



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	McGill University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester Two, 2024
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Law, major in Psychology, minor in Criminology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Interpersonal Relationships: PSYC474	English	Unspecified PSYC300 level
Social Problems: SOCI250	English	Unspecified CRIM200 level
Intensive Oral and Written French I: FREN215	French	FREN232 and unspecified FREN200 level

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points _____

Any comments about these papers?

PSYC474 Interpersonal Relationships was definitely my favourite paper and Kristina Tchalova is an amazing teacher. She explains the concepts very clearly, and is really friendly and available if you need help with anything. The course covered a range of topics such as gaslighting, AI and the future of love, attachment theory, attraction, sex, and violence. Assessments include multi choice quizzes and exams, and a paper where you get to analyse and give relationship advice to a couple of your choice from a movie or tv show. The class is large, so lecture recordings are available and most of the relevant information is written on the lecture slides. Overall, this was a really interesting and enjoyable paper that I would highly recommend if you can take it!

SOCI250 Social Problems is an interesting and relatively easy class if you show up to all the lectures, as the lectures are not recorded. If you don't go to the lectures, then I would recommend attending the exam review lectures with the student reps who go over definitions and everything you need to

know before the exams. The exams are multi choice and can sometimes be difficult to pick between two answers, so if enough students got the answer wrong the teacher (Mehri Ghazanjani) was nice enough to cancel out those questions and give us free marks.

FREN215 Intensive Oral and Written French I is a 6 credit course (crediting back for two Otago French papers) taught in French, and was my least favourite class. There was a LOT of homework for this class due to being an intensive course worth double the credits of a regular French course, and there were 2x 3 hour classes per week. Attendance is mandatory, but you are able to skip up to 5 classes before the 10% participation grade is removed from your overall grade. I definitely learnt a lot of French during the class, however, it's worth noting that you are taught Quebecois French and not the French from France, so some words and pronunciations are different. You are expected to have completed all of your homework as the teacher will pick on you during class to answer questions and explain grammar concepts in French, which could be quite overwhelming as there were around 30 students in the class. You will have to complete a Placement test before you begin the course, however, if you are placed in a course which you think is not the right level for you then you will most likely be able to change. Although the course is a lot of work, you do earn double the amount of credits and from what I've heard, the 3 credit French courses also have a lot to do, so I would recommend just doing the 6 credit course if you can.

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

Individual courses explained in depth above. PSYC474 was most similar to the psychology courses at Otago, whilst SOCI250 was also similar but smaller in class size. I can't compare FREN215 to a French course at Otago as I haven't taken one there.

Accommodation

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

I found a 4-bedroom apartment in a private, student apartment building right next to McGill underneath Mont Royal through a website called Places4Students. You can also find flatmates through the website. It took me a while to find an apartment and I ended up signing the contract only a month before moving in, so I would recommend searching early and joining a number of housing Facebook pages to find housing and flatmates. My friends either had a studio downtown or were in an apartment in Le Plateau (a cool student area).

I got very lucky with my apartment as I had amazing flatmates who were also exchange students from Sweden, Czech Republic and Germany. We had a great balcony and common space to hang out and throw drinks, although our bedrooms were really small and there were a lot of broken items in our flat. We also negotiated with the landlord to sign a 4-month lease rather than the usual 12-month lease as we were only staying in Montréal for one semester. However, I would be cautious when signing a new lease or taking over from someone as it can be difficult to fill your room if you are not there for the whole year.

Money matters

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

My accommodation cost \$850 CAD per month which was a good price for the location. I completed a year-long exchange and was in Boston beforehand, so I cannot give a price on the cost of flights. I also have a US passport so I didn't need to obtain a visa to study in McGill, but if you are wanting to

work while studying in Canada then you will need to apply for a visa as early as possible because it can take a few months to be processed.

Food prices were definitely high in Montréal, both, at the supermarket and going out to eat. Tips of at least 15% are expected as well.

I had the mandatory Studentsafe Insurance through Otago and also had to pay for McGill's mandatory international student health insurance, which cost \$349 CAD. You will automatically be charged for the full year, but will have to activate your health insurance coverage to get the exemption of paying for one semester.

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

For finances, I used Studylink, savings, and Revolut and Wise which are two international currency banks which I would recommend. Revolut is great because you can just use Apple Pay and don't have to get a physical card.

Visas & Insurance

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

As above ^

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, \$350CAD as above ^

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Unfortunately there wasn't much help or activities organised specifically for exchange students. There were international student orientations where I met some of my friends, however, most of the students who attend are first year international students studying at McGill for four years.

There are a lot of clubs to join so definitely join those. Each faculty also has their own orientation week where they have a lot of events organised, so I signed up for this, however, I was disappointed because 99% of the students were first year students. It is great if you are 18 and a fresher, but not as a fourth year student.

Each week, the McGill faculties have their own student bar with free food and \$3 drinks which was a lot of fun to go to. I only went to the Law faculty bar, and sometimes it would be sponsored by law firms so there would be free drinks!

The best event on campus for me was the OAP (Open Air Pub) which is a chill music festival with cheap drinks and food that runs during the Fall semester. I would recommend going early though because the line can be outrageously long.

What was the university/ city like?

McGill is a profound university in Canada and across the globe, with great professors and resources. Montréal is also an amazing city! It is very multicultural with a great student vibe. There is always something to do, and everything is very close and easily accessible with the metro, bus and BIXI bikes. I would recommend buying a 4-month or monthly pass through the OPUS card.

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

Le Plateau is the student area with a lot of cool restaurants, bars and shops. Mont Royal is a must, especially at sunset, Le Vieux-Port, Rue Saint-Catherine, Biodome, NHL, a bunch of museums, Les Sept-Chutes, Christmas markets, Mont Tremblant, and Québec City. I would also recommend going to Picnic Electronic which is a house/techno festival that runs every Sunday for the first few months.

Any tips for future students?

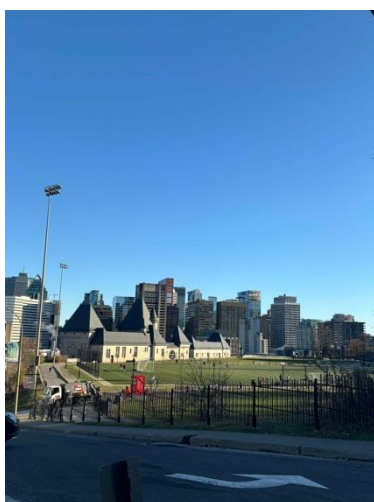
Pack your best winter coat as it gets VERY cold! The day I left in late December, it was a low of -17c and a high of -11c. My friend is still there for the Winter semester and she told me it got down to -27c!

Overall Experience

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

Apart from my exchange in Boston, this was by far one of the best semesters yet, and I would highly recommend everyone to do an exchange if they can! I met some of the most amazing people who I will always cherish. To make the most out of your exchange experience, you need to put yourself in uncomfortable situations and I can ensure you that you won't regret it. I have learnt a lot about myself and different cultures over the semester, and cannot wait to go back overseas again and explore more of the world! No matter where you go, you will be able to make the best out of the experience!

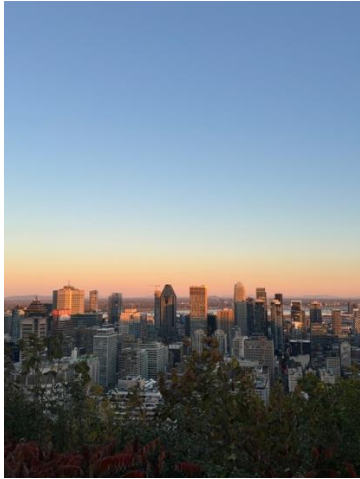
McGill University



Le Vieux Port



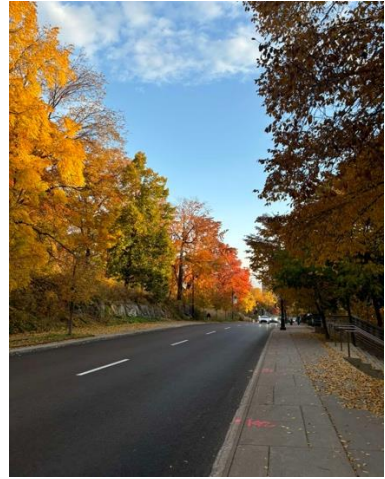
Mont Royal at sunset



Québec City



Montréal in Autumn



Mont Tremblant



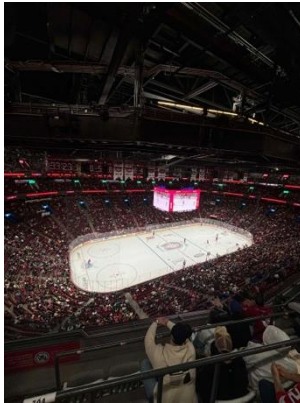
Football (soccer) match



Opera



NHL



Les Sept-Chutes

