

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Media Studies
Exchange Institution	University of Texas at Austin
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	VUW 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	\$80
Accommodation	\$4,000
Return Airfare	\$3,000
Local Transportation	The UT bus is free with ID. Car shares such as Lift, Ride Austin etc. were pretty cheap if I needed to go somewhere further, or I got my friends to drive me.
Meals	Included in my accommodation but spent around \$40-50 a week eating out
Visa	\$400
Health & Insurance	\$1,500 (for UT Insurance plus travel insurance before and afterwards)
Personal Spending	\$8,000 (I went on lots of trips with friends; Colorado, New Orleans, New York, Mexico hence how expensive it was!)
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$55 a month for unlimited data, calling, texts to US numbers
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	I didn't realize how much money I would spend on going out/travelling but those were all personal expenses.

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

I spent what I expected on the required expenses; visa, accommodation etc. I spent a lot more than I anticipated on doing 'fun' things, definitely bring spending money!

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

I just used my NZ credit card

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

Take advantage of free services such as the UT buses, if you're worried about money do local activities such as Barton Springs or the park to save money.

VUW Trimester 2/2016					
PHL 304	English	Elective	20	2	This class was really boring to me because it was a freshman class so it was super basic and introductory. Marked on attendance so had to go to class regardless.
RTF 322C	English	MDIA 300 level	20	3	I loved this class. The professor totally knows his stuff, it was 1900-1960s movies so if you love black and white/silent film history you'll enjoy it.
ADV 316	English	Elective	20	2	This class was boring and seemed kinda pointless. It was very patriotic at times and the lecturer kinda had no idea what he was going to do most days. Wasn't marked for attendance so I never really went and did my assignments from home.
RTF 359S	English	MDIA 300 level	20	4	This was an interesting class, sometimes felt a bit out of the loop because everyone was personally involved in fandoms and I wasn't. The professor is super cool though and really funny. We had lots of great class discussions.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Luckily the RTF department has a course advisor so he emailed me and we set up a meeting to make sure I

would be approved for the courses I wanted. I then enrolled online on the date for exchange students. My friends/roommates helped me out.

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 didn't get most of the classes I had planned and I also changed my mind once I got here. I would say don't get too stuck on having certain classes because it will probably change. Also meet with your department advisor if you are confused or want advice.

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

Choose things you will enjoy! I didn't do enough research so I ended up with some classes I didn't like, don't make my mistake!

Academic Experience

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

It was a lot easier than I expected in terms of grades, but the workload is more intense than Victoria. You will have more homework/assignments than usual and the assignments are usually smaller.

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?

It was pretty similar in terms of teaching style although all the professors are different in their own way. It was more work but easier work if that makes sense.

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?

I did four courses and managed that workload fine. I had friends who were doing less or more, I think it all depends on your personal ability to handle work. I love the Film History class I would definitely recommend that to any media students or film buffs! I have a much better understanding/appreciation of films now.

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

Do your readings! Go to class (even if you don't have to). Study with friends it makes it way more fun.

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

I didn't really study on campus at all but everyone said it was great.

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?

Everyone spoke English.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in an ICC co-op called French House

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

Lots of people, it allows you to makes friends easily. Meals are cooked for you 5 nights a week. It is cheaper than pretty much all other options. Downside is the co-ops pretty dirty, you will be living with some people

you don't like and the culture can be pretty intense (lots of people talking about queer issues, politics, feminists issues etc.) so prepare yourself to either be involved or to avoid those kinds of conversations if it makes you uncomfortable.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

The co-op was good for the price but I found it hard to get along with some of the people and the dirtiness grossed me out. If you can handle lots of people/chaos go for it, if not then get an apartment or stay in student housing.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in on the 7th August which was two weeks before school started but I got my contract moved to an earlier date.

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

The house cooked meals together 4 nights a week and the remaining day's food was available to cook your own meals. The meals were average/good at times, I am a vegan so that was difficult at times but people accommodated for me.

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

Not applicable

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

Do lots of research! Make sure it is the right environment for you and that you know what you're getting in to. You'll be spending a lot of time there so its important to pick somewhere you will enjoy.

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 lived with 20 people so making friends was easy. I also made friends in classes/through other people. Everyone will love you because you're foreign, stay positive and be friendly and you'll have no problem!

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

It was a difficult time primarily because of the election. Other than that I didn't have to make any adjustments other than sometimes people not understanding my accent/slang.

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

Americans walk very slow haha. That annoyed me a lot. They will also sometimes be very blunt or loud. Other than that I was fine with the culture.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Texans are super friendly, they will always help you out. Whenever I got stuck or lost someone always approached me and helped me on my way.

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

I was always treated well, they loved meeting someone from New Zealand and hearing about the differences etc.

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?

I think Austin is very accepting of minorities/LGBTQ+ communities from what I could tell. I never really heard of any negative issues.

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

Nothing bad just a few people making jokes about my accent. Unless it really offends you I'd say just laugh with them, they probably don't mean any harm!

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?

They were lots of sports/clubs offered to us when we first arrived. I wanted to focus on my studies/have some spare time so I didn't sign up for anything, but they sounded great!

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

Austin has lots of great movie theatres, lots of great museums and galleries and monuments. There are also cool parks and pools around in the summer.

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

I never applied for work so I don't know!

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I volunteered as a writer for the International Office and as a crew member for the Austin film festival.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Spending money!
2	Sunscreen/bug spray (it gets REALLY hot!)
3	A camera (take lots of photos you won't regret it!)
4	Photos of home/things from home to make you feel more comfortable
5	Good vibes/positive attitude!

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

1	Do as many things as you can, always say yes! (you never know you'll meet/what you'll do)
2	Stay focused on your studies even if you're tempted to just have fun
3	Keep a calendar so you remember important events/assignments
4	Explore Austin/Texas and any other states while you're in the USA, it's a beautiful country!

5

Have fun!

Top 5 Things to do

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

1 Barton Springs

2 Watch the bats fly out from under the bridge

3 Alamo Draft house Cinema

4 Zilker Park

5 Barbarellas (club)

H: Personal Experience

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

My time in Austin was a total whirlwind. There was times that I was very homesick and sad and others times when I never wanted to leave; it's totally normal! I made lots of friends that I will keep in contact with and learnt a lot from my courses. Basically I wouldn't have changed anything even if there was some bits that didn't go as I planned, it's all part of it! If you're deciding whether to do I say JUST DO IT you will have so much fun and I guarantee you will not forget/regret it.

