



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	BSc Food Technology
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	18/02/2024 until 23/06/2024
Exchange destination: University	Massey University
Faculty	Social Anthropology, Sociology, Linguistics
Country	New Zealand
City	Auckland

2. Motivation for exchange

a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I have always wanted to live in another country and a study exchange is the perfect opportunity to try that out. Besides that, I think it is also good to experience education at a different institution.

b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

First and foremost, I wanted to go far and to an English speaking country. I also considered Singapore, but the courses I could take there were not as interesting to me. New Zealand was a perfect mix between a familiar Western country, with influences from Pacific culture, which I was already interested in.

c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

Mainly, because the other option would not have allowed me to study in Auckland.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

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4. University and studying

a. Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Understanding Cultural Difference	7.5	An introductory course to the field of Anthropology	5	Very interesting and laid the basis for a field that was completely new for me

2	Anthropology of Ritual, Religion and Witchcraft	7.5	Applied anthropology with examples from various religious beliefs from around the world.	5	Amazing teacher who was one of the only experts in the field. Included actual anthropological fieldwork which was cool.
3	Social Inequality and Justice	7.5	Laid out several sociological theories on why social inequalities arise and what can be done to mitigate it.	5	Class felt more like a discussion, which I really liked. It feels a little surface-level at first but actually does go a bit in depth.
4	Language and Communication	7.5	Introductory course to the field of linguistics	3	It was more communication than language, which I did not like. Besides that, it was also online despite being listed as in-person.
5					
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b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes (it was the only option haha)

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes, but only barely. Right before my semester started, the entire Natural Sciences faculty was removed from the campus I stayed at and many, many courses were actually taught online, despite being listed as in-person. To clarify, I had initially planned on taking some courses on Ecology and Sustainability, which ceased to exist about a month before my exchange, forcing me to only take Humanities courses. I ended up really enjoying these courses, so it was not horrible in the end for me personally, but other students should be aware that the courses listed on the Massey course guide might not exist anymore or actually be online.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed (Yes, No - Explain):

Yes, they were not difficult but in a different field than what I actually study, so still intriguing and challenging enough.

e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain):

For the most part, yes. They worked well together and served as a nice, overall minor of social anthropology.

f. What is it like to study there?

E.g. Study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material?

My classes were quite small, with only +-15 people in a classroom and I had 1 lecture per course per week. Workload was doable, with only essays and "take-home tests". One course had a set textbook, but the others relied on pre-lecture reading from several papers or other sources, so there was a lot of self-study.

g. What is the culture of the university?

E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with WU?

Due to the small classrooms, lectures were significantly more personal than at WUR, which I really liked. I was at a first name basis with teachers and usually knew most people in my classes. Often, the lectures felt more like conversations between the class as a whole, instead of a teacher preaching to their students. Due to the budget cuts, though, the campus as a whole was notably empty for most of the week, because many students had online classes.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?

There is the possibility of living on campus, in either catered or non-catered shared housing or even studios. There are some cafés and restaurants on campus, but they all close early in the afternoon so it would only be suitable for lunch. Included in the rent is a subscription to the on-campus gym and the classes it offers. There is a laundry room, which is pay-per-use, in the common area of the accommodation. Throughout the semester, activities were organized for those living on campus, usually in the common room.

5. Housing-traveling-living

a. What are the possibilities for housing?

E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?

From what I could gather, the rooms on campus are an almost guaranteed spot, since some rooms were still empty when I stayed there. It is a little bit more expensive than private renting, but I'm sure that is possible too. I paid 313NZD per week for an un-catered room in a shared apartment of 5.

b. What is the culture like?

E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?

For the most part (and very much simplified), it is like a combination between English and American culture, although New Zealand is the only ex-colony that is actively trying to revive their indigenous culture, which is great. There is a very big Asian immigrant community, so there are many different restaurants all throughout the city.

c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?

New Zealand is very car-oriented! I initially planned to buy a cheap bicycle, but that would not be doable as there are barely any good footpaths, let alone cycle paths. Luckily, the public transport is alright. There are buses that go from the University to the nearest bus station about every ten minutes. From the campus to the city centre, it is about 45 minutes by bus and costs ~1.50 Euro, if you use the AT HOP card and load it with a student concession. There are a couple train lines that connect the furthest parts of the city, like the airport, but apparently they don't always run. Sometimes the bus connection between two spots in the city is not ideal either, so there is also always the option of taking an Uber, which is more expensive.

6. Expenses

a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	1500 euro
Visa - if applicable	243 euro
Vaccinations - if applicable	-
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	There is a travel insurance from Massey that I accidentally got, but got refunded because the included WUR travel insurance is also sufficient.
Daytrips/sight-seeing	10-100 euro
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	~850 euro, apartment
Grocery costs per month	~200-300 euro
Public transport costs per month	30 euro
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	100 euro (for once a week)

a. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands:

Grocery costs were generally higher, but restaurants were sometimes cheaper, depending on the location.

b. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

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7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

E.g. Nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?

There is so much to do in the Auckland CBD that are all reachable by public transport, so I could go on forever. There are nice restaurants from many different countries and usually a market every Saturday or Sunday in multiple areas throughout the city. K-Road is the alternative/queer street of the city, with a lot of thrift stores and cute shops. Many of the museums are free for Auckland residents (exchange students count as residents)

so definitely go there! If you're here during summer, definitely go to Brown's bay beach, or Long bay beach or Takapuna beach.

A short (but expensive) ferry from the city will take you to the volcanic Rangitoto island which is an amazing day hike if you like that (or you can swim at the beaches).

From Auckland, there are organized day tours that take you by bus to the Waitomo glowworm caves, or the geothermic town of Rotorua (great place to experience Maori culture). Fans of Lord of the Rings must take a trip to Hobbiton, which is where they filmed parts of the movies.

If it is within your budget, this is probably the only time in your life that you can spontaneously fly to Australia, because a return flight from Auckland to Sydney/Brisbane is only about 200 euro.

b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?

Matariki celebrations! Matariki is the Maori astronomical new year and has been a national holiday for only two years now (usually end of June). So if you are there at that time I would recommend to check it out. You can find other scheduled events like cultural festivals (I went to an international food convention) on eventfinda.co.nz

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?

I had a full mental breakdown in the first week because of loneliness/the new environment/immediate homesickness and I cried for multiple days. Calling with friends/family/partners just to vent definitely helps, but at some point you really need to go out there and befriend people and build a social life. It might seem useless since you are only there temporarily, but it is always nice to have actual people to talk to where you are, whether they are classmates or housemates or someone doing the same sport as you. Maybe you will never talk to them again, but it makes your exchange a lot better.

Being an international student also means you're limited in travel and other means, so an added benefit of befriending locals is that they might have a car or a place to store luggage during travels :).

b. Best memory?

The first big thing I did when I arrived was hike on Rangitoto island and reaching the summit after several hours was sort of symbolical of me overcoming my homesickness. At the end of my exchange (when my girlfriend came over!) I hiked it again, so it has a special place in my heart.

9. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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