



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Cardiff University
Semester & Year of Exchange	2023 Semester 2
Otago degree(s)	BA
Major(s)	Geography

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Community Engagement, Mediation and Negotiation Skills	English	A Planning Paper, likely postgraduate
Cultural Geographies: Places and Practices	English	GEOG376
Sport and the Media	English	NA, this is a journalism paper so there's no equivalent at Otago

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points

72 _____

Any comments about these papers?

All three papers were good. I really enjoyed the Sport and the Media paper, it was super interesting and felt noticeably more real world than a normal university paper. The Community Engagement, Mediation and Negotiation Skills paper was quite dull and I found it a little difficult, surprisingly I got my highest mark of the three papers in this one. Cultural geographies was very similar to any number of Otago papers that I've taken, it was noticeably more abstract however which was cool.

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

It is significantly less hands on over there, less contact time as well. I tend to leave my work slightly last minute but I had enough common sense to do work prior to leaving on any trip I was going on. Also these papers were all great as they had two assessments each, just one about halfway through and then another one towards the end with no exams. In fact only the med students or some maths papers have exams at Cardiff which is awesome.

Accommodation

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

I was staying in Talybont North, which was perfectly adequate. Not super flash by any means but it had everything I needed. Very close to a massive Tesco which was helpful. It's a little further away from the uni and from town and the bars etc but only by like 5 or 10 minutes walk. I was living with four 18 year old Welsh girls and then another Australian exchange student. We all got on really well and the Aussie was my best mate for like 5 months. I know there's exceptions but if you are nice to people and respect their space then they are generally reciprocal regardless of age.

Money matters

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

I think the halls were like \$5500 NZD, Flights were like \$3000, I didn't need a visa as you don't need one to study for just one semester. I can't remember how much my insurance cost. Food in Cardiff was cheap which is awesome. Compared to some countries in Europe Wales is very affordable. Cardiff gave me 500 pounds as apart of exchange funding so that was great.

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

I used a wise card the entire time, never had an issue. When I first arrived I got some cash out with my BNZ debit card and that worked fine. I genuinely didn't need to use cash once in the UK except to buy breakfast at a cash only diner. In Spain and in Prague I did have to use cash so I guess just always carry like 20 euros with you.

Visas & Insurance

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

Nope, if you're only studying for six months then you just get given an automatic visa on arrival in the UK. I was freaking out because I genuinely just walked into the UK and straight onto a bus to Cardiff but this caused me no issues.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes I think they did, I had insurance from home though.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

There were heaps of clubs and groups to join, personally this isn't my thing so I didn't join any, but I did go to the exchange student mixers with my friends and they were good.

What was the university/ city like?

Personally, I loved Cardiff, but I can understand why some people wouldn't. If you want a big grand European city then you'll hate Cardiff. It is old and in some places a little underdeveloped but I absolutely adored it. The people are so lovely. The university is really high quality with really good facilities. The standard of teaching seemed to be quite good as well.

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

Elmers café, best breakfast in Cardiff for 6 pounds, its cash only. Tiny Rebel brewery is awesome I spent heaps of time there. The prince of Wales bar in town is an experience, it's absolutely massive. Cardiff is great because its only an hours bus from Bristol Airport which gives you access to the vast majority of Europe. I did heaps of travelling which is essential. If you stay in Cardiff you will get bored. I spent enough time overseas that my weekends in Cardiff actually became a novelty which is what I would recommend to other people.

Any tips for future students?

Do as much as you can. Go to the exchange mixers. I only met one other person from NZ, and she was way younger than me (and from Auckland) so we had little in common. The vast majority of my friends were Australian, be prepared to hang out with people you might not normally associate with, you're all in the same boat! Travel, travel, travel. If you can't find someone to go with you then go alone. I met plenty of people in Hostels and had some of the most ridiculous nights out with people I'd known for like 5 hours. I was absolutely petrified of travelling by myself the first time I did it, but it turned into the best experience ever every single time I did it.

Overall Experience

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

It will be the best thing you'll ever do. It sounds cliché but I grew as a person exponentially and it actually made me appreciate New Zealand way more when I came back. I don't want to say that I needed to do this exchange but after four and a half years at Otago I was very much done with studying, thankfully I found this exchange super invigorating. I did everything that I wanted to do while I was over there, I wouldn't change a thing and I'm so happy I chose Cardiff as my destination. I reiterate that Cardiff definitely isn't for everyone but for me personally I loved it. Also the Welsh are easy to get along with and they love Kiwis, there's way more of a learning curve trying to interact with European people.