



## Student Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

|                        |                      |  |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------|--|------------------|
| <b>Otago degree(s)</b> | <b>LLB/BA</b>        | <b>Major(s)</b>                        | <b>Politics</b>  |
| <b>Host University</b> | University of Exeter | <b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b> | Semester 2, 2017 |

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

| Course title  | Language of instruction | Otago equivalent | Otago credit value |
|---|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| <b>POL3080: The International Politics of Religion</b>                | English                 | POLS300          | 36                 |
| <b>MLI1121: Cultures and History in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Italy</b> | English                 | 100 level BA     | 18                 |
| <b>MLM1010: China of the Senses</b>                                   | English                 | 100 level BA     | 18                 |
|   |                         |                  |                    |
|   |                         |                  |                    |

Any comments about these papers?

I really recommend leaving any 100 level papers that you can use for your degree and put them aside for your exchange semester! It makes it a lot easier to be accepted into papers over there, as you are only able to take one 300 level equivalent that can be credited to your Otago degree. I left two 100 levels, one 200 level and one 300 level for my exchange semester. This worked out well because I took a 300 level politics paper in Exeter that was equivalent to two Otago papers, so that filled my 300 level and 200 level papers. Then I took two 100 level equivalents. I would recommend the papers that I took, I enjoyed all of them. The content was really interesting, especially for my politics paper and it was easy to engage well with the work because of this. You have to submit choices for papers before you get to Exeter and you will be accepted into courses before you arrive but it is reasonably easy to change over there if you need. I recommend doing quite a bit of research before you go, as that really helped when I arrived when I needed to change some things around.

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

I thoroughly enjoyed my academic experience at Exeter! I loved the class style, which is a lot smaller than my classes at Otago with most of my classes only having 20 to 30 students in each one. However, this means the classes do fill up quite quickly so I recommend being onto it when you arrive if you need to change anything! All of my lecturers were very approachable and helped me with any questions I had. Be prepared to fully engage and participate in class. This wasn't graded but the lecturers expect you to do the readings and discuss in class and sometimes you are allocated slots to do presentations to teach some of the content. I was nervous at first but this really increased my confidence! I found the workload similar to Otago. I took all internal papers which I recommend doing if you are going in second semester (first semester at Exeter) because their exam week is after Christmas. This meant I could get all of my assignments done before Christmas and do some more travel! Overall, I really liked the style of teaching at Exeter. The grading system is different to Otago. A pass is 40% and the highest mark you can get is a first which is 70% and above. Don't freak out if you receive 60%! This is still considered a great grade at Exeter.

### **Accommodation**

I stayed at James Owen Court. I would definitely recommend staying here! It was an awesome way to meet other exchange students from all over the world and I made friends for life! Everyone was keen to go and do day trips and travel because we were all new to the place. Another positive about James Owen Court is that it is in town and so easily accessible to shops, cafes etc and it is right next to a movie theatre, a few takeaway shops (Mega Kebab – my fave) and also a Tesco Express which had all of your basic needs. James Owen Court is about a 20 minute walk up the hill to the University. I actually enjoyed this walk, although it took a while to get used to walking up the hill! JOC is not like a first year hall, but is self-catered and it does not have the RA system or support first year halls here do. How JOC is set out is you are put into a flat of about 5-7 people, you share a kitchen but have your own ensuite. I became best mates with my flatties and they try to place you with people that are similar to you. In terms of the rooms, they were basic, nothing fancy and not modern but it was fine for a semester. One bad thing is that you have to buy all of your kitchen wear, bedding etc. I would recommend buying a University pack, which was in my room when I arrived with all of the necessities. You can do it yourself at Primark or any of the cheap kitchen shops but it was convenient to have it there when I arrived. Another con was that washing was really expensive there (3 pounds to wash so about \$6 NZ each time you wanted to wash). Overall though I would recommend staying at JOC because it was the best way to meet people, it was always social and everyone was awesome that I met! Those that were in private housing did not have as much fun because they were only with a few people and it was twice the price. Make sure to apply as soon as applications come out for JOC, as it's the only place you can apply for as a one semester exchange student, besides the private accommodation.

### **Money matters**

For accommodation, I stayed at James Owen Court which was about 2,500 pounds all up. This is quite expensive and you cannot pay weekly and so it makes it a bit more difficult compared to flatting. However, it is definitely worth it. I would recommend booking flights quite early to get a

cheap deal. Do some thorough research about exam periods and also how you want to structure your papers there (whether you want to do just internal or stick around for exams), which will help you plan your flight back. For your visa, you need to have your acceptance letter definitely. You also technically need to prove you have \$9,000 in your account (I think). I did not get a visa before I left, as I was staying in the UK for less than 6 months and I just needed to provide my acceptance letter at the border. There was no cost for the visa. However, do thorough research into your situation and it really depends on how long you're there and make sure you have all relevant documents with you! I used Southern Cross travel insurance and paid about \$300, which covered everything Otago requires and covered me for the 5 months I was in Europe and in Exeter. I found the cost of food similar to NZ and also the cost at restaurants, cafes, etc were similar. I had about \$7,000 (not including flights) to spend on my travels in Europe and for Exeter, which I found was enough for me, but it depends what you like to do and what clubs you join at the Uni. I also had my student loan coming in as well so if you aren't planning on having that then make sure you save more!

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

I had my usual debit card and I got a mastercard "Cash Passport", which is a card that you can load multiple currencies onto so that you don't have a currency exchange fee each time you use your card. If you use your NZ card over there, it is good to get a bit of cash out so that you aren't charged each time you use your card. I got cash out before I left NZ as well. It is good to let your bank know the dates you will be overseas so they don't think someone is using your account. Make sure you have a back-up card and some cash that you leave in your room or somewhere safe in case you lose your wallet or it gets stolen.

### **Visas & Insurance**

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

I did not have to apply for a visa because I was studying in the UK for less than 6 months. This meant when I flew into Exeter all I had to show was my university acceptance letter. However, on the NZ MFAT website it has various documents that you are supposed to bring if you are studying for less than 6 months, such as bank statements showing a certain amount of money in your account. You should be prepared with all of this definitely as you never know! Also check the requirements if you are there longer than 6 months as you will have to apply for a visa.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

I got insurance because it is a mandatory requirement of Otago if you are going on exchange to get full cover. I did this through Southern Cross and it was about \$300 for 5 months away and was full cover for everything.

### **Extra-curricular/Social Activities**

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

Clubs and Societies are huge at the University of Exeter and I would totally recommend joining one. There is everything from ski club, surfing, hockey etc all the way to the Harry Potter society, Disney society and even Cocktail society. During freshers week, the societies are all on campus promoting themselves and so you can go and see the variety of choices and talk to members about it to figure out what you would like to join. I joined the ERASMUS society, which is the European exchange society because so many of my friends were from European countries and I wanted to join the trips and events they were doing too. I also joined BodySoc, which held fitness classes on campus and FemSoc which had a lot of interesting talks about gender equality. I am into sport and was considering joining a team but I also wanted to travel a bit around England on the weekends and so I decided to stick with clubs that were flexible. It is up to you and your situation, as I know a few people that joined teams for the sports they loved and had the best time! The clubs also hold socials every Wednesday at the Lemmy (on campus bar) as well as the Ram (which is a bar/restaurant on campus) and other places in town. Definitely get involved in a club as it's a great way to meet people as well!

Another thing I would recommend is that if you are staying in JOC or have a friend in JOC you can join the Residence Life trips, which were really cheap trips to some awesome places in the UK. I did a 5 pound day trip to Cardiff and a 5 pound day trip to Bath with them. They also have other events going on too that you can get involved with.

What was the university/ city like?

The University of Exeter is set up the hill about a 20 minute walk from JOC or a 25-30 minute walk from the centre of town. The University itself is really pretty as it has a lot of green space and the main forum (like the link at Otago) is quite open with outdoor seating around it to make the most of the few sunny days! I would say the standard of the buildings are similar to that of Otago. I didn't have classes in large lecture theatres but more like smaller classrooms. There are cafes on campus as well as a couple of bars, a campus movie theatre, gym and regular food stalls outside.

Exeter itself is a quaint city. I would compare it to Dunedin in the way that all of the main shops are down one street, with various side streets coming off it leading into old English looking lanes. If you continue down the main street you get down to the River Exe and the Quay which has a few cafes and restaurants around there as well. The main feature of Exeter is the Cathedral, which is really beautiful. It has everything you need in terms of shopping such as Primark for all your cheap essentials, Poundland (yes it all is one pound) and a lot of saver shops which makes for cheap shopping. There are also shops such as Zara and H&M that we don't have everywhere in NZ. Exeter has an awesome nightlife as well! My favourite places included Unit1 (go to Cheesy Tuesdays for some epic throwbacks) Fever, Timepiece and the Terrace. All of these places were really close to JOC so you could walk everywhere. There is also Lemmy on campus, which you should definitely check out. Clubbing goes on in Exeter almost everyday of the week, so if you want to party on a Monday you definitely can! I felt generally safe walking around Exeter, but at night make sure you are always with someone, especially if you are coming back from the clubs. Exeter is what you expect an old English town to look like, with most of the residential flats being built in red brick and you can see the Tudor influence around the Cathedral Square.

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

## In Exeter:

- The main one is obviously visit the Cathedral. It is expensive to get into but I signed up for a free Christmas market and so got free entry to look around.
- Enjoy the Cathedral green area. There are a few cafes around there or you could get high tea.
- Around the back of the Cathedral is the old town wall. I didn't really find this until later but you can walk by the ancient wall and down to the river.
- Visit the Christmas markets during December by the Cathedral. Also go to London and do Winter Wonderland! If you are going anywhere in the UK like Edinburgh or Europe like Germany, definitely go to a Christmas market, they are amazing!
- I enjoyed exploring the town in the first few weeks, looking at shops and walking down the side lanes.
- Gandy street is a really pretty old street off the main drag. It has some vintage shops as well as a Harry Potter inspired bar.
- Hire a bike and bike along the river exe to Exmouth
- Go down the the Quay and walk along the river or visit the cafes
- There are a few gardens and parks in Exeter too that are nice to walk around, and Northernhay gardens contain "Exeter Castle" which is basically a large house as we found! However you can walk around the old castle walls in there too.
- Visit Powderham Castle. This is a 30-40 min bus ride through cute villages to a beautiful old castle!
- Do a Sunday Roast at the Old Firehouse!
- Restaurants: My favourite was Hubbox, which was an American burger place. Definitely go to the Old Firehouse, they have the best pizzas as well as the Roast. The Rum and Crab Shack is good. There are lots of places around!
- Cafes: Argitiano was my favourite café in town and also a great place to study if you wanted to! Boston Tea Party is a great place for English tea. You should also go down to Gloria's arthouse, which is the prettiest arty café. There are the chain cafes around too such as Pret a Manger and Costa, which are both on campus.
- Clubs: Unit1, Timepiece, Fever, the Terrace, Lemmy. There are others too but these are the main ones we went to.

## Travel:

- Make the most of any organised cheap trips with the University. On my first weekend I did a trip down the Jurassic Coast in Exmouth and visited the town. As I said before I also went to Cardiff and Bath with the uni.
- Make the most of the location. Being in Exeter you have access to many beautiful areas! While I was in Exeter I visited Bristol, Bath, Torquay, Plymouth, Exmouth, Cardiff and more. Make the most of your weekends and try and plan some trips with new friends!
- I went to London quite a few times too and you can get cheap buses through national express or megabus. Definitely visit London!
- During my semester I also spent weekends in Dublin and Edinburgh! I couldn't recommend these places enough, especially Edinburgh which was beautiful and had an amazing xmas market. In Dublin, do the Guinness factory tour.
- If you want to fly somewhere, the best place is out of Bristol which is a 2 hours bus from Exeter. Go onto skyscanner and check the flights from there and you can book really cheap

buses through megabus to Bristol airport! This is what I did for Dublin and Edinburgh and it worked out well.

- TRAVEL AROUND EUROPE! I can't emphasise how amazing it was to do some travelling in August and September before my exchange. I did about 5 weeks and it was worth it to experience the European summer. I went to Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Krakow, Prague, Dubrovnik (Croatia), Rome and Florence! It was absolutely amazing. I travelled with someone but if you are alone it could be good to do it through Contiki or another organisation. Make the most of going over to the other side of the world, as you don't know how long it'll be before you have the chance to again!

Any tips for future students?

- If you are applying for JOC, apply on the day the applications are released as a lot of people apply!
- Research your visa requirements
- Research what papers you want to take well in case you need to change them in your first week or 2. Also research about exam periods and plan around them before you book any travel
- Go into exchange with an open mind. When I first arrived I wondered if I had made the right decision. By the first week in, I had already met lots of people and was really enjoying myself!

### **Overall Experience**

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

Going on exchange was definitely was one of the best decisions I made at Uni. I met the most awesome people from all over the world and got to experience a different University, all while having the opportunity to travel around the UK and Europe. I recommend England, especially if you do not know another language and don't want to be overwhelmed by the cultural change. Ever since I started University I have wanted to experience exchange and I am so glad I followed through with that because it can be so easy to not put yourself out of your comfort zone. I gained a lot more confidence and the change of scene also helped me to appreciate the positive aspects of being a University student. Please go on exchange – you won't regret it!



Exeter Cathedral



Walking through Gandy Street



Day trip to Torquay



Part of Exeter Quay



Leading into the forum at the University