



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business)
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2025
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Major: Finance Minor: Computer Science

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Monetary Policy in the US and the EU	English	N/A elective paper 6 ECTS
Macroeconomics	English	N/A elective paper 4 ECTS
Natural Resource Use and Circular Economy	English	N/A elective paper 6 ECTS
Course V - Banks, Accounting and Supervision	English	FINC304 6 ECTS
Pre-Semester German Language Course for Incoming Exchange Students	English/German	N/A elective paper 2 ECTS

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points

24 ECTS = 54 Otago points _____

Any comments about these papers?

Monetary Policy in the US and EU was my favourite paper taught by a retired Federal Reserve worker discussing monetary policies used by central banks in Europe and the U.S. The course only took 2 weeks (6 x ~4 hours sessions) and required a group presentation and closed book exam. Was a lot of content crammed into 2 weeks of classes but worth it considering it was finished in 2 weeks.

Macroeconomics was I would the equivalent of a 200 level Otago economics paper so was relatively relaxed. The course was over 5x ~6-hour sessions weekly and required a small 1-minute presentation, 4 closed book mini-quizzes and a closed book exam.

Natural Resource Use and Circular Economy was a paper I picked up at last minute as an elective and was 6x ~4 hour sessions weekly with group presentations in class, homework/assignments and a take home exam. Considering it had a take home exam rather than closed book was great.

Banks, Accounting and Supervision only spanned over 3 full day classes (9am-5pm on a Friday though) including 2 group presentations and a closed book 2-hour exam on the 4th Friday. The first session was taught content then the next 2 sessions were predominantly listening to and discussing the other groups presentations. The exam featured 5 long answer questions one relating to each groups set of presentations so most of the study for the exam was just reviewing and making sure you understood the other groups presentation. Recommend this one as it was an equivalent for a FINC300 paper from Otago yet only took ~3.5 days. The lecturer is interesting and entertaining.

Pre-Semester German lessons were ½ of the Pre-Semester Orientation and I highly recommend these as it is a great way to not only learn some German to use (as they speak a lot in Vienna) but spend time with other exchange students. The other ½ of orientation was 2 weeks of activities I also recommend signing up for this.

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

Very different. Many of my papers were only ~5x few hours sessions so were finished quickly rather than spanning the whole semester. I recommend this as it meant I got to travel a lot more at the end (peak Euro Summer). Workload overall is less by far. Spend a lot of time studying the course catalogue before applying for courses to see how long the papers are/what type of assessments there are. You have to wake up in the middle of the night NZT to apply for courses as it is very competitive. Also have plenty of back up papers as you often don't get into your top pick courses. I also took German lessons throughout the Semester which weren't credited but I highly recommend as it was a great chance to meet others and build my German skills. All of the papers had attendance requirements, so you had to attend 80% of the lectures as they weren't streamed online like Otago.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Molkereistrasse hall. Pros would be it is a 5 min walk to Uni, there is a supermarket 1 min away and 2 good train stops nearby. Majority of my exchange friends were in Molk so definitely recommend this one. It was also very warm in the Winter. Cons were the cooking facilities as we only were supplied a small stove top so had to purchase a toaster and air fryer. Also the area is not in the middle of town which is very different so not as many things around. Don't let this discourage you as middle of town is very near via the train. Vamos kebab shop around the corner was our favourite takeaways so definitely go there.

Money matters

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

Accommodation- between \$270-290 NZD a week depending on the exchange rate as well as a deposit which you got back in full at the end ~\$2,400NZD

Flights- ~\$3000NZD but flying in and out of London in January and August.

Visa- had to fly to Auckland for my biometrics through an agency VFS Global as they post your passport to the nearest Austrian embassy (Canberra) on behalf of you so flights to Auckland + \$429NZD which was cost of Visa, their fees and I paid extra for it to be sent that day which I recommend for peace of mind. It didn't take me long for me to receive my Visa back which was great.

Insurance- I did the student safe recommend by UoO over my time in Vienna and travelling after which I recommend.

Food/Weekly spending- Tried to spend ~150-200 euros per week on food, going out (drinks, clubs entry/tickets) etc.

Orientation Week Activities ~\$500NZD

E-sim- from Airalo so I could buy a plan for the whole of Europe and wouldn't have to add more countries as I travelled

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

Wise card for sure. This was the most used. Make sure to order the physical card too so you can withdraw cash. I also had a spare Revolut account and card just in case. Lots of cash used in Europe.

Visas & Insurance

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

Bit of a mission to apply for the Visa as securing an appointment was a bit of work. Had to check the website every day to see if appointments were added then book flights. Make sure you are very detailed with your documents to take to VFS Global using their checklist provided. The only thing that was an issue on the day was that they required a full country list of where your insurance was covered so make sure you have that. After the application was done it was a quick turnaround time to receive my Visa. I emailed them many times to ask about booking appointments and they weren't helpful. From memory when booking an appointment, I think you had to go to the very last step before dates/times came up. Make a group chat with the others going and then usually someone will put in the group chat once they have seen appointments pop up as they book out fast. You can also only apply for your visa within 3 months ish of your departure date.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes but the student safe one fit their criteria.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

WU has a great network called EBN (Erasmus Buddy Network) which organises many events, go to as many as you can in balance with everything else as it's a great way to meet others. They put on

some great events like trips, pub crawls/quizzes, movie nights, park get togethers etc. Buy tickets for the ski trip that was a highlight of my time. That was the only trip I could get tickets for as they sell out quickly. WU also puts on Spritzer stands every Wednesday after class, go to some of these to mingle with everyone and enjoy the sunset at Uni with some drinks.

What was the university/ city like?

Vienna is the most beautiful city in Europe. The centre around Hofburg and St Stephens cathedral made for some amazing walks. Lots of places to explore as it's a big city.

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

Picnics in Burgarten near the Hofburg, swimming by the Danube (catch the U-Bahn to Donaustadtbrücke and walk along the water to find a wharf to swim off), famous Schnitzel house Figlmüller, Crossfields Australian pub for a slice of home and many other fun things as you will discover.

Any tips for future students?

The language shock was a lot but just take everything day by day. Enjoy it because it goes very fast! Look into the history of Vienna before you go there (Hapsburg family) and do all the palace tours (Belvedere is free on a Friday night every month or so, Schönbrunn, Sisi Museum, Albertina). Go on one rollercoaster at Prater.

Overall Experience

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

I loved my exchange experience in Vienna. Although you have some very challenging times with being so far away from home you also have some of the best moments of your life. Even something as small as going for a picnic or to the pub with all your new friends from around the world is a pretty cool thing. University wasn't too challenging so I could focus my efforts on meeting people, exploring the city and travelling. Easy public transport, clean and beautiful city. The University campus was new and modern (and warm in the Winter). Everyone is dressed well on campus. It is a very thrilling experience living an 'everyday/normal' life in a European city. The friends you make from all over the world are incredible and it is interesting hearing about other cultures, and I have met some lifelong friends. At first it was challenging with the Austrian culture and language barrier (lots of German) but this challenge is all a part of it, and you get used to it. I got to do so much travelling before, during and after my time in Vienna so make the most of living in Europe it's crazy how easy it is to be in another country. I collected magnets from each city I travelled which is also something I recommend as a nice memory of each place. I couldn't recommend doing an exchange and going to Vienna more.



