

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Psychology and Development Studies
Exchange Institution	University of Victoria, Canada
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester two 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	\$200
Accommodation	\$650 per month
Return Airfare	\$2000
Local Transportation	\$250
Meals	\$1000
Visa	\$14
Health & Insurance	\$700
Personal Spending	\$5000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$50 per month
Other fees (specify)	Travel: \$2000
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	

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

I spent more than what I had planned so it would be a good idea to go with more than you would expect to spend. Tax is not included in the price so that was a bit of a shock at first as the price on the item did not match the price at the register.

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

I had a cash passport, which you load up with money before you leave and the transfer of different currencies is not charged. It was very simple to reload over the internet.

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

Go with as much money as you can. Anticipate spending more than you expect and save accordingly. Unplanned trips are a common occurrence and these often cost a lot.

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

Coffee, which is just plain drip coffee cost \$2.00 CAD on average, while espresso coffee cost around \$3.50 CAD

**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?

If you are going for less than 6 months there is no need for a study visa, however you will need to get an ETA, which allows you to enter the country. I would advise getting a study visa in case you want to extend your stay without any problems. The visa takes a while to come through so get it as soon as you can. Quite easy to apply and the Canadian government website is easy to navigate.

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

Get the study visa even if you are only going for one semester in case you love it so much and want to stay.

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 you will need insurance. Very easy to get and costs around \$700. It is more expensive if you go through the travel agent and I just got mine through Southern Cross, which was cheaper.

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

I used Southern Cross Travel Insurance and it covered both Canada and the USA. Would recommend going through this company rather than the travel agent as it is cheaper.

### 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 2016</b>					

PSYC366	English	Any PSYC300 paper	15	4	Interesting content and great professor
PSYC330	English	Any PSYC300 paper	15	4	Great professor and you learn a lot about people
GEOG347B	English	GEOG316	20	3	Lots of essays but prof knows the content really well
GMST454	English	Elective	20	2	Good filler course and the prof is brilliant, really enthusiastic

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Was a bit tedious as you had to send different emails for every subject but there was a lot of help from both sides. You just have to be organized and do it sooner rather than later.

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 into all the classes I wanted to get into although I did do a bit of changing when I got there. There are a lot more options to choose from than at VUW, which is brilliant. Get it all sorted when registration first opens so you don't have to worry about it later.

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

Get ones that relate to your degree but if you have a few places where you have a gap do classes that interest you, especially those that are not on offer at VUW.

### Academic Experience

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

There is a lot less pressure as the curriculum is different and there isn't a pressure on your grades as it is pass/fail. The campus is a lot more spread out and the library is smaller so fewer places to study. The professors really knew their stuff and were enthusiastic about teaching it. Studying was pretty similar to VUW and the course works was much the same.

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 workload was much the same, as was the teaching. Like with VUW each professor had a different teaching style that worked for them. It seemed easier than VUW but perhaps that is because there was less pressure due to pass/fail.

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?

Do the compulsory 4 papers but as I didn't have any labs for my courses I found I had a lot of free time so I would say take a few electives. There are some pretty interesting ones out there, such as Vampire studies and the History of Middle Earth. Lots of fun and not very hard.

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

Do the work first so you can go out and explore without the worry of thinking about your papers. Talk to your teachers, they want to help.

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

Not as extensive as the ones at VUW and the internet did not always work. They do the job though and it's a nice quiet environment to be in. The quad in summer is especially nice and a great place to do some reading.

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?

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in a shared flat that I found online

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

Had a lot more freedom than in the halls of residence and I wasn't living with first years. A con was that it was quite far from campus.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

If you are over the first years and hall life then find a flat to stay in. Have the halls as a back-up plan but take a look online for a flat first.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Halls open about a week before university but flats are more maneuverable.

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

You can get catered halls. Flats you cook for yourself. Food is relatively the same price as NZ and the same standard.

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

The housing market is pretty competitive in Victoria so I would suggest getting it before you arrive in the country. There are a few websites that can help you find a place. Its harder to get to university if you live off campus but the bus system is good.

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

Get it before you get there and have a backup plan. You don't want to arrive in a foreign country without a place to stay.

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

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

If you live in a flat its easier to make friends but they can also be international students. It's a lot easier making international friends as they are all in the same boat as you. Making local friends is a lot harder, especially if you are taking third year classes as they already have their friend groups.

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

Canada is pretty easy as its similar to NZ.

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

It was just hard being away from home but no huge differences in culture between Canada and New Zealand.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The hockey and how everyone is really nice. The stereotype about Canadians is true and everyone wants to help.

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

Everyone was really nice and helpful and are interested about where you are from. Being from a foreign country gives you a point of interest.

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?

It is a really open-minded country and the university is well equipped for people with disabilities. Everyone is made to feel really welcome.

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

I found I had no discrimination from anyone and everyone was really nice to me.

## **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?

In the first week there is a clubs event and its open to everyone. There are all sorts of sporting clubs as well as academic ones. It is pretty easy to join these clubs. The gym is brilliant and the sports run through it are a lot of fun.

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

Explore the Inner harbor and the Empress Hotel. Head off to Mystic beach and the surrounding beaches on the Juan De Fuca trail. Tofino is a great weekend getaway, especially if you like surfing. Vancouver is also a quick ferry ride away.

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

The campus pub is a good option as well as several other café type places. The gym may also have job offers. Just hand your CV out.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

The co-op facility seems to be really helpful in finding intern opportunities and there are volunteer options through your classes and clubs

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

1	A polaroid camera for your travel journal
2	An adapter
3	Presents for all the people you stay with
4	A travel journal
5	Good hiking boots

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

1	Learn your way around campus before classes start
2	Make the most out of orientation
3	Find some good hikes and spend your weekends doing those
4	Be outgoing and introduce yourself to people in your class
5	Find a place to stay relatively close 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	Surfing in Tofino
2	Mystic Beach
3	Walk up Mount Doug
4	Take the sea plane to Vancouver
5	High tea at the Empress hotel

### H: Personal Experience

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

Going on exchange was one of the greatest decisions I have ever made. The experiences that I had will stay with me for my entire life and the friends I made will be friends for life. It was very interesting to see how universities in other countries differ from my home university. I would recommend the exchange experience to anyone who is able to take part as I can change and shape who you are as a person for the better and broaden your views of the wider world.