



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University Of HongKong
Semester & Year of Exchange	2025 sem 1
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Chinese and Global Studies

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Europe Without Borders? (CCGL9050)	English	Global Studies
Chinese as a Foreign Language (CHIN9504)	Chinese/English	CHIN335
Transport Geography (GEOG2018)	English	Global Studies
Globalizing China: Development (GEOG3104)	English	CHIN241 Contemporary Chinese Society
The Making of Modern South Asia (HIST2188)	English	History

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

Any comments about these papers?

Hongkong had so many Humanities papers available that go perfectly with my majors, so I had endless options. They also give a two week trial period at the beginning of semester to all students so you can add and drop classes to see what you want to do.

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

The workload was a lot as I had to do 5 papers to equate to 4 papers at otago, however I found it manageable in the end.

The teaching style is much more independent than otago most papers only had one 2 hour lecture per week and no tutorial, meaning you had to engage and ask questions in the lecture.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Lee Shau Kee Hall, one of the university's on-campus accommodations, in a double room with another exchange roommate. The hall was mostly local Hong Kong students with a small group of international and exchange students who I became very close with.

Pros:

- Super close to campus (10 mins' walk)
- Very affordable compared to private flats
- Good opportunity to make local/exchange friends

Cons:

- Rooms are quite small, stuffy and basic.
- No common area, there was a small pantry/kitchen but was full of other residents belongings.
- Very cluttered and dirty, all of the local students live there for multiple years and accumulate a lot of stuff.
- Not as much personal space or privacy
- No catering

Money matters

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

- **Accommodation:** \$3,000 NZD total for the semester (worked out to be approx. **\$150 NZD per week**)
- **Flights:** As I was travelling before and after the semester, my flights weren't direct to and from Hong Kong — overall cost was higher than a standard return trip
- **Visa:** Approx. \$600 HKD
- **Food:** Most meals I ate out cost between **30–40 HKD (\$6–8 NZD)**. There was no catering at the hall and the kitchen was very small and not really usable (quite dirty), so cooking wasn't practical. I usually ate out for two meals a day and made my own breakfast. Supermarkets in Hong Kong were extremely expensive, so eating at cheap local places actually worked out far more affordable than cooking.
- **Insurance:** bought with flights.

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

How I accessed my money:

I used a **Wise (TransferWise) debit card**, which let me convert NZD to HKD with low fees and good rates. Highly recommend that or a multi-currency card. I also kept some cash on me as not all local shops accept cards.

HongKong uses octopus in most places which is very easy to use however to avoid exchange fees you need to have a HongKong bank account.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, I had to apply for a **student visa** through the Hong Kong Immigration Department. It was straight forward process, and was in the form of an E visa so was very easy.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There was a Welcome Week at the beginning of the semester with activities for new exchange students, which was a great way to meet people early on. However, since it was the second semester for most students, there weren't many other official mixer events throughout the term. Most of the exchange students I connected with ended up organising our own day trips and adventures around Hong Kong — exploring the city's hiking trails, beaches, and cultural spots together. These self-organised outings actually became some of the best parts of the experience.

What was the university/ city like?

HKU is a modern and international university with a really active humanities department — there were often talks, seminars, and events happening on campus. The university is set on a hillside above the city, so you get great views across Victoria Harbour, and the mix of old colonial buildings with newer high-rises gives it a unique vibe.

Hong Kong itself is fast-paced and full of energy, but it's surprisingly easy to find quiet spots or escape into nature. I really enjoyed being able to explore both the city and nearby hiking trails or beaches — the contrast between urban life and natural spaces was one of the best parts of living there.

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

Definitely explore the more rural areas of HongKong like SaiKung and the outlying Islands, they are super laid back areas with a much slower pace of life compared to the busy city.

Try *cha chaan tengs* (local diners), especially around Kennedy Town. Get a pineapple bun and milk tea combo.

Go to Lan Kwai Fong or wanchai for bars, clubs and cafes.

Any tips for future students?

Do your research on each hall before applying, choose one that suits you.

Make the most of the add drop period and try as many classes as you want, try and take some challenging ones as it is pass or fail.

Overall Experience

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

My exchange at HKU was genuinely life-changing. It challenged me academically, exposed me to new cultures, and gave me friendships I'll hold on to long after leaving. Living in Lee Shau Kee Hall with a mix of locals and fellow exchange students made the experience feel immersive and meaningful. I grew not just as a student but as a person, learning to be more independent, adaptable, and globally minded.

