

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 Art
Major(s)	Double major in International Relations and Political Science
Exchange Institution	American University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 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	\$200
Accommodation	\$1200 per month
Return Airfare	\$3000
Local Transportation	\$10 per week
Meals	\$60 per week
Visa	\$300
Health & Insurance	\$900
Personal Spending	\$1000 (trips, outings , coffee etc)
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$30 a month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Accommodation is VERY expensive in DC, but there is a free shuttle that takes you from the University to the nearest metro stop which helps keep transport costs down.

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

I went a bit over what I expected. People eat out a lot more in the U.S. than in New Zealand so I spent more there than I thought.

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

It is very easy to set up a bank account- you can do it at orientation! And there is a branch on campus with FANTASTIC staff who are very helpful. So I used a wire transfer to put my money in that bank.

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

Get a Capital One Account (the bank on campus).

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

Not sure about \$1-2

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?

Applying for the visa involves a lot of paper work, and you have to fly to Auckland for the 'interview' which only takes about an hour.

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

Keep on track with the paperwork, don't try to do it in a rush.

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?

I used the universities insurance, it was \$900 for one semester, it's easier to use their one because they have a lot of conditions as to what it must cover.

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

Yes, it is easier to use the university one, it is not very comprehensive though (no dental or vision). I didn't use it while there so I cant say how easy it is to claim etc.

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 1/YEAR					
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
SISU318	English	300INTP	15	5	Great lecturer, really

Causes of War					interesting course. Definitely easier than a 300 level at Vic though.
SISU220 International Political Economy	English	247INTP Wealth and World affairs	15	3	Hardest course I took, quite interesting but very based on economics.
SISU212 China, Japan and the U.S.	English	200POLS	15	3	The first part was really interesting but the material was more basic than I was expecting
SPAN252	Spanish/English	SPAN216	15	4	Really awesome format to the classes

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The exchange office was quite helpful; the process is still stressful though. The website with all the courses is also a bit hard to navigate.

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 most of the classes I wanted, two were cancelled though, one right before classes started which was incredibly frustrating. Make sure you spend A LOT of time looking at the available courses, there is so much choice.

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

Try and pick a few cool courses that you can't do at Vic, also think about keeping Friday or Monday free to aid with travelling if possible. Get more courses approved than you need since they can fall through very easily.

Academic Experience

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

The academic experience was so different. The classes are much smaller and there is a huge emphasis on participation. I enjoyed seeing a different style and it gave me great practice at voicing my opinions in class. Also a few of my classes were technology free- no laptops or cellphones allowed- at first I didn't like this but after a while I found I was paying more attention and retaining information better.

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 different. More smaller assignments, but in general I found the assignments and tests quite a bit easier so I was working less than I would at Vic.

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 would recommend doing a few challenging courses that you can put work into and the a few easier ones so the workload is reasonable. You can take classes like Yoga and Pilates for 1 credit, which I think, is a really good idea.

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

Go to class and participate, do the assignments and you won't have any problems.

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

The facilities are great, the library is pretty big and the internet is generally pretty reliable.

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?

N/A

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed off campus at an apartment building called the Berkshire.

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

The Pros were definitely the location; it's right by campus and more affordable than living on campus. Also a lot of students live there.

Cons were the quality of the apartment was not great and it was more expensive than living in the surrounding suburbs like Tenelytown.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Try and find a flat that is in Tenelytown or near the university, it is very convenient.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Not sure about university accommodation.

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

I cooked my own food.

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

I used the Facebook group to find a place. Get looking early it is not easy to find, try and do a Skype viewing if possible.

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

Start early.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Americans are so friendly, I found it easy to make friends. The university also has a buddy program, which is useful. I lived with Americans as well so that helped.

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

There was more culture shock than I expected, I think the key is too acknowledge the difference and then move on. Focusing on the differences makes you alienate yourself a bit.

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

Yes, I found the patriotism very over the top. Many Americans do seem to believe that their country is “the best country in the world” , I thought this was a stereotype but it is very much real. I think being aware of this from the start might be helpful for some people. I know I was quite shocked by it.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

It was incredibly open and friendly. The people were so helpful if you ever needed anything and were always happy to give you places to see/ go.

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

The university staff and everyone who worked on campus were always really great. The Students too.

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?

American is an accepting college so I think any minority would feel welcome there.

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

No, American University is quite liberal and accepting.

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?

There are so many clubs on campus. Go to the clubs fair to check them all out and see which ones appeal to you.

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

Baltimore is a quick train ride away and worth a visit. Philadelphia is not far and fun to see. And of course New York is three hours away and such a cool place.

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

I am not sure.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

A lot of people intern in various places, its worth researching this before you go.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Pineapple Lumps
2	Some warm sweaters
3	
4	
5	

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

1	Get involved in everything
2	Tell the NZ embassy when you arrive, they may have events you might get invited to
3	It's great to keep a dairy with photos and ticket stubs etc
4	Check out all the really cool courses and do ones you cant do at home
5	

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Go to a football/ Basketball/ Ice hockey/ Baseball game
2	Go to New York
3	Check out all the amazing museums
4	Visit the pentagon and the capitol building

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 to D.C was one of the best decisions I made during my time at university. Being a politics student I learnt so much from just living in D.C. and studying at such a political active school. I meet such incredible people that I will definitely try and see again, who made my time there so enjoyable. It was great also going at a time with the lead up to an election because it was so much fun to watch all the debates with people. It was also really amazing to be in an area where you could do so many small trips to cool places like Baltimore and New York. University in America is different from in New Zealand as the classes tend to be a lot smaller and the workload spread out through more smaller assignments rather than a few big ones. Also participation is a huge factor, for me this was difficult to adapt to at first but I think getting used to this learning style made me a better student