



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	Boston College
<i>Semester & Year of Exchange</i>	Semester 2, 2018
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	BSc
<i>Major(s)</i>	Computer Science

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Computational Models of Cognition	English	COSC300	12
Euclid's Elements	English	MATH300	12
Complex Variables	English	MATH300	12
Third-Year Japanese I	English	JAPA300	12

Any comments about these papers?

I particularly enjoyed the AI paper (Computational Models of Cognition). As a combination of Computer Science and Psychology, it involved reading a variety of journal articles, discussing them in class, and implementing AI models. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in learning more about AI.

The maths courses were quite challenging: the prerequisites didn't quite match up with Otago, so I always needed to spend a lot of time revising the contents. Nevertheless, the lecturers were always helpful, and offered plenty of office hours.

Japanese was also very enjoyable. Lectures were conducted entirely in Japanese, and we spent a lot of time on essay-writing and presentations, much more than at Otago. I definitely feel like I improved a lot during the semester.

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

The biggest difference is that classes are much smaller: my four classes each had between 8 and 15 students. This was very helpful as it gave everyone more opportunities to ask questions during lectures, and let us get to know each other better. In fact, most class-time was spent on discussions rather than traditional lectures. Another difference is that while the number of in-class hours per

week is a bit less than at Otago, we instead had more homework, which also counted more towards the final grade.

Accommodation

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

When you first apply to BC, you can choose if you want to be considered for on-campus accommodation. The number of places is very limited, but I was fortunate enough to get a room on campus. I ended up living in Welch Hall, which is less than 5 minutes from most lecture rooms. The rooms were already furnished, and included on campus dining, so it was quite similar to living in a hall at Otago. More than 80% of BC students live on campus, and rent is much higher than in Dunedin, so I would definitely recommend living on campus if you have the chance.

I didn't know about this before I applied, but the BC website has detailed information on the different residence halls here: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/reslife/lifeinhalls/residencehalls.html>.

Here's a photo of my room:



Money matters

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

I stayed with family in Germany before and after my exchange, so my flights to and from the US were about NZ\$1600, but it's likely more expensive if you're arriving straight from NZ. For some reason one-way flights are much more expensive than two-way flights, so if possible try and book your return flight ahead of time. The compulsory health insurance cost US\$1280, and my on-campus

housing was US\$4500 for the semester. This is similar to what you would pay to rent off-campus though. Additionally the on-campus dining (breakfast/lunch/dinner) cost a total of US\$2500. To get the student visa I needed to fly to the US consulate in Auckland, and pay the visa fees, which totalled to about US\$500.

Boston College estimates that a one-semester exchange will cost a total of US\$12000, which was quite accurate for me.

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

Once I arrived it was very easy to set up a Bank of America account. They have representatives at the exchange/international orientation, and you can get a checking and savings account, and a debit card for free. Because transferring money internationally always takes a couple of days, it's probably a good idea to take some cash as well.

Visas & Insurance

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

The only place that issues visas in NZ is the American consulate in Auckland. Getting the visa was easier than I thought though: they asked me a few questions about what I was studying, why I wanted to go to the US, etc., but once that was finished they couriered back my passport the next day.

When I then flew to the US, the process was also quite straightforward: at the airport they just checked my documents and asked similar questions, but it only took a minute.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

BC does require all international/exchange students to have mandatory insurance. This costs US\$1280, which you can pay after you arrive. They also require proof of various vaccinations. If possible I would try to get those sorted before leaving NZ, because it's quite expensive to get vaccines in America.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Boston College has a large number of student clubs and sports; you can find a list here: <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/campus-life/student-organizations.html>. I only participated in the Computer Science Society, but I would definitely recommend to try and get involved in anything that interests you. BC also has a large gym, but unlike at Otago you need to pay separately to use it.

What was the university/ city like?

Boston is a really nice, modern city. Public transport is quite good: the "T" train/subway goes straight from Boston College into the city. During orientation there's an optional harbor cruise you can do, which I would recommend.

Here's a photo from the harbor cruise:



Any tips for future students?

Boston is quite close to New York, so I'd recommend taking a Greyhound bus there. It takes about four hours each way, so you could go for a long weekend for example. Greyhound costs only about \$70 both ways.



Overall Experience

Here are some more photos from my exchange:

