

Introduction

I am a student at the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa. I am in the management specialization, and decided to go on exchange during the summer before/fall of second year. For my international exchange, I decided to study abroad in New Zealand at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. From my understanding, I was the first Telfer student to study at the University of Waikato, so it's safe to say there were certainly some wrinkles to smooth out along the way. Below, I'll outline my experience in the hopes that if you're looking to study abroad in New Zealand, and specifically at the University of Waikato, you'll be well prepared for your semester abroad.

Academic Information

There are two important things to note about studying in New Zealand. First, the semesters do not coincide with the semesters in Canada. Semester A in New Zealand runs from early March until late June, and Semester B runs from early July until late October. This means that you'll have 2 months (either at the beginning, or end of your semester) to fill in with some additional activities. This could mean additional time to travel, or to work to save up to pay for your exchange – the choice is ultimately up to each individual person. As for the varied credits, classes are typically weighted 15, 20, or 25 points (with a few being worth 10 points or 30 points). A full-time course load is 60 points and you're not allowed to go over 60 points – they will not allow you as your exchange fees only pay for 60 points worth of instruction. For my semester, this proved to be quite a frustrating process as Telfer required that I take *at least* 60 points (to be considered full time), while the Waikato would not allow me to take any more than 60 points. For this reason, I had to do quite a bit of shuffling with my classes after arriving in New Zealand to confirm my time table. I should mention that a few people did tell me that the University of Waikato was moving away from having classes worth differing point values towards a standard system of 20 points per class. This would (theoretically) mean that in order to be a full-time student at Waikato, you'd need to take 3 classes per semester.

In terms of work load per class, it's expected that for each point a class is worth, you can expect 10 hours of study (could include lectures, readings, assignments, etc.). For example, a 20-point class would encompass 200 hours of study, and a 15-point class would encompass 150 hours of study. That would mean that a 60-point semester would entail 600 hours of study time over the course of the semester. In my experience, the time spent actually studying was far lower than the above amounts, but every student will have slightly different study habits, as well as work at different speeds.

I took three classes while abroad, two of which were online classes and one which was a digital marketing class with a weekly lecture and all online deliverables. My first online class, international management (INMG412), had four deliverables over the course of the semester; a group case study assignment (~2000 words), an individual case study assignment (~1000 words), and two online discussion forums which each required a post of ~600 words and two replies of ~200 words. Overall, I found the class to be quite enjoyable with a very manageable workload

and interesting content. My second online class, introduction to New Zealand Law (LEGAL205), was quite different in its set up. This class had weekly discussion forums that ended up contributing to 20% of your final grade and whose completion was compulsory in order to pass the class. On average, these weekly assignments took ~1-2 hours to complete. There were also a few assignments and quizzes throughout the semester which introduced you to case law, and legal proceedings in New Zealand. None of these assignments were overly difficult to complete as the class was very straightforward with many examples and very strong content to refer to while completing them. Overall, I also found this class to be extremely interesting as it exposed me to indigenous rights and relevant case law in New Zealand. My last class, digital marketing (MRKTG370) had a variety of assignments & tests throughout the semester with the culminating project (worth 40% of your final grade) being to create your own website for an e-commerce store. This was also a very engaging class, with an amazing professor who was a great lecturer and kept everyone engaged throughout the semester. If you do end up studying at the University of Waikato, be sure to take any class that is taught by Roy Larke.

Semester Timeline

July 2 – International Student Orientations begin – this includes finalizing class schedules, purchasing student insurance, completing enrollment, attending orientation sessions, etc.

July 9 – Classes begin

August 20th – Teaching recess begins (this is a 2-week, mid semester break to travel around. I would highly suggest Fiji – that is what most of the exchange students all did together)

September 3rd – Classes resume

October 23rd – Exams begin (if your class has a final exam component)

November 3rd – Semester concludes (last day to potentially have an exam)

Arrival Procedures

Upon arrival, the University provides a free shuttle service from the airport to campus (about a two-hour drive) as long as you coordinate prior to your arrival (you'll get an email reminder to book). Upon arriving at campus, there will be a residence RA who will check you in to your room and get you settled in. From there, just sort of hang out until the international/exchange student orientations begin. Before you attend these sessions there isn't too much you can do to get yourself settled in other than maybe grab some groceries and settle in to your residence room.

Budget Outline

One thing to know about living in New Zealand is that all tax is already included in the price you see, and tipping is not done at restaurants. This means that the price you see on the menu/store shelf is exactly what you pay. Below I'll list a few general expenses you'll incur while living in New Zealand.

Plane tickets: These vary greatly depending on how you book your travel.

Housing: ~800NZD/month. This also varies depending on the type of residence you pick. Each residence has slightly different costs that you'll pay.

Books: To be honest, I'm not sure as I didn't buy any textbooks. All of my classes had an extensive list of materials provided to me on Moodle (Waikato's equivalent to Brightspace)

Bus Travel: Local bus trips cost \$1.75NZD with your student card. Bus travel from Hamilton to Auckland was ~20NZD and the trip took about 2-2.5 hours.

Uber/Taxi: Uber is widely used and almost always more cost effective than taxis

Groceries: Groceries were slightly more expensive (not including the exchange rate) in New Zealand.

Meals: Meals vary greatly depending on what you're ordering but restaurant prices were comparable to food in Canada, or even a little cheaper.

Vacation: Impossible to forecast as each type of vacation will vary widely. Usually return tickets to Australia can be found for a few hundred dollars (CAD). Flights to Fiji are slightly more expensive. Same deal for hostels – hostels will vary drastically based on your preferences. General suggestions would be to use broker websites such as hostelworld, momondo (flights), hopper (flights) and to just be diligent and check frequently when booking your travel plans as prices will vary drastically. When flying within New Zealand, be sure to take advantage to Air New Zealand's 'Grab a seat' program which offers flights at *heavy* discounts.

International Application Requirements

Student Visa: Before departing Canada you'll need to apply and receive an international student visa from the New Zealand government. I would begin looking in to this process at least 2 months before your departure, and have your application submitted at least 6 weeks before your departure. Documents required to obtain your student visa include:

- Scan of your passport
- Headshot (electronic file) meeting the visa application requirements
- Proof of Sufficient Funds (not sure what they're really looking for here but I just sent them a screenshot of my bank account)
- Letters from both Telfer (Veronique provides), and NZ University stating your acceptance/involvement in the international exchange program
- Proof of acceptance into residence (called a letter of place), which basically just states where you'll be living while studying abroad

All of this information is readily available on the New Zealand government's website if you simply google 'New Zealand Student Visa'.

Residence Options

There are a number of residence options available at the University of Waikato for you to choose from. All of this information is readily available online if you google it. A couple of things to note when going through this information; Orchard Park is the designated international student residence village where the vast majority of international students live. Self-Catered means you do not have a meal plan and are required to cook for yourself. Full-Catered means you have a

meal plan and are provided 3 meals a day on campus. If you're planning on doing a fair bit of travelling, I'd suggest choosing self-catered so you don't pay for meals you won't be eating.

General Tips

- If you're planning on travelling a lot within New Zealand, buy a car when you arrive and sell it before you leave. This is my biggest regret as I didn't realize how beneficial I would be until it was too late.
- Save your South Island travels until after the semester. Your semester will end in October, and you won't need to be back in Canada until the end of December/January for the start of the new semester in Ottawa. This is the perfect time to travel the South Island (the most beautiful parts of the country) extensively.
- Take advantage of every SAN (Study Abroad Network) trip that is run at the university. These are some of my best memories from my travel. SAN is a group of local New Zealand students who coordinate and run trips to many of New Zealand's most interesting travel spots at very affordable rates.
- Buy a New Zealand sim when you arrive for you to use while you're overseas. It is much cheaper than using a roam like home plan, etc. and it helps to have a local phone number as well.
- Your student visa should come with the ability to work for ~20 hours/week throughout the semester. If you're looking for a way to fund your travels/living while overseas, this is a great option.
- Set up a New Zealand bank account when you arrive and use visa direct transfers to transfer money into your account to avoid international credit card fees.