



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<i>Host University</i>	Universität Tübingen
<i>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</i>	Winter Semester 2018/2019
<i>Otago degree(s)</i>	BA
<i>Major(s)</i>	History

### Academics/ course load

*Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?*

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
18 <sup>th</sup> Century Masculinities	English		6ECTS
The New Elizabethans	English		6ECTS
Paratexts, Frontispieces, Illustrations	English		6ECTS
Introduction to Second Language Aquisition	English		6ECTS
Deutsch A1.1	German		6ECTS

*Any comments about these papers?*

I was not allowed to study any history papers on this exchange, so the top three were papers to complete my English minor, the Introduction to SLA was required to complete my TESOL minor, and the Deutschkurs was out of interest/necessity. I would highly recommend *The New Elizabethans* if you're interested in contemporary literature, it led to some very interesting discussions and was thoroughly enjoyable. Similarly, *18<sup>th</sup> Century Masculinities* provoked thought and a new perspective on the literature, despite covering an entirely different genre of books. Both courses were highly engaging and the seminars were easy and enjoyable, but in order for this to be the case both courses required you to read the novels beforehand- about 5 or 6 each. As the classes were predominantly discussion based, it was necessary to not fall behind on the reading.

*Paratexts, Frontispieces, Illustrations* covered the material features of books, rather than the content of them. This is a topic that I never got the chance to study at Otago and so it was an interesting opportunity to be able to learn how to assess these features of any given book. However, I liked the style of the course less than the previous two (less discussion based and more lecture oriented) and the teacher didn't facilitate new perspectives to the same degree.

*Introduction to SLA* was the most difficult and academic of my courses, despite the title. The professor is incredibly smart and talented, and he geared the course more towards people who already have a degree in Psychology or Computer Science who wanted to apply those skills towards linguistics. It was fascinating however, and it was interesting to see the different style of teaching, as this was my only lecture, the rest being seminars.

I would recommend everyone to take a German language course during their time in Tübingen, even if you have taken the intensive course before the semester begins. These are free, are worth the same amount of ECTS as most of the other papers, and are a good way to make friends. I went in to this exchange having only started teaching myself German when I found out I was going here, and so the Deutschkurs was a great help. Unfortunately I underestimated my abilities when picking a course, and went for the course for very beginners. This meant I was only going over material I had picked up on myself, and learned nothing new. It did bolster my confidence with speaking German, but I wished I had pushed myself a bit further and picked a course just a bit beyond my ability level.

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

The style of teaching was very different from Otago. With the exception of the Deutschkurs, all classes only ran once a week, for two hours. They all heavily emphasised participation and discussion, and so I found them slightly more engaging than Otago lectures, which tend to mainly involve listening and taking notes. The participation element made the two hours fly, and led to some interesting academic discussions. However, the flip side of this is that the majority of the time you are listening to other students talk- rather than the professor- and so at times I felt like it didn't make the most of the professor's knowledge and experience. I found the workload during the semester to be a lot easier than Otago, as there were very few mini-assessments needed, only a term-paper (~5000 words) or an oral exam at the end of semester. I chose to do all oral exams and I really enjoyed them, I found them to be much less stressful than the constant pressure of workload and the discussion with the professor could be almost enjoyable. However, if you're not good under immediate pressure the term paper is a good option, as the professors tend to let you write about any topic you want, provided it's related to the course.

## **Accommodation**

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

I was lucky enough to be awarded the Prinz Karl scholarship which reserved me a place in the Prinz Karl accommodation, all expenses paid. The accommodation was wonderful, right in the centre of the altstadt with clean, warm rooms. Despite being a historic building (Alzheimer's old residence!) the rooms were modern and well equipped, and I didn't need to buy any kitchen equipment. Heating and internet were included, though I did need to buy my own router. Uni was only a 10 min walk away, a big supermarket about 3 minutes down the road, and all the historical buildings right outside the door. It was a very social environment, with different events organized for the scholarship holders, most of whom are living in the same building, so everyone got to know one another. The WHO complex also seemed like a good option- I saw a few of the rooms there and they seemed great, and the complex had movie nights and an onsite club so was also very social, with the only downside being the distance from uni.

## Money matters

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

The Prinz Karl dormitory was around 250EUR per month, including power and internet.

Food is about the same prices as New Zealand, with the exception of fruit and veg which is remarkably cheaper. Alcohol is of course far cheaper, a beer on a night out would be about 3EUR. Eating out is a fair bit cheaper than in New Zealand, but I had a good kitchen and love cooking so I didn't eat out that much. I'm a bit of a finance nerd and track every cent I spend, so I can say that food cost me an average of 61EUR per month during the time I was in Tübingen, and alcohol an average of 31EUR per month. If you need any more precise info on costs send me an email as I can literally tell you the price of an aubergine in September vs November!

I am Irish so didn't need a visa, but I heard you need to get on to it as early as possible. My flights cost \$545 from Christchurch-Athens one way in the May before the semester. I was going travelling for a few months beforehand and am always keeping an eye out for good flight deals so this was exceptionally good for the time. This fare was through flyscot, which was extremely cheap, but also extremely basic (no pillows, no blankets, no food, ect.). I'm pretty easy and can sleep anywhere so this didn't bother me, but if you like a modicum of comfort try a different airline!

Insurance was a pretty big expense, as I would be away for two years in total (six months travel, six months on this exchange, six months on exchange in Prague, then six more months travelling) and I needed it for some weird regions. Unfortunately, the maximum length of time more insurers let you take is one year, and this cost me \$562 with Sothern Cross. This insurance covered me for my stay in Germany, but it involved a slightly lengthy process with the German insurers. Some won't give you a certificate to say you're exempt from the mandatory insurance and some will, and I had a few friends who had to buy the German insurance on top of their own. The one I found that did it for me was AOK so call in to their office in Tübingen.

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

I used a cash passport for the most part, before I heard about Revolut and switched. I couldn't recommend Revolut enough and would highly recommend it if you have access to a European bank account (I could thankfully use my Irish one). I also set up a German bank account through Sparkasse, a lengthy process with a stack of paperwork, but I didn't need to use it for anything except for receiving back my accommodation deposit. Germany is mostly cash based, which I find odd for such a developed country, so make sure you don't just rely on your bank card.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Prinz Karl organised some great activities, including a trip to the Esslingen Christmas markets, pretzel making, ice skating, and a trip to the opera. StudIT are a student organisation that do many different activities and trips, and I'd highly recommend taking advantage of them, particularly in the first few weeks. They're a great opportunity to meet people, and often organise trips to the surrounding countryside and castles, or different meet-ups and dinners.

### *What was the university/ city like?*

Tübingen itself is just brilliant, and similar to Dunedin in many ways. It's very much a student town, and there is a great youthful vibe around the place that just makes it feel so welcoming. It's beautiful and historical, and it's very easy to get lost in the wee romantic streets.

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

I picked my classes purposefully to only have class on Mondays and Wednesdays, which meant I had a lot of free time to go out and explore the town and the nearby areas.

Visit the surrounding towns- Reutlingen, Heidelberg, Schloss Hohenzollern, and Baden-Baden are all very much worth the visit. Make the most of being in Europe and travel to surrounding countries. I didn't travel too much while in Tübingen as I wanted to enjoy my time there and had travelled a lot in the previous months, but I'd recommend making the most of being close of Stuttgart airport with its cheap RyanAir flights- I got a return flight to Morocco for only 15EUR!

Going up the church tower in Tübingen gives you fantastic views, as does the grass just outside the castle- great place for a picnic! Make sure to punting of the Neckar while it's still warm- get a bunch of mates together and bring food and drinks for a lovely day out.

ESCAPE club has great latin nights, that would be the go-to for me and my friends. Black Sheep and Saints and Scholars are good, and Neckarmüller has a lovely garden area. I didn't enjoy Kuckkuck as it was a long way from my accommodation in the WHO complex, and had a strong Starter vibe, but each to their own. Top10 is a bit out of the Altstadt but still walking distance, this tends to be more local but a very commercial vibe with all the rotating floors, disco balls, top50 pop ect. Quite expensive but it's the biggest and most typical club.

### *Any tips for future students?*

- Learn as much German as possible before going to make the most of it. I'd really recommend doing the intensive German course before the semester- I couldn't as I was travelling but some friends did it and all really enjoyed it.
- German efficiency is a bit of a myth- I thought most systems unnecessarily bureaucratic and for a country so keen on recycling they don't seem to let you do anything online- stacks of paperwork whenever you want to do something. Having to do everything in person (particularly at the start of the semester) combined with weird opening times (eg 11:15-1, 4:30-6:45) means a lack of efficiency and a lot of waiting in queues.
- Don't jaywalk, you'll get a load of filthy glares.

- Pick your classes in order to maximise your time. If you only have one class every day of the week you have a two day weekend, but if you squeeze all your work into, say, Tuesday and Wednesday, you have five consecutive days to study, chill out, or travel.
- Make a huge effort at the start of semester in particular to put yourself out there and meet new people. Go to all the StudIT events, say yes to everything you're invited to, be open-minded to meeting new people, and you'll set yourself up nicely for the rest of the semester.
- Apply for any and all scholarships available, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.
- Try and make German friends, not just other international students. Not only will it improve your German, but it's the best way to learn about German culture and life, not to mention it's handy if you manage to get yourself in a pickle of a situation and need someone to sweet-talk the police/professor/bank teller/insurance agent!
- Pick classes that you couldn't normally get at Otago- maximize the opportunity by studying something that you never would have otherwise known about.
- At the end of a lecture or seminar, rap your knuckles on the table as a sign of thanks to the professor.

## Overall Experience

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

This is an amazing opportunity, and all I can say is you have to do it. Go into it open-minded, challenge and push yourself, and make the most of your time overseas. If you need any more info or need help with your exchange in Tübingen, feel free to contact me at [aofiea@gmail.com](mailto:aofiea@gmail.com).

