



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Boston College
Semester & Year of Exchange	Otago Semester 2, 2018
Otago degree(s)	BA
Major(s)	Economics, Mathematics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
MATH4445 COMBINATORICS	English	300-MATH unspecified	14.4
MATH4470 MATH MODELING	"	300-COMO unspecified	14.4
MATH4435 MATH PROGRAMMING	"	300-MATH unspecified	14.4
ACCT1021 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING	"	ACCT102	14.4
ECON3363 MICRO PUBLIC POLICY	"	300-ECON unspecified	14.4

Any comments about these papers?

In Combinatorics and Accounting I had Joshua Greene and Carlo Gallimberti, they were both fantastic. Joseph Quinn in Economics also was great. I found Combinatorics to be one of my favourite subjects I did in my undergrad career. If you haven't been introduced to Financial Accounting, Carlo is a great person to do it with. Micro-economic Public Policy Issues I found to be very useful because it gives you practical experience writing an in-depth policy review. I don't recommend Math Modeling or Math Programming, I found the course to be taught poorly and the Modeling exam was not comprehensive.

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

The workload was greater. It was recognisably different from Otago in that way. In Otago I would expect a homework assignment every other week from each subject, but at BC it was every week. I found it difficult at times to keep up. The style of teaching is relatively similar to Otago, at least for my subjects, which tend to have small class size. I would say if you're looking to travel a lot while on

exchange, BC may not be the best because most people struggled to travel often while keeping up with the workload. This was very different from Bocconi in Milan where I did an exchange in the previous semester, and people were able to travel a lot. Boston College tends to have a quality of teaching though, so I really enjoyed most of it.

Accommodation

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

My accommodation was unique from other exchange students. I'm heavily invested in my Catholic faith and I lived in a BC house for men who were interested in learning more about the Jesuits and perhaps joining them. If you happen to fit that category then definitely reach out because it was an awesome experience and gives you special access to parts of university life. Otherwise in the fall semester the best option for other students was to stay at Pine Minor College. There was a large group of BC exchange students there and they really enjoyed it. It's also one of the cheapest ways of living around BC. If you go in the spring semester, it's easier to get on campus accommodation, so I would recommend going for that. It's not too much more expensive than getting an apartment/flat, unless you have to get the BC meal plan. Try to avoid the halls that make the meal plan mandatory if possible. You can also track down an apartment if you like but it may not be cheaper than on campus accommodation. Boston accommodation is very expensive, you can expect to pay US\$900-1300 for on campus accommodation (depending on the hall and not including the meal plan) or US\$900+ for a private room off campus. The cheapest option in my semester was to share a room at Pine Minor College for US\$600. Beware if you choose off-campus housing, you'll have to deal with leasing fees and dates that may be expensive if you're unlucky.

Money matters

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

In US dollars I paid about:

900 x 4 months = \$3600 for accommodation.

Flights are hard because I came from Europe, but I recommend checking skyscanner, studentuniverse, and statravel (both their NZ AND US sites, they have different deals). You may be able to get a return flight for less than \$1000.

Visa was 160 application fee + 205 sevis fee = \$365 I believe.

Food was about \$12 per meal if you eat at the cafeteria, and groceries are also expensive. I would say budget double what you paid in Dunedin, unless you lived in a catered residence.

Boston College has mandatory health insurance which was \$1280 in my semester but it's more expensive in the spring semester. If you stay for a full year, you'll have to pay for both semesters. If you also get comprehensive travel insurance I would recommend using Travel Insurance New Zealand (TINZ, which is different from New Zealand Travel Insurance). They seemed to have the cheapest premiums. You can easily get a quote on their website.

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

You can use your credit card to begin with, maybe a debit card to get cash. However, I would recommend getting a US bank account as soon as possible. Bank of America came to orientation to help exchange students set up accounts and I had no problem with them and all their fees were waived for under 25s. Then, I recommend sending money to your US account using Transferwise, it is the cheapest way to access foreign currency I have found. You can expect to pay a commission fee of around 0.7% and that's it. You get as close as possible to the real exchange rate. You can use my referral link to get the commission fee waived on your first transfer:
transferwise.com/u/brandonk38

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes I did, essentially you apply for an appointment through your closest visa-issuing consulate and pay all the fees and fill in the requested information. BC will also guide you along. I applied for mine in Milan, where I did my semester before BC.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, it was US\$1280 in my semester.

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 similar level of clubs and sports as at Otago, you can expect practical the same clubs but with the American sports included. Get involved in some of the college matches for sure, Hockey and American Football are great at BC. They also take service very seriously at BC, so if you're up for it, get involved.

What was the university/ city like?

BC has the most beautiful campus in Boston, better than Harvard and MIT, maybe the most beautiful in the country. You can see it on their great promo videos. Boston is one of the most loved cities in the US with loads of history. It's definitely cool to live in.

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

Just explore, I didn't find anything extra special.

Any tips for future students?

Boston College was incredible, I really did love it. Be very aware it's much more expensive than Dunedin, I would say budget twice what you would for a semester in Dunedin and you'll be fine. Be prepared for a higher workload. Try to be as active as possible because your semester will go by real fast and you'll miss it. You'll also notice students at BC are very motivated, so if you're particularly ambitious, I think you'll suit BC. Please reach out if you have any questions at all.

Overall Experience

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

Boston College is a grand university with a real active and motivated culture. I found it a very inspiring place to study and a very intense but enjoyable experience. It was a very different experience for me from Otago, with all the big lights and glamour you can expect from a prestigious and wealthy American University. Except for the cold weather, high prices and heavy workload, I loved every part of BC. There was always lots to do, and it was a very beautiful campus to do things on. I think I will always hold a special nostalgic place for Boston College. Go Eagles!



