



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Essex
Semester & Year of Exchange	S1 2024
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Psychology and Neuroscience (Minor in Marketing)

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Body Senses and Existence	English	PSYC317
Making Connections; How Children Develop		PSYC319
Ageing Mind Brain and Behaviour		Unspecified PSYC300
Applied Sports Psychology		-

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points _____

Any comments about these papers?

The papers I took were relatively interesting, with most of them being papers I wouldn't/ couldn't take at Otago. I really enjoyed the sports psychology paper, and it had group work, so it was a good chance to meet new people too.

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

I chose papers that didn't have exams (as I was keen to travel for longer/ during the exam period), which meant that I only had internal assessments. Honestly, the workload was pretty relaxed, a pass is 40% over there (although they do mark a bit harder), I had 1 x 2hr lecture each week for all the papers, and they mostly just read off the slides which I found hard to engage with sometimes. But the content was interesting, and stuff that I wouldn't have the chance to learn at Otago.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in The Pastures accommodation on campus which is the newest accommodation available. I was in a flat with 11 other exchange students and shared my bathroom with one other person. It was really good as we had a double bed, living room and big kitchen which most of the other accommodations don't, which was great to use at night. It is about 10-minute walk from campus, which was a bit annoying at times when all others were living on campus, or in between classes etc. but it was closer to the supermarket than campus which was handy.

Money matters

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

My flights were about \$4,500 return, I did choose to fly through Singapore so was a bit more expensive.

Accommodation was quite expensive I think about \$360 a week but without food, there are cheaper options for accommodation though.

Groceries were cheaper than here, fruit/vege and meat was way cheaper.

I was only there for 6 months so you don't need a visa.

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

Wise Card was amazing, easy to use and quick to transfer between people, or change currencies (especially when some countries have their own currency so you can just convert as you need). Would definitely recommend.

Visas & Insurance

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

Not for 6 months, we were just on the standard visitor visa.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

I don't think Essex had mandatory insurance, but Otago did, so I just got insurance through the travel agent I booked my flights with.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

The exchange department in Essex organised an event at the beginning of semester to meet other exchange students, and another couple across the 6 months. There are lots of clubs and teams you can join, including a travel society which some students joined, and they are big on their sport so if you do play a sport definitely join a sports team as that is how the majority of friend groups are formed by locals.

What was the university/ city like?

Campus is about a 15-20 min bus out of Colchester town itself, so it is a little bit out of town. But the closes supermarket is like 10-15 min walk from campus, and the campus itself has everything you need with lots of cafes and places to eat which do 2-pound deals, a store on campus, 2 bars and a club so it is really well set up. The uni gym was quite small (compared to unipol), but you get free off-peak access if you live in student accommodation. They also have markets on a Thursday which are great!

Colchester is quite small and doesn't have much, but the 2-pound buses go to a lot of nearby towns, and London is only 50 mins away also.

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

Stanstead Airport will only cost you 4 pound to get to on the buses, so definitely make the most of that! Lots of cheap flights available from there – Sky Scanner is great for this. We honestly used Tik Tok for a lot of the places we went to, it was great for recommendations on places to eat / visit etc.

And obviously all the classic British places in Colchester were highlights – Wagamamas, Weatherspoons etc.

Any tips for future students?

Make the most of the opportunity whilst you are over there, have an open mind to whatever comes your way. And I found it really helpful to think that all exchange students you meet are in the same boat as you, not knowing anyone and wanting to make the most of the experience!

Overall Experience

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

I had an amazing time on Exchange and met some amazing people. There was a large group of exchange students that all got along well, so it meant there was always something going on, and lots of people were keen to travel too. We went to a Crusaders game in Bristol on one of our first weekends which was great, and I managed to do a lot of travelling around Europe with lots of different groups of people. I tried to make the most of this as it costs so much for us to get to Europe so while you are there its great to use the cheap flights and visit all these new places. Travel highlights for me would be Greece, Nice, Monaco and Italy – the European food and cultures are amazing to experience!

