



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	University of Otago
<i>Semester & Year of Exchange</i>	Semester 1, 2018
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	Bachelor of Arts
<i>Major(s)</i>	Communication, minor in Marketing

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Legal Communication	English	300 Level Communication	18 points
Theory of Persuasive Communication	English	300 Level Communication	18 points
Voice and Its Perception	English	300 Level Communication	18 points
Ethical and Policy Issues in Institutions of Mass Communication	English	300 Level Communication	18 points
Variable Topics in Interpersonal Communication	English	300 Level Communication	18 points
Music Business Now	English	18 point Arts Paper	18 points

As advised by my Academic Councillor, Ange Waddell, and the Communication Department at the University of Otago, due to the different semester system at UCLA, each of my 300 level (equivalent) Communication papers at UCLA are worth a little less than 18 points at Otago. Due to the UCLA quarter system I took 6 classes instead of the 4 I had to complete in order to meet all my requirements to graduate. I also needed an additional 18 arts points and so I have taken an equivalent Music paper to meet this requirement.

Any comments about these papers?

I really enjoyed each and every paper and I am extremely happy with the classes that I chose to complete. Being at UCLA allowed me to compare the Communications papers in an American college to those that Otago had to offer. It was interesting, and I found that the emphasis was different. At UCLA I was given the opportunity to focus on interpersonal communication as well as the broader societal issues. I really enjoyed my Variable Topics in Interpersonal Communication class, which analysed dyadic communication through empirical data and research. We discussed a number of different topics relating to interpersonal communication and had guest speaker, Thaemie Kim, who is a PHD candidate at MIT Media Laboratory and Co-Founder and Chief Scientist of Humanyze which

is using technology such as a sociometric badge to measure peoples interactions in order to make companies more efficient.

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

UCLA is organised on a 10 week, "quarter" system, which meant that the classes were condensed into a shorter time frame, so the pace of lectures and workload expected, was different and much faster than at the University of Otago. Although there was similarities in the courses at each university, UCLA had a much larger paper selection, so it was easy to specialise in specific aspects of Communication.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in apartment style living while I studied at UCLA. I moved in with six lovely girls and lived in an apartment right next to campus. The pros were that I made really good friends with the girls I lived with and I was close to campus and all the extra-curricular facilities (gym, library, pool etc), that the campus had to offer. The cons were that being so close to campus was expensive, there was very limited parking, I had to cook for myself and share a bedroom.

Money matters

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

Westwood is an expensive place to live, and accommodation was my major cost throughout my exchange. I payed \$800 US dollars a month to share a bedroom in a 3 bed, 7 person apartment. Flights weren't too expensive as I booked the early. I payed approximately \$700 for my flight to Los Angeles. The visa process was an additional, unexpected cost of approximately \$300. Food costs varied from week to week. Americans love to eat out and so my roommates liked to eat out 3 or 4 times a week. I tried to cook at home and would spend approximately \$50 US dollars on food a week. Health insurance was expensive at UCLA, \$780 a quarter so \$1560 in insurance for the 5 months.

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

I opened an account with the Bank of America. I found it extremely easy to access my finances and I used an app called Transferwise to transfer money from the ASB in New Zealand to the Bank of America. Transfers took 1-2 days and the fees were low compared to other services.

Visas & Insurance

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

I had to apply for a J-1 visa. The process was long and complicated. I would suggest starting early so all the documents arrive in time. I would also suggest booking an appointment with the US Embassy, as early as you can, because at some locations, appointments are hard to get.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

UCLA had mandatory health insurance for international students of \$780 a quarter so \$1560 for 2 quarters.

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 number of different organised social activities for students. UCLA offers hundreds of different clubs and organisations and there really is something for everyone. I was extremely interested in participating in sport, so I joined both an Intramural soccer and basketball team. It was an awesome competition and lots of students competed. I also bought a yoga pass. There are lots of activities advertised, but not enough time to try them all!

The International Dashew Centre also organises student trips and activities, that I would recommend.

What was the university/ city like?

UCLA has a stunning campus. There are lots of old, beautiful buildings. The campus spans 416 acres and is covered in beautiful old trees. There are lots of awesome facilities including two student gyms, three basketball courts, a recreation complex with two pools and three beach volleyball courts as well as tennis and squash courts. There is also a large communal centre in the middle of the campus, with a campus shop and numerous eating options. There are cute coffee shops for students to hang out in the sun, socialise, and study, dotted all over the campus as well.

Los Angeles is a crazy but beautiful city. There is so much to do and see! Whether you want to go to a concert, play volleyball at the beach, hike into the surrounding mountains or go and spot celebrities at a famous restaurant, LA has it all. Los Angeles is always busy and you will never get bored. UCLA is nestled in the middle of Westwood which is situated between Beverly Hills and Santa Monica. It is a 15 minute drive to the beach or a 30 minute drive to Hollywood. LA has the whole spectrum.

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

The list would be long, for things to do and places to eat. My most enjoyable moments in LA, have been cruising down the Pacific Coast Highway on my way to Malibu to surf or spending the day at the Melrose Trading Post, a very funky market situated in West Hollywood. There are also amazing art galleries to explore. The Getty is very close to UCLA and has some beautiful exhibits. Another activity I would recommend, is downloading the app Bird, (electric scooters) and Birding along the

Santa Monica Boardwalk to Venice. Stop for some breakfast at the famous Eggslut, located right next to the famous Venice sign and take in the hustle and craziness that Venice has to offer. Hiking the Hollywood sign is another must. I would also recommend weekend trips to San Diego and Santa Barbara. Both places are close, accessible and beautiful.

Any tips for future students?

I would recommend getting onto the visa process early and booking flights as soon as you can to keep the cost down. I would also suggest joining Facebook pages like "UCLA House and Roommate Search" and doing plenty of research into different housing options. When you get to your college, my biggest advice would be to get out of your comfort zone and meet as many people as you can. Join clubs, join teams, go on weekend excursions. There are so many amazing opportunities! Make the most of everything!

Overall Experience

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

Overall, I could not have asked for a more incredible exchange experience. I fell in love with UCLA and Los Angeles! From the friends I made, to the classes I took, and places I visited, my time away could not have been more amazing. My classes offered a different perspective on Communication Studies, and consolidated the direction I want to go in my career, being Public Relations and Marketing. I met a huge variety of people and learnt so much from each and every one of them. I also got to continue to play basketball and be exposed to the high level and commitment of college sport here in America. I made the most of my weekends and explored California, from San Diego to Yosemite National Park to San Francisco, as well as making trips to Seattle, Boise and Las Vegas. I have made lifelong friends and feel as though I have a firmer grasp of where I want to go with my future professional career. I also found employment through the UCLA Academic Training program, with a boutique marketing agency, and I am excited to learn about brand strategy and campaign development. This is an opportunity, I wouldn't have been offered in Dunedin, and will give me hands on skills and experience in my field. This exchange was the best thing I have ever done!







