

# 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 Science
Major(s)	Environmental Science & Physical Geography
Exchange Institution	Georgia Institute of Technology
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 and 2, 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	\$300
Accommodation	\$12,000
Return Airfare	
Local Transportation	\$50
Meals	\$2000
Visa	
Health & Insurance	\$500
Personal Spending	\$3000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$300
Other fees (specify)	
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?

As expected, but travel in the summer break chewed a lot of costs up.

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

Onesmart – Air New Zealand travel card, no fees transfer.

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

It is possible to get a job on campus but getting a SSN is a bit of a struggle

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

\$3.50

**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?

Visa was expensive and became complicated at the interview due to a recent criminal conviction within 6 months of application. Expensive and lots of hidden costs, almost made me change my mind about going. Taking time off summer work to travel to Auckland for the interview was also difficult

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

Plan for a midweek trip to Auckland and don't panic if it takes a long time to come back to you, I only got my Visa a couple weeks before flying out. I bought my flights well beforehand.

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, BlueShield full cover health insurance at \$500US per semester. It was a grudge spending that much money while not actually sure if I had to or not, but in the end worth it as I was happy to go into the clinic instead of carrying problems all the way through my stay.

I also left for the US without having received required shots, but after getting the health insurance, the shots were free at the University Health Clinic so that worked out well for me.

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

See above

**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>					
EAS3110	ENG	PHYG300	20	3	
EAS4350	ENG	GEOL200	20	4	
EAS4803	ENG	GEOL300	20	5	
EAS4699	ENG	GEOG325	10	5	
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					
PHYS2021	ENG	ENSC300	20	2	

MATH1712	ENG	MATH141	15	3	
EAS4699	ENG	ENSC302	20	5	
EAS8901	ENG	PHYG300	20	2	

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Signup for classes was in the first week of classes after talking to academic advisors of your program.

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?

Many of my original choice classes were not available or full or required certain prerequisites so I had to find new classes. Be prepared to be malleable with your options

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

. Keep in mind that there's more to your exchange than the classes you take! A busy schedule is not something you want if you are planning travel on the weekend, at the same time remember you are there to study. So there is a fine balance.

### Academic Experience

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

Teacher to Student ratios were much lower at Georgia Tech so we were able to communicate and learn directly from our lecturers who were world-renowned experts in the respective fields.

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?

Victoria's marking schedule focuses most percentage towards grades on final exams, whereas Georgia Tech had much more in-term homework and tests to ensure that you were learning throughout the semester instead of cramming in the last week of term. It is a system that seemed to work well for me as retention was high for when it came to the final exam which was only about 20% of the final grade.

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?

12-15 credit hours per week, if you have gaps in your schedule then an American History class is always a good idea to learn more about where you are and why it's like what it is.

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

It's necessary to work throughout the entire semester, simple as an hour a day of extra study goes a long way.

Make friends in class and talk to people rather than bottling everything in, everybody loves a Kiwi accent so you'll be quick to make friends!

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

Technology was really accessible, lots of computers and easy to interact with printers and scanners. Additionally, you were able to borrow GoPros, DSLR Cameras and other tidbits for a weekend if you needed them which was a very cool service I thought.

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-house was a hall of residence, single rooms with a shared bathroom. Half of the occupants were international while the other half were homegrown Americans.

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

Pros – very easy to meet people who were experiencing the exact same thing as you were, built a strong bond and that's who your friends became. Local Americans were also available to help us internationals out when we were dealing with some unfamiliar local quirk.

Cons – privacy was hard to come by with people always doing things and knocking on your door, unable to drink despite being 21 due to campus housing rules, which got us into trouble at times.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

International House or Square on Fifth – just off-campus apartments that are brand new and rather cheap for how good they are!

How early can you move into accommodation?

Just a few days before the actual semester starts, and you have to move out 24 hours after your last exam. Pack light so its nice and quick when you clean out your room.

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

I-house had two fully equipped kitchens for 50 people in the building, but half of the residents had meal plans, which were a range of meals per week depending on much you were willing to pay. "Social 75 Meal Plan" was a good option; it was the cheapest and gave you 75 meals over the entire semester at the buffet style food halls around campus. This amount to one meal per week day so we would go every weekday for dinner, stay for two hours and absolutely gorge ourselves on food for the day before taking cereal and bananas back to our residences in Tupperware containers for breakfast the next day.

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

Don't live in home-park.

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

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

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

Living in the I-house meant making friends was very easy to do, however it was mostly with internationals. It seemed locals knew you were only going to be there for a semester or two, so they were happy to become acquaintances but were reluctant to be true friends. This changed after I joined the volleyball team and a few intramural sports teams, so the key there is to sign up for things.

I now have many lasting friendships with local Atlantans.

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

It was a great experience immersing myself into American university culture. It was comfortable because it was not so different to NZ but still was different enough to be a memorable experience!

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

Tipping waiters even when they were useless annoyed me. You tip for a service, not because "it's the American way". Also they clearly target tourists and heckle tips out of you in places like Las Vegas and New York when they know you are unfamiliar with the concept.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The southern hospitality of the people in Atlanta blew me away, it was a chivalrous place where everyone seemed willing to stop what they're doing to hear about your day or show some courtesy here or there.

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

With respect and as above.

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?

Atlanta seemed to be a very progressive, liberal city in a state that is quite the opposite, it has one of the highest gay populations behind San Francisco. Georgia Tech itself was a microcosm of the city around it. It was such an international campus, with respect being paid to all based on the fact that everyone was admitted to Georgia Tech for their intellectual ability and not much else mattered.

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

The people on campus were very accommodating to all cultures and there were many cultural groups that catered to all sorts of people.

## **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 system at Georgia Tech was inexhaustible. Whatever you were even remotely interested in, there was a club for it. I joined the Georgia Tech Men's volleyball team and travelled to many smaller towns in surrounding states that I otherwise would not have seen. As well as this I played intramural Frisbee, participated in Indian festivals and attended a celebration of the Chinese new-year. Getting

involved is the best thing you can do to meet lasting friends.

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

Explore the city on foot! There's much to see and do in Atlanta, the High Museum of Art, Piedmont Park. Check what's on, more often than not there was some free concert or event going on somewhere in the city. Travel is also a great idea, Atlanta has the busiest airport in the world so getting to other places in the US is as simple as checking kayak.com for cheap flights and going for it!

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

Off campus was impossible with the type of Visa that I had, but I was able to find work in a research laboratory and also for the Athletic Association at home sports events. On-campus work was possible but going through the SSN process was difficult and I had to open up a US bank account.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Internships were hard to come by as most companies were happier hiring americans so they wouldn't have to worry about acquiring visas for internationals. However, some internationals were successful so it was not impossible.

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Adaptor Plug</b>
<b>2</b>	Warm Jacket
<b>3</b>	Screwdriver
<b>4</b>	NZ souvenirs for gifts at the end of your stay
<b>5</b>	Duct Tape

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Don't go to FASET</b>
<b>2</b>	Don't get the unlimited meal plan
<b>3</b>	Don't travel by yourself off-campus
<b>4</b>	Apply for I-house
<b>5</b>	Join clubs

### **Top 5 Things to do**

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Eat at Mary Mac's Tea Room</b>
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2	Football Games
3	Frat Parties
4	Travel Everywhere
5	Network yourself to you professors (gain contacts)

## **H: Personal Experience**

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

My year abroad will stay with me for as long as I live. My most memorable moments consist of the places travelled with newly established friends. Campus-life was like a small city, a hive of activity and always something going on, a visit from the president, a win in football against FSU. It is easily one of the most rewarding things I have done and has made it enabled me to look at Master's programs with a fresh mind.