

Student Exchange

# OTAGO GLOBAL



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Otago Global Student Exchange



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	University of Alberta
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester 2 2024
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	Bachelor of Arts
<b>Major(s)</b>	Psychology

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>
EAS 100 PLANET EARTH	English	
FS 100 INTRO TO FILM STUDY	English	
HIST 121 TOPICS IN GLOBAL HISTORY (Migration in the Modern World)	English	

Total Otago credits gained:  54 points  72 points  108 points  \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments about these papers?

FS100 had a low workload and included a film viewing once a week.

HS121 also had a low workload - plenty of prior experience in writing essays helped.

EAs100 had way more course load - probably equal to my other two papers combined. This was due to the large amount of content in classes plus the lab assignments (1 a week).

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

The lecture style was essentially the same as most of the papers I've taken at Otago. Unfortunately in two of the classes I took, the lecturers (or profs as they call them in Canada) were away overseas so these two classes were taught over Zoom. FS100 was taught in person. Students seemed to engage in lecture discussions much more and asked more questions which was quite pleasant.

## Accommodation

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

I chose the slightly more risky option of staying off campus in a room that I boarded. This turned out well, as it was significantly cheaper than staying in a hall of residence. When I arrived in Edmonton, I stayed with a friend at a motel for a couple of days while I found a place. The place I found was warm and close to a bus stop (as a student, you have free access to the bus services and trains in Edmonton).

I thought my hobbies would allow me to make social connections. This was harder than expected, and paying for the halls is necessary if you value making many social connections. This is especially true because other exchange students are much more keen to travel and have more free time to do things.

## Money matters

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

I paid 620 a month for accommodation (including utilities).

Book flights well ahead!!! Flexible flights are the go as you will probably decide to stay longer; plans change.

ETA let me travel to Canada for 6 months. The downside is that you cannot get a cellphone plan, work, or open a bank account which you can do with a study permit.

Walmart is the cheapest for groceries. Some foods are more expensive than NZ others are cheaper.

I didn't buy winter boots and never felt the need to. A friend that lives there says you can get away with it throughout January as well. Your feet might feel a little cold on some days but nothing more than how cold the rest of your body will probably feel - of course depending on you as an individual.

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

I used Wise which seems like 100% the best option. But always had cash at home and in my wallet.

## Visas & Insurance

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

ETA is very easy. Later on, I applied for a study permit within Canada because I wanted some work. But this was very tricky and is rare to do so cannot recommend it. The immigrant office incorrectly declined my application as well as my application for a social insurance number. Later I managed to get them reviewed and accepted.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

The host university does require a separate insurance plan however it wasn't too expensive. I acquired it while I was there.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Go to clubs day and their version of O-Week. Make the most of all the opportunities and go to everything just to check them out. The exchange department also organised a cool get-together at the end of the year.

The outdoors club is great - not as great as Otago's tramping club. But very similar albeit smaller and trips cost more. Nordegg is the closest outdoor place to Edmonton and the outdoors club runs snowshoeing and hiking trips. In semester one (January) they also host ice fishing and ice climbing trips).

*What was the university/ city like?*

In my opinion, the University of Alberta has better facilities than Otago. the UofA has a swimming pool and a climbing gym that students have free access to. The social areas on campus have heaps of shops to buy food. And included in your tuition students can get a card that allows free access to buses and trains. It is worth googling how to get the card and how the transport system works before arriving in Canada. If using cash you need the exact amount (they don't carry change).

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

The Rockies are by far the best place to go.

Make the most of the warm weather if you are going in semester 2. When winter comes it becomes too cold to go outside most days for longer than an hour. Not all days are cold roughly every 10 days a spell of relatively warm weather comes in (hovers around freezing) with some sun.

Try poutine and all the unique fast-food places.

*Any tips for future students?*

- It is very cold over winter (the coldest I experienced during the day was -20) however at the start of my semester (August/September) it was still Autumn and very hot with days up to 30 degrees! Be prepared for the hot and the cold. On the -20 day I wore jeans, shoes, jersey, down jacket, beanie, and buff. A light pair of thermal bottoms would've been nice.
- The bus drivers are very relaxed when it comes to letting on passengers who don't a ticket or cash and will let you on. So don't stress if you forget/lose your card - e.g. Just explain you're a student and normally they will let you on.
- Tipping is very easy. When you make the payment the eftpos machine will come up with what percentage you'd like to tip.
- Research how to get to your first accommodation before arriving. As well as the suburb and how the transit system works.
- There are three different ski fields within Edmonton though they are small but therefore great for beginners. Outside of Edmonton Jasper has the closest.

## Overall Experience

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

I think all students should at least do one semester of exchange in their time of studying. Its such a great way to do something amazing while you're studying. It gives you great life experiences and global connections that will pay off dividends. Don't be too worried about winter, the houses and buildings are warm. Take every opportunity because you'll never know if you get another but perhaps more importantly make the opportunities so you can do things.

Best of luck :)

