

2013-2014

University Attended : University of Otago

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

When you first arrive in Dunedin, the University will arrange a shuttle from the airport and it will take you to the Uni Flats office. This is the office of accommodation for international students, the people working at this office are some of the most helpful and generous I've ever met. They will sort you out with your bedding pack for your room, as well as give you your keys and take you to where you will be living for the semester or the year. They will ensure that you are comfortable and sorted before letting you get settled in at your new international home. When you arrive in Dunedin and at the University of Otago, it will be most likely at the start of July and just in time for 'RIO week'. Because the term times in New Zealand run the opposite way round to the UK, you will be starting in the middle of the year and the start of their second semester, but the University puts on a freshers style week with lots of music, comedy and cultural events to get you in the mood for the year. In terms of an induction and orientation at the Uni, they offer campus tours which are useful in helping you get your bearings around the campus, and also it's a great way to meet people, but don't worry if you don't fancy doing a tour because within a week or two you'll be used to the campus, and because its relatively compact compared to Manchester you'll feel right at home very quickly. In the first week of University, after a week of getting to know your housemates and enjoying RIO week, there will be a lecture where all the International students go to and you're given the basic information, like the emergency numbers and University protocol and procedure. Near the start of term you will also have to enrol for classes, this is more of a manual process than back in Manchester, you have to go around campus and register and get forms signed off, but its very easy and it's great because you get to just chill out and take the day to do it, and it helps to familiarise yourself with the campus. Once you're registered for classes, you'll get your student card and then you're all set. The induction period at Otago was very relaxed, helpful and taken at a pace which takes into consideration that you've just arrived in a new country and will have lots of questions. Otago's teaching staff and the UNI flats team as well as anyone you come across on campus during this time are so helpful and friendly, and of course so are the students so don't be afraid to ask anyone a question, the Kiwis are a friendly bunch and will do their best to help you out.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The style of teaching at Otago is very relaxed yet completely professional. It is very similar to Manchester, whereby each module you sign up for, has timetabled lectures and organised seminars that you go to. There is a huge variety of classes that are available and when you pick them, you're able to talk to representatives for each class so if you have any questions they can easily be answered. I chose to pick a cultural class while at Otago, because I thought it would help me understand the history and culture of the country, and I did a class on Maori studies, which was very interesting and a nice change to the usual management based classes I have to take. In relation to assessment, its very similar to back in England, whereby you have coursework, essays, presentations and group work as well as midterms and final exams at the end of each semester. All the lecturers and seminar leaders are very friendly and approachable and are easy to contact via email, they also understand that as exchange students studying is only one of your priorities while you're in New Zealand and therefore they are always happy to help. For example, one morning after my phone had ran out of battery and I missed a deadline for one of my essays, I flicked the lecturer an email explaining the situation and they were very accommodating and laid back about the whole thing, and gave me the rest of the day to complete the assignment. The style of teaching is very similar to Manchester too, however the faculty staff are less international perhaps, but nevertheless very academic.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

While studying at Otago, the MBS international team and Andrew Walker and Susan Fidalgo, in particular have been very accommodating, helpful and understanding. They are always just an e-mail away and have the experience to deal with any concerns or problems you may have. While in Dunedin, I had to send a form making

sure my class selection was appropriate and this was very easy, and MBS were understanding about the fact due to the hectic nature of the year abroad that it was a couple of weeks late.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

The meetings in second year in reflection were truly useful and very comprehensive. Manchester outlined all the information that was needed in term of all the universities we could have gone to, and in particular the feedback sheets that were available were of most use to me personally. I feel that all the leaflets and material that are available about all the Universities all around the world are helpful to a point, but its more personal opinion and another students feedback that is more useful.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

The host international office like everyone in Dunedin and New Zealand in general, are the most helpful and friendly people in the world!! They are located on campus and if you have any questions or concerns are happy to, and will endeavour to sort you out! Also Uni flats and the people that work for them are truly useful and accommodating too! During my time at Otago I had some trouble matching up my fees for accommodation and my student loan back in England, and as long as you keep Uni Flats and their head, Tony Buchannon informed with your situation they are very relaxed about it all, and can be flexible with the deadlines etc, so there is no reason to worry about that.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

The University of Manchester sorts out your insurance for your time in Dunedin, and this was of great help and it took that sort of pressure of me personally. Although I didn't need to claim any money in this regard, if I did need to, it would have been very easy and straight forward to do so.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

In term of additional costs from the University while I was studying at Otago, there is only one I can think of in particular. This is a student service fee, of around \$500 NZ dollars for the year while you're at Otago. This covers various student services and is paid while you're at the University. This fee mainly covers your access to the gym and sports facilities while in Dunedin. So once you have paid this fee, and got your student card you have free access to the Gym which is located about 5 minutes from Campus at the Rugby stadium. It has lots of basketball, badminton, table tennis, volleyball, netball, football and rugby facilities. This student service fee, although compulsory is very much value for money and is the only substantial additional cost really.

ACCOMMODATION

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT SENTENCE COMING UP, SO LISTEN CLOSELY. The best and most important decision I made, that made my year on exchange and the best of my life was staying in UNI FLATS accommodation. If you choose to go to Otago on exchange, I couldn't recommend this enough. Uni flats are in charge of the international students that are in Dunedin. They have numerous accommodation complexes around the campus area, it's a cross between halls in first year, and having your own house in second year, in and around the student city that is Dunedin. I didn't know anything about UNI flats before I went to Otago and chose this type of accommodation by chance but It was the best choice I ever made. For example, if you choose to live with Uni Flats, you'll be put in a house with maybe 5 or 6 people, and there will be four or maybe even five houses that are together, like a mini complex. Each house, has a 'kiwi host', these are new Zealand students who live with you and give you a direct link to the country and are some of the best people I've met in 3 years of being at University. All your other housemates will be other international and exchange students, and they will be from all over the world! During my time at Otago I've had housemates and neighbours from places like Australia, America, Canada, France, Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Ireland, Norway, Denmark and even the Faroe Islands. Staying with Uniflats takes all the pressure off meeting new friends and getting settled in Dunedin out of the equation. You will be put in a house and a complex that is full of up to 36 other exchange students, who want to do all the same things as you and explore their year abroad as much as you do! The Kiwi hosts set up all the bills and accounts etc, so you don't have to worry about that either. I stayed on Leith street, and if you can I'd advise you to do the same, on this one street alone there are three complex's of international students so about 100 exchange students, so you have plenty of friends to make and parties to go to! The Uni flat accommodation and houses are fully furnished, mine even came with a flat screen tv, dishwasher and a balcony for my room. Also if anything in the house gets broken,

lost or needs replacing , you just speak to UNI FLATS and they will sort that out for you, they can give you extra cutlery , fix broken doors and help with any general problems. There are also international complexes on Great King Street, Castle Street and on Cumberland Street, so any of these would be ideal for any student going on exchange, but I feel Leith Street is the best , so if you can perhaps try and ask for this one. Also walking around campus are people that are called campus watch. These are people who monitor what is going on around campus and make sure everyone is being safe. They are the most chilled out people too and they will stand around and have a chat with you so just be friendly and they will do the same. At the start of the year you will be given a phone number for them too, the service runs 24 hours a day, they can open your door if you lock yourself out , and have even been known to help you home if you've had a little too much to drink around campus on a night out! Basically staying in Uni flats will enable you have to have the best year you can have, being put with all the other exchange students means that you get to learn about all different cultures while also enjoying your time with like minded people who like to party.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Studying in Dunedin is the perfect platform to have the most fun year of your lives to date. You'll be at the bottom of the south island of New Zealand, in the biggest and most social university in the country. In terms of transport, if you come here for a year I would recommend you to buy a second hand car like me and my three friends did. They are very cheap, and insurance is even cheaper. We bought a car for 800 NZ dollars, which is about 400 pounds, so for a year it cost us just over £100 each for a car which is so cheap it's ridiculous, and insurance can be as cheap as 35 NZ Dollars a month too, so I would highly recommend getting a car if you want to explore the country and get around the city easily. There is quite limited public transport in NZ and especially in the south island, there are buses but in the long run if you want to get around and see all that NZ has to offer, a car makes more sense economically and in terms of the freedom it allows. If you study in NZ and at Otago, it will also give you the platform to see so many different countries and amazing places if you want to. While at my time studying at Otago, I've been on many road trips all over the country , in both islands in my car as well as through hiring a campervan with mates for a week for their half term break. You can see and do some of the most beautiful things in the world, you can hike, camp, bungee jump, sky dive, ski and surf all in this country! It's the perfect country , because you can do whatever you want with it! One of the best experiences I had while at Otago was in the first two weeks, where 35 of us, rented cars and drove to the ski mountains and did a weekend of skiing and exploring and it was just about perfect, the adventures just don't stop over here! Also because you are off from University from the middle of November until the middle of February, for the summer you can explore this side of the world! While I was away on my year abroad, I explored New Zealand, relaxed, snorkelled and sunbathed in Fiji for 10 days, and then spent 6 weeks travelling around south east Asia with my friends from exchange! The opportunities are endless and being in New Zealand helps them all! The university also offers lots of clubs and activities that you can take part of and get involved in, they have everything you can think of and many more, from bone carving to learning to sea kayak, there is something for everybody and I believe Otago offers more for students than Manchester in this area for sure.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

A year so perfect, it could almost be fiction

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

When we first arrived we all found it an extremely easy environment to settle into and integrate with the rest of the internationals (predominantly Americans which worked out fantastically) . The university put on what they called Re-orientation week (because we joined the university year in June halfway through) which was basically very similar to Manchester's freshers week. It included some great nights out, a tour around the campus with other internationals which we found a very useful way to map out where we'd be living for the next year, plus a pretty lengthy but beautiful and certainly worthwhile scenic train ride which a lot of the internationals go on.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

The only real negative aspect of the academic experience is the pretty tedious and long-winded process of signing up for courses at the beginning where instead of doing it online like at Manchester you have to visit each respective professor from the modules you are taking in order to see if you are eligible for the module and if you are, for him to then sign you off. However, you will be joining half way through their academic year so it won't drag on as much as when you have to do it again in February (if that's any consolation)! With the exception of that the lectures are much like those of Manchester's and you will have tutorials for each class too. The deadlines seem to be slightly more flexible too, providing you talk to the professor!

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Both Sue and Andrew were very helpful with any queries we had. We were also admittedly a little late on submitting a few admin documents to Manchester from here, however they were very understanding of this and weren't angry when it was perhaps a month or so late!

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

Everything is pretty self-explanatory here. You are provided with great accommodation, it's never been easier to make friends and the university is a very friendly, relaxed environment.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

The international office is fantastic here with an extremely helpful and useful team. They will go out of your way to help you and are always there whenever you need them. People in New Zealand are the friendliest people I've ever had the pleasure of meeting!

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

Unfortunately, if you have any medical issues and have to visit the doctors you will have to pay the full fee of the appointment because you will not have Student Safe health insurance which is the insurance policy of Otago University. However make sure you keep your receipts because you will be able to claim them back with Manchester.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

You will incur a fee from the university that will cover your use of all their facilities including their large, modern gym where they have a huge range of gym equipment as well as basketball, netball, volleyball and badminton courts and also table tennis and snooker if you're after a little mess around on a Monday night.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

UniFlats is the only way forward. When you apply for accommodation you will be applying for accommodation with uniFlats which is the company that accommodates for the internationals. They are fantastic flats and full of life. Make sure you are as honest as possible when filing out the form that describes what type of person you are so they place you in the most suitable complex of houses e.g. whether you like to drink and party a lot or perhaps whether you value your alone time and therefore would like a quieter complex.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Firstly, people in New Zealand are amongst the friendliest I have ever met. Every service encounter, whether it be buying groceries or talking with a stranger on the street for directions is always a pleasant one. Everyone will

always give you the time of day and in many cases will go out of their way to help you. You will spend the majority of your time with internationals, predominantly Americans. All internationals are the most fantastic, generous, fun, easy going people and I have honestly never met a bad one. Some of them tend to be very deep at times and love nature, but at the same time they love to get have a drink and party. Groups of internationals go away every weekend to incredible hikes (I was never really a hiker before I came out here, but decided to go on some and have seen some of the most incredible sights I will ever see on them), amazing cruises, crazy trips to Queenstown, camping trips and many other road trips with amazing outdoor activities like canoeing and mountain biking. When you're not travelling around New Zealand on the weekends, there is always a house party going on and town is also pretty lively on a Thursday and Saturday.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

Meeting some of the most amazing people I will ever meet as well as picking up a whole new range of incredible interests that I hope to now continue to pursue, New Zealand has been easily and probably will ever be the best year of my life.

FEEDBACK 3

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

The introduction was amazing, we were driven from the University Flats building straight to our accommodation which was fully furnished. During our first week in Dunedin we had many orientation seminars which were very useful in familiarizing ourselves with the city and the university. There was also a free scenic train journey for all of the internationals in order for everyone to get to know one another. The university was amazing at integrating all the students.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

The style of teaching and courses are very similar to those at Manchester with mid-term essays and tests followed by a final exam at the end of the year. The teachers make it very easy for the students to do well as they are always willing to help out wherever needed. It is very similar to Manchester but has a more 'relaxed' feel to it and the student never feels too under pressure to perform, which aids them in terms of their grades.

The teaching is similar to that of Manchester, with lectures and tutorials once or twice a week. The teachers are very helpful and are always willing to see a student if they need help with part of their work. The teachers are very relaxed with a student having particular issues and are more than helpful with finding the best way for the student to do their work.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Didn't have to talk to the MBS international team whilst I was in Dunedin but I always knew that they were there to help. The few occasions I did need to email them they were very helpful and let me know what was needed to be done and how to do it.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

The MBS second year meetings were extremely useful and was the main reason I chose Dunedin. They were very useful in trying to get the most appropriate place for everyone. There was so much information provided to us and all the universities were well represented. It was useful meeting a student from The University of Otago as they gave us some insight of how our year was going to be. Perhaps more contact with people who had been at

the university could have been useful. The individual university packs from each university were very useful and gave a good insight into what the university would be like.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

The University of Otago's host international office was not as involved with the students as maybe in Manchester. However, Uni Flats was the accommodation provider for all the international students and they were extremely helpful. Any issues would be dealt with instantly and they were very involved with the students holding many events which allowed international students to meet other international students. They were very useful and amazingly helpful. Set up and paid for all the sports teams and many social events throughout the year.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

This was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy. Didn't have many problems although one time I tried to claim for an issue with my computer the insurance dealing wasn't very helpful.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

University charged an extra small cost for use of gym facilities, but the new gym which was associated with the brand new rugby stadium was fantastic and always available to use.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

I stayed in a complex with other internationals. In my complex there were 9 fully furnished flats with 4 people living in each flat. Each flat had 2 boys and 2 girls, including a Kiwi Host. A Kiwi host is a New Zealand resident studying at the University of Otago and is an excellent addition to the accommodation structure. These Kiwi Hosts are there to help the students get used to Dunedin and to show them around but are also students themselves so are up for the same type of lifestyle as you are. They are really helpful but also fit into the international dynamic excellently. Living with Americans, Kiwis and Europeans is an excellent idea as you get to know people and friends from all over the world. I would suggest that students apply for University Flats and try and get into a complex because there are so many people to mix with. Leith Street and Castle Street are fantastic streets to live on as everyone is up for a great time and get on really well. The complex I lived in (480 Leith Street) had a courtyard which was great on sunny days as everyone could hangout there together rather than getting stuck in a flat all day. The accommodation is also so close to some of the best beaches in the world and also a very close walk to the University and the town centre. Most of the internationals are located in a close proximity so you can easily get to others students' houses. The accommodation is all set up for you as soon as you get there and you don't have to worry about finding your own accommodation which is the case for other universities.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Between 3 of us (all from Manchester) we bought a car for roughly £300 each and the insurance was really cheap as well. The public transport isn't very good so I would suggest buying a cheap car between a group of you but not too many. There are loads of chances to travel around the south island as everything is only 3 to 4 hours away and the scenery is so diverse. There are loads of great walks around the country which are relatively easy to complete. There are also many extreme activities, especially in Queenstown. Also The Highlanders, a SuperRugby team play at the stadium and there are cheap tickets to the student areas for these games which are great. The All Blacks also played in Dunedin twice during my year abroad which was a great experience. It is easy to integrate

with local students especially because of the Kiwi Hosting scheme. Uni Flats sets up loads of activities, including sports teams but it is easy to organize events between yourselves and the people you will meet. As it is so easy to travel the country you can go away most weekends and not miss out on work. There are so many different places to go and you will be travelling a lot throughout your time here seeing the most amazing places in the world. The nights out on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays are also really fun, there are often house parties every week, especially on Leith Street and Castle Street and there are always places to go on nights out because the town (the Octagon) has heaps of bars to go to on a night out.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

The most amazing country I have ever been to, I don't want to go home