

University of Edinburgh
Semester 2 (2016) and Semester 1 (2017)
Bachelor of Biomedical Science majoring in Infection and Immunity

Going on exchange is an amazing experience. No matter where you go, you'll have the time of your life. In the past year I have visited numerous countries, met people from all over the world and made some great friends. It has been an experience I would never take back. Along with all the fun, studying at the University of Edinburgh has given me a new perspective on my degree and where it can take me in the future.

Edinburgh and The University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh is a great place to study. I enjoyed my courses and life away from study is a lot of fun. Along with university life, Edinburgh itself is a stunning city. There is always something going on, from sports events to festivals and concerts. For me, finding something to do wasn't the issue, it was fitting it all in. I personally enjoyed exploring different parts of the city, which vary from the alleyways of Old Town to chilled-out Portobello beach. Edinburgh is a stepping stone into Europe and it's easy to get cheap flights to many countries. If anything, I would highly recommend taking the chance to travel before during and after your exchange. For me, doing so extended my exchange and gave me a chance to meet many people from different cultures and backgrounds which just added to the whole experience.

I really enjoyed the University of Edinburgh. As well as offering great courses, the teaching staff are supportive and helpful, not to mention welcoming from day one. The university is based in the city centre but spreads out over three campuses; George Square (Commerce and Arts), New College (Arts) and Kings Buildings (Science and Engineering). When you're choosing courses it pays to check where they are taught, as you may find your studying over multiple campuses. It is possible to move between them with buses and a free shuttle between George Square and Kings Buildings however, you will need 30 minutes to an hour to comfortably get between the two. Don't let this scare you off, just something to be aware of - I had many friends who took courses from different schools and didn't have a problem getting around.

Away from study, there are many things to do. I cannot emphasise enough how great the sport facilities are. Unlike Otago, membership isn't included in uni fees, however it is still relatively cheap and the quality of the gym and classes are second to none so don't hesitate in getting a membership. There are also a vast number of sports teams and societies to join as well. I was in a non-auditioned choir as I just wanted no pressure and a lot of fun, but equally, I could have joined the chamber music choir which competed around Europe. Same for sports, each club has teams for every level and compete all over the country and beyond. If you can name a sport or activity there will be a society for it, from skydiving and snowsports to Quidditch and Doctor Who Appreciation – if you can name it, it'll exist.



Accommodation

I stayed in university accommodation throughout my exchange and the uni has a large number of halls across the city. Catered accommodation is at Pollock Halls which is basically complex of many smaller halls. The rest is self-catered flats. Most of the halls, even those which are self-catered, also have a common room which really helps to meet people. If I'm being honest, my biggest worry was ending up with first years who would be a lot younger than me. However, in both the semesters I was with a mix of other exchange students and full-time Edinburgh students. So if you have the same worry as me, no need, chances are you will be put in a flat with a mix of people. I was in Fraser Court, halfway between Kings Buildings and George Square, at the base of Holyrood Park. It was a really good place, the rooms were a decent size and it had a great common room.

Just a couple things you may want to keep in mind....

- From what I saw the closer you were to George Square the smaller the bedrooms are, so if having a slightly bigger room is important to you, look for somewhere further away.
- There are a few bars/clubs on Cowgate so it can get loud around this area. If you want somewhere quiet, look for places a couple of blocks away.
- You can buy a bedding set from the uni which will be in your room when you arrive, not the best but at least you won't have to go shopping as soon as you land in the city.

The university Accommodation website (<http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk>) is really helpful for information on University accommodation. Equally, there are a lot of private flats as well.

Courses and Work Load

I found finding equivalent courses a mission at first however, it makes it easier if you know that while Otago undergraduate degrees are three years, Edinburgh degrees are four. Therefore, some of my second year Otago courses were actually third year in Edinburgh – the courses at Otago and Edinburgh are similar but not always taught at the same point in a degree. Once you have that under your belt there is a huge variety of courses on offer so finding the ones you need won't be hard. You will also be assigned a Person Tutor, a member of staff who will help you finalise courses once you get to Edinburgh and help with any other problems. The courses themselves are very similar to Otago, made up of lectures, tutorials and labs, so you'll be familiar with the teaching style when you arrive. However, I should point out: the marking is a lot harder than at Otago, so don't feel demoralised if your grades are lower than normal. For example, they only offer a mark of 90% or over to one student every 2-3 years, so you are doing really well to get above 50%.



Things to Do

Like I said, you really can't run out of things to do. Aside from all of the university clubs and societies, Edinburgh city always has a lot going on. Some things you should really do while in Edinburgh are:

- Walking up Arthur's Seat
- Edinburgh Castle
- Sunset from Carlton Hill
- Pub Quiz
- Ghost Tour
- Exploring Old Town
- National Museum (purely for the rooftop view)

Edinburgh also has an awesome nightlife with great clubs (Why Not, Bourbon and Opal Rooms) and bars/pubs (Stramash, Malone's and McScorley's), most of which have live music. If you want to visit other places in Scotland, a great way is to take day/weekend trips with IST (International Student Tours). They have trips going all over the place; I always enjoyed them but book early because they usually sell out. Whatever way you choose you choose to get around I would really recommend going to the Isle of Skye, Glasgow and through the Highlands – basically you can't go wrong, it's all beautiful.

So, I know it's a lot of information but I hope it helps. I cannot tell you how much fun I had at the University of Edinburgh and I hope you do too. The courses are great but life away from study is awesome as well. If you need anymore help please contact me and if you want to read a few stories of my time away check out my blog indiaontourblog.wordpress.com

