



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	BASc	Major(s)	Chinese, Chemistry
Host University	Dalian University of Foreign Languages	Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1 2018

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Intensive Reading	Chinese	CHIN 300	18 points
Speaking	Chinese		
Reading	Chinese	CHIN 300	18 points
Listening	Chinese		
Wushu	Chinese	ARTS	18 points
Papercutting	Chinese		
Chinese Painting	Chinese		

Any comments about these papers?

- I took 7 classes however these combine to be equivalent to 2x CHIN 300 level 18-point papers and 1x ARTS/CHIN 18-point paper.

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

- The workload was in my opinion significantly lower than at Otago as we did not have assignments but rather we had to keep up with the rate at which we were learning new words and grammar points, which was very intensive. The style of teaching was very interactive compared to a typical lecture style of learning, however most Chinese language classes at Otago are also quite interactive due to the nature of language study so I did not see too much of a difference in these classes. The academic experience overall felt more like high school as all my classes were Chinese language classes and therefore quite interactive which is not what I usually experience in a typical day of study at Otago.

Accommodation

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

- I stayed in the student dormitory in a single bed room. Although this option was by far the most expensive accommodation option, being double the cost of a shared two-person room and a shared 6-person flat, I really appreciated having a place that I could relax in away from the hustle and bustle of China. The kitchen facilities were pretty much non-existent, so I did have to eat out for almost every meal which became costly over time, and I had no communal lounge or area where I could interact with other students. After visiting a 6-person flat I became aware that these flats contained a large lounge area and a kitchen, and some of these flats even contained a fridge and cooking facilities if you were placed with long term students who had purchased these. My accommodation was very secure as there was key card access, and I even had my own ensuite bathroom and toilet, and a large study desk and comfy chair. The bathroom occasionally had water issues where my shower and tap water would come out as a trickle and brown, however these times were few and far between compared to all the times I had free flowing hot water.

Money matters

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

- Single bed dorm room: RMB 12000 for 1 semester (approx. NZD \$2600)
- Flights: NZD \$1800 return
- Visa: approx. NZD \$280
- Food: Between RMB 20-35 a day (approx. NZD \$4-8)
- Insurance: NZD \$400

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

- I opened a Chinese bank account and I would withdraw money from my NZ Visa debit bank card in RMB and deposit it into my Chinese bank account via an ATM. I recommend this method as it is very convenient and doesn't take long to do, however I did incur a lot of bank fees for every withdrawal I made from my NZ bank account, so I would often withdraw the maximum per transaction per day each time I was running low on money (RMB 2500). The Cash Passport does not allow you to load RMB onto the card and when I calculated the total cost of transaction fees and exchange fees, it worked out the same just to use my own Visa debit card. Cash in China is a rare sight as most people use their phones which are linked to their Chinese bank accounts to pay for everything, so I highly recommend opening a Chinese bank account to also be able to have this convenience.

Visas & Insurance

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

- Yes, I had to fill in a form and send it with my passport, relevant documents from the University in China, a return courier post envelope, and a bank cheque to the Chinese Consulate Office in Christchurch. The process was quick and only took about a week to receive back my passport.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

- Yes, I was required to pay for this as part of my registration when I arrived, the cost was RMB 300 (approx. NZD \$65), they make you get this no matter if you have insurance already or not.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

- There were a few activities throughout the semester where students could get involved, including a sightseeing tour of Dalian, a speech competition, a singing competition, the international cultural festival, and more. I would recommend signing up for the afternoon classes which happen after lunch every week. I was involved in the Wushu, Chinese painting and Chinese papercutting classes. These classes were all quite interesting in their own ways and I really enjoyed them, I found I met a lot of students I wouldn't have normally met if I had just stuck to my language classes, including students studying full time at DUFL and those who were also on exchange but from different levels of Chinese language abilities. I enjoyed paper cutting the most as we got to create great pieces of work which I could bring back as presents for my friends and family, and this class was on a Friday afternoon, and for me there's no better way to relieve stress on a Friday than by sitting with my music on creating artwork.

What was the university/ city like?

- The University was quite self-sufficient, there was all different types of food catering to different people at different prices, different stores and small supermarkets that sold almost everything you need as a student, and directly outside the university there was an area filled with restaurants, cafes, small stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, hair dressers etc etc which catered to the university students and others that resided in the area. The university is quite isolated as it is about an hour away from the centre of the city and so it can be troublesome to go into town if you are short on time. However, there is a school bus service that runs from 6am to 6:30pm (last bus leave at 6:30pm from the uni, last bus back to the uni is around 8pm) everyday which takes you in and out of town at the low price of 8yuan each way. The city is huge compared to Dunedin and is full of different unique areas to explore and have fun. The metro system is quite a convenient way to get around the city for cheap and quick and there's even a station that's only a short 5 min max taxi ride from the university. I found Dalian to be quite unique compared to other cities I visited in China, firstly it's a relatively new city which means infrastructure is still being built and it doesn't have the more traditional architecture of China, and secondly, it doesn't have a large tourist market that cities like Beijing and Shanghai have, however I felt that allowed me to experience the real China at a more relaxed pace than in other much larger cities.

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

- I recommend going to the seafood street outside the university main gates to eat because the food out there is far nicer than that found in the student canteens, its not all seafood its just the name of the street. You can find a lot of cafes and small restaurants on the street, my personal favourite study spot (with free Wi-Fi) was sunny coffee, you just need to buy one drink or item and you can study there for as long as you want, and my favourite little restaurant was jinjin café, really nice Japanese and sub-western food.

Any tips for future students?

- If you want proper internet that does not cost you \$4 per 12GB from the uni per month, I would invest in getting a sim card plan which offers unlimited mobile data and using it as a mobile hotspot for your laptop etc, it made my life so much easier because I didn't have to worry about not being able to contact people outside of my dorm room or just be able to have internet access out of the dorm.

Overall Experience

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

Overall, I had an amazing time at Dalian. I met so many new people from all over the world, who I am still in contact with now. Most of my classes were full of Russians, Koreans, and Japanese students and so it was great to be able to learn about all these other cultures and more and be able to communicate with one another in a common language (Chinese). My Chinese language skills have improved so much from going to Dalian and having to deal with full immersion, and also my understanding of Chinese culture has become much clearer.

China is a really cheap exchange destination, so it was really easy to buy lots of things that I needed whilst over there without worrying about spending too much, however the cheap prices stack up over time and you need to be careful to not find yourself spending heaps.

Some great websites and apps that I would recommend for daily life in China are Taobao (Chinese Ebay but more amazing, you can buy anything you could ever think of and its only 3-4 days shipping away or 1 day if you're lucky and have brought something from a store in Dalian), Wechat (Chinese social media platform that everyone uses as a messenger and calling app, you also use Wechat to pay for things from your phone, buy movie tickets, train tickets, etc), Alipay (another payment app that is used interchangeably with Wechat everywhere) and meituan (like uber eats but far far far better, food delivered from pretty much every store or restaurant near you for only approx. 20-30 cents delivery fee and arrives often within 20 minutes). These apps were my life savers in China and I don't know how I'm living without them!

The university was like a little village were you and every other student lived, with lots of places to eat, play sports, hangout, there was even a 'shed' where you pick up your online orders from Taobao and can send things to anywhere. I really loved having everything I needed there for me when I needed it, especially when all the shops would be open from 8am – 10.30pm in and around the uni, it was really convenient.

I highly recommend Dalian University of Foreign Languages to any Chinese language student wanting to develop their language skills and wanting to experience the Chinese culture and lifestyle to the fullest.