

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 Commerce, Bachelor of Laws
Major(s)	Finance and Economics
Exchange Institution	Oklahoma University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 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	250
Accommodation	3200
Return Airfare	1000
Local Transportation	Bus = free Bike = 100
Meals	3000
Visa	300
Health & Insurance	1000
Personal Spending	Approx 5000
Communications (phone, etc.)	60 a month
Other fees (specify)	Exchange fees around 250
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Food was relatively cheap in Oklahoma, but going out to restaurants and eating out gets quite expensive when you factor in tipping. Travel costs were higher than expected, as it is quite expensive to fly in and out of OKC, it is much cheaper to drive to Dallas but that requires having access to a car. The extra exchange fees were unexpected. If you lost or damaged anything relating to the apartment then it was a fairly hefty cost.

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

They were slightly over what I expected to spend but I had enough leeway to cover the extra costs and spending and I spent more on travelling than I intended to.

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

I used my Credit Card and opened a local bank account that connected with a debit card. This was the best way to spend money in the state I was in and I used my Credit Card for larger purchases and online spending i.e. booking travel and other costs. While the Credit Card was probably one of the most expensive options it is also difficult to transfer money over to your local bank account quickly so the best way to do it is to transfer over a large sum that you can use for day to day expenses throughout your whole stay.

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

Always plan to take more money than you think you will spend as things change such as the exchange rate

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Econ 4773 Game Theory	English	Econ 314 Game Theory	15	3	Course was easier than I expected and the teacher had an interesting style, touched on some stuff I had already done but took other things further. Tried to teach the course from the beginning of game theory and then take it to advanced places when a lot of the class already had a lot of base knowledge around the subject.
Fin 4133 International Financial Management	English	Fina 307 Risk Management & Insurance	15	4	Hardest course I took, definitely challenging and also covered a lot of content. Challenged my mathematical skills but also very focused on learning the ins and outs of options and futures. The lecturer did the exam preparation very well.
Hist 1493 United States 1865 to Present	English	Hist 112 New Histories in NZ	15	4	Definitely learnt a lot about American History, much more than I expected to learn and the lecturer was very engaging in his lectures. There was a lot reading to do but the exams were easier than expected
Hist 1233 Europe Since 1815	English	History 118 Making Europe Modern	15	5	Very interesting and well-structured course, would recommend. The lecturer has a lot of knowledge about European history and we explored a wide range of topics.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration is done properly the first week you are there, there are plenty of courses to choose from and I found the process quite straightforward although some people had troubles with waiting lists for courses. The main contact was the exchange coordinator who corresponded directly with respective faculties.

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 was able to register in the classes I wanted first time around. I would advise that you look over the course catalogue carefully and choose a range of courses that you think you will get into and apply for all of them as more options the better. Also be patient with the process as some people were worried they would not get into their desired courses but everyone seemed to be accommodated.

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

Apply early and apply for a varied schedule, as this is the time to try something different!

Academic Experience

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

My courses were mostly well taught and the teachers were very good with us being exchange students. They place a big emphasis on attendance and most of my courses had attendance or participation in class contribute towards a small percentage of the grade. Their examination style is a little bit different however and they prepare you very well for the examinations. They also have a different style of writing essays in my experience but this was relatively easy to catch on to. The academic experience definitely lived up to my expectations.

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?

The teachers are very particular with what curriculum they teach so they know the content very well and teach it very well, the lecture style is more focused on taking notes and learning from the lectures. The workload depended on the courses but there was more focus on work during the semester and less of a focus on the final examination than some of the courses I have done at Victoria. There was more work to do for smaller assignments but some of the examinations seemed to be easier than I expected them to be.

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 was an appropriate workload. I would recommend doing courses that you cannot do at Victoria as it is an opportunity to branch out and learn something new!

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

Stay on top of the workload from the start and you will be fine

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

The computer facilities and library were excellent. The internet was a bit slow at the apartment where I lived but it was very good at the university and had good coverage.

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?

NA

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Traditions West Apartments

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

You get to stay in your own room in a 4-bedroom apartment with a lounge and kitchen. While the facilities are prone to breaking down a bit the maintenance team are usually pretty on to it when it comes to fixing the issue. There is quite a big opportunity for a social life at these apartments as you are living with all the other international students so it is very easy to hang out with friends every night. The only downside is that it is very far away from any sort of supermarket or food shops and very close to 7/11 and fast food that does not promote healthy eating! It is also a little bit far away from campus but there is a bus every half an hour and you can buy a bike which is handy. The facilities are pretty good as there is a pool, spa pool, basketball court and nice clubhouse to hang out in.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Traditions West for sure! While it is a little bit far away from the campus in terms of location it is the best place to make friends and socialize. I had some of my best times at Traditions West and made some of my closest friends.

How early can you move into accommodation?

A few days before orientation week starts

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

There was a meal plan available for around \$10 a meal but there was also a kitchen in every apartment with an adequate oven and stove so cooking your own meals was fairly easy

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

NA

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

Apply for Traditions West as it is way better than any other form of accommodation, living with other international students was one of the best parts of my exchange.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Very easy to make friends, I was living with 3 other international students in the Traditions West apartments and flats filled with other international students surrounded us. Local students are also very easy to befriend if you put yourself out there and join all the programs they have available. I made quite a few very close local friends from just going out and talking to people around the university and town, but it is quite hard to make friends in class as people generally have their own groups which they stick to in class.

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

American culture is slightly different from NZ but it is not too hard to adjust, they are very friendly people.

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

None that I found challenging, being open to every different culture is the way to go and I enjoyed experiencing the different parts of American culture.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I appreciated how friendly and open they were, taking people in with open arms and showing them true American Midwest culture such as the food. American culture is slightly more conservative than NZ but they do not seem to press this on us too much and were generally very accepting of other cultures.

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

Everyone was really friendly and was more than happy to help with any problem you had or show you different parts of American culture. The locals and university staff were all very friendly and treated us very well.

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?

The university campus was quite a liberal and open place, there were lots of different groups and a mix of different ethnicities, cultures and minority groups. In my experience they would find it to be an incredibly open and welcoming campus to attend.

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

Not at all.

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?

A range of different clubs, societies and teams to join: too many to count. There were organized sports, cultural activities and academic clubs to join. I myself joined the Latin Dance Club and played basketball but there were a range of different activities for all different interests as well as an OU Cousins program that gave you an American buddy to hang out with and do things with as well as hosting different events. I would recommend checking out the clubs and activities event during orientation week and applying for as many as you can as some you will love and some you will lose interest in.

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

Oklahoma is quite a central state so there is plenty of opportunity to go travelling to different states as well as lots to do in Oklahoma such as basketball and football games, visiting OKC and going camping. There are lots of beautiful places to visit in Oklahoma such as Turner falls as well as in Texas. The campus bars are also great to visit on the weekend or for a night out.

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

There were opportunities to work on campus but I did not pursue them, I think you need a special Visa to be able to work that I did not have and I don't think that OU allows you to work on a J1 visa.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I did not follow up on any internship opportunities but there were plenty of volunteer opportunities to volunteer around campus or volunteer at different student run organizations.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	NZ Memorabilia/Food/Clothing/Something you can show around or give to friends, they love NZ stuff over there
2	Copies of all important documents
3	Clothes for warm and cold weather! Although I went towards the end of summer, it was pretty much warm the entire time I was there up until the last few weeks when it turned to freezing just like that!
4	A good camera
5	At least 2 power adapters as they can be lost very easily

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

1	Travel a lot, and then travel some more
2	Be outgoing and try talking to a whole bunch of different people, the people over there are fascinating
3	Make as many friends as possible
4	Do things out of your comfort zone
5	Worry about the cost later

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	OU Football game
2	A road trip/camping trip
3	Visit a National Park
4	A music festival
5	Oklahoma or Texas State Fair

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 the best experience of my life and I highly recommend everyone to go on an exchange. If you are hesitant or unsure about whether or not you should go then definitely take the plunge and go! While it may seem challenging or daunting at times, it such a rewarding experience. You will make truly amazing friends and have truly amazing experiences and you won't regret your decision. I made some lifelong friends on my exchange and the only thing I regret is not extending it for another semester! The travel and different experiences will make for great stories when you come home and you will come back a more confident and open-minded person. It is also great for personal development and if you want to push yourself to try new things as you definitely learn a lot about yourself and what type of person you want to be. As for Oklahoma, I loved the university and the people there and could not recommend it enough. I loved the American way of life and loved interacting with the American culture and like-minded people who also loved it. My travelling around America also ticked a lot of things off my list and now cannot wait to go to Europe and other places around the world to visit all the international friends I made!