Student Exchange Questionnaire

Name: Annette Crawshaw
Host University: New Mexico State University (NMSU), New Mexico, USA
Semester and year of exchange: Semester 1, 2013

- Why did you choose this particular university and/or country for exchange?

I chose to go to an English speaking country as I have not really utilised the opportunity previously to learn a different language. I wanted to be able to build relationship networks that would be beneficial long term in my chosen career path, especially understanding how America works and operates seeming as they have such power and influence on an international perspective.

I chose New Mexico State University with help from my academic advisor through the exchange process, Hamish Gow, which was based upon his relationships and where he thought would be a best fit for what I was studying and to complement what I have done at Massey to date.

- Did it meet your expectations?

Going on exchange and the whole process completely surpassed my prior expectations of going on exchange. The benefits of going on exchange were more than I could ever imagine; both academically and personal gain - you learn so much incidentally and grow as a person.

Going on exchange has really helped shaped me as a person, it has taught me a lot about myself, how I handle situations, and how to get on and make the most of what is presented to you in a foreign situation with people you do not know. As a result of going on exchange I feel I have developed and had to adapt and learn to challenge myself in many ways, what I truly value, and how as a person it is important not to stress and over analyse the little things in life.

I have learnt to respect a lot about people and their different values, culture and upbringing. Now I have many friends throughout the world whom I will keep in touch with.

I have learnt, grown and been challenged on a multitude of levels, I believe I am a better citizen because of my exchange experience.

On reflection the whole process of applying and going on the exchange is one of the best and most worthwhile things I have done while I have been at University, it is definitely my recommendation to embrace the opportunity for anyone who is considering studying abroad.
• **What papers did you study while on exchange? Would you recommend them?**

While at New Mexico State University the papers I studied were;

- AEEC 511 – Advanced Futures and Options Markets
- AEEC 526- Global Food Supply Management
- AEEC 556: Advanced Agribusiness Management

All of these papers are of a post-graduate level. Initially I thought that some of these papers may overlap what I had studied at Massey although they really complemented what I had done. As America is such a significant global leader within the world economy it is all taught from a different perspective, it was really eye-opening to see how they do things and what they do, because of the power of the US.

In comparison to New Zealand it was really worthwhile to understand what happens within my area of study on a global perspective as New Zealand is so small in comparison and we are ultimately price takers rather than price makers within the global economy.

**ANSC 310: Fitting and Showing Livestock**

In addition I also took a showing and fitting paper in which we were required to break in and show our own sheep, heifer (cattle) and pig in our own class show held on campus. As an agriculture student this paper was more for personal interest, it really helped with my confidence with stock and was something which was a little outside of my comfort zone. Such a paper would never be offered in New Zealand so it was really unique and something I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in especially as it was a little more practical.

• **Were there differences in the teaching methods and academic environment at your host university, compared to Massey University? If so, what kind of differences?**

New Mexico State University is the biggest land-owning University in the world and there is a wide range of Agricultural majors and programs that are offered through the University.
The areas you could specialise in and the different arrangement of papers and courses really was insightful, especially as so many papers had such a practical component to the element of work that was being done.

As I was rather limited to what I could do at postgraduate level I chose to join groups such as NAMA which had an agricultural marketing focus to it, the livestock team, which competed at livestock appraisal and judging event, and Collegiate FFA. The University even had their own Rodeo team and flower arrangement clubs so there really are groups and clubs for every different aspect of agriculture to get involved in which is something I really enjoyed in comparison to New Zealand.

As I went at post-grad level I found it was a lot more self-directed and involved, my biggest class size was 11, which is something I took a while to adapt to. As I have not studied at post grad level at Massey I am not really able to make too many academic comparisons.

Did you stay on-campus or off-campus? What was the accommodation like?

I stayed on campus in Vista del Monte Apartments which is where most of the exchange students choose to stay and it is considered to be an international community. Each apartment you shared with another student and they were very comfortable and spacious. You had your own room with a basin, desk, and double wardrobe with a double bed. You shared a bathroom which had a shower and a toilet and then you had a large lounge and kitchen area.

The accommodation was very good and all the facilities you wanted to access were on the university campus. Through ISEP you pay for your meals and accommodation although once you get there you are able to choose a meal plan and some of the money can be reimbursed.
depending on which option you take. I chose not to take the full meal plan as you tend to travel a bit in weekends so I got some money refunded back to me through the University.

I thoroughly enjoyed living on campus and with other exchange students and I believe it all added a lot to the experience especially in getting to meet new people. I am quite prepared to talk this through with any students before they head over so that they understand how this works if they would like to have a greater understanding before arriving.

- **How did living expenses compare to in New Zealand?**

I would say the living expenses were on-par in comparison to what they would be like in New Zealand when paying through ISEP.

In my initial budget I didn’t allow for as much personal spending money as I used, which is something to consider if you want to fully immerse yourself in the experience, but you can easily do it within a reasonable budget.

- **What extra-curricular activities did you participate in at the host university?**

The Study Abroad Office at New Mexico State University put on a lot of activities and outings for the international students which is something I really enjoyed such as a Mexican Fiesta, International Coffee Hours with countries such as France and Morocco in which we learnt about different cultures, and a Global Exchange Performance event to name a few. The Study Abroad programme were very involved in making sure that we got to experience NMSU and New Mexico State and what it had to offer. Within my college I was involved in NAMA, Collegiate FFA and the Livestock Team. The activities and clubs that you could join were endless and there was something to suit everyone’s interests.

The Recreation Centre put on day and overnight activities such as skiing, Carlsbad Caverns and rock-climbing which anyone could go along to, I really enjoyed these activities. The resources and activities on campus were endless, you could hire a lot of things with your student ID card which is something we made the most of. Quite often we would have an international team entered in many social campus competitions, sports games and activities.

- **What’s one thing you learnt about your host country or culture?**
As New Mexico is just above the border I had a lot of exposure to what was going on with regards to the drug cartels and the issues that occur between the borders. As I was living in a desert there really is a different way of life, where things we take for granted such as water and the use is strictly controlled. I really enjoyed learning about the American and to some extent the Mexican culture, the various scales, issues and what they farm and practice, and in general a different way of life. New Mexico State has a very low GDP which is something I had not really experienced before with such high levels of violence, poverty, substance abuse and the level of crime which can occur.

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

Going on exchange, as I have mentioned, has been a huge experience for me not only on an academic level but on a personal level. Academically it challenged me to adapt to different situations, learn through different methods and styles, understand a different marketing criteria and the emphasis that is placed on the quality of work. I really enjoyed learning about things from a different perspective, especially how Americans view and take on issues which is so different to New Zealand.

Personally I loved every aspect of the exchange, to living on campus with people from different cultures, the activities and events I participated in, to learning to adapt to different situations and what I really value in life and that sometimes you just need to go with the flow. At the end of the day the people who I met, and helped and experienced the journey with me really made the difference, some of who I will now be live long friends with.

Trip to Yosemite

- **What did you find challenging?**

I didn’t really find too much of the experience challenging as I went in with a very open mind and didn’t really have any preconceived expectations. I took it as an opportunity in which I really wanted to make the most of the experience and all the opportunities I was presented
with in which probably the most challenging aspect was fitting everything in, prioritising what I really wanted to do and learning to say no to a few things.

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

Studying abroad really helped me in gaining a global perspective which I believe is really important in today’s society and in being able to understand and meet the challenges in today’s work environment. Taking part in an exchange gives a firsthand cultural learning experience, exposure to issues which I could have never learnt from a textbook or in a classroom.

Studying abroad has really broadened my intellectual horizons and deepened my knowledge and understanding of international, political, social and economic issues in the USA and on a global perspective. It has also increased my confidence and has really helped me to mature as a person. I have gained a sense of independence, learnt to be more adaptable and have a heightened world view which I believe is invaluable to add to my resume.

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

Based on my own experiences if I were to recommend anything I think the ideal time to go on exchange would be in your second or third year of University studies. Although it did work being able to go on exchange during postgraduate level if you have the choice and to be able to select from a wider range of host university’s and papers I would recommend going during your undergraduate degree.

I guess studying abroad you assume a lot of students may have the perception that it might not be affordable. For studies and accommodation however I would say it is very on par to the cost of Massey University and you can access scholarships and grants which virtually pay for your flights so the only cost you really take on is what you choose to do in your extra time and during spring/fall break. No matter what you choose to do, it is easy to work within a budget and there are a lot of people on exchange so it is quite easy to find and work in with people who have the same ideas and budgets as you. You are even able to still get your student loan from Study Link while studying abroad if you choose to take that option.

- **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?**

Massey University, and in particular Jenny Loveday was really helpful in making sure that I was prepared and ready to go on exchange, easing any last minute worries and questions that I had last minute as I was looking to head abroad.

I really can’t talk highly enough of my host University, New Mexico State University. Once it was established I was going to New Mexico State University I was in contact before arrived, I has someone from the exchange office come and meet me at 11pm at the airport and all the staff were waiting at the office once I arrived.
The staff went out of their way to make sure that we were comfortable on arrival. Each student got a care package on arrival with bedding, coat hangers, kitchen utensils and appliances, even with loo paper to make the transition of arriving as easy as possible for us. During orientation, everything was outlined and made available to us which with the exchange students from the previous semester joining in which was a great way to met and get involved with everyone from the beginning.

I thoroughly enjoyed all the contact I had with NMSU and the assistance they provided throughout the duration of my exchange. It was great to have activities organised and there was never a dull weekend or a point in time when I had nothing to do. The international office really made an effort in getting to know us, and assisting us while we were on exchange.

I think a highlight for me would have been getting asked to speak at the Advisors Appreciation Luncheon which was put on by the Study Abroad Office in appreciation to the college advisors and head academic staff to thank, and acknowledge them for their assistance in enrolling and helping out exchange students. I felt very privileged being asked to be the guest student exchange speaker to address the luncheon which reflected on my involvement, attitude and how I had immersed myself while on exchange.

I also found it a very fitting way to acknowledge those especially in my department who had gone out of their way to include me and make me feel welcome, and helped me when I didn’t understand terminology, also in their spare time take me to visit different properties and operations, so that I really had an exposure to the different forms of agriculture and farming practices within the area.
Thank you very much for all the time and work you have put in to making this exchange possible and for the experience it has given me.

Regards,

Annette Crawshaw