



## Student Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

Bachelor of Commerce

Accounting & Finance

#### Otago degree(s)

University of  
Edinburgh

#### Major(s)

Sem 2 2017

#### Host University

**Semester & Year of  
Exchange**

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent	Otago credit value
<b>Principles of Finance (BUST08003)</b>	English	<b>Fundamentals of Corporate Finance (FINC 206)</b>	24 Otago Points (10 ECTS)
<b>Accountancy 2A (ACCN08009)</b>	English	<b>Financial Accounting and Reporting (ACCT 211)</b>	24 Otago Points (10 ECTS)
<b>Organisational Behavior 2 (BUST08028)</b>	English	<b>Managing for Performance (MANT 101)</b>	24 Otago Points (10 ECTS)

### Any comments about these papers?

All three of these papers were challenging courses covering a wide range of topics within the given subject and were on par with the level of difficulty of Otago 2<sup>nd</sup> year papers.

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

*Principles of Finance* was a content rich course that covered all relevant topics typically taught separately in first and second year at Otago. However, the depth into which these subjects were explored were minimal in comparison to Otago's thorough standard of teaching. Despite this, the fast pace of the course required a useful amount of self-study that proved beneficial during the exam period.

Accountancy 2A was again, a content rich course but did prove to be of a significantly higher level than courses I had previously taken at Otago. This is due to the implementation of different Accounting Standards in the UK and its relevance to the work assigned in the course. This paper was 100% exam based and was heavily reliant on independent study and less focused on course work despite a significant amount of ungraded pre-assigned work. Tutorials and lectures were thorough and aligned well with the required textbook. Differently, Otago has in the past relied on a relatively even split between coursework and examinations which in my opinion, proves to be of greater value.

Organisational Behavior 2 was a broad subject which although focused heavily on the management of individuals within an organizational context, also featured a variety of guest lecturers and topics that spanned psychology and philosophy. Consequently, this was another content rich course that required a combination of memory work and the linkage of topics for the relevant application. This paper resembled a few of Otago's core business papers that also covered a range of topics. However, these similar papers at Otago have, in my experience, been less structured with limited guidance in terms of topics to revise and focus on to achieve the key aims of the paper.

## **Accommodation**

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

I stayed at Riego Street University Accommodation which consisted of a series of apartment style blocks in which we were assorted into groups of 4 or 5 to a flat. Despite Riego not being a typical choice for many of its tenants, it proved to be ideal. Its central location proved to be its greatest advantage with the majority of the University's campuses within a 20 minute walking distance at most. Additionally, the flats were surrounded by multiple grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants and cafes and is a mere 10 minute walk from Edinburgh's city centre and high street. Aside from the location, I found the environment highly sociable with students and RA's making a significant effort to include everyone in activities and simple, smaller scale social gatherings.

The main disadvantage of Riego Street would primarily be that the majority of its tenants had not included it as any of their options for Accommodation during the application process due to the higher pricing and comparatively lower quality furnishings in the rooms. Additionally, it was perceived to have been located significantly farther away from all central facilities and resources when this is not in fact the case.

## **Money matters**

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

I had purchased my flights and travel insurance through STA Travel Agency. They offer a variety of great deals for round trip flights along with a flexi package that allows you to change your flights whenever you need to, which is especially useful if you are unsure about the exact timing and start of your course date. I had purchased my flights from out of Malaysia as I had spent the summer there, and a round trip on Emirates had cost roughly 1300 NZD. Additional Travel Insurance for the duration of my stay in Edinburgh cost approximately 100 NZD but this is dependent on the plan chosen.

As a Malaysian citizen I had to apply for a Short Term Student Visa to the UK from Kuala Lumpur which had cost approximately RM200 (70 NZD).

Accommodation runs from 1200 to 2400 GBP per semester. Riego Street was on the higher end of this range at roughly 2200 GBP.

Groceries should not cost more than 30 GBP a week while purchasing food outside varies. An average priced meal at a café can run you up to 10 GBP, but Edinburgh being a big city offers a variety of selections that will often cost you up to 20 GBP++

Flights within the UK can vary between under 20 GBP to over 100 GBP and often times trains and buses are not much cheaper and are more tedious overall. Flying within the EU tend to run cheaper but remain for the most part within a similar price range as the UK. There are many backpackers and motels that will cost you under 50 GBP a night and can be split if you choose to share your accommodation.

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

I had obtained a Cash Passport from STA Travel Agency as a backup in the event of an emergency but other exchange students had often spoken of using this as their only form of access to finances.

I would highly recommend opening a local Basic or Classic Account as there are less withdrawal charges and card fees but these are also easy to open and close. Having encountered some difficulty opening an account in the first few weeks due to different banks requiring different documentation, I would also strongly recommend bringing along enough cash to last a few weeks in the event of such emergencies or a Credit Card if possible.

**Visas & Insurance**

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

I had to apply for a Short Term Student Visa through the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as I am a Malaysian citizen. The majority of the application process was done online with a face to face biometrics screening process at the High Commission and I was required to surrender my passport for approximately 2 weeks which I then collected in person but can also be mailed if needed.

**Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?**

No.

**Extra-curricular/Social Activities**

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

The accommodation services would often send emails out to visiting students informing them of arranged excursions around Edinburgh and other cities over the weekend at a discounted price. I would highly recommend these excursions if you are otherwise unable to plan these trips individually. The RA's at my accommodation (Riego Street) had multiple social and educational events during the week that were open to all residents and were a great opportunity to meet fellow students.

### **What was the university/ city like?**

The university is home to multiple campuses, its central one being the George Square Campus. The mixture of historical architecture and newly renovated, modern buildings draws a strong similarity to that of Dunedin's campus. I was fortunate to have all my lectures in one building, but moving around George Square is quick and easy with many facilities at your disposal including the main library, Business School, Visiting Students Center, Student Association (EUSA) and various University cafes and independent food vendors. Additionally, a Starbucks and local Sainsbury's are located just around the corner from the square.

Edinburgh itself boasts a healthy combination of city and suburb and everything in between. The high street of the city, called Princes Street, is your go to for all things shopping, from affordable to luxurious. The town extends into Princes St Gardens and St Andrews Square, these two locations are also where the many Christmas Markets and festivities of the city are situated. However, if the city life is not to your liking, a walk down the street over will lead you down a quieter road which moves from a buzzing hotspot and down to a relaxed area with a plethora of cafes and quaint shops for your exploration.

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

At the end of the year (late November – January) the city's central attraction is its Christmas Market, garnering tourists from all continents. Full of good food, drinks, shopping and rides, it is an unforgettable experience.

Pubs and restaurants situated in the city center tend to run pricier but are often themed and well worth the experience, however moving back into the Cowgate and Grassmarket will introduce you to quaint but exciting eateries and pubs with a larger university crowd and therefore, more student deals.

Edinburgh is easily one of the thriftiest and musically inclined places you will be lucky enough to stumble upon. The Saturday morning market down the Grassmarket is well worth the visit, along with the multiple record stores that possess historical value that are dispersed throughout the city.

If you're a fan of Harry Potter, the Elephant Café where JK Rowling is said to have written the renowned first book of the series is always bustling with tourists but works as a great photo op. The Diagon Shop up the Grassmarket is a place of wonders for all fans, but the city possesses no shortage of all things Harry Potter and more affordable buys can always be found at Primark on Princes Street.

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

- Be open to gaining new experiences
- Familiarize yourself with locals and their traditions instead of only staying close to others from the same country.
- Speaking as a commerce major, Edinburgh enforces a significant amount of self-study in comparison to Otago. Although lecturers and tutors are very helpful, it is expected that you will go the extra mile for yourself.
- Learn to be thrifty and self-sufficient especially in terms of food. Learning to cook will save you a lot of money in the long run.

## **Overall Experience**

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

Deciding to participate in Otago's Global Exchange Program has been one of the most valuable choices in my degree thus far. I was extremely lucky to have been given the opportunity to study at one of Europe's most prestigious Universities, The University of Edinburgh. Edinburgh is an eclectic mix of city and suburb entwined with a rich dose of European history that never falls short on activities and experiences to partake in. I was fortunate enough to have been placed in a residential accommodation brimming with friendly students from various parts of Europe, and within a short amount of time the feeling had become in many ways, familial. Despite some of the classes veering on the challenging side, they were all interesting and provided me with insight into the way organizations are run in the United Kingdom and Europe, which prospectively will prove be to immensely useful. Furthermore, the University's Visiting Student's Office provides step by step assistance in transitioning to life in Edinburgh if needed and are incredibly helpful with any queries you may have. Living in the UK has its perks, one of which includes travelling. With cheap flights at your disposal year-round, I was able to visit various parts of Europe over weekends and longer holidays which left me with many unforgettable memories. One of the highlights of Edinburgh for me were its people. Very rarely do you come across such large groups of genuinely kind and fun-spirited people. Always up for an adventure and ever the willing tour guide, the Scots are the heart and soul of the city and complete Edinburgh's well-rounded theme.

Being away from home can be overwhelming in many ways, but part of being a suitable candidate for the Exchange program is your mind-set. Forcing yourself out of your comfort zone in the first few weeks will be something you will thank yourself for later. It is easy to dismiss Orientation and 'Fresher' activities when you are well into your degree, but keep in mind that in a new city at a new University you are presented with a blank slate, and with that, a fresh start. Don't hesitate to partake in activities that you would normally disregard back at Otago. Some of my fondest memories from my time at Edinburgh happened in places and scenarios I would have never been at in Dunedin, simply because I chose to try something new.

Looking back, if I could extend my time at Edinburgh with the people that had become my closest friends, I would choose to do so in a heartbeat. However, I look forward to my friends in Scotland visiting New Zealand and being able to experience the Scarfie culture for themselves. I couldn't recommend the Global Exchange program more as it will provide unexpected networking opportunities for your future but also create memories that you will forever cherish.



Edinburgh Castle, Princes St View



The Royal Mile, Edinburgh