

EXCHANGE REPORT

LAUREN McDONALD – LMCDONALD13@SCHULICH.YORKU.CA

AUSTRALIAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT (AGSM – SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA)

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VISA PROCESS

As a domestic student, the visa process for Australia was extremely simple. Using the [Australian Government's Department of Immigration and Border Protection website](#) I applied for a working holiday visa (subclass 417). The cost of the visa was \$425 Australian dollars and allowed me to study in Australia for up to 4 months, and leave the country as much as I desired for a year. I chose the working holiday visa over the higher education sector visa (subclass 573) as the cost was lower. If you're planning to live and work in Australia after your exchange (or at any time thereafter), I'd recommend applying for the higher education visa for your exchange, as you're only eligible to receive the working holiday visa once. The visa application process is all done online and I was approved within 12 hours. You do not need a physical visa in your passport so once you've been approved you are all set to go!

INSURANCE

I applied for insurance before leaving Canada by calling Green Shield and adding to my existing York University plan. AGSM requires all exchange students have at least \$5,000,000 in travel medical insurance and remote evacuation. This cost me roughly \$2.05 per day to cover me for the 5 months I was out of the country (3.5 months for school and 1.5 months of travel afterwards). Thankfully I never had to use my insurance.

FINANCIAL

I arrived in Australia with approximately \$2,000 Australian cash in case I found a permanent place to live within a day and needed cash for the bond. While here I opted not to open a bank account. Instead, I used my VISA as much as possible and withdrew large sums each time I withdrew cash from an ATM. I have a TD first class travel VISA, which did not charge me anything to use it while away. I was charged \$7 - \$9 each time I withdrew cash from an ATM (combined ATM fee + fee from my bank), yet I still found this to be much more convenient than setting up a bank account and transferring my money while there.

ARRIVAL/AIRPORT

Arriving in Sydney was an easy and speedy process. The customs process is very similar to what you'd find in Canada – an immigration card to fill out while on the plane and then a few questions at security. Once I was through security I made my way to the public transport area to catch a bus to the AirBnB I had arranged for my first few nights in

Sydney. If you choose to stay near the university, there is a direct bus (400 towards Bondi Junction) that takes you right to the university. The ride costs \$3.50, takes about 40 minutes and is extremely simple; I'd highly recommend the public transport even with all your luggage. Well worth the money saved. To ride the bus you'll need to buy an "opal card" which will act as your rechargeable bus pass for your time in Sydney. This can be purchased at any of the convenience stores in the airport and reloaded either online or at any convenience store across the city. The card itself is free, so you'll just need to pay \$20 (the minimum at most stores) which will be loaded directly to the card. One note about the opal card, make sure to tap when you get on the bus and again when you get off the bus. If you forget to tap off you'll be charged the entire length of the trip.

ACADEMICS

Registration Process: The registration process at AGSM is very simple (as it seems most things are in this country). About 3 months prior to the start of your exchange, AGSM will hold an info session explaining the electives available for the session. This will be recorded and emailed to you to view. This is extremely helpful as it gives you insight into what each course is about and allows you to learn a bit about the professor. You then e-mail Lisa (the exchange coordinator at AGSM) with which courses you'd like to take and she registers you into the classes. One of the downsides to AGSM is that in comparison to Schulich, there aren't many electives to choose from. We had about 11 courses to choose from, of which, a majority were focused on finance/consulting. I was however able to choose four classes that worked with my schedule and interests, so would not let this fact deter you from applying to AGSM.

Courses: Classes at AGSM run very similar to Schulich: a three-hour lecture each week, with readings and materials to prep outside class time. Overall, I'd say the workload per class was less than at Schulich. Most classes had one or two assignments and a final or final group assignment. However, a full time student at AGSM is only required to take 3 classes. Since we have to take 4 to 5 classes (depending on whether you overloaded in a term at Schulich) to equate to the same course credit at Schulich, I found I had a higher workload than some of my peers. I managed to take 6 classes in the fall at Schulich prior to my exchange, so only had to take 4 classes here. I'd highly recommend this route, as it gave me more free time and flexibility to get to know my classmates outside of school. Classes are offered throughout the day, but the morning classes don't start until 9:30 am and night classes finish at 9:00 pm, which seemed like a huge bonus!

The classes I took were:

Managerial Decision Making: This class was taught by Patrick Sharry. It was reading intensive and had an emphasis on the psychology of human decision making, which made it a very interesting course; quite unique compared to other MBA classes. I enjoyed Patrick as a lecturer, however he was a bit disorganized with his class and reading schedule, so be prepared to be flexible if you choose to take this elective. Overall, I would recommend this course.

Strategic Restructuring: This class was taught by Greg Joffe. Greg is the owner of Nous consulting firm, and therefore provided a very practical lens to this class. This class is

highly participatory, so make sure you're ready to attend most, if not all, of his lectures and do your reading in advance. The content for this course is a mix of organizational behavior, operations management and general strategy, and I felt it was useful at tying together content I'd learned throughout the MBA. I really enjoyed this course and would recommend it to others.

Services Marketing: This class was taught by Craig Tapper. This was my favourite class at AGSM. Craig is an extremely knowledgeable marketing professional. Listening to him explain how to apply marketing frameworks to real-world situations enhanced my learning as it not only helped me understand how each framework worked but also the purpose and when to use each. While this class was mostly lecture-based, I found the material and readings to be very practical and helpful for learning the content. I'm passionate about marketing however, so this could just be my bias! I would highly recommend this class.

Negotiations + Strategy: This class was taught by Shaun Simmons. I came into this course having high expectations as the content is relevant to everyone's day-to-day lives and the course at Schulich is raved about. However, this was my least favourite class at AGSM. While the content was useful, I found the text they used to be highly outdated and painful to read. Unfortunately, the lecturer also did not add value to this class either. I'd definitely recommend taking negotiations but would say to do so at Schulich (take Kevin Tasa's class – I'm sad I didn't!). Do not take this course at AGSM unless it is with a different lecturer.

Classroom: The MBA program at AGSM is much smaller than Schulich (only about 70 full time students), which made the classes smaller too. Personally, I liked the smaller class size as it made it easier to get to know everyone. Aside from me, there were 11 other exchange students from the London Business School, Cornell University, University of Texas at Austin and the University of Chicago Booth. From the full-time AGSM cohort, there were several students from across Asia, South America, Europe and North America. Overall, the average age was a bit higher than at Schulich, both in regards to full time and exchange students.

TEACHING

Teaching style at AGSM is similar to Schulich in the sense that most courses are lecture-based. However, there is less of an emphasis on case-based analysis in AGSM classes, and all in-class examples are based on Asian-Pacific companies. This was interesting as it allowed me to truly learn more about how business is done in other areas of the world. Some of the classes had guest lecturers (the CEO of Australian Super, CMO of a data analytics firm) but for the most part they were lectures and seminars. Material was covered at a slower pace than at Schulich, which was a nice change and allowed me to enjoy more activities outside of class.

LANGUAGE COURSES

There are no language courses at AGSM since Australia is an English speaking country. Given this however, there are several terms or expressions you're sure to hear (and perhaps adopt into your own vocabulary). Most common are:

- That was 'heaps' fun
- I reckon
- Mozzie (mosquito)
- Are you 'keen' to be in a group?
- How yah goin'?

It was fun to learn these along with all the various ways of saying the same things (flip flops vs. thongs, bangs vs. fringe, pronunciation of words etc.)

INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

The AGSM exchange coordinators held an orientation day the first day of classes for exchange students. At this they helped set up our student accounts, get us access to the internet, moodle and our e-mail, get our student cards printed, get our class schedule/class material etc. There was also a welcome lunch with some of the current full time students, which was a nice way to meet and begin to get to know others. The orientation is mandatory, so make sure you book your flight with enough time to arrive for the first day of classes. Lisa was my exchange contact and did a fabulous job at answering my questions before I arrived and then helping me while on-site. Since it's a small program, all of the AGSM staff get to know you by name, which was very welcoming.

HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

Finding housing was the most difficult part of the exchange process. My recommendation is to be as laid back about it as possible before you leave and then really begin to hunt once you arrive in Australia; this is what I did. I found it challenging to secure permanent housing from Canada and once I arrived, was happy I waited to do so. There are a lot of student rooms for rent around the campus, however, the quality and price varies so it's best to go and look at them personally so you can meet the others living there, get a feel for the distance to school and make sure you'll be comfortable living there for a few months. Before leaving Canada I booked a room in Kingsford through AirBnB for my first week in Sydney. After getting my classes settled, I began searching for a place to live on [gumtree](#) (Australia's version of kijiji) and on a UNSW student rental Facebook group. I saw several places, and eventually found a cute little 3-bedroom house within a 5-minute walk of campus in Randwick. I loved my flatmates (I shared with 2 Australian junior doctors) and really loved the Randwick area. It had two large grocery stores, several restaurants and cafes and was only a 20-minute walk to Coogee beach – the perfect mix of everything needed for exchange. Rent is pricey in Sydney, and everything is charged per week. I paid \$305/week including all utilities (internet, cable, electricity, water laundry etc.) for a room with a queen bed, desk and large wardrobe. The room was likely more than I needed given I was there on exchange, but I felt really comfortable so it was worth the price.

CAMPUS FACILITIES

The UNSW campus is beautiful! Lots of wonderful outside areas to study and relax when the weather is nice and plenty of study areas indoors for when it isn't. My favourite places to study were in the Info Commons room (computer room strictly for MBA use) at AGSM or in the UNSW library. The AGSM building is dedicated solely to graduate and post-graduate MBA students, and therefore there is always a quiet space to study. Other bonuses about the building include:

- Everyone is given a locker, which is quite useful if you live off campus
- There is a dedicated MBA lounge – Ping-Pong, foosball and pool tables. Big screen TV and couches. Full kitchen, coffee maker, kettle and fridge. Plus the best part, a fully stocked beer fridge! Beers were available at any time of the day for \$2.00
- There are 16 syndicate rooms (equivalent of our breakout rooms) which compared to the number of students meant there was always one available
- MBA students have access to unlimited free printing both in the common room and Info Commons
- The building and all rooms within it are accessible via swipe pass (your student card) 24/7, which meant the building was very secure and felt very comfortable working there alone or at night

FOOD

Eating out in Australia is more expensive than Toronto, but was one of my favourite things to do. There are so many independently-owned restaurants with delicious, fresh homemade food. For breakfast, expect to pay anywhere from \$15 to \$25. One nice thing however is that tax is already included in the menu prices (and you don't generally tip in Australia) so the price you see is what you pay. Buying food in grocery stores is also more expensive in Sydney than in Toronto, but again, you're getting ingredients that are more fresh than at home. In fact, genetically modified produce is against the law in Australia, which is one of the main price drivers. I lived in Randwick (a suburb right next to campus) and there was a Coles and Wollworths (Australia's largest grocery chains) within a 5 minute walk, so it was very convenient to buy food and cook meals at home.

COSTS/EXPENSES

- Accommodation: Rent in Australia is charged per week. I spent \$305/week which included all utilities, internet, cable, on-site laundry etc. This was on the pricer end compared to other exchange students. My living arrangements definitely helped make Sydney home for me, so it was well worth the cost. Other exchange students paid between \$250 to \$280/week, but they were living further from campus, and sometimes sharing with upwards of 8 people.
- Textbooks: I only had to purchase one textbook for Negotiations. All other classes relied on online readings, and we were given unlimited free printing, so there were no additional costs for textbooks.
- Local transportation: A typical bus trip from Randwick to the Central Business District (CBD – what we would call “downtown”) costs about \$3.50. Overall, I'd

say I spent about \$200 on transportation during my 3 months in Sydney, mainly because I opted to walk places as often as I could.

- Food/groceries: On average I spent about \$80 per week on groceries. I did my best to make meals at home during the week, and splurge on eating out on the weekends.
- Entertainment: Entertainment was my largest expense as I chose to travel as much as possible while in Australia. Some typical expenses would include:
 - Drinks at a bar: a beer or glass of wine at a bar is typically around \$10. If you're looking for a cocktail, that's going to run you around \$20 each. In general, spirits are far more expensive than beer and wine since beer and wine are produced locally. For instance, a 26er of vodka will likely cost about \$40 at the bottleshop, hence why bar prices are so high.
 - Outdoor movie: the outdoor cinema in Central Park is amazing, and definitely one of my must-do activities. While it will cost you about \$25 for the ticket and \$9 to rent a bean bag chair (which is also a must) the experience is definitely worth the cost. You're allowed to bring in your own food and drinks (including alcohol) and have a picnic while watching the movie – heaps of fun!
 - Domestic flights: flying domestically is reasonable priced and very convenient. Prices from Sydney to the areas I visited were roughly \$175 to Cairns, \$195 to Adelaide, \$120 to Melbourne, \$160 to Hervey Bay (Fraser Island) and \$350 to Uluru.
 - Karaoke: Sydney has heaps of karaoke bars where you and your friends can get your own booth and sing until your hearts are content. This typically costs about \$15 per person (if you have a group of 6-8) for a two hour session. Definitely a must-do while in Sydney.
 - Ferry to Manly: taking the ferry to Manly costs \$15 round-trip. Manly was my favourite beach, so I found myself going over often, either just to relax on the beach, snorkel at Shelly beach, watch the Australian Surf Open or grab drinks at some of the local pubs.

DEPARTURE/AIRPORT

Expect to accumulate more things while in Australia, so try to bring as little as possible with you. I was lucky enough to not have to purchase any house-hold items however as my place came fully stocked, so did not have to worry about disposing items afterwards (another bonus of paying a bit more each month).

MUST SEES OR DOS

Building on some of the items I've mentioned before, my "must-do" items in Sydney are:

- Ride the ferry to Manly beach. If you're a bit homesick, make sure to stop at Four Pines brewery. Not only does this bar have a great view of the sunset at Manly and delicious beer, but they also have poutine on the menu!

- Outdoor movie in Central Park
- Coogee to Bondi walk: this walk takes about 2 hours to complete and is one of the most breathtaking walks I've done.
- Surf lessons: I took surf lessons at Manly, Maroubra and Bondi beaches, all with the company Lets Go Surfing. The instructors were all super friendly and made learning to surf a lot of fun.
- Become a certified open water diver: ProDive Coogee (which happens to be just a 20 minute walk from AGSM) has a 3 day scuba certification course. I chose to do this during the week, so I could take full advantage of my time and dive in the Great Barrier Reef.
- Take a day trip to the Blue Mountains
- Walk across the Harbour Bridge: great views of the Sydney Opera House at sunset. I chose not to do the bridge walk due to its price (upwards of \$250) but really enjoyed just walking across the bridge.
- Northern Beaches: The northern beaches just begin at Manly. Hop on the L90 bus and ride all the way up to Palm Beach. From there, you can make your way on foot through several of the other beaches in the north, stopping for a quick dip or bite to eat in towns along the way.
- Newtown: Newtown is Sydney's hipster-central. Lots of cool pubs and shops to explore
- Free Sydney walking tour: there is a free walking tour in Sydney that leaves from Town Hall every day. It's about 3 hours in length, but is a fabulous way to orient yourself in the city, learn about great places to eat/visit and about some of Australia's history.
- Randwick Races: Australia has a great horse racing culture, and there is a fabulous racecourse just minutes from school. I'd highly recommend grabbing some friends, dressing up and adorning a lovely fascinator and heading off for a day at the races.

Apart from enjoying my time in Sydney, I also made trips to Melbourne, Adelaide, and Uluru during the semester. After the term, I decided to stay in Australia for an additional 6 weeks of travel.

WHAT TO BRING

- AGSM is much more casual than Schulich. While it's good to bring a few dressy items, definitely make sure to pack more casual, comfortable clothes.
- Power adaptors
- Unlocked phone – phone plans are extremely cheap in Australia (roughly \$30/month) and do not need a contract so it's very convenient if you have your phone unlocked to just switch over to an Australian number.
- A few sweaters / jackets as it does get cool at night (especially nearing the end of the term)

- Umbrella / raincoat: surprisingly enough it does rain quite a bit in Australia. I was happy to have both an umbrella and raincoat
- Athletic ware & running shoes: the area around AGSM is very active and hilly with lots of great things to do outdoors
- An open mind: things are far more laid back in Australia. You have to learn how to be adaptive and go with the flow, otherwise you'll spend most of your time being stressed and miss out on one of the greatest things about Australia.

CULTURE SHOCK

Australia really is a warm version of Canada. A lot of things were very similar, so coming from Toronto there wasn't much culture shock. I'd say the biggest thing was how relaxed and laid back everyone was.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

I absolutely love Australia. Exchange is a completely life changing experience and I wouldn't trade it for the world.

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