



Student Exchange Program

International Student Services

Exchange Final Report

Student Information

Faculty at UVic Social Sciences
Major/Minor Environmental Studies & Anthropology
Host University University of Newcastle
Host Country Australia
Dates of Exchange July 30, 2018 - November 30, 2018

Overall Exchange Experience

Please Rate your Overall Exchange Experience

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience? Please outline any highlights.

Meeting other exchange students from all over the world. I lived in a house with students from the US, France, Germany, Denmark and Australia - something I never would have experienced without the exchange program

What was the greatest challenge during your exchange?

Being away from home when there was a health concern for a family member back home.

Travel

Cost of air travel \$2000

Cost of ground transportation (ex. monthly bus pass) There was a free shuttle from the city campus to the main campus.

Did host university representatives meet you at the airport? A shuttle service was recommended through the university website.

Is there easy transportation between the airport and university? Yes

Orientation

Is there an organized orientation session upon arrival?

Yes. The orientation week before classes started was a great way to meet other international students - and specifically those who also lived off campus, as I did.

How easy was it to find the info you needed to know upon arrival?

Very. The university had already sent me information about the school and the city before I arrived

What assistance did you receive from your host institution upon arrival?

Orientation week, student website, and many emails made students aware of the various academic and health services offered. I luckily required none but was comfortable knowing that they were accessible if I did.

Accommodation

Is on-campus accommodation available? Yes

If yes, did you live on campus? No

Would you recommend this to future students? I would recommend living off-campus in shared student housing.

If you lived off-campus, how did you find housing?

There were links and listings for off-campus housing on the university website itself.

Approximately how much money would you budget per month for living, including accommodation and meals?

Around \$1500.

Language Programs

Is there a language program available either before or during the semester?

N/A

Is there an additional cost for the language training?

N/A

Academics

Was it possible for you to get all the courses that you wanted?

Yes

Please describe the course registration process

Same as UVic. Straight forward online registration.

Describe the manner and quality of instruction at your host university

The instruction was very good. Lectures were informative and tutorials were very beneficial. All lectures were recorded and posted using a service called "Echo". Most notably, the level of understanding I took away from my classes seems comparable to what I take away in North America yet the academic process in Australia was much less stressful and much more laidback. It seems that there is a normalization of stress and student anxiety here in North America and that the course demands are meant to overwhelm most individuals at some point. I didn't feel this abroad and I was told by a large and varied group of local students that the despondency many students back home experience in a typical school year isn't something they are familiar with there.

What do you feel is the greatest academic benefit you have gained personally from your exchange?

A much more developed knowledge and awareness of the many and diverse Aboriginal cultures of Australia and their ongoing social, political, and environmental relationships with colonialism.

Personal and Cultural Connections

How easy was it to adjust to the local culture? What (if any) cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

In all honesty, my adjustment to the local culture was extremely smooth bordering on indulgent. Australia has such a laid-back way of going that, as a young white Canadian male, I never felt unsafe or unwelcome. The majority of local people I met were lovely, kind, inviting, and naturally well-humoured. Despite my friends and I grumbling about the price of alcohol - everyone was loose and gracious; happy to share some cold beer and warm laughter with a funny-accented visitor. If I found one cultural aspect most challenging it would be the ongoing marginalization of Aboriginal peoples, and the continuance of colonial attitudes. Not (as discursively shown above) because of its difference to my own culture, but because of their similarities. There were, and are, many differences in the colonial experiences of Canada and Australia to be sure, but to begin looking at the injustices and violence brought to the First Peoples of Australia felt painfully familiar in a number of ways; like pouring salt in a wound it viscerally reminded me of the imperialistic mistreatment of Indigenous peoples around the globe. However, this also brought an increased appreciation for the resilience of Indigenous peoples abroad and back home and deepened my understanding and admiration for these proud and diverse cultures.

What kinds of cultural, athletic and social activities were available for students at your host institution?

There were some great activities offered by the Exchange Student Network. They included a trip to Sydney for a boat party, a weekend in Blue Mountains National Park, a reptile park, and some real sick parties that gave us all a chance to dance and laugh with other students from all over the world - giving us the space to share in the making of memories that we all still carry from there.