



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	Major(s)
Bachelor of Arts	Major: Politics Minor: Environment and Society
Host University	Semester & Year of Exchange
Dalhousie University	Semester 1 2018

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
POLI 4380 Politics of Climate Change	English	Pols 300-level paper	18 points
POLI 2302 Politics of the Developing World	English	Pols 200-level paper	18 points
PHIL 2480 Environmental Ethics	English	Arts paper	18 points
SUST 3002 Internship	English	Arts paper	

Any comments about these papers?

The papers I did on exchange were fantastic. I'm really glad the Otago Politics Department agreed that one Poli paper at Dalhousie could be equally credited to one Pols paper at Otago, as this allowed me to take some Arts credit papers while still having a manageable course load. My favourite paper was the Sustainability Internship (SUST 3002), as I managed to get a job with Halifax Regional Municipality Council and work in their Waste Management sector – a field I can see myself working in in future. As an exchange student, I constantly searched for opportunities to enhance my education and experience. SUST 3002 was a great way to involve myself with environmental issues in the city of Halifax. Additionally, the internship experience was different to anything I'd had at Otago and I gained experience that I was unlikely to get elsewhere. My other papers were also really great, especially POLI 4380. Being a 4th/5th year paper, the class was fairly small and taught at a high level of education. I got to know the people in my class better and I learned a lot.

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

Dalhousie University focuses a lot more on participation than Otago does. I had grades for attendance and participation in each of my classes. The Internship paper was different as there was not any class time allocated, but instead I had to be very self-driven and complete work by myself. Aside from that, the expected workload at Dalhousie was very similar to that of Otago. For most of my classes I had to do preparatory readings, which is comparable to that of my Otago classes. Assessments were weighted more towards internal assignments. I only had one exam, and it was worth only 40% of the total grade for that class, whereas at Otago my exams are usually worth more than half of my grade. I really liked that I was there on a pass/fail basis as it took the pressure off me to excel academically. It allowed me to enjoy my exchange to the full extent, to take time off school to adventure and explore. As a result of feeling freer (in combination with doing papers I was passionate about) I managed to exceed my academic expectations of myself anyway, which is an awesome accomplishment for me.

Accommodation

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

I stayed off-campus in a flat with 3 Canadians. I found the flat on Facebook prior to my departure from New Zealand on the "Dalhousie Housing Swap" Facebook page. I'm really glad I didn't live in halls of residence on campus as I'd already had the hall experience at Otago, and I wanted more freedom during my exchange experience. Other exchange students stayed in halls or residence and really enjoyed that experience. For me however, I enjoy cooking for myself and having autonomy to come and go on my own agenda. I also really liked living with locals who could give me a more authentic experience of living in a different city (rather than living with exchange students) and I definitely benefited from their knowledge of Halifax. My flat was located between university and the town centre which was great for balancing my academic life and social life.

Money matters

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

The most significant cost for me was my flights. I travelled around quite a bit before I started my exchange (visiting Nepal, France, Belgium, and the UK) and after my exchange (flying across Canada, then down to the United States) so my flight expenses added up quite a lot. Accommodation was a bit more expensive than what I'd pay in Dunedin (around \$160 NZD per week) but I received a weekly loan from Studylink which helped me cover it. I bought insurance through Southern Cross New Zealand which was covered by the \$1000 travel grant from Otago. For food I spent about the same as I did in New Zealand, usually around \$40-\$50 NZD a week. It helped that I tried to limit my spending in cafes/restaurants/bars and instead tried to eat in!

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

As soon as I arrived in Canada I created a Canadian bank account with Scotiabank. I then transferred money over from my ANZ account in large chunks. I found this to be a good method of managing my finances as it would cost me less in the long term than using my New Zealand bank account for every transaction. Also, Halifax city relies a lot on cash (some bars will only accept cash, the market stalls only accept cash) so using a Canadian account was much cheaper to get cash out of ATMs. My ANZ account would have charged me a few dollars extra for every time I got cash out.

Visas & Insurance

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

Fortunately, I have US citizenship so I did not have to apply for a visa. Since I was there for less than 6 months, I didn't need any other documents either.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Dalhousie University has mandatory insurance for all international students UNLESS their domestic insurance meets an acceptable level of coverage (determined by Dalhousie). I had Southern Cross insurance which I bought prior to my departure from New Zealand, which was deemed to have enough coverage. Thus, I signed a contract which would waive the insurance from Dalhousie.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

The exchange department at Dalhousie University was pretty good at getting people together and organising social events. I was there in the winter semester so the organised events were often winter-orientated, for example skiing trips at Martock or Wentworth, ice skating at the Emera Oval, tobogganing down Citadel Hill, watching 'Mooseheads' ice hockey games (the local team) etc. There were also many hiking trips organised through clubs like the Dalhousie Outdoors Society and the city-run Trips by Transit. It's really awesome to get involved with everything outdoors as it's just so different to New Zealand, especially in winter when it's snowing! Other extra-curriculars could include sport at the Dalplex (similar to UniPol in Dunedin) which is free for students. There are loads of sports teams to join and there are some different sports to those in New Zealand like curling!

What was the university/ city like?

Situated right next to the ocean, Halifax is a historic maritime city built for seafaring and trade. It's the capital of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. It is a relatively small city, perhaps about the same size as Wellington, and is without a doubt one of the loveliest cities I've ever visited. The people are kind, genuine, and they apologise a lot (fitting the Canadian stereotype well). Halifax is certainly colder than Dunedin in winter, but the houses are so much better suited for it! The houses are old, beautiful, and warm.

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

Point Pleasant Park is a really nice place to go to walk, run, and explore nature. The waterfront is really beautiful to walk around, as is the public gardens (although the gardens are closed for the majority of winter). During winter it is really fun to go skiing/snowboarding at Martock or Wentworth (definitely not as big as mountains in New Zealand, but fun nonetheless!). These trips are often organised by the international centre. Ice skating at the Emera Oval is a great thing to do, and the skate hire is totally free! Tobogganing down Citadel Hill (an old military site) is also super fun when the snow is good. I went to a Mooseheads ice hockey game pretty early on which was a great way to get to know some of the other exchange students. Something I didn't do but wish I did is go snowshoeing – a true Canadian experience, I'm told! I often went down to the Halifax Seaport Market to buy fresh produce for the week, it's a lovely place to spend a Saturday morning with music and funky stalls to browse. Value Village is a fantastic secondhand store, especially the one over in Dartmouth – taking the ferry across is free with a Dalcards! As for the university itself, I often frequented the Loaded Ladle in the Student Union Building for their free vegan lunch!

Any tips for future students?

For future students going to Dalhousie University on exchange, I'd definitely recommend trying to explore as much as possible outside of Halifax. During the mid-semester break (they call it 'Reading Week') I went to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal with some other exchange students. It was a great experience and helped bond us as a group. I also went on a trip to Washington DC, and other students went to New York City or Maine. On weekends it is great to get out of the city and explore wider Nova Scotia, for example going to Cape Breton and walking the Cabot Trail, going to Peggy's Cove, Lunenburg, Cape Split, even Prince Edward Island if you're able. Closer to home, it's awesome to do a lot of the hiking trails in places such as Long Lake Provincial Park and the Bluff Wilderness area. They are accessible by car, or through the bus system (look into the Trips by Transit page on Facebook for organised hiking trips around Halifax). For more general exchange advice, I'd recommend throwing yourself into every opportunity that you can get, because your exchange experience is what you make it, and these chances might be once in a lifetime!

Overall Experience

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

My exchange experience was incredible beyond words. It sounds cliché, but it was truly transformational for me and I learned so much about myself. I settled in really well, met some epic people, and took every opportunity that I could. I got much more into rock climbing, hiking, and skating. My academic experience was really great; I learned a lot through my courses and managed to perform well too. I got really involved in the local community through my internship working for the Council, which will use my research to change waste management bylaws in future. This also helped me gain experience in a field I have developed a passion for. I now hope to do something similar after I graduate. Furthermore, the friends I made on exchange will last a lifetime. I feel a lot more confident and competent as an individual human in this ever-changing world, more resilient to life challenges, and more creative when considering future life paths. I now know that I am capable enough to achieve whatever I put my mind to. I am so, so, so grateful for this opportunity.



Sitting on the Halifax waterfront



Meeting the university mascot, the Dalhousie tiger



My first time standing on a frozen lake



Mooseheads ice hockey game (we won)



200th year of Dalhousie University



Ski trip organised by the international centre



Mid-semester break: Toronto at night



Mid-semester break: Canadian Parliament in Ottawa



Mid-semester break: exchange students in Montreal



On the ferry to Dartmouth, looking back at Halifax City



Enjoying the hike



A friend's cabin, where I spent my last weekend in Halifax



Exchange student goodbye dinner