



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s): Bachelor of Applied Science	Major(s): Molecular Biotechnology Zoology (Minor)
Host University: University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM)	Semester & Year of Exchange: 2017 academic year (Semester 1 & 2)

Academics/ course load

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
BIO202 - Animal Physiology	English	ZOOL223	18
BIO205 – Ecology	English	200 Level ZOOL	18
BIO341 – Advanced Genetics	English	300 Level ZOOL	18
BIO347 - Epigenetics	English	300 Level ZOOL	18
BIO374 – Modern Biotechnology	English	GENE221	18
BIO373 – Microbial Ecology	English	300 Level MOBI	18
BIO372 – Molecular Biology	English	300 Level MOBI	18

Academics

The Canadian academic year runs from September through to the end of April the following year. Semesters are known as fall (September-December) & winter (January-April). Courses at UTM are either 0.5 credits (1 semester) or 1 credit (full year), with a total of 5 credits per year for the average student. Despite 0.5 credits being equal to 18 University of Otago points, the teaching style of the courses are quite different. Compared to Otago, each course has a lot less contact time. E.g. A 300 level course, such as epigenetics, may have a single 2 hour lecture a week and a 2 hour tutorial. Unlike Otago, it is uncommon for upper year courses to have lab components included, instead student tend to take additional lab based courses. I did however enjoy this style of teaching, in that if you are driven to do the study you tend to do well in the courses.

Accommodation

As I was on exchange for the New Zealand academic year as opposed to the Canadian, I decided to use on campus housing for the semester and leave for the summer. This got rid of the hassle of trying to organise two apartments off campus, but was still quite inconvenient. If you are thinking of spending a year in Toronto, I would highly recommend that is for the Canadian academic year.

UTM does offer a variety of on campus residence [options](#), and I found the 'apartment style' Roy Ivor block quite good for upper year living.

Money matters

Living on campus I was required to use a meal plan, so I had lunch provided most days. Although, I found the cost of food to be quite cheap, and could spend around CA\$30 to pay for ingredients for roughly 2 weeks' worth of dinners.

Although when buying anything, tax is not included on the display price and is added when you get to the checkout. Unlike some countries such as the UK, I could not find a way to reclaim tax when leaving the country.

If you are staying in Canada for longer than 6 months, it is beneficial to open a Canadian bank account. This will minimise fees that may be charged to a New Zealand account for transaction overseas. And take the hassle out of some reoccurring payments, e.g. rent, phone plan.

Visas & Insurance

Depending on the time of year you travel to Canada, flights will be between \$1k-1.5k each way. Personal travel insurance will cost roughly \$1,000 for a year. Although, included in your student fees is UHIP (University Health Insurance Plan), so most medical costs should be covered in Canada. UHIP tends to be charged for a whole academic year at once, so depending on when you visit you may need to request a refund.

A study permit (visa) is required for study periods longer than 6 months. The application to be granted the permit costs about \$300 and can take up to 3 months to complete. The application is completed online via the Government of Canada [website](#). The study permit will allow you to stay until 3 months after your last day of study, to work in Canada and allows the opening of Canadian bank accounts.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

The university of Toronto is split into three campuses; Mississauga, Downtown (St. George) and Scarborough. With each campus having an independent registrar and therefore the clubs and societies. The entirety of my exchange in Canada was spent at the Mississauga campus, which sporting facilities dwarf that of Unipol. If considering an exchange at the Mississauga campus, I'd highly recommend getting involved in a sports team/club.

Despite being a smaller city within the greater Toronto area, Mississauga is still noticeably larger than Dunedin, with a population just short of 700,000. Overall, I found Canada extremely welcoming, and

didn't struggle to get involved in the community. Each of the smaller cities within Toronto have their own public transport systems. As part of the student fees at UTM you'll receive a MiWay U-Pass, which enables you to use any of the public transport within Mississauga free of charge. Square One is the local shopping centre and is enormous. Almost everything you need, you'll be able to find there. For the few things you can't, you can use the intercampus shuttle from UTM to the St George (downtown) campus every 30 minutes or so on weekdays. The shuttle usually takes about 40 minutes, but in peak traffic can take up to two hours each way.

Toronto has a range of attractions to go and see. Including the Royal Ontario Museum, Art Gallery of Ontario, the CN Tower, Kensington markets or the historic Distillery district. Buses are common transport to get you to and from Toronto, with destinations including Montreal, Quebec, Niagara and New York at reasonable prices. If looking to go to British Columbia or national parks such as Banff, air travel is your best bet, as driving times get significantly longer.

Overall Experience

As cliché as it sounds, going on exchange will be one of the best opportunities of your life. While on exchange I experienced a lot of personal growth. Being in a foreign country and knowing no one, will tell you a lot about yourself. Not only did I get the opportunity to study at one of the best universities in Canada, I made a lot of good friends from all over the world along the way. My time in Toronto and abroad will always be something I look back on with much fondness. Toronto is a highly culturally diverse city, which despite its strong US influence, always welcomes you with true Canadian hospitality.

