



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	McGill University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2018
Otago degree(s)	BCom
Major(s)	International Business

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
FRSL446	French	FREN300 level	18
FRSL455	French	FREN300 level	18
ANTH212	English	ANTH100 level	-
PHIL237	English	PHIL100 level	18

Any comments about these papers?

I found the philosophy course quite hard and PHIL papers have a reputation of being quite difficult at McGill. Despite this, I really enjoyed it and it was a great intro to philosophy for someone who has never studied it but is interested in current day issues. I didn't really enjoy my ANTH paper but I wasn't familiar with the content either. My french papers were amazing and I would highly recommend taking french papers at McGill if you want to learn the language or continue study. They were challenging but I learnt a lot, to improve written skills I highly recommend FRSL455. You have to sit a french placement test once you arrive to get into the correct course for your level of ability.

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

The workload is much heavier than Otago however I wouldn't say that assessment was marked harder. My philosophy course definitely was, but the others I managed to do as well as I would at Otago in similar courses. Often lecturers will be quite young compared to at Otago which was nice sometimes.

Accommodation

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

I rented a room right on the edge of campus on Peel Street for \$700 a month. I found it through a family friend so I didn't really go through the conventional ways of finding a flat or apartment. I loved living so close to campus but I would live in McGill ghetto next time if I had the choice. It is still quite close but the houses are very cute and there is everything you need within walking distance. The plateau is nice but the commute to campus could get annoying in the winter semester I think. You can easily find places on Facebook pages such as International Roommates in Montreal.

Money matters

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

I spent a lot on flights as I am going home via Europe and I went to Chile for a month before arriving in Montreal. I would say if you are going directly to Montreal and back you wouldn't want to pay anymore than \$2000 return – that would be expensive. Accommodation varies from around \$400-\$800 per month depending how close to campus you live and how nice your place is. I didn't have to get a study permit as I was only there one semester. My personal travel insurance cost \$1000 for 7 months and that was for worldwide, comprehensive cover. On top of this it is compulsory to purchase McGill health insurance which is about \$350 and covers you for the semester. Whenever you go to see a doctor or nurse at the McGill clinic you don't pay, you just show your student ID and insurance card that you will be issued at the start of semester.

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

My Westpac debit MasterCard was actually really good as it didn't charge high fees, sometimes I'd be charged a foreign currency fee but that was never very much. You can use it to get cash out or pay for things on the card (it is considered a credit card overseas, if you get the airports version you earn airports while spending so that is always a bonus if you fly Air NZ often. I compared the exchange rate I would get using the cash passport or Air NZ OneSmart card and they were basically the same. I opened a ScotiaBank debit account as there is a bank right opposite campus on Sherbrooke Street and I transferred some money into that to use as a back up as some places do not take credit. I also had my NZ onesmart card as a third back up which is very important!

Visas & Insurance

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

I applied for a ETA which you can do online before you arrive and pay \$9 or something which is your visa basically for the one semester. If you stay a whole year the process is different. When you get to customs in Canada you must have your acceptance letter to McGill to prove you are going to be a student. The international office at McGill runs various webinars for incoming exchange students and explains all of this so make sure when they email you to sign up and join in on the presentation.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes - \$350 health insurance. All paid for online through their online platform called Minerva (like our evision). This is all explained in the online webinars run by the exchange office before you even arrive at McGill.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

McGill has an amazing social life set up for students. If you like skiing, join the ski club! It was so so much fun and they run trips every weekend during the winter to different mountains. I got to go to Vermont in the US one weekend! Every Thursday night there is Bar des Arts in the arts lounge of Leacock from 5-8pm. Highly recommend! Also sign up to FACO! A week long event where all the faculties compete against each other doing various activities. Ask a McGill student how to sign up.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is beautiful, I would probably go in the fall semester if I went back as it was pretty cold in the winter! The day I arrived it was -40, but it never got colder. If you have warm waterproof boots and a good jacket it is ok but still very chilly sometimes. Buy the boots once you get there and take plenty of merino layers if you go during winter. The city is extremely vibrant, there are loads of things to do. There are always gigs and concerts on, loads of festivals during the summer. You will never get bored! I want to move back to the city already and I only left yesterday...

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

Opiano is a really good Korean/Japanese place right next to campus with cheap bento boxes – they are called Dosirak and are really delicious if you want a filling but cheap lunch. Make sure you try a cream cheese bagel at some point, the bagels in Montreal are famous! Smoked meat is also another specialty, Dunn's Famous does really nice typical sandwiches.

Any tips for future students?

Make sure you sign up for courses as soon as you can as they fill up really quickly, you'll be notified by the international office. Montreal is a really nice city and it really comes to life in the summer so if you can be there for June/July/August then I would highly recommend it.

Overall Experience

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

I had an amazing time at McGill and I'm so pleased I chose it for my exchange semester. Montreal is a great city for students and young professionals, you rarely see anyone else around. It is extremely diverse, and great if you like french language. You don't need french to survive but I already speak french so it definitely helped in some situations when I met the odd person who didn't speak much English. McGill is full of English speaking students, a lot of international students and in particular a lot of Americans. I would've spent more time in Montreal during summer if I had known how different the city was and how exciting summertime is there. It is easy to get overnight buses to New York, Boston etc if you want to travel. Another thing to know is that tax is not included in the prices of most things that you see in stores or on menus so you have to add 15% to the total to figure out what you will actually be paying. Then in a restaurant or bar you usually have to tip 15% minimum as well so things look cheaper than they really are! It makes things much more expensive when you add it all up but I wouldn't say it is very different to Dunedin, maybe slightly more expensive if you're in Downtown. If you're tossing up on where to go, I highly recommend McGill! Most people say it's the best university in Canada, it has a great reputation, and it's in a much more interesting city than other good Canadian or US universities. Montreal is amazing, I honestly couldn't recommend it as a place to live any more.