



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Uppsala University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2022
Otago degree(s)	BASc
Major(s)	Neuroscience and Sociology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Climate Change Leadership in Practice	English	Four 18 point SOCI300 level papers

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

Any comments about these papers?

I loved it. It was a very different format which was overwhelming at times but definitely became my preferred style. We had an incredible range of teachers, the course coordinators were lovely, I was very sad to be leaving the department (CEMUS) at the end of the paper and I would go back in a heartbeat.

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

The course was very student-led. We had very few compulsory classes and every assignment was very open - we would be marked on our engagement with a topic rather than if we made the 'correct' interpretation or found correct answers. This meant that we all could shape the course into whatever interested us most, which learning style suited us best, and which communication style we preferred. Sometimes the lack of structure and explicit guidance (e.g. 'learn x, y and z in order to

pass the exam') was difficult, but I think the main purpose of the course was to teach us how to deal with this and become self-driven climate leaders.

The classes in the first four weeks were mostly guest lectures and workshops. Again, there was no exam at the end of each and the majority of these were optional to attend. However, these classes were taught by some incredible tutors from all areas of activism, and the majority of us on the paper attended every class simply because it would be a huge shame to miss the opportunity to learn from these people. For example, some of the highlights for me were a storytelling workshop with Brian Palmer, voted Harvard's 'best lecturer' in 2002, 'Decolonising Utopia' with Chinelo Onwualu, and well-being sessions with Oren Ipp.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in student accommodation in Flogsta. This involved living in a corridor with 11 other students, with a shared kitchen but private bedroom and bathroom, and common laundry etc elsewhere in the building. It's a 45 minute walk, 15 minute bus, or easy 15 minute bike ride to the town centre and most uni buildings.

I was worried about living with so many other people but this turned out to be a really good thing. We had Sunday family dinners together and went on a corridor holiday part way through the semester, and having such great people around meant there was always a feeling of connection. When the days started getting short and my workload built up, I was really glad to have this.

I had no problems with the room, shared areas, facilities etc. They were all basic but tidy and functional. The only cons about living in Flogsta were it could be noisy sometimes, and I didn't meet many locals there as it seemed to be 95% exchange students in the buildings nearest mine.

Money matters

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

Accommodation was 4485kr per month (\$678 NZD)

Flights approx \$1700 each way, and relatively cheap flights from Stockholm to other parts of Europe.

Food was similar to New Zealand, with some things more expensive (e.g. eating out!!!) and others cheaper (e.g. vegetables and vegan meat). The right to roam rule means you're allowed to pick wild food, so I made heaps of wild apple pies and foraged salads before winter. Lots of community gardens offer free food, either for everyone or for volunteers, but I missed the season.

Insurance was \$875 through StudentSafe.

I needed to demonstrate savings of around \$1300 per month of my stay, so for me around \$6500, to get a visa.

Other costs were generally high (e.g. buses, coffee, drinks, gym membership) and I didn't find any paid work, so I'm glad I had some savings.

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

I just used my NZ debit card. Everything (setting up a bank account, using local common payment apps, even sometimes buying gig tickets online) required a Swedish personal ID number. It took a long time to finalise my visa, and by the time it was done it wasn't worth organising the ID number and setting up other ways to pay for things. My bank didn't charge me much for overseas transactions so this was simplest.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, I had to get a Residence Permit for Higher Education. It was a relatively straightforward process to apply for it, however picking up the physical card was complicated. You're technically not supposed to enter Sweden without the physical card as well as approval of the visa, but it takes a long time for them to send it overseas, only certain places can take the fingerprints and photo, and it's really difficult to get an appointment.

I thought I applied early, however it was only approved days before I planned to enter Sweden (entering the country before the application is approved causes the application to be cancelled). It took a few months to get an appointment to get my photo and fingerprints taken and I only got the actual card about 3 months after I arrived.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

I believe UU required us to have insurance but no specific plan, and international students (all students?) have health insurance through the university.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There were lots of events at the start of the semester run by the uni and Student Nations (like private student associations). Welcome info sessions, sports, picnics, music, parties etc. I didn't go to many but they were really popular.

Nations run a lot of events through the semester, and you choose membership based on the nation's specialities - some run a club and have parties every week, others have bands, or have board game nights etc. They're student run and drinks and food are much cheaper there.

Leoparden is an amazing community centre with free art/creative resources, musical instruments to play on, its own art gallery and a volunteer-run cafe. I wish I discovered it sooner!

There are endless organised events and activities year-round but I mostly found my own. I volunteered at a local stable for horse riding time. I also spent a lot of time at the uni climbing gym (and sauna), explored the forests nearby, went ice swimming, and met some amazing people through the underground music scene.

What was the university/ city like?

The university seemed really well organised - any time I was confused, staff would be really happy to help. There's a mix of modern facilities and some beautiful old buildings and libraries. Study spaces were nice but often closed early. My department had its own small library and study area which was super cosy, and I spent most of my study time there.

The city was really easy to live in. Infrastructure was great - loads of buses, all on time, cycle paths, every shop and service you need. I always felt safe and would happily cycle home alone at night etc. It is relatively small, more a big town than a city, so it was nice to have Stockholm nearby for the big city activities.

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

As above, Leoparden. I'm sad I didn't discover it sooner.

Get out into nature. There are beautiful forests, lakes, hikes all within walking and cycling distance. There's also some cool viking history. Yocha Studio tea shop is a great focus space.

Any tips for future students?

Get your daily routine sorted before the days get short. It took me a while to adjust to just 6 hours of sunlight per day because my routine wasn't suited to it, and that wasn't a fun readjustment time. It's 100% worth getting up when it gets light and making sure you get outside just before sunset, even if it's freezing. I was much happier physically and mentally after working this out.

And give things a go. Everyone says it, but it's true. Meet people, try new things, take a risk by putting your hand up and asking for something you want. There are enough very different people and places around that you'll find a group or environment that suits you if you look for it.

Overall Experience

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

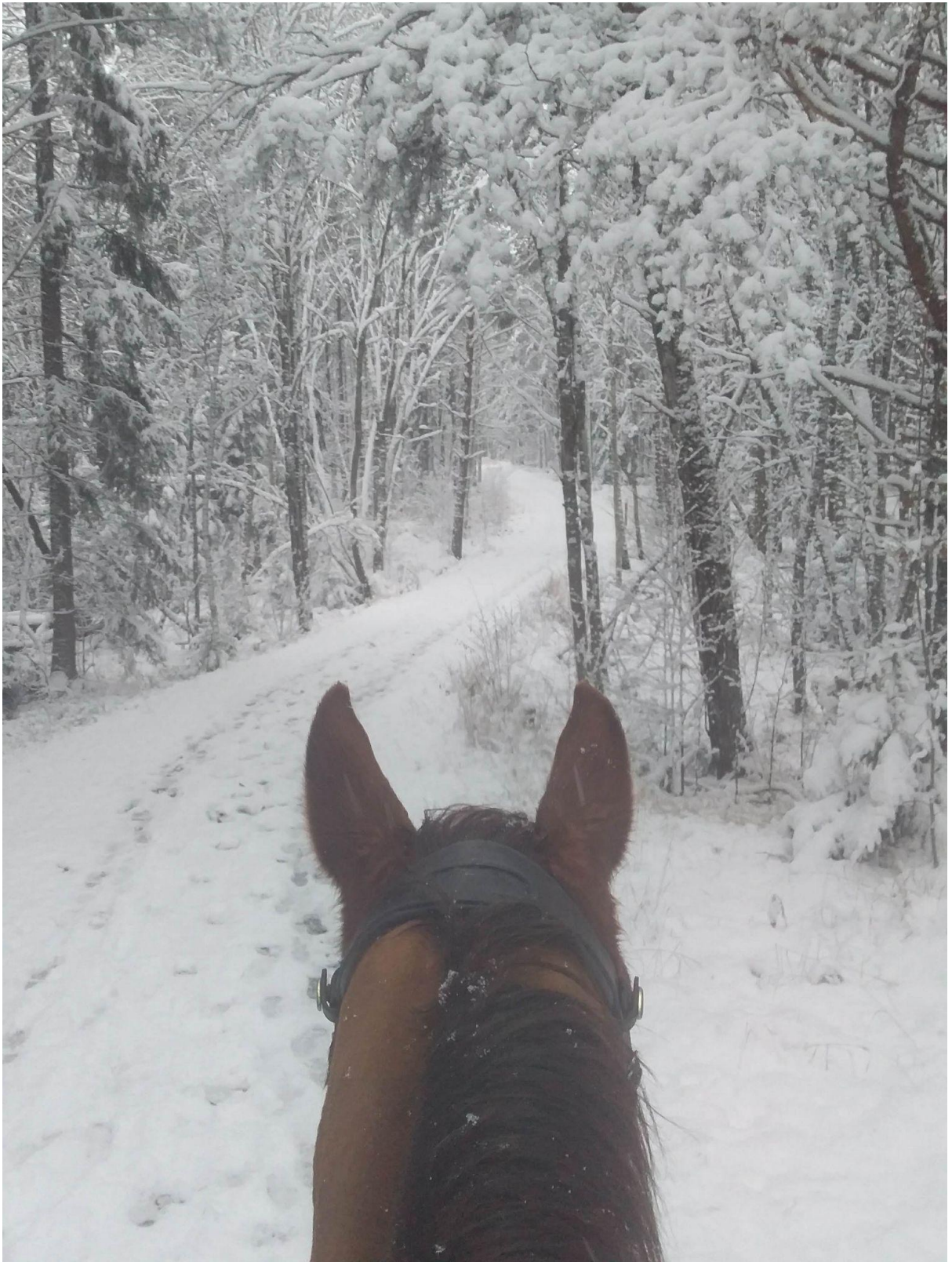
When I look back on the experience now, I had a fantastic time. The different teaching style of my course was really eye-opening and it has changed what I look for in future teaching structures. The department I studied in (CEMUS, the Centre for Environment and Development Studies) was run by wonderful people and I'd seriously consider going back to do my Master's with them.

Life was definitely stressful at times - uprooting your life and moving to the other side of the world is a big deal, plus the openness of my course provided less structure than I anticipated, and it took me a while to adjust to the lack of sunlight! However the process of rising to these challenges built resilience, and I found ways to deal with each of these by the end of my time overseas.

The most significant highlight of the experience was the people I met along the way - sometimes just brief encounters with amazing individuals who I would not have crossed paths with otherwise, but also forming friendships that will last a lifetime.

It also felt very valuable to experience life in a different culture with different social systems as well as belief systems. While Sweden has a lot of similarities to New Zealand, I feel there are some approaches that differ significantly, and this has widened my worldview.







Efter två år – nu är allt som det ska i student-Uppsala



Yvonne Huang, Angela Lee, Charlotte Osmaston och Luka Galice är utbytesstudenter och ska leva korridorliv i Uppsala.
Foto: Adam Wrafter

Måndagen i Uppsala innehöll punschdrickande, mottagning och inflyttning i studentkorridorer. För nu är studenterna tillbaka på allvar – precis som innan pandemin.

Annons