

# 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
Major(s)	Psychology
Exchange Institution	Dalhousie University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2 <sup>nd</sup> Trimester, 2016

## 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	\$200
Accommodation	\$1700
Return Airfare	\$3000
Local Transportation	\$80
Meals	\$1000
Visa	\$150
Health & Insurance	\$1300
Personal Spending	\$5000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$140
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Domestic flights in Canada are ridiculously expensive. It cost me \$500 return from Halifax to Toronto. Sometimes its cheaper to fly to the US then back to Canada than it is to fly domestically.

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

Domestic flights in Canada are very expensive, I was not expecting to have to pay the amount. Tax in Nova Scotia is 15% which adds a scare to your purchases.

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

I opened a foreign bank account. I would recommend this as you can easily transfer money for paying rent and taking cash out. Some ATMs do not accept MasterCard so getting a Visa makes things easier.

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

Look around for places to live, if you're going into residence try mini res as residence halls are filled with first year students.

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

Drip coffee is more common than espresso, a cup of drip coffee is about \$2, a cup of espresso is about \$5

**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?

To study for a semester in Canada you can apply for an Electronic Travelers Visa which costs \$7. However I was not sure if I would want to work during my semester so applied for a study permit which costs \$150. The process to get a study permit was not difficult. The file says you have to sign it but you do not have to electronically sign the document.

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

Don't leave it till the last minute if you're applying for a study permit and apply online rather than on paper. If you apply on paper you have to send it to Sydney which will take longer.

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, they have a regular health insurance and an International insurance provided by the university. You can waiver these if your insurance from New Zealand is comprehensive. Health Insurance is approximately \$400 and International insurance is \$200

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

I used Allianz Insurance, it was set up through STA Travel which was easy. I would recommend them for future students.

**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
<b>VUW Trimester 1/YEAR</b>					
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					
Cellular	English	200 level	15	5	Not psyc based at all, all

Neuroscience		PYSC			science even though it counts as a psyc paper.
Animal Behaviour	English	200 level PSYC	15	4	A very interesting course, lots of focusing on a wide range of behaviors of different animals.
Halifax and the world	English	Elective	15	2	The easiest course I've taken. Interesting as well
Indian Society	English	200 level ANTH	15	4	Way too much reading for what it was worth. Had potential to be a good course but it was not taught well.

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The registration process was straight forward. I got overrides for my courses quickly and the wait time for returning my application was short. The staff at Dal were willing to help and responded quickly making it a breeze.

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?

With my exchange transcript provided, I was given overrides to all the subjects that I wanted to take at Dalhousie.

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

To make the most out of your experience overseas, choose courses which will stimulate you but will still allow you time to travel and see Canada/your exchange destination. Don't let exchange be an expensive trip to the library.

### Academic Experience

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

A platform like blackboard, Brightspace, is used as their online communication platform with students. My lectures were not recorded which was different to Victoria. My science classes did not have any written assignments like essays or lab reports which was vastly different, all assessments were multi choice, Scranon tests.

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?

My anthropology course had an unrealistic number of readings assigned. Blackboards were often used to demonstrate lecture material and sometimes lecturers did not use microphones which made it difficult to hear if they did not project their voices. None of my second year courses had tutorial, unlike VUW so having friends in class was vital for when you got stuck.

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?

Most students at Dalhousie take five courses. They somehow make this course load work with a social life but I would recommend taking four courses in order to stay on top of work and experience exchange fully. Taking a paper which teaches about your host university's area or your host country is helpful as it gives you deeper knowledge of the background of your host country/city.

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

Get to know your lecturers to get a good understanding of what they expect from assignments and talk to people in your classes to help you when the lecturers can't.

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

The internet was a bit shocking and dropped out often but once you were logged in on a device you did not have to log in again, this was good. Computer facilities were good, but printers were scarcely located and printing prices were extortionate. The computer space in the library was open until 3am most night which was good for late night assignments or revision.

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?

I did not go to a country where English was not the first language.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

An apartment in a shared house – this style of living is most common in Halifax

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

Pros: was living on my own terms in a great location, great flat mates. Cons: had two sets of neighbors below me (on ground level and basement) and could hear when downstairs tenants were having parties.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Apartments, even though you have to deal with neighbors, drinking rules are strict and meals are repetitive in residence halls. My friends in residence wished they had chosen apartments as accommodation.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Leases turn over September 1<sup>st</sup> as a general rule, but sometimes you can arrange with your landlord to move in earlier.

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

I had my own kitchen and the supermarket was located a 5 minute bus ride or 15 minute walk away so I was satisfied. All supermarkets offer 10% student discount on Tuesday which was a bonus.

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 my house on places4students.ca, there weren't many listings here but they were good. Kijiji is also

good but there is a lot of competition. Try looking on the University Facebook housing pages as well. Don't be worried about how far the house looks on the map as the walking distance is short (also Halifax is flat) and there are lots of bus routes to take you from A to B.

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

Look at Facebook pages in the Dalhousie community as there are not as many pages like "Flatmates wanted Wellington". Kijiji and places4students.ca were awesome for accommodation. Since it's summer in Canada when applying for trimester two, many people are trying to find summer subletters when we are trying to find fall rentals. Many places pop up towards the end of July or August so do not worry if the time is getting closer to leaving and you haven't found a place. It's also quite hard to move in before the date your lease switches over so be prepared to stay in a hostel the first couple days.

## **F: Personal & Cultural Connections**

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

Most of my friends were international students. I made a couple of friends in my classes but it was difficult to integrate into an already established friend group for me.

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

Having a campus of spaced out, stone buildings was different to the close, high rise Vic buildings and it was odd to have to factor a 10 minute walk into getting between classes at opposite ends of campus.

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

The terms flat, flattie, flatmate and flatting are lost to Canadians since they use 'apartment' and 'roommate' or 'roomie'.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

They're very welcoming and accepting of everyone. Always willing to put others first and accommodate for your needs. Everyone holds the door open for you and the "sorry" thing is real!

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

So many people I talked to had been to, or new someone who has been to, New Zealand so it was nice to chat to them about their experience in our country.

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?

Dal has a noticeable acceptance of LGBTQA+ people, for example, at orientation, our t-shirts had space for name, language and preferred pronoun (e.g. she/her). Teachers also sent out emails requesting note takers for disabled people in our classes and the facilities to help you if you were disabled were made apparent. There are ramps into the buildings so if you're wheelchair bound you can access the campus.

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

The only discrimination I experienced was from Australians mocking my accent. But otherwise I did not have an issues.

## **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 were intramural sports for students to participate in. I would recommend these as they often have quite a large social aspect to them and it's a good way to make friends out of class. They also had a wide range of clubs and societies which got put on display at the societies fair.

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

Travel around the province and to neighboring provinces, especially during the summer and fall. Though you might have time later in the semester, many attractions close during the off season so your options are limited.

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

There were opportunities to work on campus in cafes, the library and on campus services e.g. call center.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There were volunteer opportunities with societies and organizations run either in the university or through the university. Volunteering is held in high regard in Canada and during societies week, lots of NGOs also had stalls advertising volunteer work for the summer and coming months.

### **5 things to take to your host country or region**

1	Warm clothes
2	Camera
3	Shoes with strong grip (for hiking, walking on ice etc)
4	NZ things to show Canadian friends
5	Good quality rain coat

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

1	Do lots of travel in the summer, especially to the West Coast and Rocky Mountains
2	Winter travel is difficult and unpredictable especially by plane, leave lots of time between flights
3	Get comprehensive insurance, unless you want to have to pay for host university insurance as well
4	Find a friend with a car who can take you on weekend trips
5	Make friends outside of the exchange group who are from the host country/region

### **Top 5 Things to do**

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

1	Rocky Mountains
2	Fall foliage
3	Hockey game
4	Chocolate Lake (in Halifax)
5	Peggy's Cove

## **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 was an experience I will never forget. I saw Canada coast to coast including the Rocky Mountains, Niagara Falls, the CN Tower, Montreal, Newfoundland and of course, Nova Scotia. I met incredible people who I know will be life-long friends, experienced a white Christmas and learned what it was to be Canadian. Going on exchange was the best decision I could have made. It has given me a new lease on life and a new way to see the world. It has inspired me to use my studies with a global outlook and has given me confidence in my studies as well as in myself. After navigating the globe on my own, I am much more confident and independent and am no longer afraid to grab life by the horns. Adapting to how Canadians live was a challenge but with the help of my flatmates, peers and university staff I learned quickly. I was lucky to have met such awesome people who made my exchange a breeze and I am happy to say it went without a (major) hitch.