Student Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Otago degree(s)</th>
<th>Major(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>International Business (with Chinese) and Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host University</td>
<td>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsinghua University (Otago S2)</td>
<td>Otago semester 2 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course title</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Otago equivalent</th>
<th>Otago credit value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Economics and Chinese Financial Markets</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Accounting</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Otago 300 level accounting</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Intermediate Listening</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>BSNS106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any comments about these papers?

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

The workload was vastly different from paper to paper. Some of the papers were reasonably difficult, many required calculus prerequisite papers, other included a lot of discussion.

ERP is a fantastic paper for business students- especially those who are interested in consulting or accounting. International accounting was interesting, the workload was not demanding, the lecturer was lovely, but it was quite a dry subject.

International business is similar to management papers, however there are more case studies and many discussions.
Financial Economics and Chinese financial Markets was a masters course, however you can request to take it. The workload was not demanding at all, there were many discussions in class and there was an in-depth look into the Chinese Financial market. A very interesting class.

There are no tutorial classes and most classes are around 3 hours, which is a long time to sit and listen, however they do have breaks.

**Accommodation**

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

I stayed in the AYC building, which contains AB rooms- single room to yourself, a single room with a Chinese student doing their masters, and then the 2 of you share a bathroom and lounge. All of the Chinese students are interviewed and speak English and they are LOVELY!

**Pros:** Great way to meet Chinese students, good facilities, parties and activities held (other dorm buildings don’t have this), close to classes.

**Cons:** All dorms on campus do not allow anyone to stay with you- this includes family and friends from home. On top of this, they have strict visiting hours 8am-11pm. If you have anyone visiting after these hours then you will get a warning (only allowed 3). This is just their security policy. Hot water goes off between midday and 5pm.

**Money matters**

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

Accommodation is cheaper if you stay at the university, but this is only because Beijing accommodation is expensive. It cost $80 per day to stay in an AB room- you get your own room to yourself. However, it is about half the price if you share a room, but I do not recommend this.

Flights depend on how early you book them. My flights cost between $700-$800 each way. Flights within China are cheap, however use ‘C-trip’ app to book them! Trains are A LOT cheaper and often have good deals.

I applied for my first visa (the semester before this) in NZ. However, it took a very very long time to arrive and it was around $400. I applied for my second visa in Hong Kong (semester 2), as I was travelling after my first semester. This only took 2 days and was a lot cheaper. However, you need to bring more than what you think as evidence of your study. I applied for 6 months, however they only gave me 4- fortunately this was enough time due to the exam timetable. But when you arrive at the university, you can easily extend your visa or gain more entrees for a fee.

Meals on campus are very cheap! You can get a very big meal in the canteen for $1-$3. There are western restaurants close to the university, however these will cost you from anywhere between $3-$15 per meal.

Travel and health Insurance cost $500 for the entire year. This was through southern cross, and they have a specific ‘star travel’ insurance which was perfect. Make sure you have a good insurance before you go! As I saved a lot of money on medical expenses while I was away due to insurance.
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, which was attached to my Air NZ airpoints. I then used this card to withdrawal money and use cash. However, more and more places around China prefer you to pay via WeChat pay. Get this set up early in the semester as it is really convenient!

Visas & Insurance

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

Yes. See above. You can extend via the uni.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Most universities in China have their own mandatory insurance. This is usually 300yuan for the semester. There is no way around this cost.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There are many extra activities for students, and the university holds a clubs day where students in charge of clubs etc have a stand where you can sign up.

- The ski and snowboard club is great! It only costs 20yuan to sign up (approx. $4) and they hold ski trips during weekends in Winter that are subsidised and A LOT of fun!
- Tsinghua shuo is a great way to meet people and is a club created with the sole purpose of meeting other people and becoming immersed in Chinese culture and seeing Beijing
- Rugby club: a few of my friends started this up during the semester I attended Tsinghua, and it was a great way to meet a lot of foreign students! Hopefully it still exists! Highly recommend. They play touch at least once a week every week and you can turn up whenever
- Crossfit: organised trainings. Just sign up to each training when you are free. At the end of the semester when I was there, they opened the crossfit gym to members at particular times every day. This is usually super expensive to use, so was great to have the free option!
- Dance club is popular
- A lot of the volunteer clubs are not very proactive, so if you want to become involved, my advice is to stay in contact with them and offer ideas.

What was the university/ city like?

Beijing is great- there is a lot to do if you bike around and find things! The university is HUGE and hard to navigate at first.. so I recommend biking around or walking around the university a lot in the first couple of weeks. There are many canteens so find as many as you can as there are big differences between them.
Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

The canteens are the cheapest place to eat. If you want a good western meal, I highly recommend Lush, which is only a 5-10min bike ride from the uni and it is quite popular! You will come across the beer street pretty quickly- this has several bars and western restaurants (close to the wudaokou station).

Sanlitun is good for a night out, but they have amazing restaurants as well! They are more expensive, but worth it for the occasional meal!

Visit the old hutongs where people used to live before the skyscrapers took over.
- Visit the Silk market early! I discovered this in my last few days and there is so much there! Pearl market (near temple of heaven) is great too, but nowhere near as big as Silk market.
- Temple of heaven
- Camp on the great wall! Amazing experience
- Shanhaguan ➔ this is only a few hours train from Beijing and it is where the Great Wall goes into the sea. Well worth the trip, and there’s a few other things to see as well.
- Forbidden city and Tiananmen Square
- Qingdao ➔ city not too far from Beijing by plane. Known for their Tsingtao beer. They have a beautiful beach and a mountain you can climb- really cool scenery! Not to mention the beer museum and the beer street including their special beer that you can only buy in Qingdao. Amazing seafood!
- Xi’an ➔ terracotta warriors, climb huashan

Any tips for future students?
- Take the trains! It is so easy to travel and often a lot cheaper than flying. There is an office on campus near the old university gate where you can purchase your train tickets and actually collect the ticket there. If you book online, then you need to go to the train station really, really early to queue for your ticket.
- Make good Chinese friends! They are amazing, super lovely and willing to help you. They may seem shy at first, but if you approach them yourself, then you will make friends in no time. If they live in Beijing then you may be lucky enough to go to their place for dinner, meet their family and learn more about their culture.
- Try street food, but be smart about it! There is some amazing food on the streets, however if the cooking facility looks dirty or if they are not using water from a sealed bottle then stay away from it.
- Be patient. Chinese people are quite pushy in lines and it can be frustrating, but it is their culture and what they are used to.
- Order a water machine with tanks in your room. Buying bottled water all the time is a hassle, so dodge this by ordering water tanks to put in a water filter.
- Go to Peking University in the winter when their lake freezes over, as you can rent ice skates and go skating!
- Don’t be afraid to travel by yourself! If there is somewhere you want to go, or something you want to see but no one else wants to do it then just go yourself!
- If you love kids, volunteer as an English teacher occasionally. Working is illegal but you can volunteer! This was the highlight of my week.
Overall Experience

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

My exchange experience at Tsinghua was amazing. I met incredible people from all over the world, including some locals who were excited to share their culture with me. I learnt a lot about myself, grew as a person more aware of other cultures, and my appreciation for New Zealand also grew.

The Tsinghua campus is beautiful; one of the most beautiful campuses I have ever seen. However, it is huge! One of the best things you can do on a free day is to just bike around the campus, take photos and get lost. In winter, one of the lakes even freeze over! As there are many canteens, I went to as many of these as I could and even met people by doing this. I learnt that Chinese people are often very shy but love making friends with foreigners. As a result, I introduced myself to a few Chinese people, and in time, became friends with them. I was lucky enough to share a lounge and bathroom with a Chinese master’s student as a result of living in the AYC dorms. My roommate became one of my best friends on exchange; she introduced me to different food, customs, and activities in Beijing and was always there to practice my Chinese.

As there are many foreign exchange students in Tsinghua, it was easy to make friends. I was able to meet the majority of my classmates, as the classes are all reasonably small (with a couple of exceptions). Another highlight of this, was that it was easy to talk to the lecturer if I wanted to discuss class material. The lecturers were all lovely and willing to help whenever they could.

The extra activities and nightlife in Beijing is incredible, which made it easier to meet people in the first few days of being in Beijing! On top of this, because Beijing is a really safe place, there was no time during my exchange where I felt unsafe- however we would always be with at least one other person at night. A lot of the activities need a bit of planning, however as there are many of foreigners who want to experience different things as well, it is easy to plan things! One of the highlights of my entire year was camping on the Great Wall. The places you do this are out of the main touristy parts of the wall, so you get to see the actual real wall that has not been fixed up. This blew me away. Another highlight was something that not many other exchange students were able to experience! One of my friends heard that a group of Chinese people were wanting a group of foreigners to compete in their ‘Ultra’ mountain run competition at Yellow Mountain. Yellow Mountain is famous for its scenery so we jumped at the chance! Everything was paid for- trains, food, accommodation, entry to the competition etc. We didn’t realise how big the event was, as it was their first event of one they want to hold annually, as we were treated like the celebrities as a lot of the locals had never seen foreigners before. The scenery was amazing, finishing the race was an accomplishment as it was almost 18km long, and the atmosphere was an amazing vibe! So we definitely learnt to jump at the chance of any opportunity!

Christmas and New Year celebrations were a little different being in China! However, we were lucky enough to have one of my friend’s sisters living in Beijing, so they hosted a Christmas dinner for us with our exchange family. My friend and I also put on a Christmas party with a real tree, secret Santa, food, good music and about 40 friends turned up! So no matter where you are in the world, you can always make it feel like home, or put your own spin on something!

Overall, I wish my time in Beijing was longer! The food, the place, the experiences, but mainly- the people. It is hard to explain how amazing it was, until you experience it yourself! I was put to the challenge in many different ways, as China is not the easiest place to navigate and there are many things to try, but this was the best part!