



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	University of Alberta
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester 1 2019
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	Commerce
<b>Major(s)</b>	Management, Tourism

### Academics/ course load

*Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?*

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>	<b>Otago credit value</b>
Seminar in International Marketing	English	MARK 3XX	18
Consumer Behaviour	English	MARK329	18
Management Skills for Supervisors/Leaders	English	MANT 3XX	18

*Any comments about these papers?*

SMO 402 is a night class (6-9pm) which seemed horrible at first but it ends up being what you get used to and there are actually many people going to night classes so it didn't feel too abnormal.

International marketing was really interesting and the professor loved to ask questions from me and people from other parts of the world so it was awesome to contribute.

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

There was a lot of smaller internal work which meant exams weren't worth much or I had no final at all. Most of the midterms were multiple choice too and pretty much worth 1/2-1 percent each which meant that the grades added up.

The class sizes were also pretty small with 15-40ish per class which meant it gave you a good chance to meet and interact with others.

University of Alberta uses the curve system which is very different from Otago. Not all papers have it however. In my consumer behavior class this was the case. Pretty much post midterm or assignment all the grades from the class are added and the grade distribution is worked out from this. For example if you got an 80% at home this would generally be an A- but here if lots of people got good grades and the mean was around 80%, that would mean that 80% would be a B.

Another difference is that Canadians call university school, they call papers classes and lecturers professors.

## Accommodation

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

I was in International House otherwise known as ihouse. I had to apply to get in and it is a relatively selective process. About 70% of international house residents are international or exchange students, the remaining 30% Canadians. This means that there is the chance to learn about many different cultures not just Canadian when interacting with residents. International house also puts on many events and activities that people are able to participate in. I tried acroyoga for example which I thought I'd never be able to do. I also involved myself in formal dinners, cultural nights, and other events that attempted to facilitate global interactions. There was also game of thrones viewings, global leadership programs, music groups etc. The rooms were great, very warm with your own controllable heater, private bathroom, mini fridge and lots of storage. There was one kitchen per wing of each floor (about 20 people) there were massive fridges and freezers and you all had your own cupboard space for food and utensils. The kitchen was a great place to interact with people from your floor. There is also the option to get a meal plan and go down the road to another residence, Peter Loughheed Hall or Lister Centre if you don't want to cook.

One downside I found was that you will have to provide all bedding, towels, kitchen utensils, cleaning products etc. I bought many of this at the start of the semester from a department store but there are sometimes some stuff left over from other residents. Another downside of ihouse specifically was that many of the residents are PHD students or international students and they are there more full time. This meant that many of these people had a routine and were settled in and on a different page to me. Through some exchange students in ihouse however I met others from Pinecrest house, where residents are generally there shorter term and therefore were keen to go explore the city/region/university more, meet new people and generally just do more extra curricular things. Pinecrest has shared units (usually with 4 bedrooms one kitchen and 2 bathrooms so they had the opportunity to become very close friends. If I were to choose a residence again it would be a close call between Pinecrest and iHouse.

## Money matters

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

In terms of basic costs, my accommodation was \$3833CA for the full semester plus a 25\$ application fee. I probably spent about \$50 CA a week on food and cooked most of my own meals rather than going out (there's a lot of food places on campus and a few food courts). No Frills is a really cheap supermarket but is a bit further away from campus than the Safeway and a whole excursion to the supermarket took about an hour if I took the bus.

I also had to get a student visa as I was expected to be in Canada longer than 6 months but I believe if you're there less then you don't need a visa. The cost for my visa was CA\$150 there is also a mandatory electronic visa that all people entering Canada need and this was CA\$7.

I booked my flights only 2 months before I left which made them relatively expensive (NZ\$2000 for economy class Nelson to Edmonton). For the way back I booked at the same time as my flight over but I used STA travel's unlimited Flexi pass where I could change my flights for the way back as I was unsure if I would be travelling post exchange. This flight was NZ\$877 LA to Auckland. The Flexi pass was \$150 which I did end up using as I changed the date and airline.

My travel insurance was \$894 but this covered 6 months of travel and I booked this through Southern Cross Travel Insurance.

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

In terms of accessing my finances I didn't open a foreign bank account as I didn't think I would be there long enough to make it worth it and I was not working. People on internships needed a Canadian bank account. I also probably should have used a travel card, I would recommend to reduce fees, I just ended up using my normal debit card but had bank fees every time I used it (I think about 2% of the purchase). I used cash a lot which I got out in lump sums from the ATM. No Frills the supermarket only accepts cash or credit card also. I was lucky my friends also had credit cards as this was necessary to rent a car and useful for booking hotels etc.

## Visas & Insurance

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

I got a student visa and a ESTA as mentioned above. The process was relatively easy, all visas can be done online through the government of Canada website which will tell you what you need and the documents you need to provide. They were pretty quick to get back to me with a confirmation also.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

In terms of insurance, I had travel insurance but also health insurance is mandatory at University of Alberta. You pay for UHIP with your student fees. Exchange students can pick up their card right at the start of their exchange from the Telus centre. It's a very easy process and pretty much all done for you. The total price for Student fees and the UHIP was CA\$283.71.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

As mentioned above international house had a variety of events themselves. Residence services also puts on events such as free dinners (BBQ, tacos, potluck dinners etc.). At the beginning of the semester there was an orientation that exchange students are encouraged to attend, I missed it as I wasn't quite in Edmonton yet but I heard it was a great place to meet people, get a tour of the university and get freebies (apparently the orientation in September is even better than the one in January). The Visiting Students and Internship Programs at UofA also put on trips to Banff and Jasper per semester that you could pay to go on. The VSIP also organized for us to attend an ice hockey game for free which was great to see and to witness the crazy amount of school spirit that is the norm there.

There are also many clubs that you can join. University of Alberta has very good gym and recreation facilities including a climbing wall. I joined the outdoors club which I would highly recommend to anyone! This club helped me to explore the region, challenge myself and meet different people on various trips, bonfire nights, at the climbing wall, running club etc. There are also different associations for religious groups, environmental groups and many more that are all very welcoming so I've heard. Within the business school there were also opportunities to attend meet and greets, networking nights (especially for finance and accounting students), there were also a lot of longer term events, associations and volunteering opportunities that popped up through the

business school however as an exchange student, more permanent students had better suitability.

*What was the university/ city like?*

Edmonton as a city doesn't have a huge amount of tourist attractions but is only about 4 hours drive from Jasper or Banff. However, the West Edmonton Mall is one of the biggest in North America and has waterslides, sea lions, mini golf, a casino, an amusement park etc. which is great to see. The river valley was also amazing once the weather started to warm up and the snow started to melt. The city was constantly under  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  for most of February and reached  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  at least twice so future exchange students should be prepared to spend a lot of time indoors. The university itself had pedway systems which were like bridges between buildings which was great to avoid the cold. I loved the university campus itself, it had so many facilities such as the gym, climbing wall, butter dome and ice hockey rink as well as a student union building with live music a lot of the time and a mall with a lot of food vendors.

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

Many I stated above. I also recommend trying Tim Hortons at least once as well as poutine as these are classic Canadian. There are a few places near campus. Remedy Cafe has great food and large coffees. Earls is also really nice for dinner. There is also many nice cafes along Whyte Avenue, which is also nice to just stroll along as there's many nice shops and it's relatively close to campus.

*Any tips for future students?*

Make the most of as many opportunities as you can. I remember a past exchange student from Otago telling me before I left to try say yes to everything and try not to say no. This was the best piece of advice and I met so many different people in so many different circumstances, it challenged me to keep pushing myself outside my comfort zone and to stay so busy but it was so rewarding and I feel like I really made the most out of my exchange and I don't really have anything I felt like I missed out on. There was one point towards the end of March I realized I had only been in Edmonton 3 weekends the whole semester.

## Overall Experience

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

Overall I am so glad I went to Edmonton and the university of Alberta. I feel like I made the most of my exchange and found a balance between seeing the country, experiencing different cultures, challenging myself personally and interpersonally as well as academically. I didn't truly understand the significance these benefits while on exchange would bring me. Even within my academic learnings, learning about business practices with examples from Canada was fascinating and kept me super interested when I compared to what I have learnt at home and when comparing the different cultures and what I am used to at home. I am so proud of myself for challenging myself outside my comfort zone throughout my whole exchange right until the end. Before visiting, I thought Canada and New Zealand aren't that different especially when comparing differences with other parts of the world, however I am bringing home a much larger perception of the world as there were so many differences than I expected. But not in a bad way, I found it so interesting and was amazed.