

Student Exchange Questionnaire

Name: Anna O'Hara

Massey Degree: BSC majoring in Earth Science and Geography

Host university: University of Calgary

Semester and year of exchange: Fall Semester, 2017

- **Why did you choose this particular university and/or country for exchange?**
I chose UofC mostly because of its location near the Rocky Mountains and Dinosaur National park, and the hiking opportunities. The courses offered by UofC were also more oriented towards my interests in comparison with other Canadian Universities.
- **Did it meet your expectations?**
My expectations were met and exceeded. Everything about the University, facilities, courses, accommodation, people, and extra curricular activities was fantastic, if very different to New Zealand.
- **What courses did you study while on exchange? Would you recommend them?**
I took Global water resources (GEOG 315), Geomorphology (GEOG 307), and Natural events and human disasters (GEOG 311). I enjoyed all of these papers; 311 and 315 I would recommend for students of any major looking for an elective paper as they are interesting and require no prior knowledge.
- **Were there differences in the teaching methods and academic environment at your host university, compared to Massey University? If so, what kind of differences?**
The classes were significantly bigger than they are in New Zealand, with less of an online learning environment, particularly in terms of recording lectures. I found the work load to be minimal in comparison to Massey, with the majority of assessments being short answer or multiple choice based.
- **Did you stay on-campus or off-campus? What was the accommodation like?**
I stayed in on-campus accommodation, Yamnuska Hall, which I found to be of a high standard. The building was fairly new (but has no tunnel to main campus, so in winter it is necessary to brave the conditions outside), and had its own laundry and fitness room. Rooms are apartment style; cleaning has to be done yourself, unless you want to pay for a cleaner. I think Yamnuska is one of the 'party halls' with other buildings being perhaps a bit quieter.
- **How did living expenses compare to in New Zealand?**
Public transport around Calgary is included in university fees, but most other things are a bit more expensive. The accommodation is similar to Massey Halls in Palmerston North. Food is slightly more expensive, and mobile prepay plans significantly more costly – most are in excess of \$40 a month.
- **What extra-curricular activities did you participate in at the host university?**

I went on several of the international student excursions, and also joined the outdoors club, hiking nearly every weekend. I also went caving, used the free gyms on campus, and attended a variety of quiz nights, board games nights, and movie nights.

- **What's one thing you learnt about your host country or culture?**

The stereotype of a polite Canadian is true in almost all cases – everyone will hold a door open for you even if you are an uncomfortable distance away.

- **What were some of the highlights of your exchange experience?**

Hiking was definitely the highlight for me – there are endless trails to explore, with each being wildly different to the others. The people I met along the way were an added bonus.

- **What did you find challenging?**

I found sticking to a budget quite hard, as many costs were higher than I had initially expected, and there are so many activities on offer, or weekend trips to go on.

- **What do you feel you have learnt or gained from going on exchange?**

Just a general experience of a new culture and way of doing things, as well as a better appreciation for the indigenous cultures and first nations history.

- **Do you have any tips for future students intending to travel to the same country or university?**

Join clubs, meet people, and hit the rockies as often as you can. Buy your winter clothes over there – they're warmer, cheaper, and you'll definitely need them. Layers will be your best friend.

- **Do you have any comments on the support provided to you by Massey University and/or by the host university before/during/after your exchange?**

My exchange was well organised by the Massey team – they were easy to contact, helpful, and quick to respond. On the Calgary side, things were a little less well organised. Lots of the move in information was not communicated to me – a free airport shuttle for example, as well as possible early move in. They also recommended some services, such as bedding options, that were considerably more expensive than other options. After arrival, everything was much better organised, and the excursions and opportunities to meet other exchange students were great.