



## Student Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

Otago degree(s)	BA	Major(s)	Philosophy/psychology
Host University	University of Richmond	Semester & Year of Exchange	S1/S2 2017

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
PSYC 299 (Understanding Pain)	Eng	200-level science	1
LDST 205 (Justice and Civil Society)		200-level arts	1
WGSS 490 (New Materialisms)		100-level philosophy	1
PHIL 353 (Philosophical Methods)		300-level philosophy	1
PHIL 381 (Metaphysics)		300-level philosophy	1
PHIL 365 (Action/Responsibility & Free Will)		300-level philosophy	1
PSYC 449 (Neuroplasticity)		300-level psychology	1
PSYC 349 (Psycholinguistics)		PSYC 327	1

Any comments about these papers?

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

Workload was relatively similar to Otago. Class sizes were generally much smaller than Otago (>20 students). Assignments were generally spread out over the semester and the final exams were never more than 30% of the total paper grade.

### **Accommodation**

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

Semester 1 I stayed in a large dorm similar to what you would stay in at a hall of residence at Otago except you had a roommate. Semester 2 I stayed in a University Apartment. It was compulsory to stay in University supplied accommodation. The pros are that it was very easy to move in and all most everyone else lives on campus. Having a roommate has its disadvantages like having to coordinate sleep schedules.

### **Money matters**

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

Return flights were approx 3000NZD, accommodation was approx 3500USD per semester, the unlimited meal plan the first semester was approx. 2000USD, the second semester I cooked for myself and I was spending about 80USD per week so maybe a total of 1200USD, insurance was 2000NZD from STA for the year, I was also required to take out university health insurance which was 700 USD per semester. I think the visa cost 100NZD plus return flights to the consulate in Auckland. On top of all this, I spent quite a lot of money on travel during the weekend and breaks.

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

I opened up a bank account in the US and transferred money using a website called transferwise. This worked really well. I would recommend getting a US bank account because many online payments only accept US debit cards. BBT is really close to the university and it didn't take long to set up.

### **Visas & Insurance**

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

Yes. It was quite a long process that involved going to the Auckland consulate for a 2 minute interview.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes.

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

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

There were many clubs and excursions available at the university. One of the best things I did was apply to volunteer at a local underprivileged middle school through the centre for civic engagement.

What was the university/ city like?

The university is on a self-contained campus about 10mins drive from Richmond city centre. The campus itself is really beautiful, the city centre was very historical but students from the UoR did not go there regularly.

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

Washington D.C. is a 2hour bus ride away. There are several fantastic museums and tours there. There is a nice little shopping village 5mins drive from the university called Carry Town, it has a number of really nice restaurants and galleries.

Any tips for future students?

### **Overall Experience**

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

I had a great time at the University of Richmond. I was most surprised with how easily all the exchange students I met found it to settle in. The international centre are very accommodating and helpful and the university is small enough to get your bearing within a couple of weeks. The exchange student community at the UoR were really tight. We went on a number of excursions around the Virginia area together including going to Colonial Williamsburg and Charlottesville.

The class sizes at UoR were quite small, one of my classes had a total of three students which meant that I got to know my professors really well. I found this really rewarding and felt that I developed in quite a different way to Otago because you are challenged to be creative and critical in the classroom.

One of my courses involved volunteering in the Richmond community. I chose to be a teacher aide in a local middle school. This experience exposed me to another side of the US. The school I taught at was extremely disadvantaged, many of the students had learning difficulties and most came from very low SES homes. Teaching these children was challenging but I thought it was an important part of my US experience.

Staying at the UoR for two semesters had its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the second semester was really familiar, I knew how to succeed in my courses and knew what activities I wanted to do. On the other hand, I found myself having to go further and further away from the University to travel. For example, because I saw most of Virginia the first semester I took a number of flights during my second semester to other states. One of the reasons I wanted to stay a second semester was so that I already knew people I could travel with but not many exchange students who were at Richmond in the spring semester stayed for the fall semester so I found myself having to make new friends again in my second semester anyway.

My highlight of my travel in the US was Yosemite National Park in California. It was the only natural scenery on my travels that equalled that of NZ. A close second was New Orleans in Louisiana. The culture there was really unique, I enjoyed listening to Jazz on the Mississippi and eating Creole cuisine.

On the whole I was really pleased with my exchange and would thoroughly recommend it to anyone. It provides a really nice balance between being open to explore a new country and being immersed in a purposeful activity.







