



OTAGO GLOBAL

Student Exchange Programme

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Otago Global Student Exchange

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My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Cologne
Semester & Year of Exchange	S1 2019
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Accounting and Finance

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
Corporate Finance	English	FINC300 unspecified	3x 18 point papers = 4 Cologne courses
Corporate Governance	English	FINC300 unspecified	
Financial Statement Analysis	English	FINC300 unspecified	
Macroeconomics, Money and the Financial Markets	English	FINC300 unspecified	
German Language Course	German		

Any comments about these papers?

The papers were really interesting and the content was something I was really interested in for my degree. The lecturers who taught the papers were really knowledgeable and knew what they were talking about, the difficulty was about between a 200 to 300 level course at Otago, it was challenging in the way that they would put a lot of math in the lecture slides, however, they do not test on this in the exam.

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

The style is very different to Otago, with two of my courses running until the middle of May and then the exam wasn't until the end of July. They also have lectures here for upwards of 3 hours +. One of my courses had lectures for 5 hours a day which is so different to Otago. Exams at Cologne are worth 100% of your grade as well so don't expect any assignments throughout the semester and be prepared to study hard for your exams (which are only one hour). Apart from these differences, the workload I feel is a lot less than at Otago and if you're a crammer like me Cologne's style will suit you perfectly as you only need to put in the work in the exam period and still be able to pass.

Accommodation

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

I stayed with a German family who lived in Sürth which is a 20 minute tram ride from Barbarossaplatz which is a 15 minute walk from the Uni. I really enjoyed how nice and kind the family were I lived with, the village was so cute and always quiet which was always great. However, as it was a 20 minute tram ride away from town I feel if I could choose again I would want to stay closer towards the university. The trams go every 10 minutes in the weekdays and 15 minutes in the weekends which run 24/7. I did apply for the Studentenwerk which is their version of a hall however spaces are limited and to ensure you get a spot you have to apply at least 6 months before you arrive (which I did not do). Everyone you meet lives all over the city though so it was never an issue about feeling left out or anything!

Money matters

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

For accommodation I would spend €365 a month which included all expenses including towels and linen. For my flight I got a one way flight from Invercargill to Frankfurt on a sale with AirNZ for \$900, as I'm in Europe for a second exchange I don't have a return flight. The visa cost was €50 for a 6 month residence permit. Insurance was through STA travel and they even give 10% discount for students going on exchange! Kebabs and Pommdoners will be your best friend in Cologne, they are so cheap and when I couldn't be bothered cooking it was worth it. I had about \$12,000 NZD for the semester, but in saying that I continued to get Studylink every week which adds up and I got to travel to 18 countries during the semester! Ryanair and Eurowings is so cheap from Cologne and Dusseldorf (20 min train ride away). As a student at Cologne you get a Semester pass with your ID card which means you can take all trains apart from ICE and IC/EC trains for free within the state of NRW, this saves you a lot of money and the state is filled with amazing cities.

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

For my accommodation I had to get a German bank account which I set up with Sparkasse as its zero fees and you get a cool eftpos card with it. However, I only ever used it for my accommodation and everything else I just used my ANZ cards as there is no ATM fees at Sparkasse ATMs. Keep in mind, Germany is a cash country which means they rarely take card at most small places or Kiosks so always have cash on you, but Supermarkets and big restaurants take card (with a minimum).

Visas & Insurance

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

In Germany as a New Zealander we can enter on a 3 month tourist visa and apply when you are in the city with all the correct documentation you require. I'm not going to lie it was hard to first establish myself here in Germany, they require a lot of documentation and of course they are very limited on the English usage even in a Foreigners Office. You first have to register yourself with the city and then you open a bank account with the form you receive from this and then you can apply for your residence permit. Which if its less than 6 months they stick this into your passport, the International office give you a booklet at the beginning of the semester outlining the whole process. I just recommend going with other exchange students to get all this done as it can be very frustrating doing it by yourself! Apart from this at the beginning its all worth it to meet the people you do and be in this great country!

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

In Germany they require you to have German insurance as a rule. However I took my STA travel policy to TK (on Universitatstrasse) and received an exemption, you must do this otherwise they will not let you enrol at the University. It's really simple as long as you have the policy for them to read with your passport and they will give you an exemption! This is far cheaper having a NZ policy than having to sign up for a German one.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

ESN Koln always had so many activities going on during the semester! I joined for a couple of these one was a trip to Drachenfels Castle which was amazing and a must see in NRW! I had a few friends who signed up for Unisport which is essentially social sports you sign up for, I never did it but I heard it was great.

What was the university/ city like?

The city is massive, over 1 million people live in Cologne and with the formal capital Bonn only a 20 minute tram ride and Dusseldorf only 20 minutes away on the other direction there is a massive amount of people in the same area! The shopping part of Neumarkt is amazing and the old town along the Rhine is beautiful and everything I imagined of Germany. The University is massive and very hard to find places but you get used to this. The Uni also has a Mensa which is a cafeteria where you can get meals for lunch with your ID card and it's amazing as its very cheap and you can make your own salad etc.

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

If you are in Cologne in March and/or in November they have a thing called Carnival, look up pictures online its crazy its essentially Hyde Street Party but extreme with everyone in the city taking part! Must see's in Cologne is The Dom, Koln Triangle, Fischmarkt, Altstadt, Rhine river steps, Botanical gardens, Seilbahn and Zulpicher Strasse. On Zulpicher Strasse there is the most amazing Falafel store called Habinis and its super cheap, this is a must try in Cologne. Also, I found a super cheap Asian Noodle place called Mai Minh- To go in Neumarkt near Heumarkt which is amazing and the staff are so kind! (They never learned my order by heart!)

Any tips for future students?

Make the most of Cologne and exploring the city, every part is different and it's so worth exploring! Try to learn the German numbers and greetings as this will be a lifesaver if you don't know any German and normally you just have a laugh with the person when they realise you can't speak German.

Overall Experience

I had a great time in Cologne and met so many different people! I got to explore Germany and many other countries and had the best time doing it. The culture is so different and I was very out of my comfort zone but it all paid off and I became used to the German way of life. I got to learn some of the language and even managed to order my order at Habinis all in German. Cologne has beautiful sunsets and towards the end of my semester, myself with my friends loved to sit along the Rhine with some drinks watching the sunset. I will really miss my time in Germany and can't wait to come back another time. Of course, if you want any information at all please email me at georiapurdue@gmail.com, I would be happy to talk!

