so different but all very cool and fun.

- Downtown Santa Barbara is also very cool and trendy, the funk zone was one of my favourites with lots of shops and eateries.

Any tips for future students?

Make the most of every opportunity, especially the exchange gatherings even though you may be living with Americans (like I was) my closest friend in the end were exchange and international students as they all wanted to do the same activities I wanted to do.

Overall Experience

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

This exchange to UCSB has been the best decision I've ever made. I've met the most amazing people, gained global connections, and had the privilege of living in an incredible location with awesome facilities. UCSB, with its beachfront location, offered the perfect balance of academics, social life, and opportunities to be outdoors, spending lots of my spare time surfing and exploring (which the photo below captures). I've thoroughly enjoyed both my time here and the university papers I've taken, which have included inspiring guest lecturers, from the COO of Bank of America to the ex CFO of NVIDIA. I've learned so much and am excited to take this knowledge back to New Zealand.

Along with weekends in Isla Vista, I also had the chance to become close with other exchange students and travel around California. Exploring Yosemite National Park was one of the highlights. Being able to explore this area of the world was amazing and I feel I have

grown as a person, stepped out of my comfort zone and made connections and lifelong memories.







