



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

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| Host University | University of British Columbia |
| Semester & Year of Exchange | Semester 2, 2018 |
| Otago degree(s) | BSc |
| Major(s) | Information Science |

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

| Course title | Language of instruction | Otago equivalent | Otago credit value |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| EOC111 | English | Unspecified | 4.5 |
| EOC114 | English | Unspecified | 13.5 |
| CPSC210 | English | INFO202 | 18 |
| CPSC221 | English | COSC242 | 18 |
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Any comments about these papers?

These papers were awesome to study, but sometimes had a lot of little things to do over the entire semester. Which means you were always engaged. Great for academics, not so great for exploring your new environment!

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

The teaching style is very interactive. Lecturers will ask a question and actually expect a response. They will (usually) not answer their own questions, unless a student answers incorrectly. Midterms are also a huge part of the entire university culture at UBC. Almost every class will have at least one. I had one class with one midterm, one class with two midterms and another class with three midterms. So get used to continual learning and examination!

Overall, very different from Otago. Lecturers are also quite big on attendance here, offering points for simply attending (via the use of iClickers to answer questions in class). Compared to Otago which has very little attendance points (at least in my degree).

Accommodation

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

I stayed on campus at Fairview Crescent. It's a small pedestrian only community area with lots and lots of houses all stacked up together. A lot of students here are exchange students, but I had 2 domestic UBC students with me this term, which was great as they offered some great insight. One was from South Africa, and a Canadian native! Plenty of good advice on things to do, places to eat at, and general advice about Vancouver.

I loved being on campus, it was such a good experience being able to walk everywhere and meet new people quite easily. The residence organised events throughout the semester including a \$10 bus to Whistler during opening weekend!

The only downside being that UBC is actually quite far away from the "rest" of Vancouver. At least an hour by bus to get into downtown or somewhere else in the large metro Vancouver area. Although luckily public transport here is AMAZING. Especially compared to Dunedin's "public transport" system...

Money matters

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

Oh man, money.

Vancouver is not cheap.

I paid about \$2100 for my return flights with one flight on sale. The eTA was \$7 for the visa waiver program. Food is as expensive as you want to make it. I'd say you could get away with \$50 per week on the very budget end, supermarket shopping. Otherwise if you want to eat out a few times a week as I ended up doing, you should look at more about \$100 per week for food. It's just so super easy to burn through money on food here.

Insurance cost me \$1000 for the entire cover period of about 5 months, including some travel in the USA. This was the no excess option, so it could be cheaper if you were willing to pay excess also.

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

I did a few things to access money in Canada. Firstly I opened a Canadian bank account with CIBC, as they had a student deal going on at the time (which I imagine most banks do) so that you don't get charged service fees, or anything of the like.

To send money to my Canadian account I used Transferwise, which gives you absolutely stellar exchange rates (i.e. the actual exchange rate at the time, plus about 0.4% in fees) which was super awesome.

So essentially I just converted my money to CAD and sent it to a local bank account to spend via card.

Visas & Insurance

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

No visa for me. As a NZ citizen, you can enter Canada for up to 6 months without a visa (including study). So I entered under the visa waiver program using only an eTA to fly into Canada.

Super simple and easy. Just be prepared with some documentation about acceptance to UBC or similar to the border & customs protection officer when you enter Canada.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, UBC requires you are enrolled in iMed. Which is essentially medical insurance cover for the time you're in BC. It's actually a very minimal insurance that leads up to you enrolling in the BC Medical Services Plan (more expensive, more coverage) but you need to be in BC for 3 months for cover to start, so that's why you're automatically enrolled in iMed.

And even if you have other travel insurance (like I did, and you probably should too) you will still be enrolled in iMed. Which is about \$250 for the entire semester.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There is the Exchange Student Club at UBC who plan plenty of adventures, experiences and activities for exchange students to get involved with. As well as plenty of activities happening around campus anyway, such as sports games, homecomings or farmers markets! (They have a farm on campus!)

What was the university/ city like?

The university feels quite separate and disconnected from the rest of Vancouver as there is only one direction (East) that takes you out of the UBC campus. It's surrounded by beach elsewhere. However, the campus experience is like no other. With almost all the amenities you need (supermarket, bottle stores, sports grounds, barbers, the list goes on) so you can go weeks without ever leaving campus and feeling like you need to!

This is only if you live on campus of course. But if you live off campus, you'd get a sense of both city life and campus life. Public transport makes it stupidly easy to get around Vancouver, and as students we get a very cheap pass that allows unlimited transit around the city skytrains, busses and seabusses. The large city feel of Vancouver certainly shows through, and shines the best in downtown. With it's large buildings, waterfront walkways and of course the well loved Stanley Park. There is always something new to explore in and around Vancouver, you just have to allow yourself to wander!

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

Things to do: Stanley Park is amazing. Walking through downtown, gastown and along the waterfront. Of course Wreck Beach on campus (clothes optional, so keep that in mind). The Grouse Grind up to Grouse Mountain is well worth it. Victoria is a (very cheap) ferry ride away, and you can even do it as a daytrip! If you go to Victoria, go to Chocolat Favoris and have a dipped soft serve in one of their MANY flavours. Or a chocolate poutine!

Any tips for future students?

Please make sure you have access to more money than you think you would need. You'll probably need it.

But also, don't worry about money too much. If you want to do something, just go and do it! You might only have one time in your life that you're overseas and you get to live as a student fully! Make the very most of your trip, talk with everyone you can. Learn about the culture, try new foods, do new experiences. Push yourself and you'll find that actually doing whatever it is you wanted to do is so much more rewarding than you ever thought possible.

Overall Experience

I have had some of the best moments on exchange, from the places I've seen, to people I've met. I've loved the whole experience, and especially as my first real time going overseas by myself it has taught me a lot about myself. It's changed me into someone who is still me, but with a newfound feeling of experience tucked away under my belt.

But I think what's really been the best feeling is that even though as I write this, my time in Vancouver and at UBC is coming to an end. It does not feel like the end, as this is really only the beginning of experiencing more that life has to offer. Wherever that is. However it manifests itself. I've learned that I'm more capable than I thought I could be. Sometimes you really need to push yourself and see where it takes you.

