



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	BCom	Major(s) Management & Economics	
Host University	NOVA SBE, Lisbon, Portugal	Semester & Year of Exchange	S1 2018

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
European Economics Seminar	english	ECON 3xx	15
Strategy	english	MANT 3xx	15
Entrepreneurship	english	MANT 3xx	15
Macroeconomics	english	Macro 200	15

Any comments about these papers?

Entrepreneurship was a lot of fun and filled with exchange students. European Economics Seminar was very interesting and very in-depth, with a lecturer who is involved in monthly EU meetings so he had some really solid insight which I thoroughly enjoyed. Strategy and Macro were really hard, and very maths based.

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

Coursework throughout the semester was fine and I was able to keep up with assignments with fairly solid grades. Where I really struggled was exams. Exams at NOVA are way more vague in questions, yet they look for specific answers and I really struggled with that. The system is funny because I would have a grade average of say 15/20, worth 70% (so above 50% for the paper entering the exam) yet in the exam got a 6/20 for the remaining 30% which is an auto-fail, despite good grades throughout the semester. What I found is I for the most part I understood and could apply the learnings, but I really struggled to nail that in an exam format which resulted in me failing $\frac{3}{4}$ of

my courses. It was very frustrating and really kinda sucks to work hard throughout the semester only to bomb the exams and it be an instant fail.

Accommodation

I stayed at the halls of residence that was right on campus (the campus is changing so I don't know if this is still an option). It was cheap at only 225 euros per month, whereas most of my friends were paying between 350 – 700 euros per month. Staying in the halls with mainly locals was fine, however it took some time to get to know them as they all preferred speaking Portuguese and as its their second semester were already quite clicky. Still, I made it work and had a lot of fun and was able to spend more on travel etc.

Money matters

In comparison to Dunedin, Portugal is slightly more expensive, although what you spend paying more for food and transport, you make up for with cheap beer and wine. There are also lots of organised trips with ELL and ESN, student exchange groups which is where the real costs are. I went to another country on average once a month, and travelled around Portugal at about the same frequency. Getting to Ireland for St Paddys day was a huge cash burner, but totally worth it.

If you're going to Europe grab a cash passport as most places accept cards. Withdrawing from ATM's usually cost about \$10 so best to do it once and be done with it. What I did, was pay for all my friends meals at a restaurant and then they would all give me cash as it was free for them to withdraw being from the EU. Saved me so much in ATM fee's

Use Taxify instead of Uber, as they are generally about 20% cheaper and pay their drivers more so your rides will be far more pleasant. I have learnt so much from Taxify drivers just from talking to them about their favourite spots and what they love to do. Uber I just havn't had that experience. Oh and avoid standard taxi's as they will overcharge or give you change in Angola dollars if you aren't careful (I was not careful haha)

Visas & Insurance

Getting a visa was the bane of my existence while studying in Portugal. I was told it can be tricky and take a while, so I applied in late October 2017. In hindsight I should have followed up more frequently, as before I knew it I was on a plane without a visa with the Australian embassy ensuring me that it was fine to do it this way. Once in Portugal I had to send my passport to the Australian Embassy and wait for about one month before getting it back. If you can avoid this you absolutely should. As a tip: call them everyday and do not get off the phone until they have completed exactly what you need of them. Double check everything with them and ask them is there anything else I need to give you. I finally got my Visa and passport back to me on the 1st of May, just 1 and a half months away from finishing the semester. Stressful and very slow is how I would describe the process.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

ELL and ESN throw some epic parties and trips around Portugal. Porto in particular was a great weekend and ESN held a mansion pool party which felt like it was from a movie set. Definitely go to as many of these as you can early on (although they have events literally every day) as it's the best

way to meet people and see Portugal at the same time. Everyone is also amazed when you do a shoe, and it resulted in celebrity like status for a few weeks where I never paid for a drink or entry into an event.

In terms of sport, they typically have 1-2 university teams for each discipline, so you had to be mad keen on joining to get a spot. I myself am much more of a surfer, and found that just hanging out around the surf rental shops was the best way to get amongst the local scene. If you have never surfed before, Portugal is a great place for beginners or more seasoned pros alike. Give it a try

What was the university/ city like?

The university had a great buzz around it. There are only 2-3000 students so it felt rather homely and you would always see at least 3-5 friends every time you went to class. As of next semester they are moving to a new campus that sits right on a popular surf beach which looks amazing and I'm sure will have similar vibes. The other cool thing about the university is most organised groups run BBQ's where beer is 60 cents and a bifana (local sandwich with Pork) is 1 euro, there's music, sun and just in general good vibes.

The city itself is fairly touristy, especially in the city centre. Locals are friendly and quite a few speak reasonable English. Try to hang out with locals as initially a small business owner can seem a little annoyed by tourists or people who don't speak Portuguese. This is generally because entire areas of locals are being slowly pushed away from the smaller streets of Alfama purely because of increasing tourists needing accommodation and wanted the 'authentic experience'. Just be friendly and they will be friendly as well. Aside from that slight undertone, overall the city is one of the happiest places in Europe. I often find myself asking if anybody in the city actually works because they always seem to be out at the beach or drinking beer on the streets. It's definitely a unique place and stress levels of Portuguese are non-existent, it's really cool.

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

Costa Da Caparica, Porto, Pineche and my favourite spot Nazaré. Portugal has some incredible beaches and you could spend a solid year just trying to visit them all. I can give you an extensive list if you flick me an email because there is so much to see. I also jumped over to Morocco and 100% recommend going there as it was fairly cheap from Portugal/Spain.

Any tips for future students?

Go out in the streets as much as you can, there is always a free concert or buskers playing and it has quite the friendly atmosphere. If you are lucky enough to experience the Sardine festival you get to see what it looks like when a whole city parties for nearly a week. Madness and so much fun.

Overall Experience

I love Portugal, and have thoroughly enjoyed living here. I may even want to come back and work here as the start up scene here is very active and that's my bread and butter. I will miss the people I've met, and have made a few lifelong friends. The academic side for me was tough, but I'm sure with better exam smarts you will be fine. There's very few other places where the surf is as good as in Portugal and if you get the chance, go check out the 100ft waves at Nazaré. If you are tossing up whether to go on exchange absolutely 100% do it.



