

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts, Commerce
Major(s)	French, International Relations
Exchange Institution	Ecole Supérieure du Commerce Extérieur
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 and 2, 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	\$0 (all study material available on Moodle – like Blackboard)
Accommodation	\$1400 (student residence)
Return Airfare	\$1000
Local Transportation	\$120 per month for unlimited travel around the Paris region
Meals	\$300 per month
Visa	\$150
Health & Insurance	\$320
Personal Spending	\$200
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$30 per month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compulsory health care we had to purchase through host university</li> <li>• No need to purchase textbooks – all material provided online</li> <li>• Free housing subsidy from the French government! Called CAF (Caisse d'allocations familiales)</li> <li>• All museums free for students upon presenting your student card</li> </ul>

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

Everything looks cheap in euros, then you put it into \$NZ and it suddenly becomes crazy expensive 😞

But I kind of expected this since it is Paris...

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

I opened a French bank account with Caisse d'Épargne. This account was specifically for students as it had cheap fees. However, afterwards I heard that other banks were giving 100€ free to students so I would recommend looking into that first. I also used a Qantas travel card. It is accepted everywhere and you can easily change currencies online with it.

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

Be prepared to spend and treat yourself 😊 but also remember that there are many facilities free for students.

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

1€ for a can of coke. A bit more expensive in touristy areas (esp. Chateau de Versailles)

**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?

I applied for a student visa at the Embassy of France in Wellington. It cost about \$150. There were a lot of documents to put together. After my appointment, it took about a week for the visa to arrive.

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

Start putting your documents together early. For example, my academic transcript was needed. You have to order these from your faculty, you can't just go pick it up.

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?

We had to purchase mandatory health insurance through the school for about \$320. The school wouldn't send us the link to apply for courses until it was paid.

What insurance company did you use and would you recommend it to 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>					
French C1	French	Compulsory language course	8	4	Course based on French professional life, e.g. French CV, job interviews etc. Very useful
Négociation Interculturelle	French	INTP 2 <sup>rd</sup> year	8	2	Badly organized
Sociologie	French	INTP 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	8	3	Good lecturer, although did not use PowerPoints

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Current Economic Issues	English	INTP 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	8	3	Great lecturer, very well-organised course
European Lobbying	English	INTP 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	8	1	Badly organized, lecturer not motivating
International Relations 2	English	INTP 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	4	4	Great lecturer, well-organised course
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					
French 'memoire' course	French	Compulsory language course	6	3	Only had three lectures, but still a good course
Managing International Mobility and Strategic Issues	English	IBUS 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	8	4	Very good PowerPoints, very knowledgeable lecturer
Doing business in the MENA region + doing business in South-East Asia	English	IBUS 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	8	4	Good lecturers, interesting courses
Cross-cultural management	English	IBUS 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4	2	Badly organized, but lecturer had good real-life stories that related to content
Culture et pratique de l'entreprise	French	Elective	6	4	Great course, great lecturer, learnt a lot
La France à 360°	French	INTP 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	8	5	Great course, great lecturer, learnt a lot

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

We were sent a link to apply for courses. Could email international relations office if anything went wrong.

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?

First semester was very successful for me, I got into all the courses I wanted. Unfortunately, the second was a bit of a nightmare. Everyone either didn't have all the courses they applied for on their schedules, or had courses they never signed up for on their schedules. Dropping and adding courses was also hard. It's not a simple add/drop mechanism online. There was only one person from the international relations department who you could mail to add or drop. It was obvious that she was really stressed out from all the students emailing and coming to see her, but students were just as equally (if not more) stressed. I hope ESCE changes this system in the near future.

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

Choose as many courses as you can before course registration, just in case anything changes.

### **Academic Experience**

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

ESCE is a small business school so lectures are mostly in classrooms. There are only two actual lecture halls and they are not nearly as big as the ones at Victoria. Also not as much emphasis on essay writing, more reports and group presentations.

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?

Similar to Vic, but a lot of group work so needed to meet up with other students a lot.

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 or 5 courses but I did more and still managed to have enough free time. If you speak French, I would recommend La France à 360 and French Civilisation if you don't. Both courses are a good insight into French history, society, way of life etc. You get to know the country really well. It's an amazing feeling talking about where important events took place and then you can just take a short metro ride there after class.

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

Attend all classes. Don't forget that you're overseas for the experience and the study.

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

The internet access was mostly good, but I heard that mac books connected better than normal computers. ESCE actually has no library and teachers recommended using the online 'Learning Center' for scholarly articles, e-books etc. There is a well-equipped computer room. However, no library meant little space to study on campus.

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?

The school provided compulsory French courses for all international students. You take an online test and are automatically placed in the appropriate class level when uni start. Even though I already spoke French prior to exchange, I still learnt a lot in my French class.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Student accommodation (my own room and bathroom, shared kitchen with about five people).

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

Good area, friendly staff, nice atmosphere, met a lot of people

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Student accommodation, studio apartment, flatting (if you find a place with good flat mates)

How early can you move into accommodation?

I arranged move in day before arriving with staff at my accommodation.

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

We cooked for ourselves but had cooking utensils and cutlery provided by the accommodation.

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

My student accommodation had a partnership with ESCE so it was easy to apply and get a place. A lot of people from my uni lived there.

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

Start looking early. I needed proof of accommodation in order to be granted a visa. Choose which ever form of accommodation suits you.

## **F: 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 with international students is easy. You meet before the semester begins at orientation so most international students know of each other. Making friends with French students is a little harder. I made friends with a couple of French people that had already been on exchange so they knew what it was like. Speaking French really helped.

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

I had spent some time in France before so it was not too difficult, but I did have to adjust to life in Paris. It's a fairly big city and can get very crowded, especially the metro at peak times.

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

ESCE is very, very different from Victoria. We had a role taken in each class and most classes were 2-3 hours long. I once had a class that was canceled one week so the following week it was 4 hours. Administrative matters also take a bit longer in France.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The 'joie de vivre' aspect of life. After classes I often went to museums, walks, coffee dates with friends. In France I finally felt as though I had a balanced lifestyle between work and play.

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

Overall, I was treated very well by locals. French students at ESCE can act a bit 'high school' e.g. talking back to lecturers. University staff working in administrative can be a bit cold but nothing I gave a second thought afterwards.

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

There were lifts and ramps for people with disabilities at ESCE. Never witnessed any discrimination at the school.

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

None.

## **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?

ESCE said they offered sports but information wasn't easily accessible. But there are lots of extra-curricular activities offered around Paris. I took a photography class once – was the best thing ever.

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

I would recommend seeing other parts of France and Europe too. I went to the South and north of France, as well as the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium (only like an hour from Paris with the train), Germany, United Kingdom.

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

I worked as a baby-sitter for a while in the holidays. Lots of agencies recruit English-speakers.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I was told that you could only do an internship if it was required in your degree at your home university.

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

1	Camera
2	Warm coat for winter + gloves
3	Umbrella
4	Positive attitude 😊
5	Open mind

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

1	If you want the housing subsidy, put documents together before arriving
2	Make an effort in group assignments, sometimes you have to rate each other after
3	Go on trips
4	Don't just go to class and then go home. Explore the city
5	Don't hang out with only native English speakers.

### Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Climb to the dome of the Sacre-Coeur (over 300 steps but so worth it)
2	Take a picture in front of the Eiffel Tower sparkling (sparkles every night!)
3	Go to meet ups and language exchanges
4	Go to a wine tasting event
5	Travel France, don't just try and see as many European countries as you can

### H: Personal Experience

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

I studied in France during the whole of 2016 and it was by far the best year of my life. France is challenging, but at the end of the day all the hurdles are worth it. I met some of the most amazing

people I have ever come across and I saw some of the lost beautiful cities. And most importantly, I learned so much about life and about myself. I felt truly at peace in France, and am so grateful to Vic Abroad for giving me this opportunity.

