



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Western University – Ivey Business School
Semester & Year of Exchange	S2 2023
Otago degree(s)	BComSc
Major(s)	Food Science and Marketing

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
4572 - Online Retailing	English	MART308
4441 - Entrepreneurial Marketing	English	MART3XX
4421 - B2B Marketing and Sales Management	English	MART301

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

Any comments about these papers?

Online retailing had a new lecturer/professor who was lovely and had a different teaching style to the other profs. As the class was a night class (6-9), it was notably smaller than my other classes which made it more fun. All classes at Ivey are an hour and twenty minutes unless they are doubles, which are three hours. I will say that having a three hour class until 9pm is pretty draining, however the prof tried his best to make it engaging. My other classes had a final test assessment, however this class had nothing like that so it was definitely less stressful!

Entrepreneurial marketing was also quite a fun class. There were hardly any assessments and if so they were quite simple and interactive. Out of the three courses, I found the content of this class the most interesting and relevant to my degree back home. I felt most confident contributing in this class as the prof made it engaging and less daunting.

B2B was my least favourite as majority of the content was about sales which I am not as familiar with. The prof was quite serious but also a very good teacher once you got to understand his humour and

teaching style. He did occasionally cold call on people which my other profs hardly did, however you get used to this and if you are paying attention and do the pre-reading this is not an issue. This class had the most assignments which were mostly in groups but I ended up enjoying most of them in the end.

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

Classes at Ivey are not at all like Otago. There are a maximum of around 80 people in each class and you are expected to sit in the same seat every time. Everyone has a name plate so the professor can call on you or answer you by name when you put your hand up. Contribution is a large percentage of your grade at Ivey, so you are expected to raise your hand in majority of your classes. The learning style is case based, meaning you are required to read a real business scenario before each class which will then be discussed in detail in the following class. These cases take around two hours maximum to do, however there are almost no lecture notes so once the class is over you don't need to revisit it!

The standard of work is also very different. Most assignments are relatively simple and often in groups which lightens the workload. Grades are also scaled, meaning hardly anyone ever gets a grade below 75% which is a bonus! This means you are pretty much guaranteed to pass as long as you show up and engage in the classes. They are very strict about attendance and you can only miss one or two classes, so definitely keep that in mind. Most people take four or five classes, but if you can I would recommend taking three as I only had two days of class each week. You are guaranteed Fridays off in HBA2 so you will have a long weekend to go out and do things!

Accommodation

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

I was in Alumni House and I couldn't recommend it more. This is one of the halls and most exchange students went here in my semester. Bayfield is another hall I had the option of going into, however these were individual rooms and my friends there were a bit more isolated. In Alumni, everyone is in a flat/apartment of four so we were forced to get to know each other. I loved my roommates and we got to know a lot of other apartments really well. We had our own kitchen and bathroom so I cooked for myself which kept costs down drastically. It is a bit dated, especially for the price, however I believe it was worth it. My only advice against going into halls would be if you are planning to do a full year exchange, as over 90% of us were only there for a semester and those continuing had to move into Bayfield.

Money matters

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

Accommodation: I paid a lump sum of \$5,500 NZD which is pretty expensive. Rentals in London are similarly priced to Otago if you want to live off-campus, however in my opinion you are paying for the experience and I would personally do it again if given the choice. You do get the option to have a meal plan included in your accommodation costs which over half of my friends had, however this is not unlimited and most of them had to top up their balance. I believe I saved more than half on food costs by cooking for myself at Alumni. I think the initial meal plan cost is around \$3,000 NZD. I would say a con of cooking for myself would be that I had to go out to get groceries, which was a bit of a challenge as there are no stores nearby. The bus system is efficient enough that this is easy to manage and I feel

like I experienced more of the city this way. Transit is an incredible app that breaks down the bus routes easily, otherwise Google Maps works pretty well too.

Bus pass: Leaning into the previous, you have to purchase a transit pass for just under \$300 CAD. This is unlimited however and attached to your student card which makes it very convenient. Ivey is pretty far away from Alumni if you choose to stay there (25-30 minute walk), however there is a bus route that runs through campus that is essentially door to door which is handy.

Ivey fees: a few weeks into the semester we were asked to pay \$300 CAD for course materials which I wasn't expecting. Make sure to account for this as it was a bit blindsiding for us!

Food: I would usually spend anywhere between \$50 - \$80 CAD per week on groceries. Walmart is by far the cheapest grocery store but it is also the furthest away. Each week I would order my groceries for pick up online and then catch the bus to White Oaks mall, which is a half hour each way by bus. Although it was long, I would do it with a friend and consider it as an adventure through the city!

Flights: I am still living in Canada so I cannot provide accurate details on flights, however expect to pay between \$2,000 – \$3,000 NZD depending on the season. As my semester finished just before Christmas, flights home are definitely hiked up during this time. I would recommend booking a return flexi flight if you can as booking separate one way tickets can cost a lot more.

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

Most people would recommend Wise and honestly I was not a fan... Revolut is a similar platform that was very commonly used by European exchange students and I ended up loving it. Unfortunately they do not have the option of pre-converting NZD to CAD at this time which was slightly frustrating, however they charge no conversion or transaction fees. I found most of my friends used it so it made it very easy to split costs. I also have a Canadian bank account which helped in rare situations where I needed to transfer to a local student, however you can usually get cash out in this scenario. If you choose to get a travel card, make sure you order a physical card beforehand as I did not have a physical Revolut card and therefore could not get cash out.

Visas & Insurance

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

If you are going to be in Canada for less than six months you only need an ETA, which costs no more than \$15 NZD and is a super quick process. This is similar to the USA ESTA which you can apply for if you want to cross the border at any stage and is valid for two years. Anything longer than a six month exchange requires a study permit, or if you want to work during your exchange you will also need this.

I purchased the travel insurance recommended by Otago for around \$800 NZD.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, this is called UHIP and was just under \$400 CAD for the semester. It doesn't cover the cost of prescriptions which are far more expensive in Canada so make sure to stock up beforehand and learn from my mistakes! Fortunately you can claim this back on your travel insurance but it is slightly annoying.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Western threw a lot of large events in O-Week and throughout the semester that were great for meeting new people. Ivey also has a separate O-Week orientation that you have to attend. Ivey organised a few events throughout the semester like a trip to Niagara Falls and Toronto however there weren't super frequent. Every week I attended the Western International global café which provides hot drinks and snacks with a new activity every week. I loved attending this for a weekly pick-me-up and social gathering! The school in general always has fun events going on that are usually free. Some notable ones were quiz/bingo nights, magic shows, silent discos, concerts and more. A few of these were catered to first years but they were still fun to be a part of.

I also joined the outdoors club for around \$20 CAD as it was recommended by a few past students. I was very disappointed as none of their big events happened in first semester so this was a waste of money for me. Some of the events were cancelled so I wouldn't take this as advice, I think I just got unlucky.

What was the university/ city like?

London itself is not a notable place. It is very inland with not a lot around it, which was quite the culture shock coming from NZ. Downtown has become quite sketchy so I would avoid Dundas, the main street, at any time but especially at night. Western campus is very nice however and you feel very safe there. The student life is extremely similar to Dunedin and there is an excuse to go out every night of the week. Molly's karaoke is predominately Sunday but also Monday, Jack's \$1 beers on Mondays and Wednesdays (bring cash!), Wine Wednesday at Delilah's and also Ivey Thursday which is when you will see every Ivey single student there. Cowboy's, Ceeps and Lost Love are common weekend venues but Cowboy's was my personal favourite.

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

My advice would be to get out of London as often as you can and explore! Toronto is no more than a three hour bus ride away with a major airport that frequently has cheap deals to places within North and South America. You can also travel the same distance to Detroit and fly from there, but I found Pearson in Toronto had better options. Google Flights was my best friend as this allows you to look at different time periods and compare different airlines for the best price. Hopper is another great app for flight price prediction and hotel deals. I scored myself an incredible deal to stay at the Fairmont in Toronto very last minute, so if you are willing to be spontaneous this is a great option.

Throughout my exchange I visited Vancouver, Banff, Jasper, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec City, Niagara Falls, New York, and Los Angeles. New York was my favourite however this is an extremely expensive city so be prepared for that. Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec City was in one trip for thanksgiving weekend which was a stunning time of the year to go. We travelled on an overnight bus which saved on travel and accommodation despite being slightly uncomfortable. I regret not making it to Algonquin National Park or the Bruce Peninsula as these seemed beautiful in the warmer weather.

Attend as many sporting events as you can! Western and North America as a whole are very big on sports, so they go all out. Your student card gets you free access to all Western sports games which is a plus. Hockey and football are the biggest and very unique experiences. For homecoming, there were

dozens of free food trucks at the football game which I would recommend making the most of! The London Knights are the local hockey team which you can get relatively cheap tickets for, or you can travel up to Toronto for a Leafs game at a bit of a steeper price point. In Toronto you can also attend MBA or NBA games which have an amazing atmosphere. These are dependent on the season so make sure you look into when the seasons begin and end first!

There are a few good options to eat out but after the conversion rate, it can be very expensive. La Cucina was probably our favourite spot. Los Lobos is also known for Taco Tuesday but we never made it there. Dimi's is a fun spot for birthdays as you get to smash a plate and a free shot!

Any tips for future students?

As said previously, try get out and explore at any given opportunity. The Ivey schedule is pretty lenient so it is likely you will have plenty of time to spare. Save hard as the cost of living has spiked pretty drastically here and travel is also fairly expensive. Say yes to everything (within reason) and put yourself out there! Time goes by very fast so try to make the most of the experience.

Overall Experience

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

I loved every second of my exchange. My recommendation to anyone considering one would be to just do it! It doesn't matter where you end up, it will be worth it. I have made so many new friends for life from so many different countries, and my understanding of the world is far greater than before. As someone who has not travelled a lot in the past, I feel as if my exchange was a catalyst in wanting to get out and experience more. I still live in Canada, which is a giant step that I likely wouldn't have taken without completing my exchange. I have noticed a significant improvement in my confidence and willingness to say yes to things that I would find daunting in the past. Sure, there were hard moments but these were significantly outweighed by the positives. So, take the leap and go!





