



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Bristol
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2025
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Politics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
MODL10019 Introduction to Visual Cultures: from Bristol to the World	English	ARTS100
POL11101 Political Concepts	English	POLS100
UNIV10009 Decolonise the Future!	English	ARTS100

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

Any comments about these papers?

All three papers were great! I particularly enjoyed Visual Cultures as it was centred around Bristol and the local artists within Bristol (notably Banksy!). This paper also involved field trips which was a great way to explore the city. Note: both Visual Cultures and Decolonise the Future involved mostly group work for the assignments which I enjoyed as it was a nice way to meet Bristol students. Also, all three papers were internally assessed meaning I was done with study by April and didn't have the stress of exams whilst being abroad.

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

The workload was significantly lighter but this is because I was doing first year papers as a fifth year, and doing less papers than I would at Otago. The style of teaching is definitely more hands-on and you are expected to do more preparation for class and tutorials. Students are also expected to regularly attend lectures (and they are pretty serious about this!) which differs from Otago. The

overall academic experience was great – the university is very helpful and the staff were friendly, making for an easy transition.

Accommodation

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

At Bristol they place you into random accommodation depending on what price range you select. I stayed in The Courtrooms accommodation which was owned by the university and was very nice and modern. I selected a mature flat and my flatmates were super chill and friendly, I ended up becoming great friends with them. Though it was a bit more expensive, I had an ensuite room and a large shared kitchen and lounge in my flat. This was also in the city centre and about a 15 minute walk to university (uphill!) but this location was perfect as it was next to the main shopping area, the local markets, lots of other Halls and the beautiful harbourside!

DO NOT select the Cardiff option – they might try to scare you by saying there is limited options in Bristol but the Cardiff option is not worth it due to the super long commute. You are much better to find independent housing and flat in Bristol. All of my 20+ exchange friends except one were placed into accommodation despite it not being promised and studying in the busier semester (their Spring semester or teaching block 2). If you go in the autumn semester you are automatically guaranteed accommodation I believe!

Money matters

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

Accommodation was ~\$11,000 for one semester.

Flights were around \$5,000 which was on the pricier side as I left just after New Year's and returned in July/peak summer. I also booked my flights pretty late!

Food was quite expensive due to the exchange rate. If you budget well there are affordable options in the supermarkets. Food in England is no more expensive than it is at home.

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

Wise Card. This was fantastic and lots of my friends used it also. It was super easy to set up and the transaction and exchange fees were low. Make sure to order to home well in advance.

Visas & Insurance

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

I did not have to apply for a visa. I got Travel Insurance through Southern Cross Insurance which was ~\$500 for the six months and covered all of the countries I wanted to visit during and after leaving Bristol!

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?

The exchange society was a great society and they had fun mixers to meet everyone and get involved. If you want to make friends with Bristol students rather than primarily exchange students, societies are the best way! The sports societies are especially fun.

Bristol has the most student societies out of any other UK university so I would recommend taking advantage of this!

What was the university/ city like?

Bristol is a hidden gem of the UK – I loved it so much I'm even thinking of moving back! It gets super sunny in the warmer months and springtime is especially beautiful. It is also such a lively and vibrant city. The music scene is incredible and there are so many local gigs you can go to which I would highly recommend. The harbourside is stunning, especially in the warmer months and a great place to walk/run or stop in at the plethora of pubs!

The university is extremely prestigious and well regarded. It is part of the Russell Group of the UK, 11th in the UK and 54th globally! The campus itself is also stunning and is comprised of mostly beautiful old buildings – the Wills Memorial Library is especially gorgeous! The campus is more spread out compared to Otago but most of it is in Clifton and all of my classes were a 10-15 minute walk to each other.

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

Things to do: Harbourside. St Nic's markets. Clifton Suspension Bridge and observatory for sunset and picnics. College Green, especially as it gets warmer. Clifton Downs.

Places to visit: Bath is super close by (11min train) and beautiful, anyone who goes there loves it for a reason. I visited five times! Thekla is a super cool nightclub on a boat and is pretty iconic for those studying in Bristol. There are so many good places to go out for students and they all have great student deals.

Places to eat: Wetherspoons (you can't go to the UK without going to one of these!) – cheap eats and drinks. Rosa's Thai, Little Bagel Co.

Any tips for future students?

Do the welcome week events. The mandatory welcome talk is where I first met all of my friends! The study abroad team also offers great events during the first week such as an IKEA trip (very helpful), St Nic's markets, a trip to Bath and a trip to Cardiff! As well as this, just be super friendly and welcoming and you'll make friends easily – remember everyone is in the same boat and just as scared as you are!

Alongside this, just say yes! Be open to doing fun things especially in the first few weeks as this is when you meet everyone. I think everyone should do a semester abroad – it is truly the best thing I ever did so just make the most of everything and soak it all in.

Overall Experience

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

My exchange semester was nothing short of incredible!! I cannot recommend the University of Bristol and Bristol as a city more. I made the most amazing friends and friends for life all over the world. Bristol is such a fun and exciting city, there is always something to do! It is the perfect balance between a big city (nightlife and socialising) and a small city (very walkable and everything is close).

Also, Bristol is a perfect hub to the rest of Europe and Bristol Airport is super easy to get to from the city. I managed to visit 16 countries during my exchange (and another 8 afterwards before heading home). So I definitely recommend making use of cheap flights, weekend getaways and the long reading week and mid-semester break.

Bristol is genuinely the BEST place you can choose for an exchange. It is difficult to put into words how amazing studying abroad was – the opportunities I had, people I met and places I was lucky enough to see will hold a special place in my heart forever. I hope you love the experience as much as I did!



