



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	University of British Columbia
<i>Semester & Year of Exchange</i>	Semester 2 2017
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	Bachelor of Physical Education / Bachelor of Science
<i>Major(s)</i>	Sport & Exercise Science / Human Nutrition

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
KIN 303 – Strength & Conditioning	English	PHSE 314 – Athletic Training & Conditioning	18pts
KIN 361 – Introduction to Athletic Injuries	English	PHSE 310 – Athletic Injuries	18pts
PSYC 207 – Contemporary Topics in Biological & Cognitive Psychology	English	PSYC 211 – Brain & Cognition	18pts
PSYC 217 – Research Methods	English	PSYC 210 – Principles of Psychological Research	18pts
PSYC 331 – Forensic Psychology	English		

Any comments about these papers?

The School of Kinesiology at UBC is amazing – it's the top-ranked in Canada so if you're a P.E student this is definitely the top pick! I found the KIN courses that I took so interesting and the labs were really cool! I would definitely recommend the Strength & Conditioning and Athletic Injuries courses to any P.E students heading to UBC! I would also recommend Forensic Psych if you're interested in psychology/criminology – I found this course really interesting even if the lecture was on a Wednesday night 7pm-10pm!

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

I found the workload pretty similar to Otago although I had a lot more internals which was annoying when you're trying to explore Vancouver! The workload is more focused on work throughout the semester rather than solely on your final exams. My final exams weren't worth much of my overall grade (30%-45% max) so they weren't as stressful and were pretty chill compared to Otago final exams (almost felt like a midterm) but also meant you had to do quite well on your internals. I would recommend only taking 4 papers (courses as they call them) while you're there if you can, as having

5 midterms in a week and assignments for all 5 classes isn't ideal when you would rather be out exploring! Lectures were also really discussion based and emphasised participation and in-class contribution - often you'd have to talk to the people around you. Canadian students are a lot more open to talk in lectures so often there would be whole class discussions/debates especially in the psychology lectures. In some of my classes I actually got graded for my in-class participation/attendance – e.g. by i-clickers.

Accommodation

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

I lived on campus in a student residence called Walter Gage which is a mixture of Canadians, internationals and exchange students. I was in a 6 bedroom apartment with 5 other girls – 2 from Canada, 1 from Denmark, 1 from China & 1 from Japan. Our apartment was on the 13th floor and overlooked campus and had an amazing ocean view. Most exchange students are in either Gage or Fairview Crescent (another residence) or in a flat off campus.

The location of Walter Gage is super convenient as it is right on campus (although the campus is so huge that if you had a class at the opposite end it would still take a while to walk there!), its opposite the gym which was convenient when motivation was lacking, and it is also close to the bus bay (some buses stop right outside) which makes grocery shopping super easy as you don't have to walk far with your bags! Both Gage & Fairview are self-catered and only come with basic furnishings so you don't get provided with any pots/pans/plates/cutlery for the kitchen and there's no bedding or towels or anything which is super niggly when you first arrive but everyone needs stuff so it's easy to find others to make the trip to iKEA with.

One thing that sucked about Walter Gage is the fire alarms go off a fair bit as everyone does their own cooking, also the lifts in my tower always seemed to break and waiting for one lift (especially during peak times in-between lectures) took forever. Another thing to note is that it has a pretty unsocial vibe as the apartment doors (as well as your bedroom door) self-lock behind you so you have to meet people in common areas/knock on other apartment's doors and introduce yourself!

Money matters

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

Vancouver is a really expensive city to live in – housing is insanely expensive. Other than that I didn't notice a huge difference, however keep an eye on the exchange rate as when I was there it was really low so when I'd buy something in Canadian dollars that looked cheap it actually ended up being really expensive in NZ dollars so I ended up spending way more than I thought! Also remember that tax isn't included in prices so it ends up being more expensive at the checkout and a lot of the time you have to add a tip onto that as well (e.g. at restaurants).

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

I had a Cash Passport which was super convenient as I was in America beforehand so you can load different currencies on the same card. However always make sure you have enough on your card (there's an app which lets you see your account) as it takes a few days to load the money and you don't want to be left with no money for a couple of days, especially when you're going away (I learnt

this the hard way). Also when you take cash out take it out in large amounts as the ATMs charge around \$3.00 every time you use them which soon adds up!

Visas & Insurance

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

You have to get an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) in order to enter Canada which is really easy to apply for online. I didn't have to apply for a visa as I was only there for one semester, if you are going for two semesters or you want to work while you're there then you will need to apply for a visa which is a bit more of a process.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

UBC has iMED Health Insurance which is temporary insurance plan for all exchange students and you are automatically covered by this, however if you're staying 2 semesters iMED only covers you while you wait for your BC Medical Services Insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Walter Gage and Fairview both organise a lot of random events/activities for those living there, however I didn't go to any of these. There are heaps of different clubs on campus (and by heaps I mean literally thousands – club sign up day is hectic!) which is an easy way to find people with similar interests. I would recommend joining the Exchange Student club (they organise a ton of events/trips for exchange students) and the Ski & Board club which organise a bunch of ski trips and had parties throughout the semester.

What was the university/ city like?

UBC is absolutely huge! The campus is like a mini city – I would actually bus to one of my classes which was at the other end of campus! It's easy to get lost at first but once you know where your classes are its easy to navigate! The campus is beautiful, its surrounded by forest and you have a view of the mountains and out to sea from campus. There is also a beach at one end of campus, however there is about 1,000 stairs to get down there which sucks to climb back up, also note it is a nudist beach and a lot of older men seem to enjoy going there. At the start of fall semester (over summer) there is a shop on the beach which sells massive tapestry's for like \$15 which are super cool!

There are more than 60,000 students at UBC (over 3x the size of Otago) and it is a very diverse school – they have a lot of international students so it really does feel like its own city. Everything at UBC is just huge. The sports facilities there are insane – they have a football stadium (note: 'She's the Man' was filmed there), an ice hockey arena (where some of the 2010 Winter Olympic games were played) as well as two training ice rinks, a basketball stadium and a brand new swimming facility that just opened while I was there, multiple football & rugby fields as well as an indoor baseball training centre and a track and field oval! There is also several museums on campus, a farm and a shopping centre at the south end of campus. There are two bars on campus – 'The Pitt' which

is in the basement of the student building and 'Koerners' which has a YOEO (You Only Exchange Once) night every Thursday for exchange students which is an awesome way to meet other exchange students and they also host House Parties throughout the semester.

There is always something happening on campus – parts of campus were blocked off at one point as a movie was being filmed on campus. There is also a fraternity village next to campus which have events all year – they have free parties during the first couple weeks of fall semester which are hectic but after that they start charging for entry. The school spirit at UBC was also insane – everyone wore UBC apparel around campus and on event days such as homecoming everyone dresses up to support the Thunderbirds (UBC's football team).

Even though the uni is about 30mins from Downtown Vancouver, the bus system in Vancouver is awesome! Students pay for a bus card as part of their student fees which allows you unlimited bus rides (and there are buses to basically everywhere), as well as free rides on the SkyTrain and the ferry! They also have these cars called Evo and Car2go around Vancouver which have an app that allows you to literally hire a car for trips away or even just to get groceries making transport around Vancouver super easy!

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

If you're going during Otago's second semester (September – December) then you should try and do any hikes you want to do in the first few weeks while the weather is nice and you don't have any assignments! There are heaps of hikes around the Vancouver area with crazy beautiful views! I recommend hiking Joffre Lakes and Garibaldi – Panorama Ridge Trail (I didn't get the chance to do this hike but it looks insane!) Grouse Grind is a 3,000-step climb up Grouse Mountain and has a sick view but you can also catch a gondola up there if you don't feel the need to walk up the 3,000 stairs (we caught it back down). Quarry rock is a super chill hike that ends with a pretty decent view – we did this at sunset which was dope but the walk back was sketchy in the dark. There's a few hikes up Mount Seymour which have awesome views over Vancouver. Basically because Vancouver is surrounded by mountains there's so many hikes nearby just google and you'll have heaps of options!

I would also recommend the Sea to Sky Gondola in Squamish – there's a suspension bridge at the top which is super cool and the view is amazing! Definitely go to Whistler when it starts to snow – the Mountain is rad and the apres-ski is even radder – Garfinkle's is a sweet place for a night out! Also if you plan to go more than once buy a Whistler student season pass as you only need about 5 days of skiing to pay it off and then you can on-sell it to semester 2 exchangees!

Make sure to venture into Downtown Vancouver and check out the sights – most of the shopping is on Robson and the nightclubs are on Granville – definitely check out Republic & Aura! Granville Island is also a cool place to check out – the markets there are insane! Stanley Park offers some sick views of Downtown however definitely rent a bike as we tried to walk and only got about a quarter of the way around! Be sure to go to a Vancouver Canucks game – ice hockey is the best sport to watch!

Any tips for future students?

YOEO – You Only Exchange Once! Get involved in every opportunity! Get out of your comfort zone and introduce yourself to anyone and everyone that you walk past in the first week or so as everyone is in the same boat and trying to meet people – I met some of my best friends on exchange in the most randomest ways e.g. in the line to Koerner's (on-campus bar), another time I responded to a post in the exchange student page and ended up staying in an AirBnB at Whistler with 8 random

other exchange students for the weekend and it was one of my favourite memories from exchange! People are always looking for other people to do stuff/go on trips with so get involved!

I recommend going during Otago's second semester (Fall semester) as it meant when you first arrive the weather is still really nice which made it easy for sightseeing and hiking and then gradually got colder (and wetter!) which made hiking a bit harder but also meant trips to Whistler! If you're into skiing, spring semester might be a better choice, however I just stayed a little bit longer after my exchange and did some skiing at Whistler in January! Also going in second semester makes it a little harder to meet people as everyone already knows everyone/has already seen Vancouver's sights/knows what they're doing in general!

Canada is a wicked place to go on exchange - Canadians are super friendly and Canada is very similar to NZ which means you're unlikely to get culture shock or home sick at all. Go with no expectations and just take everything as it comes. It's unlikely to go exactly how you've planned it or exactly how someone else's exchange went – everyone's exchanges are different so try not to compare yours with anyone else's!

Overall Experience

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

Going on exchange was an unreal experience and I would recommend it for anyone! Exchange gives you the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and travel while still under some sort of direction compared to travelling by yourself and also allows you to get out there and travel without putting your studies on hold! It's good to get out of Dunedin for a semester or two especially if your degree is longer than three years! I didn't feel like I missed out on much and now that I'm back I feel like everything's more or less the same as before I left so don't choose not to go on exchange because you feel like you will miss out on stuff back home! One semester (4ish months) seems like a long time to be away but my exchange flew by and I was back before I knew it.

Exchange allowed me to grow as a person, I am way more confident and have so much ease meeting new people now. I made so many friends while on exchange from all over the world and now have places to stay in almost every continent which will make travelling in the future so much easier! I enjoyed meeting new people so much that when I came back to Dunedin I became a Kiwihost which means I am living with students on exchange at Otago! Being surrounded by people who want to travel has allowed me to keep the exchange going even though I'm back in NZ! I definitely recommend for returning exchange students to counter the post-exchange blues!

I know the application process seems like a lot of admin and the easy option would be to just stay at Otago but I can tell you it's definitely worth it! I had an unreal experience and could not recommend it more! Go do it!!!



UBC sign!



Homecoming



Exploring Stanley Park



Sea to Sky Gondola



View for my apartment in Walter Gage



Snow on campus!



Joffre Lakes

Sunset at Wreck Beach



Whistler Peak

Canada flag at Whistler

