



## Student Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	Bachelor of Physical Education Bachelor of Science	<b>Major(s)</b>	Sport and Leisure Studies Psychology
<b>Host University</b>	University of Texas at Austin	<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Full Year 2017

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
KIN312 Sport Industry in America	English	200 PHSE SPLS paper	18pt
KIN351 Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity	English	300-400 PHSE SPLS paper	18pt
KIN352 Sport Pedagogy	English	PHSE330	18pt
KIN363 Theory and Practice of Strength Coaching	English	300-400 PHSE SPLS paper	18pt
KIN347 History/Ethical Issues in Sport/Physical Culture	English	300 SPLS PHSE paper	18pt
KIN355 Sport Marketing and Public Relations	English	PHSE424	18pt
PSY352 Abnormal Psychology	English	PSYC203	18pt
PSY418 Statistics and Research Design	English	PSYC210	24pt
PED106C Weight Training	English	N/A	6pt

PED106 was an elective class, which was amazing! There was minimal assignments and more about learning how to exercise in a weight room, a great way to stay fit on campus – I would recommend taking it for sure. The other classes were all interesting and I think fit into my degree well. They were more academic classes than many people take on exchange, but the workload still left room to explore the city and be social.

Each class is a lot more interactive; students answer professors' questions, there is active discussion and debate. We discussed relevant current events and connected the material to our lives as students and world trends. The classes were often more assignment based and did not rely as heavily on tests/exams. I only had two or three final examinations, with most of my classes being over as classes finished. We had pop quizzes in some of my classes that forced me to be on top of my readings, so my work was spread out throughout the semester rather than all being compact at the end of semester. The atmosphere for tests and exams is more relaxed than at Otago, not as official that was great for exchange.

### **Accommodation**

I stayed at The Castilian, an off-campus dorm. It was across the road from the west side of campus and within a 15-20-minute walk from all my classes. It included a meal plan, so I had all my meals downstairs, as in a hall of residence at Otago. The dorm itself was modern, refurbished, temperature controlled, and all the facilities were great! After living in a flat prior to exchange, it was frustrating not being able to control my meals and meal times as much, but there was a large range of foods on offer at every meal, so you could realistically probably follow any diet you wanted. There was not an established community-feel in the dorm, but my roommates became great friends of mine, so it did not feel lonely at all. It was a change having to share my room with someone in a dorm, but it was a good challenge and the roommate matching system matched me with great roommates so it was not stressful and actually ended up being a great blessing.

### **Money matters**

My flights, insurance and accommodation were my major costs. My flights were around \$4,000 to get to Houston and back – my mom flew with me and drove us to Austin from Houston. Medical insurance was compulsory, around \$1,000 per semester. Accommodation was \$1,100 per month, including all my meals and utilities, but had to be paid two months in advance. I worked at a summer camp for six weeks, which gave me about \$1,000 – I used this to travel for two weeks at the end of summer. I was able to get my textbooks for cheaper than in New Zealand, either second-hand, rental or online versions. I had to buy myself toiletries, bedding. My other costs were mostly eating out, buying clothes, and traveling. I went large for my time here, never saying no to any opportunity or counting pennies when I went out for meals, travelled to over ten states and attended all the sports games, so the costs totalled around \$17,000 on top of Studylink paying most of my accommodation.

To access my finances, I used a combination of methods. I used my New Zealand debit card mostly for online purchases or I drew money from it to use. I had an Air New Zealand cash passport that I put funds in which was my main method of paying for things. I opened a local bank account at the university so that my summer camp had an account to pay into so that I would not lose money in international transfers. Lastly, I had a credit card linked to my parents' account for emergencies or unexpected payments where I just paid them back later.

### **Visas & Insurance**

My visa application was rather last-minute because I had to wait for paperwork to arrive from Texas before I could go see the embassy. It involved an online application and paperwork and then a trip to

the American embassy in Auckland. The visit to the embassy was extremely brief, and my visa and passport were returned to me very promptly. I honestly stressed about this way more than I should have.

The University of Texas at Austin had compulsory medical insurance that was about \$1,000 per semester. The \$2,000 covered me for 12 months including summer, however, and covered all my doctor visits and prescription medicine.

### **Extra-curricular/Social Activities**

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

There is so much to do in Austin! I spent most of my time at the various Longhorn sporting games; soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball and football. There are intramural sports to participate in, many organisations to join – they say there is an organisation for anything you could be interested in. Depending on which semester you go, you could even fully emerge yourself fully into college life by rushing for a fraternity or sorority! There are organisations specifically for international students, to introduce you to American families/life or take you on excursions around Texas, or organisations open to the whole campus that international students can join.

The city itself has an outdoor/exercise lifestyle with many walking tracks in the Green Belt, many activities or space to run your own in Zilker Park, kayaking or SUP on the lake, many gyms around town and fitness classes available on campus. Great places to see the greater Austin, have a think/chat and get away from campus are Zilker Park, Mt Bonnell and 360 Overlook.

As far as recommendations for what to eat and where to go, find yourself some local friends and let them give you the list of places! There are two ways of tackling an exchange; by hanging out with other international students and doing all the tourist stops, or hanging out with local students and truly experiencing life as a Longhorn. I would greatly recommend doing the latter! It really set the tone for my exchange, I went home with friends for Easter and Thanksgiving and had homes to stay in while I was travelling the country. With UT being such a diverse campus as well, you get a taste of different places around America just by interacting with classmates and friends. I joined an organisation on campus and made most of my friends through that, and managed to work at a summer camp as academic training that provided the most amazing experiences and friends!

So, my tips would be to not stress too much about your visa, befriend locals (see if you can get a local roommate or join an organisation), prepare to put on weight (it happens when traveling, and especially in Texas), go watch volleyball if you are there in the fall, and give Two Stepping a go!

### **Overall Experience**

I came to Austin for a year, hoping to live here and experience life as a Longhorn. I remember walking around campus and being mighty confused, timid and nervous. Walking off campus twelve months later I was greeting friends in the sea of 50,000 faces, giving directions to strangers and boldly wearing burnt orange. I arrived a very anxious international student and am leaving a true Longhorn. Texas embraced me as I learnt to “hook ‘em”, pose for photos at sorority events, and

learn the line dances at two stepping. I even got the opportunity to intern with Texas Football and get an inside view of America's biggest sport. Going during our academic year gave me more time to explore America as well as summer was included in my visa; I was able to go on a mission trip to Haiti with Longhorn athletes, work at a summer camp and see all the classic sites across 14 different states. People always say that going on exchange is the best year of their life and changes them completely, and I wholeheartedly agree! Going to sunny California would have been great, but there's something about the Lonestar state that gets under your skin and makes you bleed burnt orange until the day you die.



1: Red River Showdown weekend in Dallas - Texas v OU football with my sorority



2: Trip to Haiti with Longhorn athletes



3: New York skyline at night!



4: The famed Route 66 during my summer travels. Had to get a pair of ugly American-tourist sandals for summer camp.



*5: Antelope canyon was absolutely breath-taking!*



*6: Horseshoe bend with fellow Scarfie*



*7: Hiking the Rocky Mountains in Estes Park*



*8: Hiking in Estes Park and catching up with long-term penpals*