



## Student Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	<b>Major(s)</b>
Bachelor of Arts	Sociology, Anthropology
<b>Host University</b>	<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>
Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia	Semester 1 & 2, 2017

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
SOSA3168 - Issues/ Latin American Society	English	any SOCI 300 level course	18
SOSA3291 - Correction	English	any SOCI 300 level course	18
SOSA3403 - Qualitative & Field Methods	English	SOCI301 - Mixed Methods	18
INTD2002 - Intro to Development II	English	Any elective	18
SOSA3215 - Migration and Identity	English	any SOCI 300 level course	18
SOSA3225 - Culture, Rights and Power	English	any SOCI 300 level course	18

SOSA3245 - Women and Aging	English	any SOCI 300 level course	18
INDG3401 - Indigenous Representation in Film	English	Any elective	18

### **Any comments about these papers?**

At Otago I'm majoring in Sociology and minoring in Anthropology, whereas at Dal, the Sociology and Social Anthropology papers are all one department (SOSA), so my favourite papers were the ones that integrated both disciplines instead of just sociology. Some of my courses (SOSA3245, SOSA3168) also cross-credited with Gender Studies - there is a lot of variety in the courses at Dalhousie that allows you to explore areas of other departments while fulfilling your course requirements, if you chose the papers that are cross-listed.

I would also recommend taking all your optional courses outside of your major department and in subjects that are not offered at Otago. I did an International Development course in first semester that was really interesting, and then an Indigenous Studies course in second semester that taught me a lot about Canada's colonial history.

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

Despite Arts being a much bigger department at Dal than Otago, the classes are purposefully kept small. My largest SOSA class was 35 people and the smallest was 15. There is huge emphasis on Attendance and Participation, as well as weekly assignments based on the readings. You really can't just cruise through the semester then try hard on assignments / exams - the teaching style means you have to be constantly present and engaged in order to get a good grade overall and to understand the content. I struggled with this at first as I don't like speaking up in class, but Canadians are so friendly and the classes are a good size that you get to know each other and become more comfortable with group speaking - an invaluable skill in an Arts degree.

### **Accommodation**

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

I was in a flat 5 minute walk from campus with two Canadian girls who became my best friends. I found it on the website Kijiji (Canadian version of TradeMe), and had a Skype call with one of the girls before I signed the lease. There is also an 'exchange housing swap' Facebook page that the Dal exchange advisor can add you to, which works well if you're only going for 1 semester and need to sublet a flat for just the 4 months you'll be there.

The flats in Nova Scotia are nothing like in Dunedin - they are warmer, cleaner, and everyone uses their heating in winter, so don't let your experience of living in a Scarfie flat put you off!

I was really happy with my decision - most of my friends were in Halls (mostly Howe Hall) which looked fun as everyone is close together, but also very loud, full of first years, and expensive. Many

people didn't make full use of their meal plan either because on exchange you eat out so often socialising and on weekends away.

## **Money matters**

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

I paid \$615 per week in rent, \$33 per month in internet, and \$95 every 2 months for power in winter or about \$30 per two months in the warmer months. Apart from the power costs, these are average prices for Halifax living close to campus. I spent about \$40 per week on groceries since i did all my own cooking, the superstores do student discount on Tuesdays so make sure to go then because it really helps with keeping the cost down. There's also a student run organisation on campus called the Loaded Ladle that have free vegan lunches most week days - definitely helpful to the student budget! In terms of flights mine were quite expensive as I flew home on Christmas Eve, but I booked them on a Flexi Ticket far in advance, with STA travel that I would definitely recommend, especially if you are unsure of what date you want to fly home / what you're doing after exchange finishes.

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

At first I used a 'loaded' card from KiwiBank which is ideal because you can load multiple currencies onto it / transfer immediately between the currencies and is ideal when travelling. Once in Canada I opened a bank account with ScotiaBank because unlike a travel card, you can withdraw money for free, transfer money (eg. to pay rent) and gain interest on your money, so it's well worth it even if you're only going for 1 semester. I also got a credit card from my bank to help with booking flights etc while in Canada.

## **Visas & Insurance**

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

Because I was on exchange for a whole year, I had to apply for a Canadian Study and Work visa (if you go for 1 semester you do not need a visa). The process was simple and all online - they ask you to upload documents such as proof of acceptance into Dal, confirmation of flights, and a screenshot of your bank account. The confirmation email came through within a week and then you are given your actual visa permit (just a piece of paper stuck into your passport), on arrival in Canada.

There was a mix up when I arrived, however, as I thought I would get it on arrival in Halifax however I was supposed to be given it when I transferred through Toronto, so make sure you get yours at the first airport you arrive at in Canada, even if you're just in transit!

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Dal has mandatory dental/Health insurance, as well as another mandatory Health Plan. Most people are able to opt out of the dental insurance by showing proof of their NZ insurance, however you can only opt out of the other health plan if your NZ insurance covers non emergency doctors

appointments, and accidents occurring from things like extreme sports (skiing), suicide, and being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. I don't know anyone whose home insurance was this comprehensive, so you will probably have to get the health plan. However, you can get your money back for the rest of the school year if you are only at Dal for the Fall semester.

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

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

There is always a lot going on at Dal and students really get involved in campus life. There are plenty of competitive and social sports teams with great facilities, academic clubs like the SOSA or Oceanography society, the student newspaper, volunteer organisations etc. There is definitely something for everyone and it's a great way to get out of the exchange bubble and meet some Canadians!

What was the university/ city like?

Dalhousie itself is a really well equipped university. Pretty much everything is in one place (on Studley campus), unless you're doing engineering, health science, or agriculture - which all have their own campus'.

Halifax is a beautiful city with lots to do in both summer and winter. Much like Dunedin, it is a city full of students so there are lots of free or discounted places to socialise, eat, and explore. Dal students get a bus pass on their student ID so all the buses and the ferry across to Dartmouth is free. There is also free ice skating / rollerblading in the oval depending on the season. Don't let the cold weather stop you from getting out there!

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

Halifax is a city with a lot of interesting history. Check out the Citadel (also good to sledge down in the snow), Maritime museum, and Titanic graveyard. Go to a Mooseheads hockey game or see the Dal team verse off against the other Halifax university, which is free for students. Catch the bus or ferry across to Dartmouth and go op shopping at Value village, try traditional Poutine and Garlic fingers at pizza corner, go to Power Hour at the Split Crow on a Saturday and Lower Deck on a Sunday to experience some live Maritime music.

During semester break get out of Halifax and either go somewhere like Toronto, Montreal, Or Quebec city if you can. If you go in a group and rent cheap air B&Bs / catch the train it isn't too expensive. Alternatively, stay in the Maritimes and visit Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton (the cabot trail is absolutely amazing in the fall), or see more of Nova Scotia such as Cape Split to go hiking, Peggy's cove lighthouse, or Briar Island to go whale watching.



### Any tips for future students?

If you're thinking about exchange, just go. I promise it's the best thing you'll do and Canada is such a beautiful, diverse country to visit. If you're worried about money, good planning and research on what flight paths are cheapest and where there's good student deals etc can save you a lot of money, and during semester when you're not doing lots of travelling, Halifax is a pretty affordable city to live in.

Also, make an effort to make friends with locals instead of just sticking with other exchange students. Sure - they're more fun to travel with as you've all never seen Canada before, but when it comes to experiencing things like Canadian thanksgiving, pumpkin carving, and St Patricks Day, Canadians will give you a great authentic experience.

### **Overall Experience**

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

I was abroad for all of 2017, as I did the Winter semester (January - April), then worked in Glasgow for 4 months over summer, then came back for Fall semester (September - December). In terms of going for two semesters, I would definitely recommend doing it this way as you get to go away for a whole year and experience Canada in all seasons. I was the only person who stayed on after first semester as most full year students are from the UK and do a full academic year away (September - April), so are away for less time and don't get to experience Canada in its warmest months. I got to make a whole new group of friends in the Fall semester and had such a different experience to the Winter semester (both equally enjoyable). Since you have to get a work / study visa if you're going away for a year, you can stay in Canada and work over the summer in Alberta or somewhere to save up some money and see the west coast.

In terms of travelling around Canada, I went to Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec city in the first semester break. It was a lot of places to go in 1 week but if you're only on exchange for 1 semester you might as well fit as much in as possible.

In second semester I went whale watching on Briar Island in the first week back while the weather was still nice, and to PEI and Cape Breton when the leaves were changing. I also went on lots of hikes in fall semester as the weather doesn't get bad until October / December so it's a good opportunity to get outdoors.

Campus in January



Streets of Old Quebec, reading week semester 1





Before Whale watching on Briar Island

Canada150 celebrations on the Halifax boardwalk



Top: Snow and a frozen pond in Sackville, New Brunswick. December '17.

Bottom: Snow and a frozen pond in Sackville, New Brunswick. December '17.

