

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 Science
Major(s)	Environmental Studies + Public Policy
Exchange Institution	Sciences Po, Paris
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2015, Trimester 2

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 (majority of my readings etc were online)
Accommodation	\$0 (living with family) but expect to pay \$200p/w for rent + services
Return Airfare	\$2600
Local Transportation	\$10 p/w (because I borrowed a bike which I used 90% of the time)
Meals	\$25 if you go out and have a standard meal
Visa	n/a
Health & Insurance	One off payment of ~\$300
Personal Spending	\$50 p/w
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$10 a month with Orange mobile (basic plan)
Other fees (specify)	If you want to travel France by train you can buy a Carte Jeune ticket that gives you good deals! \$120
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Alcohol and cheese are a lot cheaper! Supermarkets seem a little more expensive but head to the cheaper ones (Franprix) for good deals

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

More or less what I expected. I was living with my family so didn't spend as much – but be prepared to spend money on food and going out.

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

Foreign bank account was the best way to go (albeit a bit of a hassle to set up). People use cash a lot there though.

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

Sciences Po has a whole bunch of good student deals with French banks, they'll probably help you set it up

too.

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

Hmm, maybe one euro for a can of coke and around 3 euros for your average coffee

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 had UK passport so I kind of cheated.

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

I haven't done it, but the French do like their paper work so be prepared for that.

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 recommend two types of health insurance. You'll go through all of this when you enroll online – they give you a cheaper option and a slightly pricier one. I went for the cheaper one and from memory it was ~NZD\$300. You can opt for your own choice of insurance if you want as well.

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

n/a

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 2/YEAR 2015					
Intro to Public International Law	English	n/a	20 points	3	A more intensive course (especially as I had never done any law), but very informative and you do a lot of interesting case studies
Governing Sustainable Cities	English	n/a	10 points	5	Really interesting, great teacher. The Class wasn't very full but would definitely recommend.

Environmental Politics	English	ENVI	10 points	4	Enjoyable course, cool readings.
A Political Intro to Climate Change	English	ENVI	10 points	3	Cool lecturers who work in the field of climate change politics.
French Language B1	French	n/a	n/a	3	Worthwhile doing a French course! Even if you do it begrudgingly, it did wonders for keeping up my French abilities

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

It's all done online and is pretty competitive. Get familiar with the website and read up on how to enroll before going to actually enroll. Pretty sure I stayed up til 1am so I could enroll at the right time.

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 got all the classes I enrolled for but was awake as soon as registration went online (I'd heard it was fairly cutthroat). There's heaps to choose from if you don't get your 1st choices, but definitely keep your eyes peeled when you read emails from Sciences Po so you know when sign up is. The whole process happened much later than I was expecting.

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

Take something fun and in French if you can!

Academic Experience

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

Sciences Po has a reputation for being quite prestigious, and definitely met my expectations for doing so. I really enjoyed the level of intellect of the professors (many of which were actual practitioners as well). Really interesting course material in each course and provided a totally different global perspective from many of my Vic classes.

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?

Workload varied depending on the course. For instance my Public International Law class was weighted more (20 points rather than 10) so there were more readings and a lot more course content to get through than what I'd previously experienced. Mind you, I hear that Law at Vic is pretty intensive too.

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?

Sciences Po gives you a pretty good outline of the design of your course load, depending on your degree. I would recommend taking an arts class in French if you want to make French friends and improve your language skills.

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

Do the readings, and contribute in class. They love when you speak up.

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

The library has weird opening hours, but really good printing services. Computers are usually full but I guess if you turn up early enough you'll be one of those people.

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?

Yes, based on your French language level (you can check this from their website) and then Sciences Po offers a variety of French courses based on your level.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Parents' apartment

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

Fully furnished, free food, secure, prime real estate, internet and dog provided. 10/10 would recommend.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

See above.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Whenever suits.

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

My dad can cook pretty well. He likes chilli.

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

n/a

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

Don't go for your first option without doing some research. There's a Sciences Po facebook page that lots of exchange students use for swapping apartments etc, would be a good place to look and get a feel for what other people are doing.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

I mostly made friends with international students. A couple of local students made an effort to befriend exchange students but I think in general the French locals keep to themselves. One of my classmates took me for a tour round the Louvre which was pretty nice of him 😊 (it's a labyrinth).

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

Pretty easy. But I had visited Paris before and had a feel of what to expect. The uni has a very intellectual atmosphere, it's pretty motivating.

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

The French seem a little more serious than kiwis, and don't tend to thank bus drivers or anything – so don't take it personally if people seem a little rude to you. If you're trying to improve your French, be stubborn with using it in shops. Lots of places near the touristy areas will have English speaking staff who will use English as soon as they detect that you're not a native speaker.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The food, the night-life atmosphere, it's a cultural hub – heaps of museums (which you can get into for free with your Sciences Po ID card), and you'll see a huge variety of people out and about – sketching, taking photos, etc.

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

Pretty 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?

Hard to say. There were heaps of social groups that seemed to cater for all sorts of people, there was a pretty cool LGBT group as well (they throw parties and events all the time). In terms of physical disabilities, a lot of the buildings are older so don't have much wheelchair access etc., but there were elevators.

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

No. Nothing terribly different from Wellington

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 huge range which I am not going to cover here – it's all on the Sciences Po website and they have really big club weeks.

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

There is so much in Paris you will not run out of things to see or do. I spent most of my time exploring and getting to know the city. Or get a youth train pass from the SNCF and get out of the city on your weekends off. Try go to Giverny (Claude Monet's gardens), or go to the west-coast to see the ocean (I really missed the sea while I was in Paris). Keep your eyes peeled on the discount airline websites if you fancy going somewhere more exotic. I went to Iceland, it was incredible (Blue Lagoon is not overrated).

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

Work at the Eco café (such a cool place, cheap coffee and really good biscuits but it is volunteer work). Plenty of families want English speaking babysitters or au-pairs for their French kids, and cafes are pretty keen on English speakers too.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I think there are lots of opportunities, depending on the type of internship or volunteering role you're after. A quick google-search never hurts.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	<i>A semi-cool but comfy backpack</i>
2	<i>A smartphone (or a map if you want to do old-school navigation)</i>
3	<i>Socks</i>
4	<i>Toothbrush</i>
5	<i>A book you've wanted to read for a while</i>

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

1	<i>Go crazy on the navigation and public transport apps</i>
2	<i>Don't be afraid to bike around Paris. Just be cautious and remember they drive on the other side of the road</i>
3	<i>Shabby chic is okay. Don't worry if the old lady at the supermarket judges the rips in your jeans</i>

4 *Be nice to your Concierge or landlord/lady*

5 *Explore new streets when you can, take a different route to uni.*

Top 5 Things to do

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

1 *Catch a random metro to the end of the line.*

2 *Get a bottle of cheap wine and take a baguette and some cheese of choice (Boursin is delicious) and go to Seine at dusk.*

3 *Go to concerts and gigs*

4 *Make the most of your Sciences Po ID card and go to all museums. Georges Pompidou, L'Orangerie, Louvre are just starting points.*

5 *Hang out near Canal St. Martin.*

H: Personal Experience

My exchange wasn't your typical type of exchange, but it was brilliant. I made some really good friends to go on adventures with. University is only one part of the exchange experience, and Sciences Po seemed to be a good example of a French uni. I loved how many people were in the city, and the history that you are surrounded by. Make the most of it.

