



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Queens University, Canada
Semester & Year of Exchange	S2, 2019
Otago degree(s)	BASc
Major(s)	Environmental Management and Politics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
GPHY 310 – Landscape Ecology	ENG	Similar to Biogeography	18
GPHY 320 – Energy and Society	ENG		18
ENSC 310 – Environmental Policy	ENG	Politics course	18

Any comments about these papers?

I loved both GPHY 310 and ENSC 310. Highly recommend GPHY 310 to anyone who enjoyed biogeography or ecology. A really well structured course where I learnt a lot.

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

I found it very similar. I did really well in all my courses with a similar level of effort that I would put in at Otago. If you want to spend more time travelling etc then aim to take lower level courses. It is common for Queens students to take 5 or even 6 courses. I was able to take 3 and this meant the course load was more on par with Otago.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in a private flat with 3 Canadian girls. I would have preferred to stay in the dorms but accommodation is very limited. I enjoyed the flatting situation though. One of the girls was absolutely lovely. It was great having people with local info and also being able to go to events with them and their friends.

Money matters

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

My accommodation costs were quite high but my accommodation was also a recently built complex building. It was around \$250 per week, I luckily only had to pay for 4 months so it worked out not to bad. My flight to and from NZ were around \$1300 each way but I booked very late. I was on a full year exchange and my insurance was around \$1200 with \$0 excess through STA. They were great to go through when I needed to make a claim. The visa was \$14 or something, very easy and very cheap, you can only be in Canada for 6 months so be careful if you plan to travel before and after the semester. Food was very similar to NZ, some of the stores even had 10% off days for students.

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

I used a credit card. My debit card didn't work so I would suggest double checking with your bank before you leave. I used TransferWise to pay my rent and also to transfer to other accounts if I went on trips with non-Kiwis etc.

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes, an eTA. It is a very quick, easy and cheap process.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes they did, I think it was between \$200-300.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

In the first week there was an orientation week for exchange students. It was well worth the money since you got to meet so many people in the first week. I also joined the Outdoor Club which I really enjoyed.

What was the university/ city like?

The university was fantastic. I loved the campus as well as my lecturers and the structure of university. They have plenty of clubs, sports and cultural activities to get involved in. Kingston as a town is also really good, there is plenty of supermarkets and takeaway options around and on campus. The downtown area is really close to campus with stores and restaurants.

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

I enjoyed the thousands islands boat tour, I would recommend the prison tour even though I didn't get to do it (it closed over winter and I wasn't expecting that so get in while you can). Cacao 70 is a great dessert place. Queens pub on campus is really good, especially the falafel sandwich. Cogro (Common Ground) has great bagels!

Any tips for future students?

Get involved early and in as many things as possible. Try to be prepared and be able to take 3 courses instead of 4, it will give you far more free time. If you are going during the Sep-Dec term get a warm jacket but you can probably get by without investing in snow shoes, they are expensive and it doesn't snow too much in this semester.

Overall Experience

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

Queens was a great university both socially and academically. The campus is beautiful in all the seasons and is similar to Otago with all the students living within 10-15 minutes off campus. There is so much to see and do; the Pier, American football, basketball, ice hockey, thousand islands, ice skating in the town square, weekly markets and more so get out and enjoy. Once the winter arrives it is harder to find the motivation to go outdoors since it takes half an hour to get dressed in all the layers but keep getting out, even if it's just for a walk, the town, campus and parks are beautiful in the snow. Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara Falls, New York City, Washington DC and the Adirondacks National Park (NY State) are all trips I got to take and would recommend. Canadian cities I found to be very similar to NZ, there isn't a lot to do so 2 days is plenty, this means you can visit more than one in each trip. I loved NYC and DC so totally recommend doing them. I had many friend who visited Chicago and loved it as well. You can even make good use of the mid semester break and get down to Cuba or Mexico if you need some warmth. Both before and after my exchange I went to Central America and cannot recommend doing that enough, it's so close and a much cheaper option than traveling in North America. All in all doing an exchange is a great way to find a second home, travel in a new part of the world, learn from a different perspective and make lifelong friends.



Copan Ruins, Honduras



Capitol Building, Washington DC



Homecoming, Queens



Snow on Campus



Ice-skating in the town square



Winter sunset on campus



Orientation week paint party



Thousand Islands Boat tour



Kingston town sign



Tamming Ceremony



First Football game



Fall colours



Niagara Falls



Santa Ana Volcano, El Salvador