



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	McGill University (Montréal, Canada)
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2019
Otago degree(s)	LLB(Hons)/BA
Major(s)	Music

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
MUAR211 Art of Listening	English	MUSI2**	18
MUAR201 Basic Materials of Music	English	MUSI201 Materials of Music 2	18
MUAR392 Popular Music After 1945	English	MUSI3**	18
RELG254 Intro to Yoga Traditions	English	Interest paper	-

Any comments about these papers?

If you are looking for comparatively easy/optional papers to do while on exchange, all the MUAR papers are safe bets. MUAR211 is a 'bird' course which means it is regarded as an easy A – the lecturer is very generous in giving out study guides and strongly hinting what will be assessed. If you already play an instrument and know high school level music theory then MUAR201 will also be a walk in the park. RELG254 was interesting and I took it having no previous religious studies background. The professor is excellent, but it requires a bit more effort to keep up with the readings and the classes were quite heavily discussion based.

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

McGill is great, but the enrolment process was definitely frustrating for me. I was supposed to be going into the Schulich School of Music but they told me after I had applied that they didn't accept music students in the Winter semester (despite this not being anywhere on their website or exchange information forms). Luckily I was able to take some music papers under the Arts faculty instead, but it pays to triple check your university will have enough papers that you need to credit back, especially if you can't get into the ones you originally want. When I went to enrol in the papers they were all full,

so I had to check Minerva (equivalent of eVision) every couple of hours to check if someone had dropped the course so I could enrol before someone else.

Also be prepared for a lot of coursework to do during the semester! In my classes the students were a lot more engaged and vocal during lectures, particularly where a portion of the mark was based on participation, which took some getting used to.

Accommodation

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

I lived in an apartment with two American students in the Plateau area, found through the International Roommates McGill FB page. I absolutely would recommend the Plateau – it's a 10-15 min walk to campus, and on the awful weather days there are buses that you can take to avoid walking in the snow. I felt that it was a really nice balance between accessibility to campus and accessibility to

Other popular student areas are the Mile End (further away from campus but über trendy) and in the McGill Ghetto (much closer to campus but it makes it harder to get out of the student bubble). I also considered staying in Evo (a hostel/apartment hybrid) but it was going to be too expensive for me. Unless you missed out on living in a hall of residence in Dunedin or are particularly nostalgic for those days I would think carefully about going into a hall here. They are quite expensive and largely first year students, although I know some other exchange students did end up there.

Money matters

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

My accommodation was 660CAD a month with all expenses included, in a nice flat with unlimited heating. My flights were about 1800NZD, and travel insurance (above the mandatory McGill health insurance) was 720NZD for fully comprehensive cover over 5 months for Canada and the USA. Food as always was more expensive than I anticipated, as the tax is quite hefty and you have to tip (at least 15% is expected usually) on top of that.

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

I joined with the first bank I came across, which was Bank of Montreal (BMO). It was okay, easy enough to set up but I only had 30 free transactions a month after which you get fined for every extra transaction. I think Scotia Bank would be the way to go, they offer unlimited transactions for student accounts. I used TransferWise to wire my money over from my NZ bank account which worked out pretty well.

Visas & Insurance

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

No visas for Canada if you are only staying for one semester – you do need an ETA (and an ESTA for the USA if you are transiting through/want to travel there later). Apply well in advance for these as they are vital, and make sure you apply through the official website only (there are scams/brokers that charge extra unnecessary fees).

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, comprehensive health insurance for approximately 365CAD which you have to pay before the semester starts (otherwise they freeze your student account and don't let you add/drop papers).

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Join MISN (the international student group), they organised lots of cool trips and it was a great way to meet other exchange/international students. I also joined a choir and the outdoors club (MOC) which were great ways to meet people outside of the exchange group!

What was the university/ city like?

Montreal is a magical city. Because it gets so cold in the winter, the city is well-equipped to make the best of it and there are lots of fun events to get people out and socialising. It has won best city to be a student for the last couple of years for good reason. It is also a great home base which can be used to explore the east coast of the States and the surrounding areas of Canada.

Although not ideal, I didn't speak a drop of French and I was absolutely fine. You may get worse customer service and the occasional stink eye but otherwise I wouldn't say it is necessary to speak French to live here. However, it will be a bit limiting if you want to explore outside of Montreal/wider Quebec where it quickly becomes Francophone only.

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

In Montreal some must-do's are IglooFest, Montreal en Lumiere (especially Nuit Blanche), Cirque de Soleil, vintage shopping (Empire Exchange, Eva B's, Unicorn Boutique, Citizen Vintage, Annex Vintage), and of course poutine (La Banquise, Dirty Dogs). If you can, hire a car for a day (try Car2Go) and visit Parc Omega, where you can drive through and see North American wildlife like moose, bison, bears and wolves up close. If you bring carrots you can feed the moose through the car windows which is excellent. I would also 1000% recommend husky sledding (but it is \$\$\$). The place I went was Expedition Wolf near Mount Tremblant where over half the dogs were rescue dogs, but there are lots of options to choose from.

During my exchange I also travelled outside of Montreal to Quebec City, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Nashville, New Orleans, Washington DC and New York. Getting over to this side of the States from NZ is always expensive so if you can make the most of it.

Any tips for future students?

Jaywalking is super illegal, so it pays to follow the lights (the police were known to lurk around busy roads near McGill and issue students with fines).

If you are coming to Montreal to learn French and want to enrol in the FRSL (French as a second language) courses, you need to do this ASAP rocky. If you are a near beginner at French like myself, I would recommend flunking the online test as that way you can bypass going to the FRSL office and having to line up for hours to get an oral evaluation, by which point the course will be full and you will miss out (as happened to me unfortunately). Instead, if you get a 0 on the online test you will get enrolled straight away in the beginners courses and not risk missing out.

Overall Experience

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

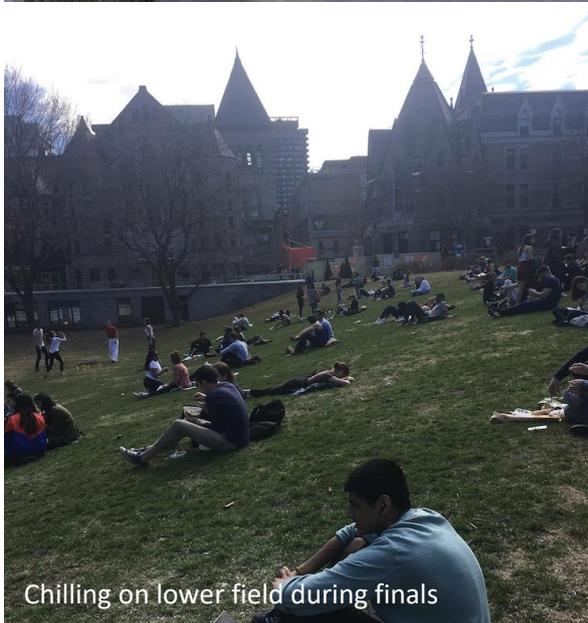
Montreal is a perfect blend of the North American college atmosphere and European culture and artistic vibes – it is literally the best of both worlds. Experiencing a northern winter was also an amazing experience, and I was often warmer in Canada than I have ever been in Dunedin (because people have to use heating to survive!). I honestly cannot think of a better place to go on exchange than MTL ☺



Sunset at Parc la Fontaine



Dog sledding!!!



Chilling on lower field during finals



Snowshoeing in rural Ontario



View of campus from Roddick Gates