



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Western Australia
Semester & Year of Exchange	2021 Semester 2
Otago degree(s)	LLB BA
Major(s)	Philosophy, Politics and Economics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
PHIL2008 - Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence	English	PHIL2XX
POLS2220 - Foundations of Global Political Economy	English	POLS211
POLS3334 - The International Politics of Africa	English	POLS3XX
PPHE3001 - Integrating Philosophy, Politics and Economics: Rational Choice	English	PHPE3XX

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

Any comments about these papers?

I found the POLS and PHIL papers really interesting; the PPE paper was less engaging. It was the first time Philosophy of AI was being taught but it was well put together and engaged in a variety of cognitive science and philosophy of mind issues. Dr. David Mickler is an enthusiastic African studies teacher, I highly recommend his paper for a background/survey of African politics. Dr. Charan Bal has expertise in Marxist thought and Southeast Asian labour relations, so he provides a unique introduction to Political Economy.

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

The biggest difference at UWA was that all classes were available online even though there were no Covid-19 restrictions on campus. This meant a lot of lectures were poorly attended, while making it harder to meet classmates it provided a great opportunity to ask questions and engage with lecturers who were welcoming of feedback and interaction. The online teaching did allow for greater flexibility, I took a 3-week trip in the middle of the semester, and I was able to stay up to date by easily switching to online learning.

The lectures (2/3 hours a week) and tutorial (1 hour a week) system were similar to Otago. Tutorials were well attended informal discussions of the previous weeks lecture topics; this was the most valuable aspect of each course.

Each 6 point 'unit' was about the same workload as an 18-point arts paper at Otago. The 200-level papers were quite advanced and took nearly as much work as a 300-level paper.

The libraries on campus were great with semester long lending periods.

Accommodation

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

I stayed at University Hall, an on-campus UWA affiliated residential college with lots of international students. I had a single room and shared a bathroom and kitchen with four other undergraduate students. The facilities were old, but the maintenance team worked hard. Seven meals were provided each week which could be redeemed for lunch or dinner at the dining hall. The hall also catered for postgraduate and recently graduated students, many of whom were stuck because of Covid. I think there were 250 students during my semester but there was capacity for 500 or 600.

There were about five other halls all within a 5-minute walk to campus. While more expensive they seemed to offer a greater collegial experience (similar to Knox and Selwyn at Otago).

A lot of students I met on campus lived at home or in a share house (flat) and commuted to campus. The Perth public transport system is good, and housing is cheaper than most other state capital cities in Australia.

Money matters

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

-Flights: I flew from Auckland to Perth with Air NZ for about \$750 and I have another direct flight booked for my return which was \$880. I arrived during the quarantine-free travel period so there

were no quarantine costs, I expect my return MIQ room to cost around \$1300. (A lot of other students arriving from South East Asia, UK and other Australian States at the start of the semester were able to home-quarantine at UniHall for no extra cost.)

-Accommodation/Food: I was paying \$250AU/week for the single room and 7 meal vouchers which I used for dinner. I spent a further \$50/week at the supermarket for breakfast and lunch. (The UniHall room costs are rising to \$350 for 2022 in anticipation of international students returning, forcing a lot of current residents to find flats.) I covered most of these costs with Studylink living costs and used savings for activities and travel.

-Visa: There were no visa costs, as I was traveling on a NZ passport. I recommend taking advantage of the ability to work in Australia.

-Transport: TransWA provides trains and buses around the city. A Smartrider card is easy to get on campus and by linking your student number for a discount most fares come down to less than a dollar.

-Insurance: yeah, get it.

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

I set up a bank account as soon as I arrived. There is a Westpac branch on campus where I opened an account in less than 30 min. My NZ debit card has also proved useful and can be used at shops and ATMs with a small currency exchange surcharge (although not much more than the currency exchange fee I was facing with any NZ-AUS bulk wire transfers). However, the best option is to have a local paycheque going into a spending account, minimizing any transfer fees. It's a good idea to have cash on hand for things like farmers markets or the Annual Indonesian Street Food Festival that you might come across.

Visas & Insurance

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

N/A

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Not for NZ citizens.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

UniHall was part of a lot of inter-college competitions and events that were fun and a great way to meet people. The hall also provided a few free events, e.g indoor climbing, trampoline park, volleyball.

The UWA student guild (OUSA equivalent) organises lots of on campus activities - snake patting, bbq, secondhand pop-up shops, etc.

There is a bar on campus 'The Tavern', which has local comedy and live gigs. The Captain Stirling Hotel is also a great place for a quiet beverage and has a student night on Wednesdays.

What was the university/ city like?

The UWA campus is nice with lots of outdoor gardens and study spaces. Being so close I spent a lot of time on campus and around the Matilda Bay area. The library system was similar to Otago, with a main central library and various subject libraries to explore.

UWA is a 10-minute bus ride from the city. The CBD is inviting and great even just to walk through. I was lucky enough to visit Government House on a field trip, and there are lots of accessible public institutions for curious politics students. For restaurants and bars to suit a student budget Northbridge is walking distance from the city Centre.

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

-Cottesloe and Scarborough beach.

-Fremantle has great second-hand shopping, food markets, the Maritime Museum (where you can tour an Australian Navy submarine for \$5), and beaches.

-Kings Park has lots of bird life and ANZAC history.

-Optus Stadium is great for an Aussie Rules game and its easy to catch the free public transport to and from the game. Go Dockers!

-I spent time in Carnarvon about 800kms north of Perth, it has access to vast amounts of coastline including Exmouth, Coral Bay and the Ningaloo coast. The area is great for water sports, diving and animal watching kind of like Western Australia's great barrier reef.

-The South-West region, places like Margaret River, Augusta and Esperance.

Any tips for future students?

Perth is cool but regional WA is well worth a visit. Don't forget your deadlines and miss out on easy marks. Enjoy the beach but watch out for Sting Rays, Sharks, Jellyfish, Sunburn, Kangaroos, Snakes, Dingos and CRABS!

Traveling during a global pandemic is unpredictable and unnerving at times. I think WA is one of the safest places in the world, but the reality is that Covid is dynamic and New Zealand's border settings can change at any time.

Overall Experience

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

I arrived at UWA at an interesting time. Personally, I arrived without any knowledge of Perth or Western Australia, but I quickly found my way around. The public transport system and living on campus certainly helped in this regard. Without other international exchange students finding a group of friends was harder than usual, but my time in Dunedin was good practice and I ended up making lasting friendships in unexpected ways.

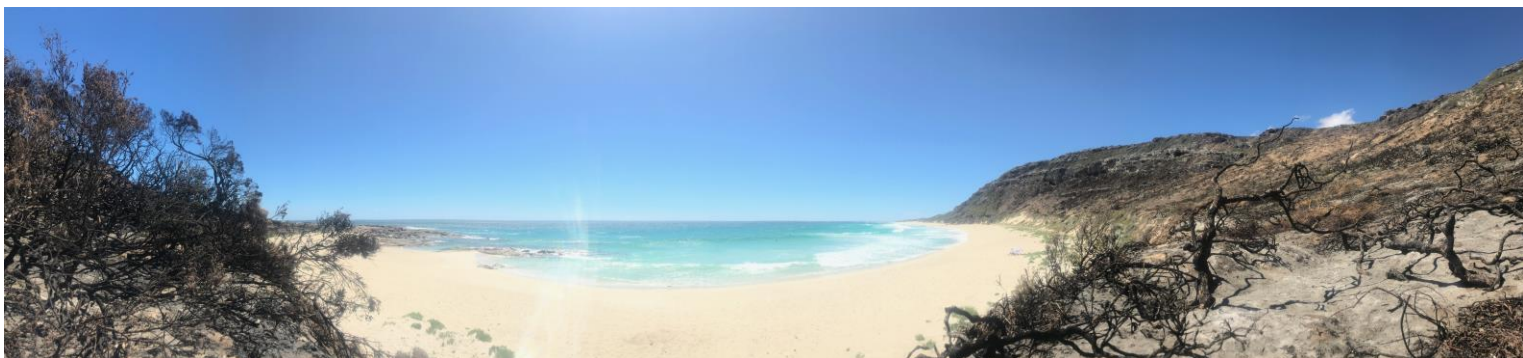
More broadly, it was interesting to experience the effects of the pandemic at another university. Local hero, WA premier Mark McGowan has pursued the elimination strategy perhaps better than even the New Zealand government, which meant very few restrictions within the state. However external travel was tightly controlled. The lack of international students created financial issues for

the university, while other international students and recent graduates could not safely travel home to see family. This provided an interesting setting to consider my international politics workload.

The teachers were good, and the courses well delivered, but on reflection some of the best learning experiences took place outside of the classroom. After my final exam I lived in the Mid-West desert town of Carnarvon for six weeks before spending two weeks in the temperate South-West. Meeting locals and eating from the land was incredible. The variety and contrast between the north and south reaffirm how large and diverse Western Australia is, all of which seems to come together in Perth and UWA.



UniHall Mens Football Team. 3 Losses, 1 Win.



Conto Springs, Margaret River Region after a severe bushfire.



The Cape Leewin Lighthouse in the distance, Augusta.



Desert camping, North-West WA.



UWA Clocktower from UniHall "A block".