



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Glasgow
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester One (NZ) 2019
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Anthropology, minor in Sociology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Celtic Civilisation 1B	English		
Economic and Social History 1B	English		
Sociology 2B	English		

Any comments about these papers?

All of my classes were enjoyable and interesting, particularly sociology which was a level 2 paper (and had an anthropology section in it, the University of Glasgow does not have an anthropology department). The other two courses were level 1 (first year papers) so they were pretty easy (for a third year student).

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

The academic experience, and Glasgow university as an institution was very similar to the University of Otago. It was not hard to get my head around coursework and the online 'moodle', which is pretty much the same as blackboard. The teaching style was similar, all of my courses/papers had multiple lecturers who were experts in their topic of teaching. It was very easy to adjust.

The semester is a bit shorter and they have a three week Easter holiday that starts after classes finish and before exams, so depending when your exams are there is nearly a month for you to play around with, think of some holidays you'd like to take in Europe.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in university accommodation, Cairncross House, which was like a hall of residence, except nothing compared to the ones that I visited in Dunedin, to be honest it was quite a shock. I was never in a hall of residence, but heard good things about it from my friends at Otago who were in them. Cairncross house, however, was not as social as I thought. All doors immediately locked closed, and you had to take your fob/key with you everywhere, including to the toilet and to get into the kitchen and back into your room. This is all for safety reasons, I assume, so if that's something you're worried about, it is completely safe! Other student accommodation in Glasgow would have been better (Murano, Queen Margaret Residences, and Kelvinhaugh) as they were set up more like flats/apartments of around 5 people. Most people in Glasgow uni student accommodation are either first years or international students. I found that the international students (6 of them) who shared my kitchen (ie, the only people I socialized with from my building) mostly kept to themselves, and the first years (4) were already very close with each other seeing as it was their second semester and I didn't fit in exactly, mostly because of age difference (they were between 17 & 19 and I am 23). I thought it would be a good way to make friends and socialise but it wasn't for me. Perhaps if you go during their first semester the experience would be different and if you are younger. In hindsight, I would have preferred to find a student flat on my own, not chosen student accommodation, but it was pretty easy to live in, you didn't have to do any cleaning except for your own dishes and taking out the rubbish (this is different in other student accommodation), and the best thing was that it was always really warm during the cold months, however, it was then too hot when the weather was good. I had one tiny window and it literally opened two centimetres. Another good thing was the location, it was a nice 15/20 min walk to class, in a really cool area, lots of nice cafes and bars, several grocery stores, and 20 mins walk from some clubs, I tended to walk home after a night out (I'm sure that is probably not recommended for safety reasons, but I never felt unsafe and always got home mostly unharmed). A good perk was the free uni gym membership that comes with uni accommodation.

Money matters

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

Accommodation was expensive and in my opinion not worth it, it was £220 a week, which is around \$440NZD about double what I was paying for rent in Dunedin. The location of my accommodation was good but you could get flats around the same price in that area that would have been way nicer.

My flight (one way) just before Christmas was about \$1300NZD but if you fly at other times of the year you can get flights for around \$1000.

Groceries were slightly less expensive than in New Zealand, eating out around the same, alcohol around the same, but drinking at bars was generally slightly less expensive, however, because drinking at bars is way more common place here you end up spending more on alcohol (compared to flat parties and pre-drinking in Otago).

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

I opened a bank account with HSBC, I can't remember whether having a Swiss passport made that easier for me, in general it wasn't exactly the easiest process, I did it while I was in London when I first arrived in the UK, but eventually they gave me one. I used transferwise to transfer money

between my bank accounts. I then got a Monzo card which I just transferred money from my UK bank account, it was easier to track my spending on, and apparently it is easy and fee free to use in other countries with foreign currency (I have not yet tried it out). I would recommend transferwise (currency exchange app for own bank accounts) and Monzo!

Visas & Insurance

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

I have a Swiss passport (essentially the same as an EU passport) which meant that no visa was necessary for me to study or work; however, with the looming chance of BREXIT this could change.

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?

There were a few clubs days at the beginning of the semester and there are loads of clubs available, including a 'shrek club', apparently you can create whatever club you want.

What was the university/ city like?

The university was quite beautiful, lots of really old buildings, however Otago uni campus is pretty stunning and hard to compete with. The city has a great social life, there is a really good music scene, lots of bars had live music on throughout the week, there are a few big music venues so there were a lot of big acts coming through. Glasgow is full of pubs essentially. The west end where Glasgow uni is located was definitely the 'coolest' area of Glasgow, lots of cool bars, cafes and shops that aren't mainstream (compared to the centre city which is just full of the normal international franchises). Public transport was really easy and convenient, I used apple maps a lot though, it really became my best friend overseas.

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

If you like burgers and chips you'll like Scottish cuisine. As a vegetarian I was very impressed with Glasgow, most places had really decent vegetarian and vegan options. I ate the best vegan burgers ever at The 78 and Bread Meats Bread. There are so many different clubs to go to, it's hard to choose a favourite, I would recommend just trying out as many places as possible. While Glasgow is far bigger than Dunedin it's not that hard to move around, I used uber quite a bit, it's not too expensive because places are quite close in the city. I would just recommend eating and drinking out at various places, try get to some music gigs and to an 'after party' which are clubs/parties that keep going after normal ones have to close (around 3/4am).

Also the cool thing about being in the UK is there are so many other countries that you can go to that are a cheap flight away. Flights are cheaper from Glasgow to France or Germany than from Auckland to Dunedin. Totally make the most of that while you can. Go check out the highlands, there

is a good student tours company that will take you. Go to Edinburgh, it's gorgeous! Also make friends with someone who has a car and go out to Loch Lomond (a huge lake) on a hot sunny day!

Any tips for future students?

I found I was a lot older than people I came across in my accommodation, in classes (because I was taking level 1 and 2 papers), and at the initial international student initiation events (which were a really easy way to make friends with other international students, more than 50% of which were from the USA). Because of this, I found using dating and friend making apps such as tinder and bumble (there is a BFF option/setting) were a really awesome and easy way of meeting people that I had more in common with, could relate to, and who were actually Scottish (or have been loving in Scotland a while and can give you a lot of recommendations and advice).

Overall Experience

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

Overall my exchange experience was fantastic, a great opportunity for personal growth (especially for building confidence and independence) and gaining life experience. I made really good friends from different walks of life. I found Glasgow to be welcoming and friendly, and new and exiting without being a complete culture shock. People are really nice in Glasgow, and the social life is fantastic. Where New Zealand winters (especially in Dunedin student flats) can be cold and miserable, I found (contrary to the warning that it will be cold, dark and rainy in winter) that Glasgow was in fact quite cosy indoors (you just need a proper coat and maybe an umbrella for going between locations). There were a couple of really freezing days, but inside was generally nice and warm. People still went out all the time during winter, and in Spring there were some really nice sunny days where it felt like everyone was out and about, lying in the park, or having drinks in the sun at the bars outdoor tables. Coming from Dunedin, it was not hard to adapt to the student culture, and it is much more fun to go to bars and clubs in Glasgow than in Dunedin, plus there are 20 times more options! I found uni was really easy to adjust too and I feel I made myself at home pretty quickly. Being able to quickly go on holiday to somewhere completely different, even just for a weekend, is the coolest experience ever and something that should totally be taken advantage of. going on exchange was one of the best decisions I have ever made.



