



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	<b>Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen</b>
<i>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</i>	<b>Winter Semester 2018/19</b>
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	<b>BA, BTheol</b>
<i>Major(s)</i>	<b>Psychology, Biblical Studies</b>

### Academics/ course load

*Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?*

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>	<b>Otago credit value</b>
<b>Deutsch-Kompakt-Sprachkurs</b>	German	GERMX00	18 – 12 ECTS
<b>Aufbaukurse</b>	German	GERMX00	18 – 9 ECTS
<b>Aufbaukurs-Trainings</b>	German		3 ECTS
<b>Panorama Deutschland</b>	German		5 ECTS
<b>Religion and the Challenge of European Identity – IES Programme</b>	English		3 ECTS

*Any comments about these papers?*

The “Deutsch-Kompakt-Sprachkurs” is a five week language intensive course. I arrived in Germany having done only 3 semesters of German language at Otago. The course is quite expensive but the best decision I made. The five weeks were spent predominately in the classroom, however one week was spent in Bad Urach, a small town 30 minutes’ drive from Tübingen. We stayed in a youth hostel and were only allowed to speak German (“Nur Deutsch!!!” still rings in my head to this day). This week was awesome, getting to know each other, doing some cool activities and having a few cheeky beers along the way. During the course we also went to Lake Constance, the Mercedes Museum and an Opera performance in Stuttgart. Not only is it great for German language and culture learning, these class mates will be your first friends and most likely your best friends while you are on exchange. I really recommend this course.

The “International and European Studies” department offers some really good English taught short block-course papers.

If you want to learn German, or better your language skills, the “Deutsch als Fremdsprache und Interkulturelle Programme” offers over a hundred different courses for all levels.

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

The language courses I took were all intensive, with a minimum of three hours of class 1, 3 or 5 times per week. It seems like a lot, but it's the best way to learn. "Panorama Deutschland" was one three hour class per week. We had to do a group presentation, weekly homework and a test comprised from the homework sheets. It was a good course, very much like a high school social studies class, looking at topics like politics, geography, post WWII Germany, immigration, the EU, the welfare state and so forth. The IES papers are all taught as block courses with six classes over three weeks - really good if you need three quick ECTS.

## **Accommodation**

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

I was fortunate enough to live in the Evangelisches Stift. This is the most beautiful building located smack bang in the middle of the Altstadt (old town), 1 minute from the Marktplatz, on the banks of the Neckar River. This opportunity is only for students of Theology at Otago, so if that applies to you, definitely talk to someone in the Theology Department about it.

Living in the Altstadt is really good as you live 15 minutes from campus, with supermarkets, shops, pubs and restaurants within walking distance, meaning you don't have to buy a semester bus ticket. In terms of other student accommodation, "Prinz Karl" is a really awesome student apartment, 10 minutes from Uni, in the middle of the Altstadt, and a lot smaller than the WHO complex.

## **Money matters**

Food is about the same price as in New Zealand, especially if you go for the budget "Ja!" branded stuff. Fruit is about the same price. Döner is the go to cheap eat, Die Kichererbse has the best Falafel in town.

I had a prepaid travel card and my New Zealand debit card. I didn't have any problems with the travel card, but I worked out that is about the same just to use your debit card, as long as you withdraw your money from a German bank that has an agreement with your bank i.e. Westpac – Deutsche Bank. Germany is very cash dependant still, so don't expect to be able to pay by card, although most touristy places do offer card services.

## **Visas & Insurance**

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

I was on a New Zealand passport, so for my first three months I didn't need a visa, all I did was show my Uni acceptance letter at the airport. Before the end of the 3 months, I had to get a student visa but this is a fairly simple process, it did cost but I can't remember how much.

Yes insurance was mandatory. I worked out that it was cheaper to get the 1Cover comprehensive travel insurance package which the Uni accepted. It also meant that my travel before and after studying was covered.

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

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

StudIT Tübingen offers some really cool trips and a regular meeting in a pub. I personally didn't get involved in the group as I was living in a college environment with 150ish other German students, but it's a cool opportunity to meet other exchange students. I also made most of my friends from the language course before the semester started, and we organised trips, dinners and parties ourselves.

*What was the university/ city like?*

Tübingen is a really cool little town. Much like Dunedin, the Tübingen campus is the central hub of the town, with everything students need surrounding the campus. It is often said „Tübingen hat keine Universität, Tübingen ist eine Universität.“ (Tübingen has no University, Tübingen is a University). Much like North Dunedin, there is a campus bubble, and you tend to spend nearly all your time in this area. But it is important to get out of the bubble at times, go for a walk in the surrounding hills, get the free bus on Saturday to another town like Reutlingen, make a day trip to Schloss Hohenzollern, or make a weekend trip to Freiburg or Heidelberg.

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

Volkfest in Stuttgart - like Oktoberfest but more local, closer to Tübingen with cheaper accommodation – still as rowdy.

Boden See (Lake Constance) – really beautiful place but definitely go in the summer.

Make the most of being in the middle of Europe. Berlin is an interesting place, go and experience it for yourself. Dresden was my favourite German city that I visited, however: Munich, Nuremberg, Cologne, Freiburg, Heidelberg are also must-see places.

Flixbus is the cheapest and most convenient way to travel around, with Wi-Fi and charging points in every seat. I used the Go Euro app a lot to check for the cheapest bus, train or plane fares. Skyscanner is also really good for finding cheap flights to England, Ireland (7 Euros return) and other destinations in Europe.

Schloss Hohenzollern (castle) is only 30 minutes away by train, but make sure you check the bus timetable from the train station up to the castle and back, otherwise it's a 20km walk there and back – makes for a good story though. Also check when the English tours are, unless you want to challenge your language skills. Glühwein at the top with a panorama view is also a must do.

**Pubs**

- Blauer Salon
- Collegium
- Saints and Scholars
- Wohnzimmer
- Neckarmüller - out the back in the sunny garden is great.
- Kuckuck – this is the pub in the WHO student complex. It's a Starters, Boogie (RIP), 10 Bar fusion except with internationals not freshers. It hosts the familiar sticky floors and moist air, but you can't go past 1 Euro shots, E1.50 beers, but best of all ... beer pong in a pub (although renegotiate the house rules with the opponents because I don't know about you, but three reshuffles is just excessive).

*Any tips for future students?*

Make sure you make the most of the Neckar while its warm. We were fortunate enough to have our own Stockerkahn (punting) boat at our accommodation, but if you don't, hire one and go for a punt down the Neckar, it is the greatest way to spend an afternoon with a few beers and a picnic.

If you're in Tübingen for the winter semester, definitely go to the Esslingen Middle-Ages market. Only 30 minutes away by train but it is well worth it. Unlike any other German Christmas market, but wrap up warm and try the Glühwein (mulled wine) because its cold.

Make use of the contact list of other Otago students on exchange. On one hand, it's really helpful to contact other kiwis studying in places you may be visiting. On the other hand, being so far away from home, from friends, family and the kiwi lifestyle is not always easy. I found it refreshing having a fellow kiwi to have a fat yarn with, someone you can connect with about New Zealand or Otago, someone you can just speak good kiwi slang with.

## **Overall Experience**

Don't just think about it, do it. My decision to go on exchange has been the best decision I've made whilst studying at Otago. In terms of learning another language, being fully immersed in that country is the greatest way to improve. Culturally speaking, stereotypes are only that. With your feet on the ground you experience the culture and see for yourself what makes other countries tick, allowing you to test if the stereotypes are accurate (and why), or just downright stupid.

Being part of such a rich international environment, I learnt so much about the European perspective. I learnt a French perspective on the Yellow Vest protesting, an English, German and wider European perspective on BREXIT and the European Union. I heard first-hand accounts from students growing up behind the former Iron Curtain, what the conflict in the Balkans meant for children in Serbia, Hungary and Romania. I also discovered language, how lucky we are to speak English as a native language, but also how naïve we can be in not learning other languages or simply not understanding the importance of language.

My exchange has broadened my perspective on the world, history, international politics and so much more. People say they go on an OE or leave their homeland to challenge and find themselves. I have definitely challenged myself and in a sense I have found myself, maybe not in the way found in self-help books, rather I have discovered who I am as citizen of the world, and what it is to be a Kiwi. Go on exchange, experience another culture, travel, take it all in and discover what it truly means to "take your place in the world."

