



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Uppsala University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1, 2023
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Biomedical Science
Major(s)	Molecular basis of health and disease

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Molecular biology and genetics II	English	BIOC352 and BIOC300
The changing geography of Sweden	English	unspecified 100-level arts

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

Any comments about these papers?

Molecular Biology had many contact hours, and a good mixture of lectures, labs, and seminars. Very good follow on from BIOC221. The class was small so you got to know people quite well, half were international, half were Swedes. I gained good confidence in the lab, and the group work and presentation were also useful. It was full time and lasted for half the semester (15 points).

The Changing Geography of Sweden was very interesting to learn about Swedish society. Very little contact time and there was much less work to do which was nice.

I was enrolled into a third elective paper but had to drop out due to sickness and travel commitments.

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

You often take one course at a time which makes it less stressful. The workloads are very reasonable. There is less focus on grades (you don't get a mark out of 100), and the teachers are very approachable. The lectures are longer - 1hr 45 mins, but always with a 15 minute break in the middle. There are no official semester breaks - you may be lucky and have a break between courses. However you generally don't get overloaded with study/assignments so a break is not as desperate as it can be at Otago.

Accommodation

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

I stayed at Rackarbergsgatan which was a very good place to be. Very close to many campuses, and close to the city centre. I shared a corridor, kitchen, and bathroom with 4 other international students.

I would recommend Flogsta for a more social experience (where about 12 people share a corridor), but any of the places from Uppsala University Housing Office are high quality housing.

Money matters

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

Rent cost about \$157 per week, including power/wifi. Return flights were \$3000. Residence permit cost \$230. Insurance cost \$642. Food is similar price to NZ.

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

I would recommend getting a wise card, which means you can have accounts in multiple different currencies. You can't get a Swedish bank account if you're only there for one semester, and there is no need. You don't need to carry any cash - almost everything is contactless.

Visas & Insurance

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

I had to apply for a residence permit. This involved applying through Migrationsverket and sending proof of admission and bank account funds. Then you had to book an appointment with the Swedish Embassy to have your passport checked. This was supposed to happen in Canberra, but it was not possible for me to get there, so I contacted the Swedish Embassy in London and was able to have my passport checked there (because I flew to Sweden via London, and am a UK citizen). It then took a few hours for the residence permit to be officially issued and be in the system, and I was allowed to fly to Sweden.

Once in Sweden I had to visit the migration agency in Uppsala to have a photo and fingerprints taken, and then could collect the residence permit card 10 days later. This card is needed when returning to Sweden if you leave.

It was a stressful process, so I recommend doing things as quickly as possible, and making sure the embassy you want to go to will let you, if you can't go to Canberra. If you have an EU passport, you won't have to go through this process.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

The university provides health insurance to all students. Other insurance was not mandatory, but Otago Uni ensured everyone had insurance. I used Studentsafe Outbound insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There is a buddy programme where you are put into a group with other international students and one or two Swedish students. You are put into a Whatsapp group and can organise meets ups etc.

There are Nations which are student-run organisations. They have student pubs, cafes, clubs, sports groups, music groups etc. You sign up for one and then get a student ID card, which means you can enter any of the nations. You get perks depending on what nation you sign up for. For example, being members of some means you get to enter the club for free, or you get discounted food etc. Being involved in a nation is a good way to meet people and join hobby groups. For example I joined some of the running groups. They also hold gasques which are fancy dinners with specific dress codes and rules, and are a great way to experience traditional Swedish student culture.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is very well organised. There are different campuses for different departments, but nothing is too far away.

The city is very bike-friendly - everyone has a bike and it is the best way to get around (be careful in the snow).

You can get away with knowing zero Swedish - everyone you come across at university will be able to speak English.

Everything is clean, and designed very well. It's not a big city, but it's not small either.

It is a student-town, and nations are a big part of the culture.

Valborg is a big student-Uppsala celebration at the end of April, which is a very fun experience.

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

I would recommend taking a trip up North to Kiruna/Abisko in Winter. This gives you a high chance of seeing the northern lights (although I did see them in Uppsala twice), and also you get to experience traditional Sami culture if you do a specific tour there.

Trips to Stockholm are a must, and the train takes about 40 mins.

Uppsala itself has many nice cafes and nature places (although no hills/mountains). Visit Gamla Uppsala (old Uppsala) to see ancient tombs. Of course visit IKEA!

Another popular trip is a boat ride to Finland which I heard good things about.

Look out for activities organised by nations - one organized a ski day trip which was awesome.

Any tips for future students?

Be prepared for winter to be very very cold and dark. Buy a big coat as soon as you arrive (the second hand shops are very good), buy a bike (facebook marketplace), take the course Basic Swedish (I wish I had - it's not an intense course and is another good way to meet more international students), follow @studyatuu on instagram for tips and day-in-the-lives of Uppsala students. Most of

the friends you make are likely to be international students - Swedes tend to stick to themselves and you'll likely be with international students in classes. Make the most of the location - travel within Sweden and also Europe, and meet as many people as you can.

Overall Experience

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

I had an AMAZING time, and absolutely love Uppsala University. Time went too quickly.

Adjusting to the dark cold winter as soon as I arrived wasn't too difficult - it helps that every building is heated very well, so generally you are only outside in the short bike-ride to campus. Take vitamin D! Spring was very late to arrive, but when it did it was extra nice and everyone spent time outside. The sunsets are stunning all year round.

I really enjoyed the style of teaching. It was less stressful than Dunedin. The student culture is very unique and awesome to be a part of.

I made the most of being in Europe, with multiple day trips to near-by towns, and short trips to other countries. I went with my sister which made things easier - always having someone to do things with, so if you don't know anyone, definitely prioritise making friends in the beginning.

