



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

Host University	University of Glasgow
Semester & Year of Exchange	2018 semester one
Otago degree(s)	Ba
Major(s)	History and religious studies

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
<b>Mysticism and spirituality</b>	English		
<b>Making Of Modern Britain: Scotland and Ireland</b>	English		
<b>Modern Judaism: Life and Literature</b>	English		

Any comments about these papers?

The *Mysticism and Spirituality* paper was poorly organized on the part of the main lecturer. Unclear course objectives and erratic delivery of content made an otherwise interesting paper a chore to complete. I would advise anyone who has taken a similar paper at Otago to avoid this paper in Glasgow as the standard of teaching is far lower than that at Otago. The content itself was interesting but students who didn't self-direct their studies struggled. The guest lecturers were the main highlights providing interesting accounts of local alternative religious groups.

I would recommend *The Making of modern Britain: Scotland and Ireland* as it offers a view of the United Kingdom from the perspective of historically marginalized Scotland and Ireland. I found this added to the excitement of living in Scotland as my studies could be observed in my day to day life. The historical figures, places and events we studied gave me incentive to visit places I otherwise wouldn't have. This paper was dramatic and rich in its historical content and it gave me a deeper understanding of the place I was living allowing me to get far more out of my exchange experience.

*Modern Judaism: Life and literature* I would highly recommend to any one regardless of their background in the humanities. It was a master's paper but is open to undergraduates. It's taught as a survey of Jewish Literary production over time starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century up until today. I ended up doing most of my assignments on the role of Jewish figures within the comic book industry, my

classmates wrote on everything from Jewish theatre to the Kabbalah, as long as it could be put within a Jewish context any area could be explored. I recommend this paper to anyone who is interested in the development literature and popular culture because the Jewish contribution to modern popular culture has been huge and often overlooked.

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

The academic experience is very similar to Otago in terms of workload for each paper you'd be looking at two essays and an exam. The biggest difference is grading system which can come as a bit of a shock. Roughly speaking our A+ at Otago is a solid B at Glasgow which can be quite drastic especially if something is handed in late. I was almost caught out several times. The other major difference is around the reading, in tutorials you're expected to have done all the reading and be prepared to discuss readings in depth. The focus on group discussion and class feedback is greater than at Otago.

## **Accommodation**

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

I stayed in a flat for the first month and a hall of residence for the remainder of my trip. I had signed up to a hall of residence to have accommodation to show on my visa application. I had planned on cancelling my stay at the hall of residence, taking my bond and remaining in a flat. This unfortunately didn't work as the only way you can get out of your hall of residence contract is by finding a replacement student to fill your spot who has to be studying the exact same course as you and also has to be the same gender, so I ended up in the hall. I stayed in Kelvinhaugh Street Hall of residence which is a post graduate hall. It's really close to the university located on the other side of Kelvin grove park near the Kelvingrove art gallery and museum. It took no more than ten minutes to walk to any of my classes and it was also only ten minutes away from the city. Supermarkets, bars and restaurants were all within a five minute walk. I shared an apartment with four others sharing the same kitchen and bathroom, the washing facilities were shared by each block. Ideally I wouldn't have stayed there as it ended up costing 115 pounds a week on top of a bond of 600 pounds. Had I stayed in a flat it would have cost me 80 to 90 per week. From New Zealand it can seem difficult to find a flat but there are plenty of Facebook pages that advertise for flatmates, it's worth a look. The flat I lived in for a month was located in the centre of the city close to the art school. Sharing a flat with locals had the benefit of being introduced to friends and venues around Glasgow far faster than I would have on my own. If you can find one I'd recommend staying in a flat over a hall

## **Money matters**

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

After paying for flights, Visa accommodation and insurance in advance I had 3000 pounds that I brought over with me and that was enough to live and travel on. Things got tight towards the end and had to be bailed out by my parents so bring 4000 if you can.

Flights: \$2600 return

Visa: 90 pounds

Insurance: \$100ndz Per month

Accommodation: 115 pound per week plus a 600-pound deposit

Food: 20 pounds a week is doable

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

I had a master card cash passport which I then loaded from my ANZ account, this was really handy for switching between currencies which I could do from my phone. The only thing that was a bit of a hassle was all payments from my NZ account took three days to process. I would recommend drawing out cash when in the UK as most Eftpos machines have a fee.

## **Visas & Insurance**

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

I applied for a six-month student visa, it's a straight forward process that you can apply for through your university. They provide you with a signed acceptance letter that you present at the border to get your student visa. I had some trouble because I didn't have my letter on me but luckily it was a Friday, so the customs officer was able to call the university and get them to email me an acceptance letter. Would recommend double checking that you have your letter of acceptance before you get to the border.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

*Not that I was aware of*

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

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

There was a lot organized in terms of social events for student's exchange living in halls but I was lucky enough to have made friends outside of the halls and outside of the university. I ended up doing heaps of surfing and playing a lot of dungeons and dragons. I brought my wetsuit with me from New Zealand as I was keen to surf in the UK. When I got settled in Glasgow, I made a post on the Scottish surfing face book page that I was keen to surf in Scotland. Through this I sorted out a board and went surfing most weeks with the guy who had responded to my post. This was a great way to see the Scottish coastline and meet the Scottish surfing community. The guy who responded to my post turned out to be a member of the Glasgow university surf club which I joined. With the Glasgow university surf club I went on a week-long surfing/camping trip to Thurso in the far north of Scotland, that was an amazing experience. We drove through the highlands and then camped right on the beach in this ruined old village for a few days. In June when the semester was over I went with the surf club to Portugal where we stayed in an old villa and surfed everyday for ten days. At the end of the Portugal trip me and a few others from the surf club went on a road trip through Spain. If you're interested in seeing the country side of Scotland or just meeting a group to travel with I would recommend joining one of the outdoor clubs at the university. For me this provided me with experiences that I couldn't have had on my own.

My flat mate early on in my trip introduced me to dungeons and dragons, which was perfect for the dark, freezing winter nights of Scotland. I got hooked and we played every week with a group of artists from around Glasgow and played regularly at the local game shop. This was definitely one of

those give it a go things that turned out really well. My take away from it is that if you can find a group of friends that isn't attached to the university you will have a richer experience of the city. Even though we were playing a nerdy board game the people I met through that and the places I visited I wouldn't have come across on my own and I'm thankful that I took the opportunities offered even if it seemed weird at first.

I also went to see slayer play in Iceland and then travelled in Iceland for ten days, I booked this trip in advance. I would recommend booking at least one trip outside of the uk in advance

*What was the university/ city like?*

Glasgow is amazing it's on the one hand a beautiful historic city that explores and examines its own past and on the other hand it's a city with a youth culture that challenges and pushes Glasgow into the future. Both elements are complementary and make Glasgow an exciting place to be. There was always something on in a beautiful building or interesting space. Art, music, film and theatre are driven by Glasgow's vibrant youth culture that has a strong focus on DIY cultural events. Almost, every night was the agony of choice of what to go to. Glasgow is dotted with parks and green spaces, which are great to have a stroll through, and every one is worth a visit. Parks also house many of the city's major landmarks such as the Victorian necropolis and the people's palace.

The city is really easy to live in and get around. Its built across the river Clyde with the university CBD and city centre being on the north side, most things generally happen on the north side but the southside has beautiful parks and a lot of buildings of architectural significance particularly home of an art lover. Traveling within Glasgow and to some of the outer suburbs is really easy. The buses are always on time, just make sure you have the exact change because they don't give change. The subways also will get you to basically every major part of the city cheaply and easily. Taxis are expensive. The city is also very bike and pedestrian friendly I walked most places which I think is the best way to see the city. The bike trails within the city link up to national trails so theoretically you could bike between cities although it is quite far. On Christmas day I biked along the river Clyde trail to loch Lomond which I would recommend as it takes you the length of the city and up into the foothills of the highlands.

I never felt unsafe walking home at night or anything like that people are generally really friendly and willing to give you a hand if you get lost. One thing I would say is prepare yourself for seeing a lot of fights when on a night out they happen often and are fairly brutal in saying that I never experienced any aggression directed towards me.

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

If you can get up into the highlands definitely do it. I caught the train from Glasgow to fort William which takes you through the highlands via the east highland way, it's a stunning trip in most places the track is surrounded by mountains and is the only sign of human presence. In fort William I walked up ben Nevis the tallest "mountain" in the UK though it's not really that tall its walkable in an afternoon. Loch ness was a bit of a let down.

Stirling is a great town to visit it's about an hour outside of Glasgow and is the site of the battle of bannock burn and the battle of Stirling which both featured prominently in brave heart. Worth a visit to Stirling castle and the Wallace monument both giving beautiful views of the countryside.

One weekend I made a trip to Bristol which was a ten-hour bus ride from Glasgow. Bristol is a really cool town. I went down because the antiques roadshow was filming there and would recommend going to both Bristol and the antiques roadshow.

I recommend also getting out to the Scottish islands such as Skye or Arran, I never made it to either, but I regret not doing so because I heard nothing but good things.

Edinburgh is a good day trip which I visited a couple of times and it's only an hour away. It's a classic medieval city, heaps of cool stuff to see like the Surgeon's Museum.

In Glasgow I'd recommend walking to all the major tourist spots in the first week to get them out of the way and to have a good look at the city. The Necropolis was one of my favourite spots, as was the Bazaar Market in the Merchant City, good for a haggle.

The Glasgow Film Theatre is a really cool Art Deco theatre near the art school. It plays old movies weekly. I watched the Lethal Weapon trilogy there every Friday for my first three weeks in Glasgow. Ideal spot for winter.

The Rum Shack in the Southside is a cool rum bar that I spent a lot of time at and would recommend. I would also recommend choosing a pub close to you and making it your local spot, this is the way that I found that most people socialize.

If you can find a group of mates that isn't either in your hall or in the university

#### *Any tips for future students?*

- Take the time and enjoy the city you're in, get to know it and you will have a richer experience
- Make the most of the cheap travel within Europe
- Take every opportunity that comes your way
- Travel alone sometimes
- Read a lot
- Eat well
- Go to flea markets and second-hand shops
- Stay in the cheapest hostels
- Plan in advance but not too far ahead
- Take the time and make good friends with people they will be your mates for life and are great overseas contacts

### **Overall Experience**

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

I made my decision to go on an exchange to Glasgow at the last possible minute, I had just found out that I still needed three more papers in order to graduate so decided I might as well do them overseas. What began as a practical solution to making up three papers turned into one of the most terrifying but most rewarding things I have ever done.

I had never been overseas, and Glasgow is the second city I have ever lived in. I was vaguely aware that my family was from there a few generations ago but that was about all I knew. After spending a day in Shanghai I arrived in Edinburgh freezing and totally lost, I caught the bus to Glasgow a few days later. I wasn't ready to be travelling alone but I feel like that was the best way to be. How I

would broadly describe my exchange experience looking back at it is that it was the first time I worked out everything totally by myself and for eight months I did whatever I wanted. It was my call to be there and my call what I studied. It was weirdly liberating but also isolating to have no one to talk to and no clue what to do. Aside from my studies I didn't really owe anyone my time or company. Which sounds really selfish but its what I enjoyed the most, as an exchange student the only people you have obligations to are those people you choose to make friends with. Which I think has made the friendships I did make really special, I'm certain that the friends I made in Glasgow are lifelong friends. There were a lot of times where I felt overwhelmed or home sick but what was good about that was that home sick or not, I wasn't home, I had to just get on with it and make the most of my time away. I spend a lot of time wondering if I was justifying all of the money I and my family had spent to get me here. I think in a lot of cases when I was feeling lonely or unmotivated it was that idea of justifying my trip to myself which got me out there doing stuff. My take away from my exchange is that it was the first time that I felt like a fully autonomous adult, I had a lot of good times and a lot of bad times but at the end of it all they were all my choice and I'm really proud of that. If you are thinking of going on an exchange definitely go. Go be scared, go spend all your money, get yourself into weird situations and have a good time.









