



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of California, Los Angeles
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2024
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Neuroscience

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Neuroscience M101A – Neuroscience: From Molecules to Mind – Cellular and Systems Neuroscience	English	ANAT332
Neuroscience M116A – Behavioral Neuroscience Laboratory	English	ANAT335
Psychology 110 – Fundamentals of learning	English	200/300 level neuroscience paper

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

Any comments about these papers?

As a third year Otago Neuroscience student, M101A and Psychology 110 were partly repetition of content I had already learned at Otago, this is because at UCLA the papers towards your major only start in 3rd year. I really enjoyed M116A as we got to analyse MRI scans from patients and cut up a sheep brain, this paper is different every quarter though so it might be completely different in other quarters.

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

My papers did not include labs except M116A which was based around lab work. The lectures are fairly similar, however it is a lot more normal to ask questions during the lecture than it is at Otago. The tutorials were quite different than I was used to as they provided more like a summary of what was learned in lectures rather than new material. The usefulness of the tutorials really depended on the postgrad teaching it.

As M101a and Psychology 110 covered a lot of content I already knew the workload was doable. But you can't let that fool you and take it easy. At UCLA the assignments do start a lot earlier than at

Otago, so you definitely need to be on it from your first lecture otherwise you get behind quickly and it will be difficult to catch up. I also had a lot more reading work than I was used to at Otago. But if you stay on top of the workload, you'll definitely have time for other (social) things that make an exchange a great experience.

Accommodation

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

I stayed at the University Cooperative Housing Association (UCHA) just 5 minutes from campus and I absolutely loved it. It is like a hall of residence but then completely run by students. You will have to help out in the kitchen once a week for 4 hours and clean the bathroom in your hallway 3 times a quarter. That the residents help out at the UCHA does mean that your rent is a lot lower than at the halls of residence from UCLA.

Living at UCHA also made making friends really easy. About half of the residents are international, which makes that everyone wants to connect and do fun things around the city. I have heard that it is way harder to make these connections when living in the UCLA halls of residence.



Working in the kitchen was sometimes boring but also fun.



My really messy room that I shared with 2 other girls, who became my best friends.

Money matters

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

What	Costs
Flights	Round-the-world ticket \$4000
Accommodation	\$1580 = first month plus deposit \$671.30 = second month \$831.25 = third month, moved to a better room
Visa	\$314.50 for a certain document \$368.16 for another document \$20 for photos for the visa I also needed to get some vaccinations and a blood test which I cannot remember the costs of.
Flights to Auckland for visa (lot of hassle for a 5-minute face-to-face interview...)	\$200.97
Food was included in accommodation	Anything from the supermarket is expensive
Insurance	Studentsafe Outbound - \$596.25 UCShip - \$1,257.98
Sailing Club	\$265

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

I used a Wise card when I was in the USA. This worked perfectly for me and ensured I did not have to pay high fees when paying internationally.

Visas & Insurance

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

I did have to apply for a visa, and it was not an easy process.

My advice for visa would be to start the process early as it takes a bit of time. There are several forms you have to fill out and then you have an interview in Auckland. Before your interview just make sure you have all the forms and have paid all the different things they want you to pay. Also, for your interview, be there a lot earlier than your appointment time. I had to wait over an hour for my 5minute interview as they were so behind.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

UCLA does have a mandatory insurance, however you can opt out of this by filling out a waiver.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

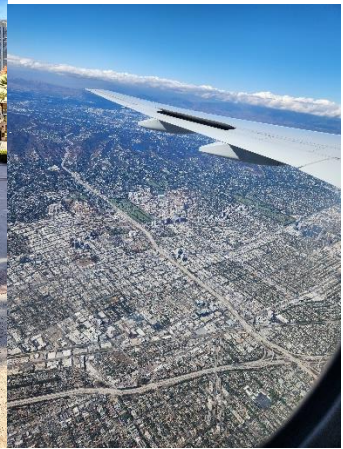
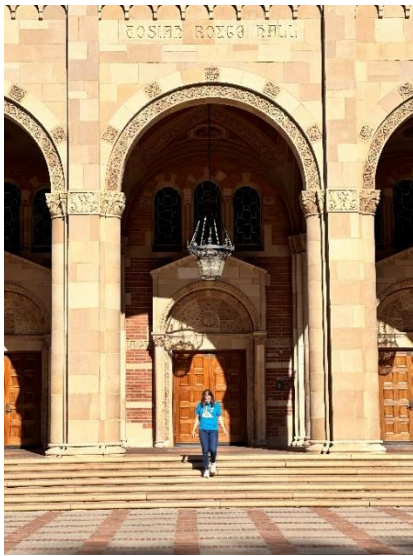
There were too many organised activities it was impossible to attend them all. At UCLA there are over 300 clubs and sport groups so definitely join at least one of them. This photo was taken at the extracurricular fair and was only half of the stands with club and organisations.



The Dashew Centre also organises a lot of events for international students, and I made some friends at these events.

What was the university/ city like?

Big! Everything is bigger than in New Zealand so expect to be overwhelmed several times a week.



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

- Santa Monica Pier
- Walk of Fame
- Hollywood Museum
- Dolby Theatre
- Athlete's welcome at the start of fall quarter
- The first football game of the fall quarter is free so definitely go to this as all other games will be very expensive.



- The Broad
- In-n-out
- Malibu pier
- San Diego
- Santa Barbara



- West Hollywood Halloween party



- Diddy Riese – the only cheap food in LA

- Paramount Pictures Studie Tour



- Runyon Canyon Park



- The last bookstore
- Beverly Hills online audio tour – free



- The grove mall around Christmas time



- La Brea Tar Pits and Museum
- Warner Bros. Studio Tour
- Disney



- The Getty Museum



Any tips for future students?

Get involved! Definitely join clubs or groups on campus as it is a great way to make friends and to discover the city. I joined the sailing team and backpacking club which both took me to different parts of California for not too much money and I made great friends through these trips.



Overall Experience

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

If I had to describe my exchange experience it would be: “amazing”! I had the best time and if I could do it again, I would go in a heartbeat. I really enjoyed studying at UCLA and feel like I learned a lot of things I wouldn’t have learned if I had stayed home. I joined the Neuroscience Undergrad Society (NUS) which organised fun events like movie nights and a gingerbread house building night but also Professor Luncheons and the journal club.

Other than studying, I also went out exploring in LA. I went to some really cool places like the walk of fame, Warner Bros studios, Santa Monica Pier and of course Disneyland. Through me joining the Sailing Club I was able to compete in two regattas, one in San Diego and one in Stanford. It provided me with a new skill, as I did not know how to sail before I arrived at UCLA. It turned out I really enjoy sailing and the teamwork. It became a newfound passion that I will continue back in Otago. I also made amazing friends and got an insight in the American culture. A cultural highlight was having thanksgiving dinner with a local Los Angeles family, alumni from UCLA.