



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	LLB/BA	Major(s)	History
Host University	Queens (Canada)	Semester & Year of Exchange	S1 2018

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
ENGL 273 Literature and the Fantastic	English	English 200 level	
ENGL 218 Introduction to Indigenous Literature	English	English 200	
ENGL 258 Jacobean Shakespeare	English	English 200	
HIST 253 History of Public Policy	English	History 200	
HIST 258 Slavery in North America Colonial Era to 1865	English	History 200	

Any comments about these papers?

Because the 200 level English courses at Queens are designed and run by teaching fellows they change every year. Thus each 200 level course varies quite a bit so I would recommend reading the course description carefully and noting down the different assessment schedules of each one on offer before deciding which to take. The 200 level history courses were both excellent. While the information in History of Public policy was extremely interesting the course workload was 2-3x heavier than Slavery in North America in terms of assigned readings and time needed for test preparation. I think the lecturer is considering making History of Public Policy a full year course so bear this in mind if considering it!

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

In both my History and English classes we had 2 one and a half hour lectures each week, and no tutorials. This means you get the same contact hours with the lecture as the typical 200 level Otago history/english paper but without the smaller group contact. The teaching is similar lecture style and the assessments were also similar.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in the Kingston Student Housing Cooperative (Co-op). The major pros of the accommodation are that it is VERY close to university, the co-op is split into 21 houses with between 5 and 10 people per house, but all the houses are within a 5-7 minute walk to uni. Also the houses generally have a mixture of both exchange students and Canadians living in them. This means you get to meet exchange students who understand and are in the same situation as you and also meet Canadians. There are meal plan houses and non meal plan houses - so food is provided if you choose the meal plan and you all eat together in the central house on Brock street so you get to meet the whole community of over 100 people living across the 21 houses a fantastic way to make friends. The houses are super warm because the utilities are all included.

Cons of the co-op (depending on your view) - you have to do 3 hours of work for the cooperative most weeks and 3 hours of work for the community once a semester, the 3 hours of work include things like preparing the meals, baking bread, serving meals etc, these can be a good way to meet people as well though, and a break from uni! It's not as cheap as finding independent accommodation once you arrive in Canada but it is way cheaper than staying at the accommodation provided by the University which is Jean Royce Hall (which is also on West Campus so at least a 10 minute bus ride away from the main campus).

Money matters

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

- Flights from NZ to Toronto return are about 2,000 NZD
- The train from Toronto to Kingston is about 50 CAD but you can also get Megabus which can be cheaper if you book early.
- The Co-operative is 3,532 CAD for one semester
- Compulsory Medical Insurance from Queen's University (UHIP) 204 CAD for one semester, additional travel insurance costs vary.
- No visa is needed as long as you are studying for less than 6 months
- Because food is included in the Co-op I didn't buy a lot of groceries, cost of living is slightly higher than Dunedin, the cost of food on the shelves is relatively similar but they add tax when you get to the till.

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

It's easy to open a foreign bank account, and at the Queens Orientation CIBC bank provides all the information and helps you open an account. I would recommend using CIBC because all the ATMs on campus are CIBC and you have to pay a fee to use other banks ATMs.

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process? There is no visa required for less than 6 months study in Canada but proof of study when you enter Canada at the border if you tell the border agents that you are studying for one semester is helpful.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

UHIP (the university health insurance plan) covers medical costs for doctors appointments and emergency situations in Ontario. It is compulsory unless you can prove that you already have insurance that provides full coverage.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extracurricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

There are heaps of organised activities available to students depending on your interests. Like Otago Queens has clubs you can join. Queens has more clubs than any other university in Canada. Some clubs include a fee to join, but they provide an excellent opportunity to meet Canadians and others who share the same interests. Trips by Transit Kingston also plans free hikes around Kingston.

- I joined the Yoga club, for \$30 CAD a semester you could go to two yoga classes a week, options included yin yoga, hot yoga, bikram yoga, etc.
- The Outdoors club: (the Queens equivalent to the tramping club except on a bigger scale) organised day trips and weekend trips skiing, ice climbing, hiking, ice skating, ice hockey

There are also events organised by the International Centre a day trip to Ottawa in February, where you can see the parliament, ice skate on the Rideau canal, and see the markets, a trip to a maple syrup farm, opportunities to try curling. All are worthwhile.

What was the university/ city like?

Kingston is similar to Dunedin in that it is a small city largely based around the university. Kingston is between Toronto and Montreal which means its easy to visit both but cheaper than living in either. There is a clear student area around the campus like Dunedin with a strong student vibe. The main street has lots of shops and restaurant and with your student ID the bus is free so you can visit the cinema and the mall with outlet shopping about 10 minutes out of the centre. It is also beside Lake Ontario and near to the US border so you can go on a cruise or a day trip to the US. Kingston also has a lot of history, it was the first capital of Canada, where the first parliament was set up under the famous prime minister Sir John A MacDonal, there are several military forts built to prevent US invasion, and is the home of a historic prison.

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

Skiing at Mont Tremblant, visit all the major cities, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa. Make time to see the light shows at Fort Henry, learn to ice skate on the free rink in the city centre using free skates from the international centre, find the "Harry Potter" study room on the top floor of Douglas library on Queens Campus, try maple taffy (hot maple syrup poured onto snow), try Kingston axe throwing, walk all around the lake, enjoy the local live music scene at Musicii, the Brooklyn, Ale House and The Mansion.

Any tips for future students?

There is so much to do and see in a relatively short time make the most of every weekend, and reading week.

Overall Experience

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

I arrived in Kingston on January 2nd there was deep snow everywhere and the temperature was -30, I definitely wasn't prepared for winter in Canada. The houses and all the buildings are really well heated and insulated, so the key is lots of layers. Good snow boots are also essential because although the roads and pavements are snow ploughed it is still slippery.

Queens makes a real effort in their orientation: there is a general orientation and then one specific to your faculty. We had a week of events, to help you get to know other international students and explore Kingston before classes started. I found there were so many opportunities to be involved although its normal to be a bit homesick at the beginning joining clubs, and sport teams instantly grounds you in the Canadian university experience. I joined the yoga club, enjoyed the free classes at the amazing 6 levelled gym, because it's so cold you can't really exercise outside, and quickly found that Kingston felt like home. Being between Toronto and Montreal means I was ideally situated to travel during weekends, I went skiing on Mont Tremblant with the Outdoors Club, went to Montreal and Quebec city in the mid semester break in February (reading week), and on a day trip to Ottawa.

The central university campus was easy to navigate with really strong university spirit. I took five courses and the workload was okay, I was still able to travel and go out. The Arts courses I took offered very different content from anything offered at Otago I enjoyed learning some Canadian history. I really enjoyed being able to make friends with both international students (who understand what you are experiencing) and the Canadians who lived up to their stereotype, always so polite and friendly! Because I went in the winter highlights for me included seeing Kingston in the snow (it looked completely magical), learning how to ice skate, trying curling, ice hockey, and being able to ski. It was also great fun watching the Queens ice hockey team at the local stadium. The people are what make any exchange/ experience truly memorable and having so many opportunities to meet incredible people from so many different places through the housing co-operative, lectures, clubs and the winter orientation, meant the transition from Otago to Queens was relatively straightforward.

Travelling after my semester finished in April was also a highlight, we did a road trip from Calgary through to Vancouver hiking in the national parks and the Canadian Rockies. We saw black bears and the northern lights, went canoeing in Whistler, and when I left in early June I had come full circle, the temperature was +30! My time in Canada and at Queens has left me with so many cherished memories. Although transitioning to a new country and culture was challenging and it took 2 weeks or so to really settle in the challenge was worth the reward, new knowledge, new friends and an incredible overall experience.



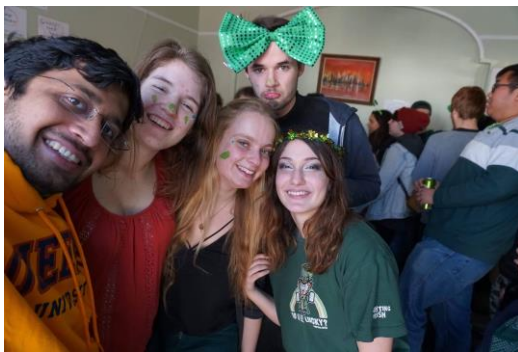
Learning to Ice skate



Canoeing in Whistler



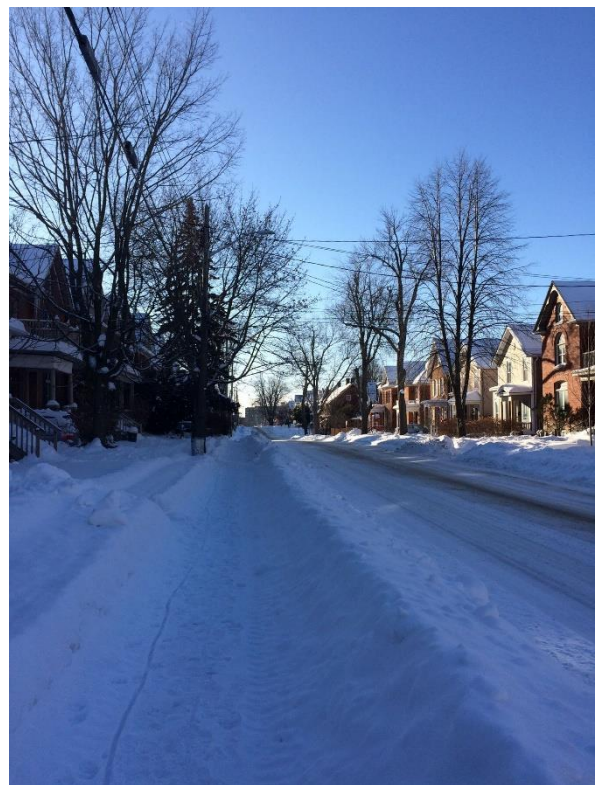
Banff and the Canadian Rockies



Saint Patricks Celebrations



Maple Festival



Kingston in the Snow