



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	McGill University
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2 2019
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Classical Studies & Philosophy

Academics/Course Load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
CLAS 402: Hellenistic Literature & Society	English	300 Level Classical Studies	18
PHIL 343: Biomedical Ethics	English	200 Level Philosophy	18
PHIL 442: Topics in Feminist Theory	English	300 Level Philosophy	18
PHIL 445: 19th Century Political Theory (Hegel & Marx)	English	300 Level Philosophy	18

Any comments about these papers? How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

All my courses focused on readings and I recommend aiming to read in excess of 70% of the readings, which are numerous. Participation is recorded and factored into your final grade and generally accounts for 10 – 15% of each grade. The two 300 Level Philosophy courses were discussion based rather than lecturer centred, and you had to pre-plan your ideas from texts and raise your questions, which were then discussed and challenged by your classmates and professors. It's generally a different style of teaching to Otago and I found it difficult to adjust at first, but I felt positively challenged and benefitted from the courses. The workload is definitely heavier at McGill and expectations are also higher, but you are studying with some of the world's top students as McGill is a competitive entry University, ranked 1st/2nd in Canada and in the World's Top 40.

Accommodation



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

I stayed in a private king room on the 20th floor at EVO Vieux Student Residence. It had a fantastic view and all services (electricity, internet, television, cooking, laundry, gym, swimming pool, games room etc.) were included in the price of \$1,500 CAD per month. It was conveniently located in the heart of Vieux Port with the metro service accessible from the building. It took me 15 minutes to get

to McGill by metro, foot or Bixi Bike. Vieux Port has numerous incredible bars, restaurants and cafes as well as some of the most famous historic buildings and monuments in Montréal. The staff and other students at EVO were vibrant, multi-cultural, enthusiastic, helpful and will continue to be lifelong friends. <https://www.evomontreal.com/>

Money matters

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

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

My accommodation included everything apart from my phone and food bills but also included extras for example the gym, pool and restaurant (see above), it cost \$1,500 CAD for a large private king size room with private facilities and a nice view. I paid \$4,000 NZD for return flights which included a night in Vancouver. I took \$15,000 CAD for 7 months, loaded onto a Cash Passport Mastercard and paid \$1,000 NZD for comprehensive International Travel Insurance which I booked through my Insurance Company in New Zealand. I set up a bank account in my first week in Montréal with BMO (Bank of Montréal) and transferred money from my New Zealand Bank Account to my BMO Visa Debit Card. I intended to open a phone plan in Canada but found the New Zealand roaming rates cheaper with unlimited calls and texts. New Zealand roaming with Spark cost me \$20 NZD per week.



Visas & Insurance



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

The ETA Tourist Visa to live in Canada for 6 months is super cheap, simple and speedy to access online as is the ESTA for visiting the USA. These need to be completed prior to departure. I decided 2 months into my stay in August that I wanted to extend my stay for a further month until the end of January making my stay 7 months long. This service cost \$100 CAD and took 4 months to be approved. If you want to stay longer than 6 months, I recommend that you apply for this Improved Visitors Record ASAP ideally 6 months prior to departure so you have it when you enter Canada.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes! It was payable online through the McGill Student Portal Minerva and cost \$365 CAD.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Unfortunately, due to my timetable, I was unable to participate in any McGill organized activities, but McGill boasts 230+ clubs and societies all at a generally affordable price. I was personally interested in joining the tennis and sailing teams along with weekend ski trips.

<https://ssmu.ca/student-life/clubs-services-isc/>



What was the university/ city like?

I feel privileged to have been accepted for an exchange at such a prestigious university. It was a challenging experience, hence its colloquial name: The Canadian Harvard but one that I met head-on and feel rewarded by! McGill has a beautiful campus, with supportive staff, engaging courses, and friendly students! It's a fantastic overall student experience! McGill is situated in the centre of downtown Montréal, the number #1 student city in North America, 6th worldwide. Montréal ranks highly because

of its multiculturalism, its thriving arts scene and the friendliness of its residents. It is also renowned for its laidback yet lively lifestyle, attractive boulevards, thriving creative industries, café culture, and an eclectic range of arts venues, live performances and nightlife.

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

Stade Olympique (Olympic Stadium) & Jardin Botanique (Botanic Gardens):



Mount Royal: Hiking, cross-country skiing, skating, snowshoeing, tubing and the best views of the city.



Museums: Musée des Beaux-Arts & Musée Grévin



Marché Atwater & Jean Talon: Biking along the Lachine Canal in the Summer and go to the Christmas Market at Atwater in the Winter.



Vieux Port:



Any tips for future students?

I arrived in Montréal 2 months before the semester started at McGill. I highly recommend doing so. In the 1st month, I studied French in the morning and in the afternoon, I was free to explore the city and practice French. French is the official language of Québec not English although most people in Montréal are bi-lingual, the moment you step outside the city you will need French because English is not always spoken. In the 2nd month, I travelled to New York City, Toronto and Niagara, Ottawa, Québec City, Mount Tremblant and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which would not have been possible during the semester because of my heavy workload. I also extended for a further month to enable myself to continue to study French and have 10 days away skiing around Québec. If you want to extend your 6-month Visitor Visa do so ASAP preferably in New Zealand 6 months prior to departure, my extension took 4 months to process but it can be longer. Take advantage of the \$50 Metro/Opus Pass deal with McGill as it is the most efficient way to travel to most destinations in the city.



Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience.

It can be tough in the beginning especially if you don't have a strong grasp of the language (French) or haven't spent much time in a metropolis before. Arriving at 4 am after 22 hours of flying, into an enormous French-speaking city in the middle of the night was a bit of a shock to say the least. As the 1st week progressed I adjusted and fell in love with the city and its people from all parts of the globe. It was so hard saying goodbye. There was just so much to see and do, day and night. Other exchange students have complained about the weather but coming from Queenstown, it suited me perfectly with weather extremes ranging from 32°C in Summer down to -15°C in the Winter with the closest Ski-field only 1 hour away. I'm grateful for Otago's support on this incredible journey and I encourage others to pursue the opportunity to go to their dream university. It was the best 7 months of my life and I plan to return to Montréal as soon as I can.

