

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 Building Science
Major(s)	Proj. Management and Sustainable Engineering Systems
Exchange Institution	ESA- École Spéciale d'Architecture
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	3 rd Year, Semester 1 2015

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	-
Accommodation	\$1200NZD per month
Return Airfare	\$2300NZD
Local Transportation	\$100NZD per month
Meals	Included in accommodation price
Visa	\$157 in NZ, plus a further \$100NZD in France
Health & Insurance	\$530 for entire 5 months
Personal Spending	\$2000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$40 per month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Travel costs, printing costs for university (much higher in Paris!) phone plans were more expensive than in NZ

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

I spent about what I thought I was needed for the entire 5 month stay in Paris, but I think I ended up spending more in the last month I was there as I travelled. Make sure you budget travel into your costs – it is so cheap in Europe that it is so worth it!

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

I used a Cash Passport card which I got through my bank (ASB), but I think it is offered through other banks too. It allows multiple currencies, so when you travel to countries off the Euro you can switch money over for no cost. It did take a few days to load on money from my ASB account though.

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

Printing costs were higher than I imagined. Printing at the school was cheap for A4/A3, but if you needed

bigger and in color it costed a lot. Budget more into your costs.

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

Not sure of coke but coffee was cheap at school – 1.20€ at the university bar. Outside in Paris it was more expensive - 4€ sometimes for a café au lait. Espresso is much cheaper if you can drink it!

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?

The Visa process was fairly straightforward. The French Embassy is in Wellington so was handy. You just have to get your passport in order and make sure it has 6 months on it from the date you return back to NZ. I think they also wanted details of your finances and how you were going to finance your trip. It cost me \$157NZD for a University Visa. Then a further \$100NZD in France for a medical check (this can be avoided – this was in case I wanted to extend my stay in France).

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

Apply early just to be safe. I went into the Embassy on the 21st or 22nd of December, so just before Christmas. I managed to get it back in the first week of January so it was super quick, but apply early just in case they are busy.

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?

No mandatory insurance.

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

I used STA Travel Insurance. It was around \$530, with the discount for VIC OE students. I never had to claim, but would recommend to future students.

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					
Architecture STUDIO	French/English	SARC300 Design Paper	32VUW Points	2	Really cool paper – had a Portuguese prof so was a good experience to see how he taught. Was also interesting to see how the French design and their style , I

					really enjoyed it.
MAKE	English	BILD331 – Sustainable and Regenerative Design	15VUW Points	2	Super interesting paper-worked on a real project happening in a community in Haiti. Had a few presentations during the semester.
Representation of The City	English	-	15 VUW Points	3	Looking at media and how it portrays cities and architecture. Was something I would never do at Victoria so was interesting to write the paper. Lots of texts involved in this class.
Histoire de Paris	English	-	15 VUW Points	2	History of Paris, interesting course but hard to follow when walking around narrow Parisian streets.
French Course	French	-	15 VUW Points	1	French Language Course, compulsory for all exchange students. 2 hours per week, pretty straight forward course.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The exchange office was helpful at ESA, but if you are waiting a long time for things you asked for, keep pushing and emailing/talking to the exchange coordinator.

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 courses I want, they generally give exchange students first choice when choosing courses.

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

Academic Experience

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

The university was totally different to what I expected. Courses at ESA were weighted different and all the students spent the majority of their time on the main architecture course and didn't seem to care a lot about their other courses. The university actually went through a rough patch about a month into the semester and went on strike for a couple of weeks – was pretty interesting to see from an exchange student point of view.

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?

We had a Portuguese prof for our main architecture course and he taught pretty similar to VUW's standards. The French profs were way more laid back and sometimes turned up 1 hour late – pretty standard in France but you get used to it!

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?

You have to take Architecture Studio, plus the 2 compulsory courses for exchange students (Histoire de Paris and French course) plus either 2 other courses or 1 research seminar. The seminars seemed like a lot more reading and work and more directed towards masters, so maybe do 2 other courses if you are undergraduate.

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

Just make sure you turn up on time and always go to class – the French are pretty big on attendance and this is included in your grade.

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

I never used the computer facilities but there was a big Mac studio available

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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?

I wasn't fluent in French but managed, I also took the 2 offered English speaking courses. I think both professors have left now so I am not sure what – or if – any more English courses will be offered at the school. Just make sure you have the level that ESA asks you to have before arriving. The compulsory course at the school doesn't really help.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in a host family that I found through an online website.

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

I really enjoyed it – my host family was great! I now have a family in Paris I can go back to anytime. I had meals included in my price so although it was expensive, having breakfast and dinners included helped a lot. No cons – it was better than I could have imagined.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I really enjoyed having a host family and it was still really social. You could try an apartment by yourself or find some French flat mates to move in with. Also, there is a big place called Cité Université which had different houses according to nationality (Canadian, American, Swedish, etc.). There is no NZ house but we can apply for the international house I think.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in a month before university started.

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

I was really satisfied with the food that was included with my host family.

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 just found it on an online website through google.

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

Begin your search a 1-2 months in advance.

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 found it really easy to meet and make international friends- you are all in the same boat. I made friends from around the world. It was also pretty easy to make French friends at ESA, they are all really friendly.

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

I didn't have any problem and didn't get culture shock moving to France.

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

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What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I really liked the French people and completely disagree with what people say about them being rude and snooty! I enjoyed the food culture, it was incredible.

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

Everyone was super nice and friendly and would always be willing to help. They like Kiwis and I was told a few times they think of us as exotic!

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 it would be fine.

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

I didn't face any issues.

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 were a few big architecture exhibitions for students, you could get involved if you ask the French students.

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

Travel! I managed to do a few weekend trips with friends and it is super cheap. Or stay in Paris and make a bucket list for everything you want to do. Try out some new cafes if you like coffee.

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

Not too sure outside of school but there was an opening in working for the bar on campus which would have been open to exchange students for sure.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Lots of internship opportunities for after the exchange.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm coats
2	A good pair of shoe(s)
3	Camera
4	Photos/memories of NZ
5	Lots of travel money!

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

1	Keep an open mind – everything will work out!
2	Learn French and make sure your level is up to what they ask
3	Be prepared for the French style of teaching, it is different to VUW
4	Have fun travelling and making new friends
5	Live nearby the university

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Integrate yourself into the French lifestyle, it is awesome!
2	Try our new cafes/bars every weekend
3	Get a Velib pass – the best money I spent by far
4	Travel whenever you can, it is super cheap in Europe
5	Try as much of the French food as you can, it is amazing and you will miss it in NZ

H: Personal Experience

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

My exchange was beyond anything I could have ever imagined. I had the most amazing experience and enjoyed Paris, and France, so much. The school was so different to what I expected, but it was so worth it and I now look at New Zealand in a different light. I made so many lifelong friends from around the world that I can go and visit whenever. I travelled to a heap of countries, so Paris was a great base. Paris is an amazing city with so much culture and the French lifestyle is incredible. Thanks VIC Abroad for this amazing opportunity, I truly appreciate it!