



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of British Columbia (Vancouver)
Semester & Year of Exchange	Otago S2 2019
Otago degree(s)	Law/BCom
Major(s)	Accounting

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
COMM454- Accounting for Management Controls and Incentives	English	ACCT302	18
COMM459- Financial Statement Analysis	English	ACCT310	18
COMM460- Non profit Social Marketing	English	MART	18
COMM362- Consumer Behaviour	English	MART	18

Any comments about these papers?

I got a lot out of the papers that I took on exchange, it was a really cool experience to attend University with a completely different structure to Otago. All of my professors were of an extremely high calibre and provided an engaging learning environment. It was really interesting to take some electives on exchange not related to my core degree, and I found that I really benefited from the different perspectives and backgrounds from other students in the class.

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

The Sauder Business School provided an extremely different approach to learning than what I had previously been exposed to at Otago. Classes are much smaller with the majority of mine holding around 40 students, so it is more tutorial-like than lectures which are held at Otago. I also found every class required a very high level of engagement and participation, which also meant a lot of preparation for every class. Alongside this papers were mainly internal and group project based. I found that this meant a lot of work was required during the week given I travelled most weekends. However, I only had one 30% exam to sit in the final examination period, so while my workload was heavy during the semester I was fortunate enough to ski the majority of exam period due to my extra free time. Overall, I would recommend taking 4 papers or less so that you can cope with the

workload whilst still having the ability to travel and experience the beautiful scenery of Canada. Sauder Business school (especially the Accounting department) expect high involvement from its students as it is a competitive entry degree, but I also found I gained a lot from this challenge.

Accommodation

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

I was based in Walter Gage, which is University campus accommodation. Walter Gage is for second year students and above, within my apartment of 6 there were two exchange students and four Canadian students. I found living on campus to be extremely convenient only being minutes from class, the gym and other facilities. However, I also found this accommodation to be quite hostile, it was really hard to meet people within the building and was inferior compared to the halls of residences available at Otago. However, I would highly recommend applying for Fairview Crescent, which is another accommodation mainly filled by Exchange students and was far more social by comparison. Should you not receive on-campus accommodation there are plenty of Facebook groups to find flats or other living arrangements, which were sometimes cheaper than living in the halls.

Money matters

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

Money does truly matter while you are on exchange and travel either side will make it all the more expensive. It's a really good idea to set out a budget and keep track of how much money you are spending, while also leaving some reserve funds available. Costs always seems to arise that you just don't anticipate and can cut into your travel money, so the best idea is to make an estimate of what you think it will cost you and then multiply this by 1.5 to allow for some wriggle room. My living costs for a week worked out to be around \$370, with accommodation working out at around \$300 per week and food at \$70 per week. I would recommend shopping at No Frills supermarket, which is only a 15 minute bus away and provides much cheaper options than some of the on-campus stores. The cost of food and living is pretty high in Vancouver, the estimate I provided for food would be if I cooked all my meals in. Eating out can prove to be expensive as you have to factor in tax that is added onto the bill and around 15% tip for your server. However, Vancouver is known for its food scene so you may want to budget in extra for this.

I got a really great deal on my flights through the Air NZ New Years sale, Auckland-London/Paris-Vancouver/Vancouver-Auckland all for \$2,600. Booking flights in advance will save quite a bit of money, however I did change my flight home after deciding later to stay longer, which cost around \$100 to change. Try and book in advance because there is still the flexibility of changing the dates at a later point for a cost.

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

Before I got to Canada I was using a Travellex Cash Passport card, which is where you pre-load money of a currency that you choose. This has the effect of spending in the same currency as the country you are in. However, what I didn't realise is how much of a fee Travellex takes for providing this service and I worked out it would have actually been cheaper to use my NZ card and pay 2.5% fee and the exchange rate of the time. So if you are doing any travel in the US or anywhere outside of Canada I recommend just using your NZ card because it works out cheaper. In terms of spending in Canada I recommend opening a Scotiabank Student account (there is one on campus where they help you set it up). This was completely free to open with zero fees and I was able to have a debit card for the account which I could also use online. The best way to transfer money from your NZ account to your Canadian bank account is through Transferwise. This initiative saved me a lot of

money while I was away and made it so easy to transfer money internationally to friends in other currencies. How it works is you have an account with Transferwise, enter the amount of CAD you want to send and then it will give you the equivalent in NZD and notify you of the fees to do so. You then make a bank transfer from your NZ account to Transferwise bank account and they then deposit the money into your Canadian account. Note that if you were to do a wire transfer directly from your NZ account to your Canadian account it could cost as much as \$50 in fees. Transferwise exchanges the funds at the live exchange rate and charge around 1/5 of the fees of other bank providers.

While I was away I also had a Westpac Credit Card with a \$1000 limit in case of an emergency. I never actually used this card but it was reassuring knowing that it was available should I need it. Some hotels and ski rentals also require a credit card deposit and will not accept a debit card, so it definitely came into use in these situations as well. It should also be noted that things like insurance only provide cover that you can later claim back, they do not provide the money up front. I had a friend that got injured skiing and was required to pay \$1500 upfront, which he didn't have even though his insurance covered him. So having a credit card can also provide peace of mind in these kinds of situations.

Visas & Insurance

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

If you are only attending UBC for a semester then the Canadian government only requires an eTa rather than a study permit, which is an entry permit into the country costing around \$7 and can be done easily online. When you arrive at the airport make sure you have a copy of your Letter of Acceptance and proof of study, as they will ask for these documents if you are staying in the country longer than a certain period. I got travel insurance through OneCover, which totalled to around \$780, however this did cover travel in Europe for 6 weeks as well. UBC also requires every student to have iMed, which is medical insurance and will cover the cost of sickness and injury. It also covers students for on-piste recreational skiing, so it's not necessary to opt for additional ski insurance on top of travel insurance.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

The Exchange Student Club (ESC) was a student run society specifically for exchange students. This was the primary way that I met the majority of my friends on exchange. ESC puts on heaps of events throughout the week including the infamous Thursday Night YOEO (You Only Exchange Once) at The Pitt Uni bar. They also organise heaps of trips, which creates a stress free way to travel and meet heaps of new people. The one trip I attended was the Sunshine Coast trip where we went camping in BC's beautiful sounds, it was certainly a memorable time of my exchange and allowed me to meet many new people, who I then planned later trips with.

British Columbia is well-known for its hiking, skiing and other outdoor activities. I spent the good part of most weekends in the first two months attempting different hikes throughout the region, which was an awesome experience. I would definitely recommend The Chief (Stawamus Provincial Park), Jofree Lake (north of Whistler), Grouse Grind, Dog Mountain, Lynn Canyon as providing some of the most beautiful scenery and rewarding hikes. However, there are hundreds of amazing tracks and I didn't get round to attempting even a quarter of them. If you are a keen skier then Whistler Blackcomb provides world class slopes and a great social atmosphere, the village itself is also really beautiful. However, skiing proved to be one of the largest costs of my exchange so definitely save up your pennies if you want to do it well. Most of us brought a Whistler season pass for around \$800 NZ

which allowed you unlimited access to the mountain and discounts on food, lodging and rentals. Despite only being there for the very start of the season, a day pass at Whistler is \$170 CAD so if you ski more than 5 days then the pass pays itself off. Unfortunately we had some extremely average snow with very limited runs being open at the start of the season but was still an amazing experience nonetheless and I certainly intend to return and ski more of the mountain. If you are going for Term 2 then you will definitely find this pass to be of great value. There is a bus for \$35 CAD return which is the most cost effective way to get to and from Whistler. In terms of hiring gear Ski Junkies provides awesome quality gear for around \$380 for the entire season.

What was the university/ city like?

Vancouver is a beautiful city nestled in the mountains. It is popularly known for its uniform glass buildings the "glass city" and for its wet weather "Raincouver". During the summer months the weather was pleasant and there is plenty of sunshine, however what I was not prepared for was the amount of rain during Autumn and Winter, so be sure to pack waterproof shoes and an umbrella. One thing I didn't realise was how far away the campus actually is from the city. It took around 45 mins each way by bus, which meant I didn't spend as much time in the city as I might of, had it been closer.

Around 55,000 students attend UBC, so it can take a bit of adjusting to from Otago. The University campus itself is absolutely beautiful, covering the entire end of the peninsula. It extends so far that I hardly covered the whole area in the entire time I was there. What I loved was the amount of trees and greenery on campus, with beautiful views out towards the mountains. UBC in Autumn has got to be one of the most spectacular arrays of colour. In itself UBC is like a "mini city", it has absolutely everything you need on campus from banks, food outlets, supermarkets, stationary shops, museums, pharmacies etc.

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

The highlight of my exchange was our trip over thanksgiving weekend to Banff National Park in Alberta. I have attached photos below of some of the scenery, but the Rockies has got to be one of the most beautiful places in the world. It can be quite hard to get to as it is in the Alberta region, we drove which took around 12 hours each way, so it was a big trip. However, cheap flights do come up every now and again so if you look in advance it is only around a 3 hour flight to Calgary, where you can then pick up a rental car. In Banff there are plenty of hikes such as Johnston's Canyon and tunnel mountain and beautiful lakes such as Moraine Lake and Lake Louise to admire. Another recommendation would be to make the trip to Seattle by bus (4 hours) as it is so close to the border and a great way to see some of the US. It was a really cool city and can be done quite cheaply especially if you go in a large group and split an Airbnb.

Any tips for future students?

Definitely take advantage of Evo Cars, be sure to sign up for an account before you leave as you have to get your driving record from the NZ Transport Agency, which I found to be a hassle from overseas. Essentially it is the same concept as Lime Scooters, where you locate cars on an app and then unlock them from your phone and pay per minute/hour or per day. I found these essential for reaching a lot of hikes as public transport does not extend that far out of the city. Between five people it would cost around \$25 to use for the day which included petrol, this proved to be far more cost efficient than renting a car. Also rental cars tend to charge a young driver fee for people under the age of 25. Phone plans are extortionate in Canada so it is necessary to factor this into your budget. I had the cheapest plan available with Chatr mobile (Rogers) which cost around \$55 per month provided free calling and texts within Canada and 4GB of data. There is plenty of Wifi on campus but I found it hard to navigate my way around new areas without Maps, so its definitely an essential whilst away.

Overall Experience

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

Going on exchange has been something I have wanted to do ever since I can remember. It challenges you in more ways than you can imagine but is one of the most amazing experiences. Having the opportunity to study at a world renowned University and make connections all over the world is something I will always be grateful for. Going on exchange will teach you to budget, push yourself out of your comfort zone and to seize every opportunity. The best part of exchange is the accessibility to travel another part of the world. While studying 4 months will go quite quickly as every weekend is packed with trips and adventures. I would recommend making the most of the few months off before starting exchange to travel, I hit up the European summer which was another incredible experience. To conclude don't hesitate to go on exchange while it will present its challenges it is an absolutely invaluable opportunity that you will not regret. If you have are keen to find out any more information feel free to contact me at emily.farron@gmail.com- I would be more than happy to answer any questions.



Vancouver skyline from Stanley Park



Dog Mountain Hike



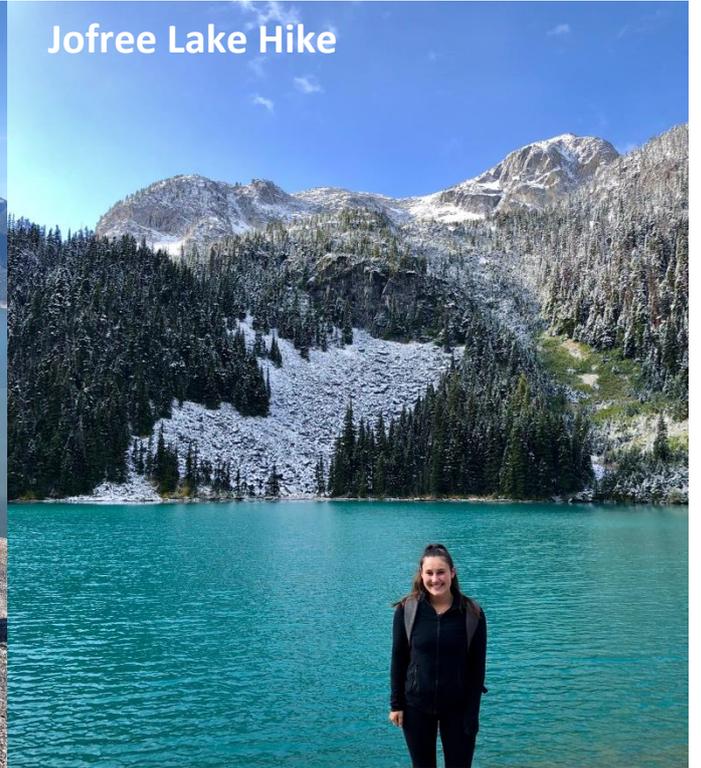
Silver Star Ski Resort



Chief Stawamus Hike



Jofree Lake Hike



Seattle Trip (Kerry Park)

Rose Garden (UBC)



Whistler Blackcomb ski resort

