



Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Commerce	Major(s)	Accounting and Finance
Host University	University of Edinburgh	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
BUST10023 Futures and Options	English	FINC306 Derivatives	10 ECTS = 24 Otago Credits
BUST10025 Financial Modelling with Excel	English	FINC309 Financial Modelling	10 ECTS = 24 Otago Credits
ELCH07010 Foundation Spanish Language 2	English and Spanish	ARTS100 Unspecified	10 ECTS = 24 Otago Credits

Any comments about these papers?

I really enjoyed all of my classes, however the two finance papers were both very full on, Futures and Options had a 40% research essay due within the first month (the rest of the grade is based on the final exam), and Financial Modelling was assessed by two 50% "projects" consisting of excel analysis and essay/report – each of which took a very long time. I found that taking Spanish as a fun interest paper was a good balance compared to the intensity of my finance classes, also if you want to take a European language class your tutor will most likely be a native speaker from that country so it's a great way to learn (or brush up on) the language.

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

There are very few contact hours compared to Otago, taking a full time courseload I only had 8 hours of class, so there is a lot of self-directed learning. Also there are fewer pieces of assessment (assignments, tests, etc.) but they are worth a much larger portion of your overall grade for the class

and you have to allocate a lot of time for completing them. The grading system is very different from Otago as well, you only need 40% to pass, and anything over 70% is an A (the highest grade).

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Robertson's Close, which is run by the University Accommodation Service. The application process was very easy (other than that you only had 24 hours to accept your offer of accommodation before it was withdrawn, with timezones that was a bit rushed), however so long as you apply by the deadline you are guaranteed accommodation as a non-European exchange student. My specific accommodation was great because it was very close to the university, but also close to the train station, major bus stops (going to the airport), several supermarkets, and other shopping. The other students in Robertson's Close were either first year Edinburgh students or other exchange students so it was a great way to meet people to go travelling with. I would recommend staying in the University accommodation because then you don't have to sort out power, and your power bill is paid for in the rent – so crank up the heater in winter! The only downside was that there is a student pub right underneath the accommodation so this was both fun (on the nights I went out) and annoying (on the nights I stayed in) as it was always loud until closing.

Money matters

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

Accommodation costs were £2,350 for one semester. Return flights plus insurance for six months cost just under NZ\$2,500. I did not need to pay for a student visa to the UK. In general food at the supermarket is a similar price to NZ, but eating out was more expensive – I probably spent approximately £20-30 per week on supermarket food.

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

I set up a UK bank account (with Santander) which I definitely recommend - it made everything much easier in terms of setting up accommodation and phone payments. However, it takes at least one week to set one up (waiting for an appointment with the bank, then the actual setup) and then 1-2 days make an international transfer from NZ to UK. So I used a Cash Passport in the beginning and then also when I went travelling around Europe after classes ended – this worked great, the only downside is that, again, it takes 1-2 days for the money to be transferred from an NZ bank account to the Cash Passport.

Visas & Insurance

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

I did not need to apply for a visa as a holder of a NZ passport, studying for six months or less. All I needed was to go to border security in the UK with my acceptance letter from the University of Edinburgh, a bank statement to prove that I was able to fund myself for my stay in the UK, and details of my return flight home to show I was intending to leave.

<https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Not that I can recall – if there were any then the insurance required by the Otago Exchange Programme more than covered it.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There are so many clubs and societies available to join, they have a big expo at the beginning of the semester that you can go along to and talk to the representatives of the different clubs.

There is also a group called International Student Tours (<https://www.istours.co.uk>) which runs trips in the weekends around Scotland and Northern England – I really enjoyed these tours and it was a great way to see more of Scotland (especially the Highlands) which are hard to access without a car.

What was the university/city like?

Edinburgh is a beautiful old city, and the University contributes a lot to that feel. There is a lot of character and you are surrounded by historical sites and castles. The University itself is made up of a mixture of old and new buildings, and the George Square Campus (where all of my classes were) is very compact and easy to get around – if you have classes at Kings Buildings (sciences) there is a bus that runs between the two campuses.

The University will also assign you a personal tutor, this is a professor in your department (mine was from the finance department of the business school) who is there to basically help you settle in and you can go to them with any issues or questions that you have throughout your semester.

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

Go to the castles (Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood Palace). Hike up Arthur's Seat at least once – there's a great view of the whole city from the top. Go to the National Museum. See all the monuments at Calton Hill.

Take every opportunity to see the highlands – they are absolutely beautiful. The train to Glasgow only takes an hour and you can get a 16-25 railcard (£30) which takes 1/3 off the price of any train ticket in the UK and can also be added to your oyster card if you are going to spend a lot of time in London.

Any tips for future students?

Make the most of your time there, when will you next be in Europe and so close to so many amazing and beautiful places. Especially if you go in semester 1 (Otago/semester 2 Edinburgh) – exams finish in mid-May and you don't have to be in Dunedin again until July – it's a great time to travel in Europe, starting to get really hot but not too crowded.

Overall Experience

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

Going on exchange is an experience that I would definitely recommend to anyone and everyone, and Scotland is an amazing, gorgeous country! There will be so many opportunities to travel around Europe, but make sure that you also take the time to explore Edinburgh (or whichever city you choose to go to). It can be hard being on the literal opposite side of the planet from your family, and adjusting to the time zone change is a major challenge – but you'll meet so many amazing people and have a great time no matter what!

View of Edinburgh from Arthur's Seat
(Featuring Edinburgh Castle in the background)



Dunnottar Castle on the North-East coast
(on an ISTours trip)

Loch Lomond (on and ISTours trip)

