

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	International Relations, History
Exchange Institution	University of East Anglia
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	Had no textbooks for my studies this term, so only small fees for books to write in if needed
Accommodation	\$210.24NZD P/W
Return Airfare	\$2,690.15 Return
Local Transportation	Living on campus means no need for bus fare to uni, however it costs about \$5NZD return from uni to town without a concession. Trains to London/ other parts of England can be as cheap as \$15NZD if booked in advance but about \$80NZD if booked on the day of travel.
Meals	Self Catered, food in the UK is generally slightly cheaper, specifically meats that are expensive here are often a lot cheaper such as bacon and chicken. Having said that, the shops close to campus were a little pricey but there was the English version of a Pak'n'save about a 20 minute walk away.
Visa	Free if less than six month stay
Health & Insurance	Around \$350 for STA travel insurance
Personal Spending	Depends how much you travel around the country. Norwich is quite cheap since it's a very student oriented town but going to London or Cambridge for weekend trips can increase your costs, totally worth it though to see the country.
Communications (phone, etc.)	Didn't set up phone plan, used free wi fi which available in most places throughout Europe. In emergencies mobile data, texting and calling without a plan in the UK is very cheap for New Zealand sim cards but expensive on mainland Europe.
Other fees (specify)	Book your train tickets in advance, can't stress that enough. A train from London to Norwich if done right can cost about \$20NZD but if you buy it on the day it can be around \$100NZD.
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Food, drinks alcohol etc is a bit cheaper in the UK so that was a nice surprise.

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

I just used by visa debit and got a lot of cash out. I used cash for pretty much every purchase. It's easier and cheaper in the long run and

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

Put in the effort to go shopping at the cheaper supermarkets that are slightly further away. There is a small supermarket on campus and one near campus but they are the English versions of a New World metro and the uni shop is run by the student union. They focus on environmentally friendly goods and food. Which is nice, but we're all poor uni students so avoid it unless you're just on campus and want a snack.

Just like New Zealand, drinks at pubs, bars and clubs are overpriced, flat parties are always cheaper and more fun anyway.

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

Don't drink coffee but a can of coke was sometime like 50p so about \$1, usually cheaper than here.

**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?

This was a long and confusing process that was half my fault and half the fault of the British government. If you are going for less than six months and are a New Zealand citizen you DO NOT NEED a visa, the website was in the process of being updated when I applied and it did not tell me this. I applied for one and got it rejected because of this. However on my immigration file all it said was I had it rejected. Because of this. I was held at the border from France at the train station for quite some time while they worked out why my file had this on it. In the end it all worked out but I recommend applying asap if you are staying longer than 6 months since it takes a very long time for them to get back to you.

Cost me about \$150NZD to apply, but as I said, didn't even need to.

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?

They require you have insurance but leave it up to you.

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

STA travel insurance, would recommend. Cheap, easy to sign up with a travel agent. Covers you the entire time you're away even if you leave your host country which you probably will end up doing.

## **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>					
African Politics in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Eng.	N/A	60	4	Really unique course, African pols is only just being taught at VUW for the first time in years so it was good to get a head start.
The Slave Trade: From Africa to America	Eng.	N/A	30	4	Really interesting stuff, the slave trade is taught here at VUW but it was cool to get a new perspective on it.

**Course Registration/Enrolment**

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

UEA has a really good student support service. Before I even left NZ they had emailed me a lot about courses I wasn't able to take and that sort of thing. By the time I got to England everything was good to go and I didn't need to do much.

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?

The whole process was relatively simple. The only confusing part was working out which each year level

was. England does not use '100, 200, 300' level etc. They use '400, 500, 600' as if 100, 200, 300 were their version of level 1 2 3 NCEA. I would look this all up yourself however as different universities do things differently.

### **Academic Experience**

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

It was quite a bit different for '300' level students. There is much less focus on lectures and the tutorials (they're called seminars) there are much more of a focus. For instance I had a three hour tutorial every week and no lecture for one of my courses.

How did the workload compare to what you would expect at VUW?

In all, I would say the work is easier at UEA. Lower wordcounts, slightly easier marking etc. However some of the classes last quite a bit longer so try to get some good sleep before them.

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 personally only did two 'modules' at UEA because it was the end of my degree and one counted for more points. I was still classed as a full time student since one of the courses had a higher workload than normal.

For IR/Pols/History students I strongly recommend finding something to do with Africa and or Europe. We learn very little African politics/ history here at VUW and in NZ as a whole. It is a very good thing to put on a CV and is extremely interesting at the same time. Having studied African politics while no one else here has already given me academic and employment opportunities believe it or not within a few weeks of returning.

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

English universities are pretty similar when it comes to succeeding academically. One thing that is different is the lecturer / professor takes all the tutorials and you get to know them much more than here at VUW. Use this to your advantage as much as you can and get to know them, they're marking you after all. It is good to know what they prefer in work.

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

Less computers available than VUW in public spaces such as the library, it was almost always a challenge to find a free computer. However, with my own laptop it wasn't too hard. Apart from that though, the internet was great. It uses the 'eduroam' system where once you're connected you can use free internet at any campus in the country. For example, I went for a day trip to see Cambridge University and could freely use their internet.

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?

Obviously they speak English in England. However, none of my lecturers were English so that was funny. Prepare for that I guess?

If you go over to Europe proper you don't need to know much of the native languages except in France where they seem to become annoyed rather quickly if you don't at least greet them in French. Apart from that the touristy places in Europe all will probably have at least a few people speaking English. Germany and Austria specifically appear to have English as a second language!

Try to point out that you're from New Zealand and not English, this can get you treated a little better in Europe, specially France.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

On campus accommodation named 'UEA: The Village'. Sort of, it was right next to campus.

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

Pros:

- You get to meet new people a hell of a lot easier than in private accommodation
- English student accommodations are almost all self catered, I much prefer it
- No 'forced fun'. Unlike here in NZ, the student halls are really just blocks of flats. There are no weekly RA meetings (There is an RA but you literally only meet them once if you're good). There's no hall branding or anything. Everyone is just left to live to themselves. This could be a con to some but I had more fun and made more friends in the first week at 'The Village' than I did during a year long stay at 'Victoria House'.

Cons:

- You will be staying all with first years, this is actually a pro in most cases but a lot may find it as a con. Personally I thought it was great, basically got a do over on my first year.
- You will be the token exchange student. I found it really fun teaching everyone about New Zealand,

but again, some may not.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Definitely go for uni accommodation. It will be a bit more expensive but it was totally worth it. I can't imagine how different my experience would be in private flats.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Foreign students get to move in about 4 days before everyone else which is nice. So you get about a week before O Week starts.

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

Self catered halls, so it is what you make it. However, a lot of the halls didn't even have stoves or ovens. Mine personally did but I heard a lot of stories of people having to use these weird microwave ovens for everything. I strongly suggest ensuring a hall/ flat with an oven/ stove (called 'hobs' over there)

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

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

Being from NZ and speaking English is a huge plus obviously. Not only is there no language barrier but the conversation starter "Hi, I'm Chris. I'm an exchange student from New Zealand" is like a cheat card to making friends and getting to know people. You will probably never again find it easier to meet people and make friends in your life than you will as an English speaking exchange student in the United Kingdom.

Everyone there I met loves New Zealand and loved hearing about it. I made more friends in a couple weeks there than a couple months at vic. Exploit the fact that you're from the other side of the world as much as possible.

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

There is a little bit of culture shock but apart from Australia, the UK is probably the easiest place for a Kiwi to integrate. The foreign student welcoming and info talks were pretty funny, having to explain to people from other countries English culture and that sort of thing, where I was just sitting there thinking 'this is pretty much Kiwi culture but a little different'.

The United Kingdom is New Zealand but sliiiiiiiiiightly different in most ways, if that makes sense.

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

Nothing too hard, everyone having different accents was kind of weird but really cool at the same time. Most English found it weird that the majority of Kiwis have the same accent!

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

Really well, never felt alienated or anything. As much as the stereotype is that the English hate immigrants, they all seem to love Kiwis and I got along well with everyone.

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'm a bisexual male and not once did I feel bad about it. UEA is really accepting of everyone, there are rainbow flags all over campus and Norwich in general is a pretty accepting place.

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

Being a politics student, I asked pretty much everyone about Brexit. If you want to find out what people think about immigrants, that's a nice way to do it haha. Apart from that, I didn't encounter a single experience of discrimination. Being a white guy from a Commonwealth country however, I didn't really expect any.

## **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?

The clubs and societies at UEA were fantastic. A lot more organized and professional than at VUW. They have a club day just like here but in order to join each club or society (in the UK club usually means sports, society for things like film, culture etc) you have to pay a small fee, usually around 4 to 5 pounds. This made joining feel more important and ensured every club was well funded.

A lot more variety as well. Everything from political parties to film societies to Polo clubs. The events put

on were also usually a lot more grand than here. For example, the history society has a field trip to Germany, the film society has a field trip to the Czech Republic!

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

**LONDON**, go there as much as you can. It is now one of my favourite places on the planet. It has so much of anything and everything. From awesome historic land marks to West End to pretty much any type of bar, pub, club you could want. You will spend a lot of time there.

Apart from London I got out to Cambridge a few times, this place is like a fairy tale town. There really is no other way to describe it. Every building just seems hundreds of years old and going on the weeknds gets you tours of the famous colleges there. The place really makes New Zealand feel like an infant in the world in terms of age.

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

You unfortunately won't be able to work as a student due to British visa laws.

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

1	Pineapple lumps, they will confuse the hell out of everyone.
2	Whittakers chocolate, you will be a god.
3	If you're into sports, all blacks attire. A lot of the guys main knowledge of NZ will be sports related.
4	
5	

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

1	Exploit the fact that you are from New Zealand as much as you can. It's a cheat card at making friends and meeting people.
2	Don't neglect Norwich! The university is slightly away from the town centre and so acts like its own little city within a city. This can cause you stay on campus for a long time. Avoid this! Go in to Norwich proper as much as you can. It's an awesome little town with a lot of awesome history, shops, clubs, bars and things to do.
3	Don't neglect the rest of the country! My biggest regret is that I only really spent time in London, Cambridge and Norwich. These three places are awesome and make sure you go to London a lot but also try and get out and see the rest of the United Kingdom!
4	Join a society or club for sure, they are so different to here. A lot more to do.
5	The university has a literal club and bar on campus. It's an awesome place to go nearly every night

with your flatmates and meet people. However, don't neglect the Norwich nightlife! Go there a lot as well, lots of awesome places.

## **H: Personal Experience**

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

This exchange is by far the best thing I have done in my life. I traveled the world, met friends for life and saw sites and locations I've wanted to visit for as long as I can remember. It really is life changing. You go into it thinking it's just a nice holiday but it really does change a lot about you. It's a wonderful opportunity and I would do it again in a second. My only regret is that I didn't stay longer.