



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Essex
Semester & Year of Exchange	Sem 1, 2024
Otago degree(s)	LLB and BA
Major(s)	Law and Politics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
LW349 Criminal Justice	English	LAWS400 paper
GV525 Israeli Politics	English	POLS300 paper
GV216 Development, NGOs and Foreign Aid	English	POLS200 paper
GV254 Ethics and Public Policy	English	POLS200 paper

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

Any comments about these papers?

I choose papers with no exams, this is wise as the uni summer term (around 2 months) there are no lectures, its reserved for studying for exams. So, because I didn't have any, I had more time to travel.

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

All the papers I took were easy. Lecturers would often give you significant time to complete compulsory readings in class and a lot of group discussion time .

Accommodation

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

I stayed in the South Towers, it was the post-graduate tower, but I found the majority of people I lived with actually weren't post-grad. Around half my flat were exchange students staying for the same time period as me, and the others were international students who had been living there since last year. I would say around 70% of Essex students live on campus and only 30% flat- it is actually cheaper here to live on campus than to go flatting!

The towers were great because it is so close to campus, just be comfortable with sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities. I had a pretty clean flat and cleaners would come in once a week. Cost wise it was really affordable in comparison to other exchange locations in the UK (only slightly more than I would be paying for rent in Dunedin). The room replicated first year halls, so I did have to get used to a single bed again!

Money matters

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

Accommodation in the South Towers was around \$250nzd a week, amenities included.

Grocery shopping was really cheap! I would spend around \$50nzd a week for a comprehensive shop, but eating out was maybe around 20% more than it would be in NZ.

I paid just over \$3000nzd for flights- this was a pretty good price as peak time was early January.

I paid around \$600 for insurance.

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

I used Wise, this was perfect, so easy to transfer to other currencies when you are travelling. I also found a lot of other exchange students used Wise too, so it was super easy to also transfer them if you needed to.

Visas & Insurance

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

No, I didn't, because I was only studying as part of an exchange for just under 6 months I didn't have to apply- I was just on a standard UK visitor visa.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No, I used the Otago recommended one.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

I would highly recommend getting involved in any club or sport! I joined the hockey team and this was great, they have been Essex's club of the year for the past few years so there were great social events (think Dunedin atmosphere). I got to travel around the London area every Wednesday playing and made the Derby Day team (biggest day on campus).

I found this was really one of the main ways to actually meet people from the UK, as the exchange students mainly stuck together. Students at Essex primarily meet their friends through sport and clubs not from their accommodation, this was different from Otago but made sense because you are likely to have more in common!

The Uni has its own bar and nightclub with social events around 4x a week, the best night out ended up being Mondays! Wednesday nights were focussed on all the sport teams who had played that day (but anyone could go) with each sport having their own theme (another reason to play a sport!)

What was the university/ city like?

The University had everything you needed on campus, a variety of food options, a mini-store, gym etc. Colchester town was a little more boring, it is around the same population as Dunedin, but seems to have less to do as there is no beach/good walking etc. It is an hour away from London by train, so you can't complain really!

The main reason I chose Essex was because its closeness to Stansted Airport. It's a 2-pound bus there and is where the majority of cheap Ryanair flights go from. If you're looking to travel, there couldn't be a better option. Transport around the UK is so expensive in comparison to Europe, it was cheaper for me to go to Europe for the weekend than anywhere else in the UK!

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

Do the Wivenhoe Trail, the path is just off campus, and it leads you to a super cute seasideish town where you can get a coffee and sit out in the sun by the water.

Any tips for future students?

Get a 16-25 railcard, it saves you around 30% on all train tickets- super handy if you're going into London often!

Take advantage of Ryanair flights!

Put yourself out there! Say yes to things you might not back at home, you are here for such a limited time you might as well try everything and no harm if you don't like it!

If you arrive in January, leaving NZ summer to a dark and cold UK winter- don't worry! Things will get brighter and warmer eventually! The experience you're having is worth the sacrifice!

Overall Experience

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

I loved my exchange experience, I didn't really know what to expect, but the people I've met and the experiences I've had have changed my life! Honestly it felt like a holiday with less uni work and more holiday periods than we get in Otago. I got to see so much of Europe even though I was on a budget, I think I spent around 2 months travelling and 4 months in Essex. The university culture is also great if you're looking for a social environment like Otago.

