



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	McGill University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2019
Otago degree(s)	BA(Hons)
Major(s)	French & English literature

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
FREN355	French	FREN400 level	18
FREN472	French	FREN400 level	18
ENGL405	English	ENGL300/400 level	18
ENGL414	English	ENGL300/400 level	18

Any comments about these papers?

If you plan to study French at McGill, sit a placement test and sign up for courses labelled FRSL as soon as possible. These courses are designed for second-language learners, and fill up very quickly. I chose to take FREN courses at McGill instead to challenge myself, the students in these classes are native speakers and all teaching/discussion/assignments/exams are conducted only in French. These courses are more focused on literature and culture, which I found very interesting as opposed to learning aspects of language.

Expect a lot more theory/philosophy/critical thinking-based readings for English courses to accompany the core texts to be studied - it's tough at first, but you'll come out of it better off! And, at 400-level, you'll mostly likely be devising your own topics for final essays and such.

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

As others have said, you are not marked more harshly than at Otago but the workload is definitely heavier. Expectations are also higher, McGill is the so-called "Harvard of Canada", it has a reputation and the students who go there work harder than interact a lot more in lectures and engage with the

professor. Also, lectures are either 1.5 or 3 hours long - bring snacks! any others I've ever seen! A lot of classes also factor in 10-20% of your grade which goes towards your participation - so people

Accommodation

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

I stayed in a three-bedroom apartment in the Mile End, which I found on the International Roommates group on Facebook a month before I arrived. My room was \$500/month not including hydro (electricity) and internet. My roommates were two recent McGill graduates, who spoke both English and French. Living in the Mile End was a dream, it's the best neighbourhood in Montreal! The buses (80, 435, 55, 51) in my neighbourhood made it super easy and convenient to get anywhere on the island, even in Wintertime. My journey to school/downtown on the 80 took 20 mins, or was a 40 min walk. You're super close to Mont-Royal in the Mile End, there are heaps of amazing restaurants/bars/cafes and all of the vintage stores and used bookshops you could ever hope for! You won't find many young students in the neighbourhood, most are young professionals or young families. It makes for a calmer, more chilled-out vibe. Mile End is also a historically English-speaking neighbourhood, and the large presence of Hasidic Jews in the neighbouring suburb of Outremont adds to that. There's so much happening in the Mile End that you'll no doubt end up visiting and falling in love with it at some point - so why not just live there instead?!

Money matters

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

I saved for about a year before coming to Montreal. You can find fully-furnished accommodation for between \$500-\$800/month. I paid around \$3000 for return flights, I understand that this has become a lot cheaper now due to more flights between Auckland and Vancouver. Definitely take this path, as opposed to going through the USA, because in the US you have to claim and recheck all of your checked baggage. I transited through Chicago on my way to Montreal, the TSA process was very stressful and I almost missed my connecting flight - my bags didn't even make it! I budgeted around \$500 a month for food and other expenses, but I didn't always stick to that. I had comprehensive international travel insurance set up when I booked my flights - for six months, I paid just over \$1000.

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

To start myself off, I brought over some cash and had some money on my Loaded for Travel visa card. I set up a bank account at Scotia Bank on my first day in Montreal, and then began to pay for most things with my Scotia Bank visa debit card. They are affiliated with Westpac back home and my Westpac debit mastercard was my back-up form of payment. Signing up with a Canadian bank is a must, it is easy if you take along your McGill proof of enrolment form with your new address on it, plus your passport and drivers licence. Also, you will most likely need a Canadian bank account to open a phone plan. Besides withdrawing cash (not everywhere takes cards), another benefit of having a Canadian account is Interac which allows you to instantly email money between Canadian bank accounts, regardless of who your friends bank with. As for transferring funds between your NZ & Canadian bank accounts, try and set yourself up with XE Money Transfer before you leave NZ. They are 100% safe, reliable, and fast at getting your funds across.

Visas & Insurance

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

The ETA visa to live in Canada for six months is very cheap, as is the ESTA for visiting the USA - both are easy to sort out online ahead of your trip.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, payable online via the McGill portal (Minerva) for \$365.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Trips led by MISN to Quebec City for Winter Carnival and to a sugar shack were both worthwhile and great value for money. You can join in on other trips and clubs easily enough if you look up SSMU.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is in the middle of downtown, so you get to experience both at the same time! The campus is of a similar size to Otago, but the city is much bigger. Once you know your way around downtown, you can navigate your way around the tourists and businessmen much quicker. Don't limit yourself only to downtown, exploring the Old Port and along to Atwater market/Westmount are absolute musts to experience.

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

- Visit the Mile End (Saint-Viateur bagels are the best, Cafe Olimpico has the best coffee, explore all the vintage stores)
- Walk up Mont Royal, go to as many parks as you can (Lafontaine, Jarry, Laurier)
- Visit Little Italy and go to Jean Talon market
- Find cheap eats in Chinatown at Lan Zhou Nouilles and Patisserie Harmonie
- Explore the mural art in the Plateau
- Visit the arts museums and any small galleries that catch your eye
- Walk or bike along the Lachine canal from Old Port to Atwater markets in Saint-Henri
- Top tip above all of these recommendations is to simply get out and explore as many neighbourhoods as you can!

Any tips for future students?

It's better to anticipate learning basic conversational French. Most people in Montreal are bilingual but French is the official language of the city, not English. Expect to use French in stores and restaurants, on public transport, and on the street – making a little effort is better than none at all, given the contested history of language in Quebec (highly recommend looking this up as well before arriving). All of this applies even more once you head out of Montreal itself, not being willing to learn will shut you off from understanding the unique culture that exists only in Quebec. It's a special place, respecting their culture will only broaden your horizons.

Overall Experience

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

My exchange experience led me to meet some of the most incredible people and allowed me to have some of the craziest adventures that I never would have imagined! Every moment became an opportunity to discover something new about myself and about other people in the world as well. Montreal is the perfect place to explore yourself and experience tremendous personal growth. The city is vibrant, artsy, liberal - there's a place for everyone here, so long as you can put up with the weather! There will be tough times where you get stressed or lonely, but the strength and resilience you can manage to muster up is an excellent way to challenge yourself and to prove to yourself what you're capable of. There's no doubt that you will be a better-off, more well-rounded individual for having chosen to come on exchange to Montreal!

