



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University College Dublin
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 (September – December) 2018
Otago degree(s)	BA LLB
Major(s)	Anthropology & Law

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
LAW41310	Eng.	Unclassified Law pts.	18 pts
GRC30090	Eng.	Unclassified Classics pts.	*
GRC30290	Eng.	Unclassified Classics pts.	*
GRC20040	Eng.	Unclassified Classics pts.	*
GRC10190	Eng.	Unclassified Classics pts.	*

*4 Classics papers amount to 3 x 18 pt. Otago Papers

Any comments about these papers?

- LAW 400 Level papers at UCD amount to Masters level classes – this means that classes are closer to seminars with a large amount of student participation, than lectures at Otago. Despite this, they are engaging and worthwhile.
- GRC30290 was really interesting, and had an excellent lecturer.

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

Reading-loads and academic expectations for assignments were similar to that of Otago, as were the teaching styles. The only time when this differed was in LAW41310 (mentioned above) – academic expectations in the Masters class was on par with that expected at Otago however.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in the on-campus accommodation at UCD – Merville Student Residences. This was just a 3min walk to campus, and located the closest to the campus store Centra as well as the 24hour reception desk. On-campus “first year” accommodation differs significantly from Otago in that you

live in a small self-contained apartment with 3 others, with the same makeup of 'apartments' all around you. This arrangement is pretty similar across all of the different Residences. The apartments are predominantly made up of first-year Irish students, but I had an apartment that so happened to have 3 other exchange students. Each building (with 6 apartments) has a dedicated RA/SR, but I didn't meet them once during my time there. The on-campus accommodation is what you make it – get to know your neighbours and your roommates well and you'll have a great time.

None of the on-campus apartments had ovens, which was a massive con, but you can buy mini ovens from Ikea early in the year that work fine. Other than this, I found the on-campus accommodation at Merville to be warm, close by and ideal for studying at UCD.

Money matters

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

My flights cost around \$2800 NZD but this isn't a good indication of the average return-flight cost to Dublin, as I did a fair bit of travel in the 2 months prior to my exchange, and also fly home via Chicago to visit family.

The cost of Merville residence was around €4,169 for one semester – and this was one of the cheaper residences. Though it does include unlimited internet access and power, it did not cover washing or food. Each load of washing costs €3.50, but the washing machines are pretty big. The 2 x dryer loads necessary to dry everything are €1 each. This is paid for by loading money onto your UCARD which you can do online or at Centra, and what you use for on-campus printing as well.

- Top up your UCARD via this link: <https://www.ucd.ie/ucard/ucard-services/manage-your-ucard/topup/>
- Print remotely from your laptop via this link: <https://pharospr.ucd.ie/login.cfm?dest=webprint.cfm&>

The on-campus store (Centra) is well stocked, but prices here and at other nearby supermarket SuperValu are quite expensive. I found that it was cheaper for me to have my groceries delivered by Tesco (for €3 in off-peak hours) than it was to bus to the closest Tesco or Aldi for groceries and bus back. Though it did cost a bit to do the first big shop (as it does in a new flat at home), I usually spend about €35 every 2 weeks or so.

I went with STA (Dunedin store) for my travel insurance, and selected the comprehensive plan with a \$100NZD excess. Though I haven't made a claim (and it wouldn't cover ordinary doctor's visits which are around €50), it satisfied the health-insurance requirements that UCD has for exchange students, and was pretty good value for money.

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

I used a cash-passport to access my finances in Ireland, but this didn't turn out to be particularly cost effective. I'm not sure what I would have used instead though – but do some research as to which NZ Bank might offer you the best exchange rate (I think that Westpac might do a good deal, or perhaps ING). Cash is widely used (especially helpful in bars), but card is accepted everywhere too.

Visas & Insurance

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

Ireland does not require New Zealand passport-holders to apply for a visa prior to entry. However, you will be required to show proof of acceptance to UCD (and perhaps insurance and finances) on arrival into Ireland – which will get you a stamp for 3-months.

The visa-extension process during my exchange semester at UCD was a huge mess – INIS was overwhelmed with appointment bookings, and there were bots reserving spots so that students missed out. Don't stress out about this though – the system is improving, and UCD's immigration correspondent (Colum Cronin) can help with any issues you might come across. You can still travel in and out of Ireland for 3 months-starting from your first entry into Ireland, so long as you have all your information with you on a device/printed to show immigration when you come back through the airport on re-entry.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

The university had a mandatory health insurance requirement – I made sure that my policy (STA mentioned above) met the UCD requirements before I agreed to it by emailing the UCD correspondent. Though they suggest getting Irish health insurance, this is not necessary.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

The UCD ResLife team put on occasional events during the semester –

- Early buses to Ikea to furnish your apartment
- International Student party – which was really average
- Halloween event
- Christmas evening – A lush Christmas meal was provided in late November, with Reindeer rodeo, Santa sumo wrestling and a dessert with a glass of mulled wine.

I honestly wouldn't recommend many of the ResLife events, but the international society puts on a bunch of trips around Ireland which are definitely worth your while.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is quite self-sufficient – they have lunch places, barber, chemist, gym and pool all on campus. The city is frustratingly far away from UCD's campus – it takes about 30mins via bus, or 15mins via taxi. Dublin is pretty small, and there are a fair few attractions, but not a ton to do. Once you've done the major touristy things, the city is great for bars and clubs, music gigs at venues like the Olympia, The Button Factory, Wigwam, Wah Wah Club, the Grand Social, and the Bernard Shaw, as well as shopping. Other than that, I'd recommend seeing more of the rest of the country rather than spend much time in Dublin.

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

Go to as many gigs as possible at the venues mentioned above – Dublin is lucky to have really great acts come through all the time, since it's so close to Europe – just check out Facebook events if you're not sure what's going on.

Dacey's bar does a cheap Tuesday night, where (after the €10 entry charge) the drinks are only €1. Lillies and Coppers are also good clubs for a night out, but if you want something special, check out what's on before you go out.

Dublin has a couple of good brunch spots – Brother Hubbard (North or South of the Liffey) are great, as well as Two Boys Brew (North of O'Connell Street) and The Fumbally. A small place called The Green Bench does these incredible, cheap and enormous sandwiches weekday lunchtimes too. If you're after a dinner, Kerala Kitchen does amazing Indian food that you can have delivered via Deliveroo, or dine in. If you're missing a kiwi pie, try The Pie Man in Temple Bar, Dublin.

For some touristy things to do with friends in the city, I can recommend:

- Guinness Storehouse tour
- Walking tour of the city, and pub-tour evening with <https://www.dublinfreewalkingtour.ie/>
- Walk around Temple Bar area
- Kilmainham Gaol
- Trinity College and the Book of Kells
- Dublin's National Gallery & Hugh Lane Gallery & IMMA
- The Archaeology Museum (with bog people)
- The Little Museum of Dublin
- General Post Office, Dublin
- Day trips to Howth, Glendalough and Wicklow

Any tips for future students?

Take advantage of the first 2 months of your exchange to travel around Ireland and Europe – as time goes on, your workload increases and before you know it, your exchange will have come to an end.

If there's anything you want to know/tips for exchange, please get in touch with me.

Overall Experience: Exchange Profile

Studying abroad at UCD for a semester was one of the most valuable aspects of my degree at Otago. I have learnt so much about Ireland, as well as the rest of the world – and have plans to visit friends in the Netherlands and California already.

The law courses at UCD were incredible and a unique opportunity to learn and make contacts with international experts that I could one day reconnect with. Personally, exchange broadened my horizons of what is possible after leaving Otago, and made me realise too that the friendships made now are so valuable to my individual growth.

Travelling and going through experiences alone also develops a sense of strength and independence that I may not have otherwise gained by staying at home. I found the exchange incredibly enriching and I would recommend it to all Otago students before graduating.



