



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	McGill University
Semester & Year of Exchange	S2 2018 – S1 2019
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Finance & Accounting

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Investment Management FINE441	English	FINC202	18
Corporate Finance FINE 342	English	FINC206	18
International Finance FINE 482	English	FINC305	18
Principles and Strategies of Securities Trading FINE444	English	FINC302	18
Advanced Financial Accounting ACCT453	English	ACCT315	18
Management Control ACCT463	English	ACCT302	18
Financial Statement Analysis ACCT354	English	ACCT211	18
Financial Reporting Valuation ACCT452	English	ACCT310	18

Any comments about these papers?

I learnt a lot from these courses and I found it very useful. The 300 level courses are pretty basic but 400 level courses are much more advanced.

There are midterms for pretty much every course, and the midterms will usually be scheduled at the same period, so you have to be prepared to fight all the midterms in one go along with other assignments as well. If you choose a course without final, you may have to expect to put more effort during the class period as the grade will be heavily relied on every class. I took ACCT452, as there is no final, the grade is heavily relying on the quiz, midterm and group project. In my opinion, this course is relatively hard compared to other 400 level courses. Meanwhile, there is no final for FINE444, which the course is heavily relying on the performance evaluation every two weeks and a midterm, so you are expected to fully engage in every class. FINE342 is a very interesting course and

is relatively relaxing, the prof is teaching very good. FINE441 is also very interesting plus the prof is explaining the content well except his final is hard.

For course registration, you can submit the Course Request Form before your registration on Minerva as sometimes you may not be able to register the course by yourself. The office may have some quotas for exchange student so don't panic if you can't get in, just go to their office at the advising day.

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

The workload is heavier than in Otago, McGill expects students to be able to learn the content and apply the knowledge. The style of teaching is similar to Otago, however for some courses, the materials provided to students are limited, which means students are responsible for their studies. This teaching style encourages students to be independent and allows students to think.

Accommodation

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

I originally lived in Greenbriar, which is for second or upper year students. Later on I switched to Carrefour Sherbrooke, which is an undergrad/first-year McGill residence. I share a hotel-style room with another girl. All of the McGill rez located in downtown, it is very convenient but the rent for undergrad rez is pricy, also you have to join a mandatory meal plan (you're only required to join if you are staying in first-year rez).

Exchange students usually apply for the exchange housing, it is cheaper than the undergrad rez and you are not required to join the meal plan. Living in the exchange housing you will be able to meet other exchange students from around the world and it is easier to find travel partners. The exchange housing is also close to campus and downtown with a 10-15 minutes walk. If you want a cheaper option you can also find off-campus housing in downtown.

Money matters

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

The price in Canada is higher than in New Zealand in general. There is a 15% tax (Canada GST and Quebec tax) on all purchases on top of the selling price. There are also at least 10% tips when you dine in, if you forget to add the tips yourself on top of the final price, they will eventually ask you to pay. With that being said, you have to expect to pay both tax and tips on top of the price you see on the menu if you eat out at any restaurants.

I paid CAD1,275 per month for accommodation plus a mandatory meal plan of CAD2,250 per semester (I do not recommend staying in an undergrad rez because it is quite expensive, but it still depends on which undergrad rez you're staying). Rent of exchange housing is from CAD500-1000 depending on the size of your room. There is also health insurance of CAD730 for a year, CAD365 for one semester.

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

Canadians generally use the debit card and cash, it is very easy to open a bank account. However, there is a limit on transactions for the debit card (25 transactions per month depending on your bank, I used TD bank), so some of my friends rather apply for a Canadian credit card.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, I have to apply for a student visa as I will stay for one year. First I need to apply for CAQ, which is a visa in the Quebec province. After the CAQ is approved, then I need to apply for the study permit which is a visa in Canada. I applied it online and the whole process took me around 1.5 months.

You only need to apply for ETA if you're studying for one semester.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, the international students health insurance but the insurance does not cover any travel, I bought travel insurance separately when I go travel.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Exchange students usually join the events and trips organised by the exchange student society, for the management faculty it is called Desautels Exchange Network, DEN. I recommend you to go to the orientation organised by your faculty during the O-week and the reception in week 3 organised by the DEN to meet all management exchange students.

What was the university/ city like?

McGill is located in downtown, it is very easy to access to everywhere and the transportation is convenient. There is also an inter-campus shuttle for students who study in the Macdonald campus to go to the downtown campus for free. If you study in the downtown campus, you can also take the shuttle to visit Macdonald campus and Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, the places are worth seeing!

Montreal's summer is quite short and it is winter most of the time (from November to March), the temperature in winter is around 0°C to -20°C and it starts snowing early in November. You don't need to bring too many clothes for summer but make sure to bring enough warm clothes for winter especially a very warm winter jacket and a pair of winter boots. Fall is beautiful and the whole city is full of Maple leaves in October but it only lasts for about a month, so be sure to visit places at the most beautiful time in the year!

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

The things to do in Montreal: Mount-Royal, ice-skating, watch ice hockey, try smoked meat and poutine, try the famous bagel shop, music festival such as Igloofest (an outdoor music festival in Winter).

Quebec City is a must-go, the place is cultural and there is a winter carnival in February if you're studying in the winter-term. The exchange students society such as DEN will organise some day trips to Quebec city, Ottawa, Sugar Shack (or Cabane à sucre in French, it is a traditional Quebec meal using maple syrup) and watch an ice hockey match etc.

Most of the exchange students will also visit Toronto, Vancouver, Yellowknife, New York and some other US cities during the break.

Any tips for future students?

Studying in McGill can be very busy and stressful, make sure to plan well on studying so you won't get overwhelmed by the workload, I suggest you do not take more than four courses if you want to do more travel and enjoy the city!

Overall Experience

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

It is a very good experience studying at McGill, I met a lot of amazing friends and would definitely recommend exploring McGill and Canada. Some of the exchange students do think McGill is challenging but it is always good to challenge yourself in one of the best universities in Canada. Besides, Montreal is a beautiful city with diversified culture and people which will definitely broaden your horizon.

Some places in Canada is difficult to go so it will be an advantage if you can drive, like going on a ski trip and visiting the national park. I went to Toronto during Christmas and Vancouver and Yellowknife during March break. Vancouver is my favourite city so far but since it is far from Montreal, flight ticket is pretty expensive. I suggest you to plan ahead so you can book the tickets at a lower price. I saw the Aurora in Yellowknife and it was stunning, the best time to see Aurora is in September/October and March/April, Aurora happens throughout winter though. If you have a budget, this is surely a once-in-a-lifetime experience to see.

I decided to go on a one-year exchange because I want to explore Canada in different seasons. If you want to experience the beauty of fall in Canada, go shopping on Black-Friday and Cyber Monday, and you don't like the cold weather, you should study in the fall-term; or if you want to experience the winter carnival and are not afraid of the cold weather, the winter-term might suit you! I observed more exchange students come and study in the fall-term and I do think it is more enjoyable in the fall-term.



Sugar Shack



Black Friday sale



Igloofest



Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal



Yellowknife, NT



Vancouver, BC



McGill downtown campus



Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue (Near Macdonald campus)