



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	The University of Toronto (Mississauga Campus)
Semester & Year of Exchange	2024 Semester 2 (Fall semester)
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Computer Science

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
CSC324H5 Principles of Programming Languages	English	18 pts unspecified COSC300
CSC347H5 Introduction to Information Security	English	18 pts unspecified COSC300
CSC373H5 Algorithm Design and Analysis	English	18 pts unspecified COSC300

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

Any comments about these papers?

All interesting. CSC373H5 was the hardest for me, requiring mathematics/proofs background which I felt I lacked a bit.

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

Similar or slightly greater workloads. CSC347H5 was very group assignment heavy, CSC373H5 had difficult individual assignments. All lectures were 2 hours long, and each subject had only 1 lecture per week.

Accommodation

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

I applied for a hall of residence on campus, but as they don't guarantee them to exchange students, I was simply put on a long waitlist, and had to find another option. This meant I lost the non-refundable application fee. If you're applying for a hall of residence, it might be best to do so as early as possible.

In the end, I used the University's off-campus housing finder website, where local landlords list their houses. I definitely left this quite late (about a month before arriving) and settled on a somewhat expensive flat, a 30-minute bus commute from campus.

Cost aside, I loved the flat I stayed in. I made friends with my flatmates soon after arriving, and the house was modern, well-provisioned, had good insulation and a central heating system (which I think might be standard for Toronto homes)

Money matters

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

Accommodation was the greatest cost by far. I paid \$1400 CAD per month (the equivalent of \$400 NZD per week) in rent. Although my rent was above average, average rent in the area is definitely much higher than the typical Dunedin flat.

I used *flights.google.com* to find the cheapest routes from Dunedin to Toronto. If you can be flexible about travel dates, and don't mind flying with different airlines through multiple layovers, I definitely recommend this as the best way to find cheap flights.

I paid \$1200 for my flight to Toronto, and similar on the way back. Again, I left finding flights quite late (especially on my way back), and I think it'd definitely be possible to find something cheaper.

Food was also expensive. I don't have the data on this, but I feel like I paid a little more for Canadian groceries than in Dunedin. >\$100 per week at least. Buying food on campus was very expensive, but coffees from Tim Hortons are quite reasonably priced!

I paid \$686.25 for StudentSafe insurance + ~ \$310 NZD for mandatory UHIP university health insurance.

Two weeks before leaving New Zealand, I broke my arm while skiing. Surgery and follow up in New Zealand was free (Thanks ACC! <3), but I was concerned about paying for the required follow up appointments once I got to Canada. StudentSafe would not cover this.

I didn't need a student visa, (as I stayed for less than 6 months) so I only needed a Canadian ETA (\$7 CAD / \$8.50 NZD).

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

Your bank's Credit/Debit card might be okay, as long as you check the fine-print on the fees they charge for purchases overseas (Most banks charge a % fee on top of the Mastercard/Visa exchange fees).

I opted to use a "Wise" card (*wise.com*), because they charge a very low exchange fee. Wise is a travel card that can be used everywhere in the world. I made regular bank transfers from my NZ bank account into my Wise account, and then paid for everything with my Wise card. I was also able to pay my landlord in CAD using Wise, through Canadian bank transfers. You don't really ever need cash in Canada.

Visas & Insurance

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

No Visa, just a Canadian ETA (Applied online, paid \$8.50 NZD, a very easy process)

Canada only requires a Study Permit if you're studying for >6 months (aka two semesters), which I wasn't.

I also needed a US “ESTA”, as I travelled through the USA. This was \$37 NZD.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, “UHIP”, costing ~\$310 NZD. They paid for a couple of appointments, including one hospital appointment for my arm surgery recovery. A real pain to deal with making claims though.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There are lots of clubs to join at UTM. The international students club had several activities, and I did join to go for a trip down to Niagara falls. Pretty impressive. Made some friends.

What was the university/ city like?

I haven’t seen enough of downtown Toronto to know what it’s like to live there. Mississauga is a suburban area filled with expensive single family homes and strip malls. Not that bad though. The bus service (Mi-Way) is free for students, and buses reasonably frequent. Mississauga gets extremely cold, snowy and ice-covered during the winter, and you will want to travel to school in a warm bus.

The Credit River flows past campus, and it’s quite a pretty walk. Had a lot of fun going there in the winter with my flatmate and breaking chunks of ice off to send them down the river.

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

Not really. I honestly didn’t travel much while I was here and eating out is expensive!

We visited an amusement park near Toronto, “Canada’s Wonderland”, which was quite a good time.

Any tips for future students?



Overall Experience

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

I loved my exchange. 10/10, I’d recommend going on exchange to anyone at Otago if their course allows it.

I left New Zealand with my arm in a brace, feeling apprehensive about flying across the globe to somewhere where I knew no one, but Canadians are very friendly, and I settled in quickly.

My exchange wasn’t particularly adventurous, choosing an English-speaking country, and not traveling much while here, but I still enjoyed the novelty of day-to-day life in Canada. Different types of people, different roads, cars and shops. North American fauna, including squirrels, skunks and racoons. Courses at the university were challenging, but not dissimilar from the papers I’d taken back home.

After finishing my exchange, I took a trip down to New York City with my girlfriend, which was a lot of fun. (and really expensive!)

The best part of my exchange was flating with friendly Canadian students who made great friends.