



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Boston College
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2023
Otago degree(s)	LLB & BCom
Major(s)	Accounting

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
ACCT663501 Forensic Accounting	English	ACCT 300 level
AADS340001 Food Justice Across the African Diaspora	English	Optional 200 level or above
COMM227202 New Media and Society	English	Optional 200 level or above
POLI230901 The U.S. Congress	English	Optional 200 level or above

Total Otago credits gained: 60 Points

Any comments about these papers?

- Forensic accounting was a standout for me. It's different from the typical Otago accounting courses by being more interactive and emphasizing soft skills over theory and number crunching. The added bonus was that the course was taught by an ex-FBI agent, probably one of my favourite lecturers in my five years of university.
- Although I was initially excited about delving into American history and political science, I found it to be the most challenging course. Despite being designed for sophomores (2nd years), it proved demanding as many students already possessed a solid understanding of American history and politics, which I should have figured out beforehand.
- At the start of the semester you have an "add/drop" period where you can attend classes to see which one you like and then by the end of the week, you can decide on your final timetable depending on what courses you like. I really took advantage of this and ended up taking only one of my initial choices.



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

- While the content was notably easier, the workload at BC was higher. Otago assignments are more substantial and time-consuming, but here, you can anticipate receiving an assignment every second class, often due in the following class.
- Three-quarters of my courses were discussion-based rather than the traditional lecture style. Typically, we would have pre-class readings, and a substantial portion of the class time was dedicated to class discussions. Teachers also really made an effort to get to know you, one of my teachers took our class out for dinner at the end of the semester.
- Also, you can get pretty easy marks by just turning up to class and contributing to discussions (10-20% of your overall grade). Unlike Dunedin, there is no real stigma with speaking up in class, and was not nearly as nerve-racking as I had anticipated.

Accommodation

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

After flatting in Dunedin for 4 years, I didn't want to move back on campus so I opted for a place off-campus on Hammondswood Rd, just a 7-minute walk from the campus hub. I shared a house with three other American girls, 2 seniors and 1 junior. If you decide to live off campus or don't get a spot in one of the halls as they can be quite limited, BC Housing provides you with lots of links and resources to help you find accommodation. I used the BC housing portal, and clicked "Fall Semester Sublet" and there was only one available house, however, I don't think it could have turned out better for me.



Pros to living off campus:

- Had my own space, unlike the on-campus dorms which are mostly shared rooms, sometimes even with 3-4 people in one room.
- I got to cook my own meals – on-campus living at BC means mandatory meal plans (USD 3,500), roughly \$35 a day for food. Most students ended up having money left over and I heard the food wasn't great and can be quite expensive.
- Real American experience - made friends beyond the exchange program, and two of my roommates are now among my best friends. I also got to spend Thanksgiving with my roommate's family in North Carolina.



Cons to living off campus:

- Making friends, especially with other exchange students, was a bit trickier. Living on campus usually means constant company, while off-campus can sometimes feel lonely.
- Less involved with school activities. American universities, especially BC where most students live on campus, are highly school-oriented. Living off-campus meant I had to make more effort to stay connected.
- If your room comes unfurnished (mine came furnished) then you will have to purchase extra furniture that is otherwise provided to you on campus



Money matters

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

I knew Boston was going to be expensive but I really underestimated how EXPENSIVE it would be. Boston College estimates the average cost for 4 months is \$15,146 USD.

Flights: I flew to Boston from Europe so my flights aren't completely accurate. Flight prices are changing all the time so just be organised in advance and look out for deals. However, from NZ it would roughly be \$1,000 NZD one way.

Accommodation:

- Rent: \$1,200 USD/month
- Utility: \$70 – 90 USD/month

Visa:

- SEVIS (I-901) fee: \$350
- Visa processing fee: \$150
- Travel Costs to Consulate (if you live out of AKL)

Food: The food was also very expensive, a normal pasta at a restaurant was around \$40-45 NZD and a small Starbucks coffee is \$13 NZD. For groceries I shopped at Trader Joes and StarMarket which were both pretty reasonable.

Insurance: BC has a mandatory insurance plan which costs \$1,795 USD for the Fall Semester and \$2,338 USD in the Spring Semester. I also got out personal travel insurance on top of this, but probably wasn't needed.

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

I held accounts with both Bank of America and Wise. I strongly recommend getting a Bank of America account because it enabled me to access websites like Peacock & Hulu that I wouldn't have been able to otherwise. Additionally, it helped easy money transfers through apps like Venmo and Zelle, which are widely used in the United States. Bank of America made things convenient by coming to BC on orientation day, and the setup process was both free and effortless. I also used my wise account which is an online platform that allows you to use multiple currencies at a low transaction rate.

To be able to set up a bank account, you may need to get a US number. This was also super easy, I would recommend using Mintmobile (\$45 for 3 months) and then if that runs out I would switch to USmobile for your final month (you can keep the same number).

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, I did. You apply for an appointment through your visa-issuing consulate in Auckland pay all the fees and fill in the requested information. If you live out of Auckland, you will most likely have to fly up and have an interview with them, BC will also guide you along.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

BC has a mandatory insurance plan which costs USD 1,795 for the Fall Semester and USD 2,338 in the Spring Semester. I also got personal travel insurance on top of this, but this is optional.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There are so many clubs and sports teams to sign up to. I am not sure if they do this in their spring semester but at the start of their fall semester they have a huge sign up day fair (like Pitch Perfect) where you can sign up for stuff

What's so great about the East Coast is that it's very easy to travel places. I ended up going to New York 3 times as it was usually around \$20 – 40 one way on a bus (4 ½ hr journey). I would also recommend taking a trip down to the Cape, quintessential New England. I was also able to get cheap flights using Spirit and JetBlue (equivalent to JetStar) to Nashville, Miami, Charlotte, and Washington DC during the weekends and breaks. Porta Rico is also a common place people go on Spring and Fall break. Plus Montreal is only a 7hr drive away.



If you go in the Fall it will be football season so definitely get around the tailgates and games. Otherwise, if you go in the Spring you will be there for the Boston Marathon and Marathon Monday.

What was the university/ city like?

Boston feels like a small town with big city perks, blending a tight-knit vibe with vibrant urban life. It's a sports haven, home to iconic teams like the Patriots, Celtics, and Red Sox, and rich in cultural landmarks and museums.

Boston College is rated one of America's most beautiful campuses, stands out as a private institution. Despite the absence of fraternities and sororities, BC prioritizes academic excellence, offering top-notch education and impressive facilities. The recreation centre is a wellness oasis, featuring a pool, sauna, rock climbing, tennis courts, spa, and indoor track.

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

- Sights/Attractions
 - o Quincy Market, Boston Common, Harvard, Beacon Hill, Boston Public Library
- Restaurants:
 - o Tatte Bakery: Beautiful pastries and closest you will get to an NZ coffee
 - o Barcelona Wine Bar: Spanish tapas, goods for big groups
- North End (Italian Quarter)
- Newbury Street: Great shopping. No driving the street on Sundays as its opened it for markets
- Salem, especially around Halloween. There are pretty cheap trains that take you directly there from Downtown Boston



Any tips for future students?

- Be aware that BC is outside of Boston and can take roughly 1 hr on the T (train) to get into town. This can get quite tedious towards the end and you will have to get an Uber home if you go out in Boston town at night.
- You really want to be 21+ as Massachusetts is one of the strictest states on drinking ages (always bring your passport out as a form of ID, they won't let you in on your NZ license).
- Say yes to everything, it goes by so fast.
- Sign up for Student 9s (just download the app) and you get \$9 student tickets to the Red Sox. Also, use SeatGeek to get second-hand tickets to concerts and sporting games.
- Use your Eagle student ID to get discounted entry into museums.

Overall Experience

Was a cracker of a time! Wouldn't have wanted to go anywhere else.

