

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VICTORIA ABROAD AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Psychology and Marketing
Exchange Institution	University of California Berkeley
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	3rd year, Trimester 1

B: Finances

Please 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	\$250
Accommodation	\$12,489
Return Airfare	\$2186
Local Transportation	Free Buses, BART \$8 every visit to the city
Meals	Most meals come with accomodation at International House. Probably spent about \$10-15 a week on outside food
Visa	US Citizen
Health & Insurance	Berkeley SHIP health insurance \$1577 Travel Insurance \$690
Personal Spending	\$30 max a week
Communications (phone, etc.)	Phone plan NZD\$50 a month - all plans are pretty expensive there
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Phones plans were very expensive, public transport in SF is very reasonable

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

Ended up spending a lot more than I had planned mostly on weekend trips and going out with friends as well as travelling after university had finished. Definitely worth it though.

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

I had a ANZ cash passport which was loaded with USD before I left NZ, this meant I wasn't charged by my bank for exchange fees and international withdrawals so I found it very handy, especially if you are not planning on opening a US account. I also opened a checking account with Bank of America, which was free for students and easy to set up at the branch near campus. This was good for apps like venmo (very popular in the US) and uber.

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

San Francisco is an expensive city to live and study in - be prepared to spend more than you had planned. Consider whether textbooks are essential for your course or are available in the library.

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

\$2

C: 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?

No I didn't as I am a US citizen and hold a passport

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

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?

UC had mandatory SHIP insurance that you had to opt out of. Was \$1000USD

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

For travel insurance I used southern cross - found them easy to deal with.

D: 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					
Early Modern French Visual Culture	English		20	4	I found very interesting, lecturer can be hard to understand at times. Requires good note taking abilities as no notes on slides and no recordings. Assignments were always interesting to work on. A lot of readings that were sometimes over my head.
Theories and Methods of Art History	English			5	Great course, covers a diverse range of artworks and time periods looking at different theorists both within the discipline as well as psychologists, philosophers etc. Professor Krois was dynamic and encouraged alternative studying techniques creating a unique lecture experience.
Neuropsychology	English		15	4	Really interesting course, more clinical than I had expected as was also targeted to pre-,ed students. Lecturer was dynamic and engaging. Course structure similar to VUW.
Psychology of Personality	English		15	3	Slightly boring but very easy. Structured like VUW psych courses.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registered online for all my courses, system can be confusing as there is several different university sites with overlapping functions. Once you get a hang of it though the process itself is relatively simple.

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?

I ended up getting all the courses that I applied for, I would recommend selecting your courses as early as possible especially if they are going to be popular. There is also opportunities to audit (sit in on) other lectures to see if they would interest you in the first few weeks.

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

Academic Experience

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

I was actually surprised by how similar my experience was at Berkeley. I found it to be a lot less intimidating and challenging than I had expected. With the exception of scaled grades in some courses which mean that your peers can be very competitive about marks.

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?

Lecture style was very similar with the exception that professors are much more involved directly with students - you are encouraged to introduce yourself to them. Tutorials were run similarly, tutors are really friendly and genuinely interested. A lot more reading was required at Berkeley than at Vic, spent most of the week trying to stay on top of all my readings - especially with 2 art history courses.

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?

4 courses is definitely doable but I wouldn't want to try and do more as it may take away from your ability to experience outside activities. Avoid doing all courses in your major as workload can be intense - I found it very manageable to do 2 science based courses and 2 humanities as the type of work required is quite different.

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

Try and stay on top of your workload it is easy to get behind. Attend lectures and tutorials as you may get marks for attendance but otherwise not that different from Vic.

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

Computer facilities were surprisingly limited but each student is allotted a number of free pages to print each day. Internet is reliable and has good coverage throughout campus.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

International House - like a hall of residence

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

Pros: meal points that allow you to eat most meals there - which are really good quality. Conveniently close to campus and Berkeley town. Able to meet like minded international and domestic students all of whom are looking to make new friends and travel/experience American culture. I-House also organises a lot of cool events and is really interested in fostering a multicultural and open environment and dialogue.

Cons: more expensive than other options such as co-ops. Only graduate students are allowed single rooms so if you like your privacy this could be a challenge.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would definitely recommend international house as I believe I made some lifetime friends there from across the globe and was able to travel around California and the US with them. If you are looking for a more affordable and independent option than co-ops come pretty well recommended but I hear they can get quite dirty etc. If you don't mind sharing a room with more than one person and are looking to meet more Americans then maybe consider staying at one of the units.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in a week before classes started on the recommended move in date, this allowed me to attend several orientation events which I would recommend as you do meet some of your firm friends at this stage.

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

I-House gives you something like 250 meal points at the dining room, which is not enough for 3 meals a day for the entire semester but most people don't end up using them all as you aren't always able to attend every meal/go away for weekends. You also get \$200 to spend at the cafe in the building. There is a kitchen available for use if you ask for the key too. I was very satisfied with the food at I-House it was always good quality and healthy/vegetarian options were always available.

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

Get in early as spots fill up fast.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Staying at I-House it was definitely easier to make international friends but I made several American friends. I also became friendly with several domestic students in some of my lectures/tutorials. American's tend to be very interested in where you are from and in learning something about what life is like in NZ. Staying at I-House was a social environment so I was always meeting and hanging out with new people at the beginning until groups kind of emerged. Even still everyone is friendly and you don't feel intimidated to sit down with a group and start talking.

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

Pretty easy as America is not that different from NZ at a basic level. Just adjusting to smaller aspects of American lifestyle and avoiding using New Zealand terms.

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

I didn't find any particular differences challenging.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Friendly attitudes pretty much all the time made it easy to engage in class discussions etc. and meet new people.

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

I was never treated poorly by anyone as a result of being an international student. If anything people are more interested in you. University staff are much more involved in students lives than I had expected.

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?

Berkeley itself is a very liberal and open minded campus and I did not witness any discrimination at university. There are often rallies and demonstrations held in the central plaza in support of social issues such as racism, LBGT etc.

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

No I did not. Remember to keep an open mind - what is right for you may not be for someone else, the key is communication.

G: 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?

There was a massive range of extracurriculars - pretty much whatever you are interested in I'm sure Berkeley offers it.

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

Travel into SF on the bart and see the city sights. Drive down the pacific coast highway and stop in Monterey, Carmel and Big Sur etc. Visit the National Parks especially Yosemite and Zion.

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

Not really sure as it wasn't something I looked into.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Berkeley is known for its research so there are a lot of opportunities to do this sort of work within most degrees. During orientation there is a lot of information about these sort of things available.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A camera
2	Something that makes you feel comfortable or reminds you of home when you need it.
3	Something iconically NZ to share with new friends
4	Photos from home for your wall etc.
5	

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

1	Get involved and put yourself out there to meet new and diverse friends
2	Explore Berkeley and San Francisco they are full of cultural diversity and interesting characters
3	Attend a sports game, US university spirit is pretty crazy
4	Be prepared for everyone to be wearing cal gear - all the time. Also I have seen pyjamas in lecture before.
5	Grades are important but they are not the main reason you are there - try and avoid stressing out and remember to have fun and maximise your time abroad.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	National Parks
2	Drive Highway 1 down to LA or San Diego
3	Attend a UCB sports game
4	Visit the East Coast

H: Personal Experience

Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience. Plus, don't forget to submit some photos to the exchange office!!

My exchange is going to be an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life, not only have I made lifetime friends from around the world but memories that I will never forget. Arriving in Berkeley I was extremely nervous being there alone where I knew no-one, however almost everyone else is feeling exactly the same way and it is easy to meet and bond with people even in the first week. I definitely participated in a lot more activities organised by I-house at the beginning of the semester which was a great way to make friends and see/learn about Berkeley. When attending classes I didn't really make as many friends - it was very similar to lectures at Vic, most people sticking to their existing friends or just keeping to themselves. I found all of classes engaging and my lecturers and GSIs refreshingly involved which was great and definitely helps you make contacts within your field. I wasn't super involved in university groups or activities other than the odd sports game, I definitely wish I had joined more clubs or organisations. Although it is hard to fit everything you want to do in. I worked pretty hard during the week but always made time to hang out with friends at meals and to watch movies etc. On the weekends we usually made trips to nearby areas or road trips down the coast or to the national parks. After my time at Berkeley I travelled around California and the neighbouring states and then visited Central America - an amazing experience that I would never have done otherwise. I still talk to my friends from UCB and can't wait to have them visit/visit them.

