



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Edinburgh
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester Two 2023
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Finance

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Understanding Public Policy (SCPL08012)	English	OTAGO200
Scottish Studies 1A: Conceptualising Scotland (SCET08006)	English	OTAGO100
Creating Edinburgh: The Interdisciplinary City (EFIE08002)	English	OTAGO100

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

Any comments about these papers?

Creating Edinburgh was a completely different learning experience than what I have done before. Almost entirely all of my class were exchange students and it required you to go out in a group and visit sites around Edinburgh before meeting up for a two hour tutorial at the end to present on findings and offer critiques on certain aspects of Edinburgh. The course is marked pass/fail and I would highly recommend it for anyone going on exchange.

Scottish Studies looked at the folklore of Scotland and how the country has developed into what it is today. Some very interesting content mixed in with some very dry topics and I found different people enjoyed different aspects of the course.

Public Policy was my favourite paper as it did focus on the real world application of policy and how it is created. The paper was focused heavily on real world practical examples and wasn't as theory

based as I expected. It also allowed you to draw on your own examples for assessment which was particularly handy if you're not up to date with Scottish policy decisions.

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

Apart from Creating Edinburgh the style of lectures + tutorials is identical to the style of teaching you'd expect from humanities papers at Otago. These papers didn't have final exams and were assessed only through assignments – this seems to be the case for most humanities papers at Edinburgh.

Three papers at Edinburgh is the equivalent of four at Otago, and the workload per paper is less than what I was used to at Otago. As such I did find myself with quite a lot of free time compared to a standard LLB/BCom workload at Otago.

I did get a bit of a shock with the UK marking system being completely different to that at home. If you score 80 or above on assignment your work is considered to be publishable in its current state, and what would be an 85 at Otago would be a 70 at Edinburgh – so don't be annoyed when you get your grades back.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Robertson's Close which is a university owned self-catered hall. You're in an apartment style flat with either 4 or 6 people in an old tenement building. Robertsons Close is in a fantastic location in Cowgate which is where all the bars and clubs are in Old Town. It is also about a 2 minute walk from the Royal Mile. Although it is a hall it is a very different experience to an Otago hall and serves primarily as a place to sleep rather than a place to meet people, have events set up for you etc. It is a bit run-down but the prime location makes up for it.

My whole flat was made up of all exchange students. As a warning though Edinburgh mixes its exchange students and first years in the same accommodation. I was lucky I got all exchange students, but my other friend at Edinburgh were the only exchange students in their flat. It's not the worst thing, but be prepared for the fact you might be (both physically and maturity wise) significantly older than your flatmates.

Money matters

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

I flew in and out of London and that cost me \$2600 return and was booked 6 months in advance. I also did a bit of traveling both sides of the semester so the cost may not be truly reflective of what it costs to only go for a semester. Insurance cost \$650 using the StudentSafe package offered by Otago. Accommodation and utilities was \$250 per week for 16 weeks. Food from supermarkets was a lot cheaper than at home and could easily do a weekly shop for \$50-65 a week. If you choose to eat out it can cost up to double what you'd expect to pay in NZ at some places. Overall depending on how much travel you're intending on doing you could do an exchange for under \$12,000.

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

I had a Wise account which was a really good way of saving on overseas transaction expenses. If your friends use Wise you can also request money from them on the app which is really handy if you split bills. I would recommend having a back-up card or cash on you as Wise has strict security features and the card will decline payment if you use PayWave too often or the merchants machine isn't set up correctly.

Visas & Insurance

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

I'm a UK citizen and did not require a visa. However even if you're not if you're in the country for less than 6 months as a student you do not require a visa.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Most socialising at Edinburgh is formed through societies and not through Halls like it is at Otago. I made that mistake and only joined ESN, which is the exchange students society. They put on a few good events once and week and is a great way of meeting other exchange students from around the world.

You will have time to join other clubs and I'd recommend joining a sports team. Most expect minimal levels of skill in the sport you choose and most have Wednesday night socials which are apparently good fun.

What was the university/ city like?

Edinburgh is an absolutely incredible city and is certainly my favourite city in the UK. It has a fantastic culture and history which can easily be explored within walking distance of the University. It has a medieval feel about it and a lot of the city is planned around the University (in a similar way to Dunedin). Transport links within the city are also fantastic with an international airport 30 minutes away, a railway which can take you anywhere in the UK as well as a very well connected bus service within the city. The city is particularly touristy – so it can be a bit tricky to find quality spots that locals go to rather than tourist traps.

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

Be sure to check out the Highlands for at least a long weekend. If you can get some friends together and hire a campervan to see the Glencoe, Isle of Skye, Fort Williams I would highly recommend it. Going to St Andrews is also only an 1 hour and 40 minutes by train and is well worth the day trip. If you're into history Stirling Castle and the William Wallace Memorial is also a very good experience.

Any tips for future students?

Get a YoungScot card and a 16-25 railcard. The YoungScot card get you £1 entry into all historic sites in Scotland and free buses across Scotland if you're under 22. A railcard costs £30 for a year and gets you 1/3 of trains across the UK (including the London underground). I made my money back within a week and is particularly handy if you plan to travel within the UK.

Overall Experience

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

Going on exchange was definitely one of the best things I have done in my life. I would 100% recommend going on exchange if you can! Although I was there for formal education most of my learnings on this exchange about myself and the world around us came from outside the classroom. Whilst the country is on the other side of the globe, Scottish humour and mannerisms are very similar to that in NZ. The Scottish accent isn't that hard to understand and more people had trouble understanding my kiwi accent than the other way around.

Going to the UK and mainland Europe really opened my eyes up to different cultures which we don't necessarily get exposed to at home. Edinburgh airport has a lot of daily flights to pretty much anywhere in Europe or North Africa and flights with Ryan Air/Easy Jet can be cheaper than a box of beer if you do your planning well. I'm very grateful for this experience and being able to access continent that easily.