I have just returned home from my study abroad at the University of Otago. Unfortunately it was cut short due to the Covid-19 outbreak. However, I still have the opportunity to partake in classes online and do group projects with Kiwi students from afar. This is a challenging but wonderful opportunity as it is developing my ability to work remotely whilst also allowing me to learn more about the New Zealand culture. My time in New Zealand was amazing, even if short. We went camping, hiking, swimming and played sports, with every evening after class being taken up by some form of outdoor activity.

Academic teachings were very similar in New Zealand with lectures ranging in size from 12-300 people, similar to UCD. With it being such a new nation with less than 200 years since it was discovered by Europeans, lots of the students come from Scottish and Irish backgrounds so culturally it is very similar. Students are shy at first but friendly. Lectures can be quiet but once students get comfortable they warm up and engage with the class.

The Kiwi culture was incredibly interesting with the massive diversity of immigrants they have along with the indigenous Maori people. Maori culture was incredibly interesting and their challenges co-existing with Pakeha (Non Maori New Zealanders) over the last 200 years were very interesting.

As stressful as the covid-19 situation became, I could not have immersed myself in the New Zealand culture if it were not for UCD and the Ad Astra academy. UCD were constantly in contact with me supporting me and the Ad Astra team were alongside ensuring anything I needed was sorted out. The bursary also helped me to afford the wonderful experience of New Zealand.

It may have only been for 5 weeks but I’m sure I want to return to New Zealand in the future!A large brick building with grass and trees

Description automatically generatedA group of people standing on top of a sandy beach

Description automatically generatedA person standing next to a body of water

Description automatically generatedA pile of luggage sitting on top of a bed

Description automatically generatedA person standing in front of a building

Description automatically generated