

# Student Exchange Questionnaire

**Name:** Matthew Burt

**Massey Degree:** Bachelor of Business Studies (Finance, Economics)

**Host university:** University of California - Berkeley

**Semester and year of exchange:** Fall Semester (Aug-Dec) 2017

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

I chose Berkeley for my exchange as I wanted to experience what it was like to be amongst some of the leading minds in economics, and to experience what a top USA college was like. It is ranked highly for economics so I thought it would be a perfect supplement to my Massey learning.



- **Did it meet your expectations?**

It exceeded my expectations. I met some amazing people, the classes were bloody hard but interesting and the campus was very beautiful.

- **What courses did you study while on exchange? Would you recommend them?**

I studied; International Monetary Economics, Development Economics, The Chinese Economy and Python for Programmers.

I would recommend all my classes. My highlights were The Chinese Economy, as it gave me good insight into how the economy in China has developed over the past 200 years (kind of a history class), which is particularly relevant to New Zealand with our increasing reliance on China as a trade partner.

Also, Python for Programmers was amazing. Berkeley's Computer Science school is very highly regarded and the quality of the tutoring in this class was great. I developed a keen interest in programming after taking this course.

- **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 grading system at Berkeley was extremely hard as it was graded to a curve. This means that all the marks are basically lined up from best to worst, and the middle person receives a B. The curve is crazy too, as your classmates in Berkeley will be incredibly smart, so don't expect to be able to be slack and still get good marks. Classes also included a participation portion of the grade which rewarded students for contributing to class discussion.

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



I stayed off campus with graduate students while at Berkeley. Accommodation was relatively easy to find as an exchange student. Americans seem to jump at the chance to host a Kiwi. Calrentals and craigslist were good resources to find accommodation.



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

Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay Area in general are expensive due to the tech boom there. I underbudgeted for accommodation, but ended up paying the equivalent of 500 NZD per week for a single room. Expect to pay at least 400 NZD (including expenses) for a shared room and 500-700 NZD for a single room in a shared house per week. Food was also quite expensive, except fresh produce which was cheap. The Berkeley Bowl has an amazing selection of fresh fruit and veggies all year round, and it was very cheap. I basically lived on bok choy and noodles while I was there.

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

I love music, so I joined the Berkeley Songwriters club. This met every week and involved song writing activities, open mic nights and busking sessions on campus. The campus had so many extra-curricular activities. Make sure to check out the 'Tabling Day,' which is the day where all the groups set up tables on campus to try to attract new members. There are amazing groups like coding groups, robotics groups, rugby teams and even a Quidditch team.

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

Most of the people I met were very friendly and outgoing. Coming from New Zealand where everyone is a bit more reserved, it was strange at first to have everyone so interested in everything about myself and home (and my accent). It became normal for random people on the street or in the supermarket to strike up a full-on conversation with me. Americans are also super competitive, and seem to follow a much more defined path in their lives than we do in New Zealand. For example, most students would never dream of travelling after graduation as they would worry about falling behind their peers in the job market.

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

The friends I made were a definite highlight. Also, I got to travel around California and the surrounding states; Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Arizona and Nevada. The scenery is amazing and ever changing. Yosemite National Park is a must! Also check out Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego and Portland.

- **What did you find challenging?**

The classes were quite difficult, as were the discussion sections. I am normally quite shy in class, so it was good to be forced to contribute in class. At the end it got easier talking to the whole class. Also, budgeting



was challenging in Berkeley, accommodation being so expensive.

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

I feel much more confident and am better able to get my opinion across. I also learned a lot about Python programming. There is a growing need for people with programming and data skills in the world and, the USA being a leading economy, it was good to see that need before I would have back home.

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

Add 25% to your budget. Again, accommodation is sooooo expensive.

Don't be afraid to take strange classes. Berkeley, and USA universities, have such a great range of classes. Don't feel like you need to stick to your major, or your area of study. Maybe take a philosophy class, or a class on programming. There are even classes on how to make and bind an old school style book. That's one thing I regret, not taking stranger classes.

Join as many extracurricular groups as you can. You meet some cool people in these and there are so many choices.

Go to a baseball, football or basketball game. These are exactly like the movies and are good fun, make sure to get a horrible \$10 hotdog, all part of the experience.

- **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 was great in helping to organise the exchange. Who would have thought I would get to go to Berkeley! The application process was good and someone was always there to answer my questions and respond quickly.

I did not really need any assistance while at my host university, but the services they offered seemed great also.

