



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	Commerce	Major(s)	International Business
Host University	ITAM, Mexico	Semester & Year of Exchange	Full year exchange, 2017

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Advanced Spanish	Spanish	SPAN331	7
Political Economic Relations	English	MANT300	6
Mexican History	Spanish	SPAN300	6
Managerial Skills Development	English	MANT222	6
Theories of International Relations	English	MANT332	6
Accounting Process	Spanish	BSNS107	6
International Business	Spanish	MANT332	6
Global Strategy	English	MANT342	6
Business Strategy 1	English	MANT338	6
America Latina	Spanish	SPAN300	6

Any comments about these papers?

International Relations is very theory based, it was quite difficult to enter these higher level papers without previous study of international relation and economic theories.

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

The classes are much smaller (20-40 people) so you're expected to contribute to conversation unlike most business papers at Otago. Participation and attendance form part of your grade you need to go to class. I found the workload to be more or less the same, varies by paper.

Accommodation

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

The first semester I stayed in an exchange house (12 people) which was right by the university. This was a great way to meet other exchange students and made friends quickly. Living 5 mins away from uni was also a great benefit as Mexico City is huge and has a lot of traffic. However living with foreigners meant we were always speaking in English and it wasn't so culturally beneficial in that aspect.

The second semester I moved to a neighbourhood in the centre and found an apartment independently from the university with two other people. I did this mainly to improve my Spanish and get to know the city better. I took the metro to university which was actually really good and got to know the city much better.

Money matters

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

My rent was about \$550 a month. I booked two one way flights which totalled about \$2000. Insurance was about \$1500. Food is relatively cheap in Mexico so you're able to eat out a lot more in restaurants or in markets.

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

I used my kiwibank debit card the whole time I was away. It's not advised to try to get a bank account in Mexico as its incredibly complicated. Paying in restaurants by card is really efficient with minimal conversion rates and it cost me about \$6 each time I did a cash withdrawal so I would withdraw large amounts to pay rent and other expenses etc. You need to carry cash with you in Mexico because places such as markets don't have card terminals.

Visas & Insurance

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

I didn't receive my acceptance letter from ITAM with adequate time to attain a visa. The embassy advised me that I could use the six month tourist visa twice by leaving Mexico after 6 months to Guatemala or Belize.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Insurance was mandatory for exchange students but it could be of their choosing. ITAM does offer an insurance program.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Salsa classes were very popular with exchange students however I had classes during that time so I was unable to attend. I know other students did music classes, yoga and joined the university sports teams.

What was the university/ city like?

Mexico City is a great city which a lot of things to do, however the culture difference is quite big and population is very large. Therefore you need to be comfortable and able to navigate crowds carefully as theft is a problem. Also taking public transport can be much faster than taking ubers so being open minded and flexible is a must.

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

There's many, many museums and art galleries in Mexico City that are worth a visit. The historical centre, areas of Condesa, Polanco and Roma are also worth exploring by foot. The pyramids outside the city and of course the beach towns and the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas.

Any tips for future students?

Overall Experience

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

My year abroad in Mexico truly was the best year of my life. I would really recommended Mexico as an exchange destination because its much cheaper than New Zealand so your money will go much further, allowing you do a lot of travelling and eating out regularly. The country is incredibly diverse and even after a year of travelling, I still have places I want to see. The food in Mexico is amazing and very different to New Zealand. After one year I still haven't been able to try everything- you would be surprised how many meals can be made from the corn tortilla. Mexican people are very warm and welcoming (greeting and farewelling everyone you pass with a kiss on the cheek will become standard) and the exchange students are really included in the ITAM student life. I think this level of integrations is much better than it is at Otago University. Business courses at ITAM are not too challenging, so you're still able to manage your course load and travel in the weekends. The teachers are also really understanding and relatively accomodating with the exchange students. It's also really easy to find matches for business papers. Mexico City itself is amazingly cultural, with top restaurants and attractions. I also went to a lot of concerts and music festivals. One semester is not enough! There are so many places to travel within Mexico too like Cancun/Tulum, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Puerto Escondido, Puebla, Baja California and the north of the country. These places are all incredibly different. If you have time, you are also able to travel to Cuba or Guatemala or even further down Central America. As far as the language goes, everyone at ITAM speaks English, so if you don't speak Spanish or are having trouble, this can be reassuring. However practising Spanish is really encouraged and everyone is really friendly with regards to that. If you want an exchange where you'll be sure to really mix with the locals, learn a bit of Spanish and do heaps of travelling, Mexico is the best option.



EDC Electronic Festival



Boats at Xochimilco



Sumidero Canyon, Chiapas



Tequila factory, Tequila, Jalisco



Tikal, Guatemala



Palenque, Chiapas



Isla Holbox



Acapulco