

# 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 Design Innovation and Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Media Design and Marketing
Exchange Institution	Hochschule Mainz, University of Applied Sciences
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1, 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	\$0
Accommodation	\$2400 (\$150/week x 6 months)
Return Airfare	\$2400
Local Transportation	\$456 - Compulsory social semester fee includes free public transport in the Rhine-Main region
Meals	\$4-\$8 from Mensa (campus cafeteria), \$50/week groceries
Visa	\$0 as I have a British passport
Health & Insurance	\$600
Personal Spending	\$1000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$30 per month for a 5GB data plan with Lebara, internet was free in the dorm
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	None

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

*The financial expenses incurred were as expected, some items were more expensive than others while others were less expensive than at home so eventually it balanced out.*

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

*I used an AirNZ OneSmart travel card that I could load money onto from an NZ account, convert it into Euros on the mobile app and withdraw it in Germany from any ATM. I was allowed 3 free withdrawals a month (no fees) which was plenty as cash is the most common form of payment.*

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

*Supermarkets such as Aldi and Penny are cheaper than Rewe and Edeka. The Mensa (cafeteria on campus) is also quite cheap. Going out to eat is pretty expensive but a nice treat.*

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

*2 Euros coffee/coke*

**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?

*No as I have a British passport.*

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

-

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?

*The host university checks your insurance policy when you arrive, and if it isn't enough you are required to take insurance out again with AOK. Luckily my insurance policy covered everything, but email the International Office if you have any concerns about this as they are very helpful.*

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

*I used CoverMore travel insurance (Options Single Trip Plan 1) this included 24 hour emergency assistance, unlimited medical and dental, unlimited additional expenses and a free global sim card.*

## **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 1/2016</b>					
Corporate Design - Totally Logo	German	Design elective outside of major/CCDN331 equivalent	20	3	
Conceptual Design - Responsive web typography	German	MDDN352	20	3	
Creative Space 2016	German	MDDN314	24	1	
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

*Before Uni started, the International Office explained all the course options, from here we were able to go away, read more about the courses in the course catalogs we were given and email our preferential choices. Once these are noted, classes begin and you attend the classes that you are interested in. During the first*

*class you can decide whether or not you want to continue - and the professor writes your name down if you choose to stay in that class. After you have selected your courses in the first two weeks, you email these to the International Office who draw up a learning agreement which ensures that you are appropriately cross credited at the end of your exchange.*

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 was successful in enrolling for the classes I wanted, the course catalog changes slightly every year but the themes of the courses remain the same. I recommend choosing classes based on how much they were worth. Some of the courses were only worth the equivalent of 8VUW points and required a lot of work, classes with larger points value were worth the effort put into them.*

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

*Choose classes you are interested in, the classes are in German but its a really good way to totally immerse yourself and the students all speak English so are more than willing to translate for you.*

### **Academic Experience**

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

*University here was more like high school in New Zealand. Projects were done either as groups or pairs which was interesting and different as it is the opposite at home. The academic experience didn't fully meet my expectations however the facilities at the university were impressive (book binding studio, screen printing studio, wood and metal workshops, industrial printers etc).*

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?

*Teaching was more similar to a high school environment. The workload was a lot less than what I would expect at VUW.*

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?

*Taking the maximum course load still gave me a lot of free time to travel and explore the new environment. I would recommend all of the courses above that I took.*

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

*Participate fully even if you don't understand, everyone is super helpful so just ask.*

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

*Pretty standard, the same as VUW.*

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 took German in high school and luckily this was enough and got me through the basics and everyday life. There was a German language course offered for 8VUW points however after attending the first lesson I decided against taking this course as it was very similar to what I learnt in school.*

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

*University dormitory apartments (single).*

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

*Easy way to meet and get to know people.*

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

*University dormitory apartments (shared) as having flat mates would definitely make the experience a lot better - I recommend emailing the host University International Office and asking for the email addresses of other international students so you can all live together as these are the people you will spend the most time with during your time away.*

How early can you move into accommodation?

*One week before University begins.*

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

*I was extremely disappointed with the food as the supermarkets are very different and don't offer as wide a range as at home. In the apartment there was a kitchenette with a fridge and stove. A microwave or oven would have been great.*

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

*Refer to accommodation recommendation*

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

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

*Making friends was interesting, sometimes the language barrier made it hard but I ended up making a few really good German friends.*

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

*It was difficult at first to adjust to the German culture as the people were very different but once you get to know how things work you accept and adapt to their way of life a lot more.*

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

*The language would be the most important if you don't speak the language but a lot of my friends didn't know a word of German and still got on just fine.*

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

*The helpfulness of people if you don't speak German.*

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

*Well*

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 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?

*Due to the lack of multiculturalism in Germany and Europe in general it was difficult for me, coming from New Zealand with such an accepting background to settle in initially however a couple of months into my stay it became easier as I made friends etc.*

## **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?

*Loads and loads of sports clubs*

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

*Plan trips to different countries/cities every weekend and make sure your timetable allows this to be a possibility.*

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

1	Camera
2	Travel pouch/bum bag
3	Euros (lots)
4	Rain jacket/umbrella
5	Materials for university

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

1	Nothing is open on Sundays
2	Recycling is really popular
3	Riding bikes is the most common way to get around
4	There are loads of public holidays especially in the Spring/Summer semester
5	Public transport is amazing

### Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Berlin
2	Heidelberg
3	Picnic on the Rhine
4	Bike along the Rhine
5	Go to the theatre!

## H: Personal Experience

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

I came on exchange with 0 expectations and a curious mind hoping to experience life in a different way for a while. Safe to say I got so much more than I expected, it's hard to explain the kind of friendships you form while away on exchange but the two best friends I made have single handedly restored my faith in good people in the world which is just crazy considering I didn't know them 5 months ago. I learnt so much, like how to do adult things; pay rent, get internet working, buy groceries and cook, fill in lots of serious looking forms, how to live in a country where noone speaks English out of choice (I didn't even mind, there seems to be something so peaceful about being in a crowd or on a bus and not understand a word being said). I learnt a lot about what I want from life and how I want to get it. I learnt that travelling itself doesn't change your life but the people you meet, the experiences and thoughts you have while travelling are what makes it so valuable. Bad situations like strikes in Barcelona causing you to cancel your trip can be fixed with 3 days of Haagen Dazs. The only thing worth packing to live in another country is an electric blanket. I realised that all the things I initially missed about home, I could actually live without. There are so many things I will miss about being on exchange, besides 10pm sunsets and 30 degree weather, I will miss the friends I made and all the other amazing people I met on my journey who made my experience so incredible, the shopping, public transport, bakeries on every corner, apple pies (wow), cheap travel, living by myself, nothing being open on Sundays (so no fomo - fear of missing out), cooking dinner for myself, going to uni 2 days a week, 5 day weekends, being a minority, knowing hardly anybody in the whole city, Haagen Dazs, Spotify ads in German (what a laugh and a half) and so much more. My time on exchange has and will always be a time that I will fondly remember. I feel so lucky to have had this opportunity.

