

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND: REPORT 2008-09

ON ARRIVAL

Upon arriving at Brisbane international airport, there is a train that will take you right into central station, at the heart of the CBD. This train is quite expensive as transport goes, about 14\$, but it is really the only way to get into the city.

The University is situated about 20 minutes outside the CBD, about the same distance as UCD is situated outside Dublin City. You have the option of getting two buses to the University, yet at this stage of your travels, a 20\$ taxi is probably the best idea. The name of the Suburb that the university is situated in is called St. Lucia, however all the taxi drivers will know where the University is. You don't need to tip in Australia taxis, and taxi drivers will be surprised if you do.

ACCOMMODATION

The majority of international students will stay at a hostel in the city while they are looking for accommodation. This is where a lot of the international students meet each other and generally search together. There is a very good website on the university website where students put up room vacancies and other opportunities for accommodation. This really is the best way to find accommodation. It is updated every single day and the applicant must go to interviews with the students who place the advertisement.

NOTE: It is very very important to live in the suburb of St. Lucia, directly beside the university. All the international students live in this suburb and it really is the best location for absolutely everything that you want to do. It is easy to find accommodation in this suburb and is definitely the place to live for a student attending UQ

Rent for a room is generally between 150\$-200\$ per week. Paying anywhere below this is going to result in a pretty poor house/room, but anywhere around 175\$ a week will get you a very good room in a decent house. The estate agent encourages people to pay every 2 weeks, however are very lax about when the rent has to be paid. This is one of their faults and causes many problems towards the end.

There is also the option of staying on campus in one of the student colleges. These colleges are very expensive and are quite different to UCD. Included in the expenses for the colleges are 3 meals a day and this is compulsory. This is one reason why they are so expensive. It means that in order to keep expenses to a minimum, you have to be at the dining halls 3 times a day or else you have to buy your own food. Breakfast is served very early, for a college student, and you may also have lectures during lunchtime. Arrangements can be made to have a packed lunch, but it is really just impractical, especially for an international student, who will want to travel during holidays and vacation.

BANK ACCOUNTS

It is very important to have an Australian bank account when studying here. Especially seeing as you will be there for a year. It makes things very easy. Whether it is receiving money from a job, or transferring rent to the account of the estate agents. It really is necessary to have an Australian bank account and is very easy to set up. There is a student bank on the campus right in the middle of the grounds, and caters for students, just like in UCD. It takes only a few minutes to set up the bank account and once it is set up you can have it for the year. The name of the bank is Commonwealth Bank and is used in every city throughout Australia. This is important as international students will be travelling around so much and will need access to information and funds from their bank.

PHONE

The main phone line that all students use is Vodafone. All the international students do the same thing as regards to phones. Buy a cheap phone for 50\$ at the very start of your trip and you will have it for the whole time. The system in Australia for credit is quite good. You buy 49\$ worth of credit and it gives you 350\$ worth. You must use the credit before 30 days is up or you will lose the credit and have to top up again. You get a lot of credit for that money, which is excellent for ringing home back to Ireland. It is quite cheap to ring from your mobile to other mobiles in Ireland, especially when you have so much credit. So this is best possible option regarding the mobile phones.

BRISBANE CITY

Brisbane city is very similar to Dublin in the fact that it is easy to get around and not too big. It is only a 20 minute bus ride from the university and holds everything that a main city should hold. The nightlife is situated here, with a choice of two ends of the city. The Central station, travel agents, hotels, etc. For a number of the subjects in UQ, there is a requirement to visit the law courts of Brisbane. These are also situated right beside the university bound bus stop in the city.

LIVING EXPENSES

The cost of living is quite low in Australia. It really is a bonus coming over from the euro currency, as you can almost double your money, yet in keeping with a similar cost of living. The supermarkets are quite cheap, and expenses involved in daily living are also quite cheap.

WORK

Depending on how you are being funded, it is quite important to have a job. Wages for barmen and waiters in a restaurant are really very good, so I would advise trying to find employment in this industry. It is probably the best paid job that a student will be able to get. Be warned though that the study visa will only enable you to work only 20 hours a week, and the hotels and restaurants are very strict on this rule. Therefore you could earn between 400\$ and 500\$ per week, which is a lot giving the cheap cost of living.

In order to work in Australia you must have a Tax File Number.(TFN) It is easy to obtain this. You just go onto the government website and ask them to issue one out to you in the post. It is definitely important to get this number as soon as you arrive in Brisbane, as employers will not hire you without it. Even if you do not intend to work in Australia,

it is a wise move to apply for this number. It is easy to obtain, free and can help you in many situations.

HOLIDAYS

There is a week break in each semester, and this is a time when most international students will go travelling. It is a time when everyone goes away, to all different places around Australia and New Zealand. Having said that, UCD students are there for a year, so we have the option of going travelling during the 3 months that we have off during Christmas. The majority of international students are only there for one semester and therefore need to make the most out of every single free opportunity to travel. Term starts at the start of July and end in the middle of November. The next term starts at the beginning of March and ends at the end of June. Therefore there is a lot of time over the Christmas break to travel. Students tend to travel the whole east coast of Australia, as this is the closest and most sought after travelling experience. It is also a must to spend time in New Zealand. It is only a two and a half hour flight and if you book early flights can be as cheap as 150\$. The best time to go to New Zealand is in January, as the weather is at its best then. However, the snow season start around July and is also a good way to spend two weeks.

SUBJECTS

There was not a huge variety of law subjects to choose from as an International Student from UQ. Not nearly as many as in UCD. Lectures are conducted in the exact same way as UCD. A 2 hour lecture, followed by a tutorial every 2 weeks. UQ also uses Blackboard and it is the exact same operation as in UCD.

First Semester

Labour Law

This was an interesting subject about employment law in Australia. It dealt only with Australian law and would not be useful in Ireland, however, it was an interesting system and interesting topic to study. There was an essay mid way through the semester, and the end of term exam. I would recommend this subject.

South Pacific Law

A subject studying the current and custom laws concerning the islands of the South Pacific. This was an excellent opportunity to learn about countries where customary law is still largely entrenched. There was a great deal of continuous assessment throughout the semester, including case notes, presentations and projects.

Evidence

An excellent subject to take if you intend on studying it in your final year at UCD. The laws and rules are similar and can give you a good head start in your study for your finals. The subject was very interesting, with guest speakers and numerous short videos. There was an assessment mid way through the semester, which obligates the student to attend a case in the Brisbane law courts and report on the evidential proceedings throughout. It is merely a pass/fail assignment and is very useful.

Unjust Enrichment

This is an extremely complex subject, requiring substantial external reading and study. It is a subject concerned with much theory and discussion over the actual meaning of many issues. It seems that there never really is a right answer for the questions which the student must answer.

Semester 2

Legal Profession

A very very interesting course, and the one I enjoyed the most. It dealt largely with the ethical dilemmas that barristers and solicitors face everyday in their profession. The tutorials were taken by a prominent member of the Board of Ethics in Queensland, and his experiences of ethical issues. This subject is a requirement for joining the Solicitors Role in Queensland, and is practical to do, if one ever decides to return to Australia to work.

Civil Procedure

Another requirement for the Solicitors Role in Queensland. This subject is another practical one to pick, and deals with the procedures involved in bringing a civil case to court. Fact based and easy to understand.

Asian Legal Studies

A subject similar to that of South Pacific Law. Each lecture investigates the legal system of a different Asian country and gives the student an excellent idea of just how different the western world is, in terms of legal systems. There were 3 different forms of continuous assessment, however, none of those required too much in the way of hard work. I would highly recommend this subject, as it is a chance to learn about such diverse legal systems throughout Asia.