

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

Student Details

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Economics and Statistics
Exchange Institution	American University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 1 2017

Finances

Detail your basic costs in New Zealand dollars. This will help future students plan their own budgets. (Enter your number rounded to the nearest dollar.)

Books	NZD35 (with exchange rate of 1.42)
Accommodation	284/ week
Return Airfare	1766
Local Transportation	160 (included in university fees)
Meals	20/week
Visa	483
Health & Insurance	1470
Personal Spending	2130
Communications (phone, etc.)	71/month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Compulsory technology fee and sports center fee (NZD100)

How did your financial expenses compare to what you originally expected to spend?

Less than expected due to cheaper food prices.

By what means did you maintain your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, foreign bank account, travelers checks, etc)?

Local bank to avoid transaction costs. I recommend getting a Visa Vanilla card from local pharmacies while bank account is getting set up.

What financial advice would you give students attending the same university as you?

Do detailed budgeting from websites like this <https://www.expatisan.com/cost-of-living/washington-d-c>

What was the average cost of a can of coke or coffee in your host country?

\$2.50

Visas & Insurance **Please note this information is recommended by VUW students & current at the time of their exchange. For all up-to-date visa information you must check with the embassy/consulate of your host university.*

Did you have to apply for a visa? If so, was it difficult? What was the process, how long did it take and how much did it cost?

Yes. Fairly easy, took a week to get materials together and book an appointment online. Interview was at the consulate in Auckland which lasted 10 seconds.

Do you have any advice for future students when applying for visas to your host country?

Prepare bank account statements for the interview even though website says that it is not required as I saw that some students were asked to prove sufficient funds during the interview.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance? Or a particular insurance they recommended? If Yes, what was it and how much did it cost?

Yes. Using the university's insurance is the best option. USD1035

What insurance company did you use and would you recommend it to future students?

University's United Health Care plan. Highly recommend it as the claiming process was a breeze.

Academics at Host University

Which courses did you take while on exchange? Please rate the difficulty of each course (1-5, 1 = Very Easy & 5 = Extremely Difficult) and leave any comments you may have.

Course Title	Language of Instruction	VUW course equivalent or elective	VUW points/credits value	Rating (1-5)	Comments
VUW Trimester 1/YEAR					
ECON401-Intermediate Macroeconomics with Calculus	English	ECON305	15	4	Lots of calculus. Their 400-level courses are designed to prepare students for graduate studies, therefore it is challenging and entry is competitive. Course involves a calculus project, exams, weekly assignments and a book paper on American economic history. Co-taught with 600-level class.
ECON363-Macroeconomics	English	N/A	15	5	Participation is expected, and absences from class will lead to credit being

cs of Development					deducted. Heavy amount of readings. Students are also expected to be familiar with past economic crises in Latin America and Asia such as the Tequila Crisis, as well as policies made. Professor is extremely friendly and will come to university late at night and on the weekends to help students out. Course involves 2 papers on country of your choice and 3 exams.
STAT 302 Intermediate Statistics		STAT 391	15	3	Uses IBM SPSS. Taught by Professor Mary W. Gray who is a statistician and lawyer with extensive experience in discrimination law and human rights, so classes are interesting. Students are also trained to present statistics to people with no background in statistics. Course involves 2 assignments a week, tests, group project, presentations and an exam.
STAT370 Introduction to Statistical Computing and Modelling		N/A	15	5	Uses R to teach data analysis and presentation, graphical and formal inference, text mining, modelling and simulation. We were left with little direction but with lots of flexibility to pick a topic we care about and run a research project. Professor is extremely dedicated and often stays in university to 9pm to help students. Due to the challenging nature of this course, it will be offered as a 600-level course next year. Our work is showcased on this page http://stat370.com/wiki/index.php/Main Page

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available?

Done via university website, extremely easy process.

How successful were you in registering/enrolling for classes you wanted? What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your host university?

Each student is given a time to log in and register for class. Definitely get ready for your log in time.

Do you have any advice for future students when choosing and applying for courses?

Have prerequisites waived by their exchange office before registering for courses.

Academic Experience

How did your academic experience differ from your time spend at Victoria? Did the academic experience meet your expectations?

My largest class had 11 people, which was a very different experience from Vic. As a result, students got more attention. Professors also went out of their way to help students with assignments/internship search/graduate school applications/research opportunities/preparing for competitions. Participation is also expected in every class, and about 40% of learning came from the opinions and experiences of my classmates. Bonds between classmates are stronger than at Vic since we spend a lot of time together, and often till dawn trying to finish assignments. There was also pop quizzes that threw me off guard.

How did the style of teaching at your host university compare with that at VUW? How did the workload compare to what you would expect at VUW?

It was more interactive and individualized. Professors remember how each student did on assignments/tests and which type of questions they got wrong. We were also able to negotiate with the professors for extra credit assignments/weightage on tests/deadlines. The workload was significantly heavier, however that may be attributed to the specific courses that I took.

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other VUW students visiting your partner university? What specific courses would you recommend to visiting VUW students? Why?

Depends on your major. Local students typically take 5 courses (75-85 points). Choose courses that aren't offered at Vic, and try a capstone course.

What advice would you give VUW students about succeeding academically at your host university?

Go to office hours, even if you don't have questions related to the material being taught. Professors love to hear about your background and ambitions, and will try to get you to that goal. The library is 24 hours and offers help with researching for your papers.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your host university?

Similar to Vic's.

If you went to a country where English is not the native language, how did you prepare for this? Were there

any intensive language courses provided by the host university?

Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Off campus.

What were the pros and cons of this form of accommodation?

Pros were that you become more connected to the local community instead of being in a bubble on campus. Personally do not think that there was any cons.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Off campus

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in early January.

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? How satisfied were you with the food?

Campus offers extensive meal plans.

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find? What should future VUW exchange students know about living off-campus?

I found off campus housing through friends so it was an easy process. Living off campus is a lot cheaper.

Do you have any tips of advice for future students when applying for accommodation?

Do it as soon as possible.

Personal & Cultural Connections

What was it like making friends? How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students?

Making friends was super easy. The people I encountered were generous, welcoming and kind. As I was living off campus, I regularly got invited to neighbor's homes for dinner. Many residents in DC take pity on college students and offer us free food. I was also living with 2 Americans and became friends with their friends, so I didn't get a chance to mingle with international students.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange country/university?

There wasn't much to adjust to as DC is similar to Wellington, especially with little things such as shouting thank you before getting off the bus. DC is also a very welcoming and culturally diverse place, and not very diverse when it comes to political opinions (99% voted for Hillary Clinton).

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? How would you recommend students to prepare for these differences?

One challenge initially was how quickly and how straightforward it is when Americans make friends. It may be weird at first for someone whom you've just met 5 days ago to invited you over for dinner but take up the opportunity and get out of your comfort zone.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Their welcoming nature.

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?

I was treated like locals with kindness and generosity.

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university? For students who are visible minorities in your host country? For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?

In DC, it would be easy. It should be noted that culture/treatment of minorities vary drastically across the country.

Did you face any issues regarding discrimination in your host country? What were they, and what advice would you give to future students?

None, but gentrification is getting more serious in DC.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

I was in the Bahai Club on campus, and helped organize weekly interfaith prayer gatherings which was followed by dinner and conversations on race/equality of the sexes. I also participated in Race Unity dialogues at Love n Faith Community Café, which I highly recommend to future students. I also recommend volunteering at local soup kitchens (Martha's Table) and youth centers (Rita Bright Family and Youth Center).

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?

Explore the free museums in DC/travel to neighboring cities.

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? Off-campus?

Easier to find off-campus jobs as on-campus was reserved for federal aid recipients. I worked off campus at a café downtown.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Plenty to choose from. I was volunteering in a mentorship program for middle school students, which was a great opportunity to get a better sense of the local community.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Chocolate and pineapple lumps
2	Pavlova making skills
3	camera
4	good winter gear
5	Small change in USD (some places get panicky if you pay in \$100 bills)

5 pieces of useful advice would tell a VUW student going to your host university

1	CVS sells everything (you can get an adapter there for cheap)
2	Have the metro app downloaded on your phone
3	Take advantage of the free metro card and explore the DMV (Annandale is fun)
4	Get involved on and off campus
5	Attend events at World Bank/IFC/IMF/Brookings/Busboys and Poets/Cato Institute

Top 5 Things to do

What are your 'Top 5 Things To Do' future VUW students at your host university or city/country?

1	Smithsonians
2	Mi Cuba café and Maria's Papuseria's in Columbia Heights
3	Race unity dialogue at Love and Faith Café (also try their homemade ice cream)
4	Attend ANZAC Day Memorial
5	Tour the White House/Federal Reserve Bank/Voice of America

Personal Experience – write 1 paragraph about your exchange experience

I highly recommend exchanging to DC. Everyone I've met here care deeply about the pressing issues of society and have a great sense of justice and empathy. I also got the opportunity to travel to Philadelphia, NYC, Boston, Arizona and Las Vegas! Besides that, I have also made friends from all over the world. DC also gives you the opportunity to serve in your own capacity, be it volunteering at a soup kitchen or interning at a NGO. I also got the chance to be a party of history by participating in the Women's March! There is no doubt that this experience has changed me

and helped me grow as a person. I can't stress this enough, but **DO APPLY!**

To showcase the diversity and ambition that drives DC is in the photo below, which consists of a Kiwi trade lawyer working at the EU Delegation to the US, a Mexican working with the White House on bringing entrepreneurs from the Caribbean to the US, a PhD candidate from Montana with a research focus on gender equality in India, a Masters candidate for Peace and Conflict Resolution with a focus on race in America, and a very grateful student from little Wellington.

