



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

Host University	University of Amsterdam
Semester & Year of Exchange	Otago S1, 2018
Otago degree(s)	LLB/BA
Major(s)	Law; Media & Communications

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Archaeology & Society	English	100/200 level	10 points
Victims of War	English	400 level law paper	15 points
Eurocentrism: History, Identity, White Man's Burden	English	100/200 level	10 points
International Law, An Introduction	English	400 level law paper	15 points
Making Media: Production, Practices and Professions	English	100 level paper	10 points

Any comments about these papers?

Archaeology & Society: I didn't really enjoy this paper, not being equivalent to one Otago paper it was a lot of work. There were 6 hours of compulsory class to attend as well as at least two compulsory reading summaries per week (which took at least 2 hours per summary). The course description was outdated and did not warn of this work and the first day we turned up the lecturer did not realise there were internationals in this paper so was speaking in Dutch. I would **not** recommend this to someone going on exchange.

International Law, An Introduction: I enjoyed this paper but the lecturer was very disorganised, it was self-taught and he was hard to get a hold of.

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

As mentioned above, I had one self-taught paper which I've never had at Otago. Although I enjoyed the content, I don't think self-taught papers are for me and I prefer having regular lectures.

Most of my other papers were taught in a similar manner to Otago. The Archaeology & Society class was a lot smaller than I am used to.

## **Accommodation**

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

I stayed in Plantage Muidergracht 20. I loved my accommodation. The location was ideal, it was close to campus and kind of in the centre of all other accommodation (e.g. it was between Science Park and Prinsengracht). It was in a nice area (although a girl did get mugged outside of our building). The washing and drying was free, which was pretty unique to most other accommodation.

The cons would be no lift in the building, there was also a bit of theft because there were always people coming and going and because there were so many people you didn't know everyone in the building.

## **Money matters**

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

Accommodation: \$4,700 (roughly)

Flights: \$2,000 (roughly)

Insurance: \$346

Visa: \$500 (I could have got a cheaper one, the student working one but no one told me this – I would recommend helping students/telling them this as the other one was a lot cheaper like \$150 or something)

*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. I opened a Dutch bank account but never put money in it. For someone going to the Netherlands I would recommend opening a Dutch bank account (and actually using it). otherwise you're going to have to draw a lot of cash out because a lot of places only take maestro.

## **Visas & Insurance**

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

Yes. All online, proof of funds (this was a bit difficult – my bank couldn't provide exactly what they needed and I had to send documents to them). You finish the process once you get over there. Again, I would advise you to tell students they can apply for the working one because it is a lot cheaper.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

Yes, medical insurance. This was covered by my Southern Cross travel insurance policy

## **Extra-curricular/Social Activities**

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

There were a lot through CREA (the cultural organisation). I personally didn't partake in any, but I did a taste tester of Bollywood dancing which I really enjoyed. I wish I had done some Dutch lessons, so I would recommend this to future exchange students.

*What was the university/ city like?*

The campus is spread across the city, which was obviously very different from Otago. I was based at two of the campuses. The Roeterseiland Campus is awesome, most of it is relatively modern and there is a student cultural centre/bar/café there (CREA) which has a cool vibe. The Oudemanhuisport campus is a bit older and not as nice, but has the cute Amsterdam feel.

Compared to Dunedin, the city felt 'big', but for a major city it is small (as everyone says). With a bike, the world is your oyster. The canals are hard to get a grip on at first (I was still getting lost even at the end) but they're the iconic part of Amsterdam and you come to love them. Dam square and Amsterdam Centraal were not fun to bike through as there are so many tourists so I always tried to avoid this, but I guess this just shows you come to feel at home in the city. Amsterdam overall has a very cool vibe, it has a perfect mixture of student culture (which Otago has) and being a modern, bustling, forward-thinking and open-minded city.

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

I'd recommend all of the classic tourist spots (e.g. Anne Frank house, Moco Museum, Van Gogh Museum, Waterlooplein markets etc.) – they're popular for a reason. I'd recommend doing little day trips out of Amsterdam, for example to the Hague and Zaanse Schans (cute windmill town). These are easy to do, just jump on a train (I wish I had done more). Pilek is a really cool spot for food or drinks, it's just a ferry ride from Centraal Station, and is right by the flea market which is once a month which I'd also recommend going to!

Definitely visit the parks (Oosterpark, Vondelpark). They're super nice and are great for either exercise or as afternoon spot for snacks and drinks with friends [beware there are some 'characters' who also hang out there..].

I'd also recommend to going to an 'ODAM' (one day a month) exhibition. Essentially this is a monthly art exhibition, which changes location each month and has a lot of interesting and cool pieces of art on different mediums (I saw paintings, photos, clothing, videos, poetry, rapping). You can buy a beer for two euro to enjoy while you're there. All the information is on their Facebook.

*Any tips for future students?*

Definitely do the ISN Intro week. Although I found some parts a bit tedious (like being a fresher again), this is where I met most of my close friends from exchange and overall it's a very valuable experience.

Although moving over the other side of the world can seem scary (and anxiety-inducing), you'd be surprised how quickly you can make a new place your home. The first few weeks can be tricky, but give yourself time to adjust.

The whole experience goes so quickly so I'd say enjoy every day! Pack in as much as you can but don't forget to enjoy the small parts of everyday life in your new city/country.

## **Overall Experience**

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

Going on exchange was one of the best things I have done at University, and I would encourage everyone to take up the opportunity to do one if they can! As with anything in life, there will be up and downs but you come away with an invaluable experience and friends all over the world. Being somewhere like Amsterdam was amazing not only because of the city itself but also for the ability travel elsewhere. Weekend trips were easy and can be done on a budget.

