

Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information:

Semester 2, August-December 2017

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Otago Degree: Bachelor of Physical Education Majoring in Exercise Prescription



Academics:

I took 4 papers (classes) at the University of Alberta, which is the equivalent of taking 3 at Otago.

Course	Language of Instruction	Otago Equivalent	Otago credit value
PERLS 207 Adapted Physical Education for Diverse Populations	English	PHSE 305	3
WGS 244 Disability Studies	English		3
KIN 338 Physical Activity and Sport Participation for Children and Youth	English	PHSE 323	3
HE ED 320 Social Dimensions of Health and Health Promotion	English		3

The teaching style was very similar to Otago, however I found the classes to be far more interactive than at home. I had two 80-minute lectures for each class per week. They have a site called e-class which is very similar to blackboard where all class material is posted. Most classes had one large mid-term (~30%), one or two assignments/essays (~30%) and a final exam (~40%). I enjoyed all of my classes but would highly recommend KIN 338 (physical activity and sport participation for children and youth). I found this class to be extremely interesting and different to anything offered at Otago, plus the lecturer is awesome. I would especially recommend if you are interested in children and/or psychology. HE ED 320 was also interesting, but I found it to be my most difficult class, so this is something to keep in mind when selecting classes. Selecting classes is done on a site called bear tracks, I would suggest finding a number of classes you are interested in taking as some classes fill up quickly. Being on exchange you only need to pass which really takes the pressure off, however I found I had plenty of time to study without all of the commitments I have at home like working, and got good results in all of my classes.

Accommodation

I stayed at Pinecrest House while on exchange. This option was not available to select when applying for accommodation (which is guaranteed to all exchange students) but all of those living there originally applied for International House which is right next door. I had a great experience at Pinecrest House, it is a very nice place to live and very close to campus, it took less than 10 minutes to get to class or the gym. At Pinecrest you get your own room within an apartment where you share a kitchen and 2 bathrooms with 3 other roommates. My roommates were lovely and became some of my best friends. The only downside of Pinecrest (and I believe most other residences) is that you have to provide everything yourself. The rooms have a bed, desk, chair and set of draws and the kitchen has an oven and a fridge so be prepared to buy everything on arrival. Most residences, including Pinecrest do not have a meal plan so I did all my own cooking with my roommates. Other residences do offer meal plans that anyone can sign up for whether they are living there or not so this is always an option if you do not want to cook. I made friends living in Pinecrest, Tamarack, International House, East Campus Village and HUB and we all had positive experiences, so I would not stress too much about where you end up living.



Money Matters

Going on exchange is not cheap but it is definitely do-able if you put your mind to it and worth every cent. I worked 20 hours a week while studying at Otago and was able to live at home with my parents in first semester to save money. In general life in Edmonton costs around the same as Otago but there are many associated costs with going on exchange;

- Accommodation: \$800 CAD/month
- Flight to Canada: \$1000 NZD
- Flight home (Christmas is an expensive time to fly!): \$1700 NZD
- Travel Insurance: \$600 NZD
- University insurance: \$32 CAD/month
- Bus pass: \$180 CAD

I would recommend saving as much money as you can, so you can make the most of living in Canada for 4 months. During my time away, I was lucky enough to spend 2 weeks in the states on the way over, many weekends in the Rockies, a weekend in Toronto, a week in Mexico and a couple of days in Vancouver on my way home.

While in Canada I primarily used a cash passport which you can get from any bank to access my money. This was very easy to use and was accepted everywhere I went. I also got a credit card as a back-up card which I would recommend doing as I used at times when I had not loaded enough money onto my cash passport.

Visas and Insurance

If you are only studying in Canada for one semester you do not need a visa or a study permit. To enter the country, you only need an ETA, which you can easily apply for online and only costs around

\$15. I would recommend printing off your U of A acceptance letter as it is likely you will be required to show this to enter the country.

Insurance is expensive but a must. I organised my insurance through house of travel and got the fullest amount of coverage possible. As a student at the U of A you will also be automatically signed up for the UHIP (university health insurance plan). This is compulsory and will allow you access to things like free doctor's appointments and prescriptions.

Extra- curricular/Social Activities

Places to go:

- Sugar bowl (best cinnamon buns and cheesecakes)
- Old Strathcona farmers market on Saturday mornings
- Free skating Thursday nights at Rogers arena
- Whyte ave: heaps of cool bars, cafes and shops
- River valley: a short walk from campus, a great place to go running and watch the sunrise/set
- No frills (the pak n save of Edmonton)
- MEC and atmosphere are the best shops for outdoor gear
- Army and Navy, I bought my bedding here at the start of the semester
- Plato's Closet is a really good second-hand shop



Clubs:

- Outdoors club: I would highly recommend joining the outdoors club if you are interested in hiking (biking or climbing). I went on 2 trips with the club during the semester but there is nearly a trip every weekend.
- Pilates: I signed up for a Pilates course for the semester, but there are plenty of other options if you are interested in joining such a group.



Travel:

After finishing semester 1 exams I spent 6 weeks working and then spent 2 weeks in the states with a friend before arriving in Edmonton late August. We did a top deck tour visiting LA, Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, Napa Valley, Yosemite National Park and San Francisco.



I did 2 trips to the Rockies with my roommates. They really are one of the most beautiful places I have ever been. We were also lucky enough to drive the icefields parkway between Banff and Jasper, one of the most Scenic drives in the world. I would recommend booking a car through rentalcars.com and ideally finding someone over 25 to drive to make it cheaper. HI hostels tend to be the cheapest accommodation, but you need to book in advance as they book up fast.



Horseshoe Lake, Jasper



Peyto Lake, Icefields Parkway

Elk Island is a small national park less than an hour from Edmonton that is also worth visiting. It is especially pretty in the fall and there are many short walks around the park. There is no bus there, so you will need to hire a car or look on the recreation website as they also run trips there.

Unfortunately flying within Canada is expensive, I would recommend using westjet (Canadas jetstar) or looking on a site called yegdeals to find the cheapest flights. If you are visiting somewhere closer to Edmonton, you could also get a Greyhound bus.



I was also lucky enough to spend reading week on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico which was a nice break from the cold! A part of the world I would never have visited from NZ.



Pink Sea, Rio Lagartos



Isla Mujeres

Tips for life in Canada

- Pedestrians have the right of way- this took me a while to get used to
- Tipping: this is quite confusing at first, but rule of thumb is to tip 15%

- Weather: Winter gets cold in Edmonton however it was nowhere near as bad as I expected. I bought a good coat and boots when I arrived in Canada, but if you've got a decent puffer jacket you'll be fine. We had a very unseasonably warm December with most days being above 5 degrees, but the locals tell me this is most unusual. There is also plenty of nice weather and we didn't get snow until November (so make sure you bring summer clothes too).
- Public transport: the busses and LRT (train) are very easy to use and are all covered by the bus pass you purchase at the start of the semester

Overall Experience

I cannot even put into words how valuable the experience of going on exchange has been for me, I wish this was something every student could experience. I have had the best 4 months of my life, met the most amazing friends, seen some incredible parts of the world and learnt more about myself than I thought possible. I could have easily talked myself out of going on exchange for reasons such as the cost, having to do a long-distance relationship and typically being a shy person. I would encourage you to look past your fears and just go for it, I am certain you will surprise yourself.

