



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Tsinghua University
Semester & Year of Exchange	2019 Semester 1
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Economics, International Business

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Corporate Strategic Management	English	MANT 200 level	18
General Management	English	MANT 200 level	--
Listening Chinese (3)	Mandarin	CHIN 300 level	18
Management Information Systems	English	INFO 302	18
Speaking Chinese (3)	Mandarin	CHIN 300 level	18

Any comments about these papers?

The Chinese language papers were good, very helpful teachers with clear pronunciation. I could not take a comprehensive paper, as it was divided into different papers (eg. Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Writing), so if you are only taking, say two, you will miss out on an aspect. The Management papers I chose varied in style; General Management was rather basic but had several interesting guest speakers. Corporate Strategic Management was a very good paper, as we not only studied strategy formulation and implementation; we also studied a ton of cases. Management Information Systems had both theoretical and technical sections, but I felt that the lecturer's English level lowered the potentials for the paper.

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

There were no tutorials for any of the papers that I took in Tsinghua, which was okay, as most of my courses were more theoretical, and the Chinese language papers were small in size, so we had interactions when needed in lectures anyway. The quality of the paper will and does however, depend on one major factor: the lecturer's English level. However, you have no way of knowing this prior to arriving and taking the class. I found that lecturers who had studied overseas

for their postgraduate studies were well qualified and well spoken. Workload again, of course depend on the respective course. Lecturer's and their Teacher's Assistants are always happy to answer questions and help.

Accommodation

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

In Tsinghua there is the choice between living in a single room, AB room, or double room. Because I planned to go with my friend, we got a double room. This meant a small space with two beds and shared toilets and showers with the whole floor. There is no common area in most of the options, which I thought, was quite poor, but if you get involved, you can make many other exchange friends as all the international students on campus live in neighbouring buildings (5 buildings). There is no kitchen, but there are several cheap on-campus canteens. Compared to most rooms in Dunedin, it is much smaller. However, you can make a single or AB room quite homely. We did have room cleaning every second day with a change of sheets once a week, which saves you from cleaning your own room. Due to the size of the campus, getting a cheap pedal bike early in the semester will save you a lot of time and energy.

Money matters

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

Accommodation: for double room 40 RMB/day, I think it was about \$1,200NZD for the semester. For an AB room or single, it is 80 RMB/day, so double that.

Flights: round flight booked 2 weeks before departure were about \$750NZD.

Visa: because I wanted to make sure I get there as soon as I could so that I could spend the end of my summer holiday there, I paid for one day visa service, the total cost was slightly over \$200NZD.

Insurance: I got a rather comprehensive package for about \$250NZD. There is also an insurance policy at Tsinghua, but it isn't too much.

Food: food is cheap in China. Because you can just eat canteen food if you like, that can be around \$2 dollar per meal. So, you may find yourself eating out quite often, and it is still rather affordable.

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

I think it is crucial to create a Chinese bank account once you arrive, which the university orientation programme helps you with. Almost everything payment-wise can be done on your phone however, through WeChat or Alipay, which can be connected to your Chinese bank account. That way you can pay with your phone without taking your wallet or bank card anywhere. If you are transferring currencies, I recommend doing a bulk at once then seeing how far it gets you.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes. The visa application wasn't too complicated, but make sure you get onto it as soon as you receive your university enrolment letter, especially if you want to leave soon.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, I believe it was about 300RMB which is under NZD\$70.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Make the most of their clubs fair, because that's the fastest way to get involved in extra-curricular. For sports, often the university is divided by schools or faculties so perhaps ask your faculty during orientation. Being the best university in China, there are a multitude of great clubs and initiatives; I would say this is almost more important than studies. Being the Harvard of China, you can literally meet someone high profile every second week if you look. The two student associations that I was a member of were GPA (Global Practice Association) and SABRI (Student Association of the Belt Road Initiative). In GPA, besides organising small seminars with previous Doctors without Borders Vice-Executive, and ex special advisor to the director of the UNEP our flagship event was the Global Solutions Festival (GSF) <http://globalsolutionsfestival.org/>. I helped a small team organise this weekend social entrepreneurship idea-thon or create-thon. We invited 20+ distinguished mentors including leading foreign entrepreneurs in China and a few Forbes List 30 Under 30 Asia 2018. For SABRI, the biggest event we held was a university symposium inviting 4 ambassadors working in China from Asian countries among other special guests. Because of the name of the university, make the most of this side of your exchange, be active and make connections.

What was the university/ city like?

In comparison to Dunedin, the university, as well as the city, Beijing, is HUGE. From the dormitories, it is a good 30-minute walk to get out of campus. However, rather far from the city centre, it is situated in the 'university area' beside Peking University and other universities. Therefore, you don't have to go very far to find other exchange or international students, or people your age. You will notice the change in pace, and how everything takes a little longer to do, which is normal in a big city. Make sure you do explore other parts of the city as well though.

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

Besides all the touristy places, I recommend going to some places with either locals or Chinese people, you will have quite a different experience, learning more about the history and culture. The canteen food can get old quite fast, but don't worry there are plenty of foreign-style restaurants right by campus; Middle eastern, American, Italian, Russian, and Pakistani to name a few.

Any tips for future students?

Embrace the culture, don't be scared, go travel, see things, have fun. Be out there in the first few weeks, make sure you join random things, even if you don't stick around after trying it. Use your time in such a well regarded institution in the world's most populous country to your advantage, you don't know what it may get you 5-10 years down the track.

Overall Experience

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

I absolutely loved my time on exchange, it was refreshing and rewarding. Not only was I able to have a break from Otago, but I also made life-long friends and memories. The two things I benefitted from the most while on exchange was the friends I met, and the extra-curricular activities I was a part of. Quite literally, I met more people than days I was there for. I heard life stories from people from Russia, Poland, Colombia, the States, China etc., learning about their background, culture, and even future goals. Being a member of student associations helped me connect professionally. I was able to personally meet and talk to ambassadors, Huawei's COO, a few CEOs, and a couple Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia 2018. The experience not only broadened my perspective of the world but also helped propel my personal ambitions. Go for the opportunity, you won't regret it!

