

# Vic OE Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VIC OE AS A WORD DOCUMENT

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Conjoint BDI and BCA
Major(s)	(BCA) Marketing (BDI) Industrial Design
Exchange Institution	Hoschule fur Gestaltung Schwabisch Gmund
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 2013

## 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	\$560 per month (Included power, internet etc)
Return Airfare	\$3000
Local Transportation	\$40 for a bike which I sold back to the second hand store for the same price
Meals	\$150 per week
Visa	\$100
Health & Insurance	\$350
Personal Spending	\$3000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$20 per month for a O2 German sim card with 1GB data, unlimited texts and calls to German numbers otherwise I used Skype which is free.
Other fees (specify)	-
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	- Some Course Materials needed for design projects \$100 - Sending all of my souvenirs home \$200

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

**Pretty Good. You have to remember that everybody's costs will be different so it pays to write a list of everything you think you might need before you go and make sure you over budget by at least 1-2 thousand just incase. You never know what might pop up!**

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

**Germany has a cash culture unlike NZ where we use Eftpos for everything so you will need cash with you most of the time. I found that withdrawing money from the ATM using my ANZ Travel card was expensive**

and I wasn't comfortable with keeping large amounts of cash on me. The best thing to do is go to the Deutsche Bank and open up a student bank account. Apart from transferring all of my money from my NZ account to this account everything is free including withdrawing cash from an ATM.

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

- **Pay all of your rent in full before you go. It saves a lot of confusion and hassle.**
- **Go to the second hand store ASAP and buy a bike before all of the other students do. Depending on where you live it will take you about 20 minutes to ride to Uni from the city center and can save you as much as 4 Euro (or 1L of German beer) each way on the bus.**
- **If you are going to travel around Europe purchase a Bhan Card (Discount Train Card). Generally the trains are better to get around than flying. You can either buy a 25 Euro Bhan Card which saves you 25% on any train trips you make or a 100 Euro Bhan card which saves you 50% on any train trips you make.**
- **Also if you are planning to travel, consider doing a contiki. I did one before I got to Schwabisch Gmund that took me to 8 countries in 12 days, cost me only \$2500 and I made some great friends along the way!**
- **Again open up a German bank account as cash is used in place of eftpos almost everywhere!**

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

**Im not quite sure on that one but I don't think there was much difference to what is here in New Zealand.**

**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?

**Yes I did. You need to go to the German embassy in Wellington to do this and once you arrive in Schwabisch Gmund make sure you register with the immigration office. The visa will cost you around \$100 NZD.**

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

**I would suggest that anyone applying for a German Visa should contact the German embassy well before they are planning to leave. When you apply for a visa the embassy will take fingerprints and hold your passport until everything has been processed. I had a situation where I did not receive my passport back until the day before I left for Europe, which was pretty stressful, so make sure you get onto it quickly.**

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, I don't think there was a mandatory insurance but I think they required that you did have insurance.**

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

I used Southern Cross Travel Insurance and I would recommend you use the same. It was really easy to get and you can apply online at [www.scti.co.nz](http://www.scti.co.nz) within about 2 minutes. I think there is a 35% discount for online bookings but overall it cost me around \$350 NZD for the 6 months I was there.

### 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 1/2013</b>					
Product Planning	English	-	-	1	Good teacher, easy course content
Process Design	English	-	-	1	The same teacher as product planning and again really easy credits
Product Design	English	-	-	3	A little more challenging and a bigger work load but a really rewarding course
Seminar Week	English	-	-	1	Easy and fun. You get a week off to do your project too!
German Language Course	English	-	-	1	Really easy and fun. Our teacher was great.

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

In the first few days of trimester we got together with all of the other international students and spoke with German students and lecturers to sort out which courses would be best to take. There was plenty of help available and you had the whole first week to make up your mind so no pressure there!

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?

**You will have to speak to the head of your school here in New Zealand to have your proposed courses in Schwabisch Gmünd signed off as part of the VIC OE exchange program process. So I would recommend that you use this time wisely to go over any concerns you may have with them. Overall though I think I chose the right courses! I was happy with my choices and it definitely helped to think about what I wanted to do before I left for Germany.**

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

**In the end you have to make up your own mind what the purpose of your trip is. You need to decide whether you are going abroad to improve yourself academically or whether you are going abroad to travel lots, socialize and make new friends. I managed to find a good balance between the two although I didn't end up taking as many courses as I intended to before I left.**

### **Academic Experience**

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

**Overall I think the way in which the courses were facilitated was really good. The teaching staff over there tended to be much more qualified than many of my lecturers here in NZ. For example we had one tutor who had previously worked with Steve Jobs at Apple for over 10 years. So the quality of learning was definitely up there.**

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 around about the same for each course however they tended to be a bit more lenient on the International students with deadlines as there were often periods of time where people would be away traveling.**

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?

**As I have previously mentioned it all comes down to you and your reasoning for doing an exchange. If you are there to further your academic skills then take as many papers as you please. If you are there to socialize and travel then only take on as much as you can handle.**

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

**As always you get out of it what you put in. There is no difference to NZ university or any secret ingredient to success, just hard work.**

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

**All of the facilities at the university were fantastic, if not better than what we have at VUW. The only downside was that the workshop was in a different location to the university, which made it difficult to transfer work between there and the campus come presentation time.**

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?

**Don't worry about this too much. The majority of the teachers at the university speak good English and all of the students speak really good English. You will also be in German language classes every week that give you the basics to do things like shop for groceries etc.**

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

**I stayed in the suggested accommodation by the host university.**

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

**The best thing about this accommodation was that there were other international student's there who I could mix with. It was pretty much like a University Hostel. It was also good in the fact that the \$560 per month that I paid gave covered power, internet and even a room clean each week.**

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

**I would definitely recommend staying in the accommodation that the university suggests. You can also flat with German student's but it can be tricky organizing who pays for what when you are coming in fresh and don't speak the language. It's also nice to be in a place where other people (the international student's) are in the same position as you.**

How early can you move into accommodation?

**I arrived quite late as I did a Contiki before I went to Germany but I had some friends who arrived as early as a couple of months before hand and used that as a home base to travel from. It really comes down to availability.**

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

**There were no plans for meals but we had a good kitchen at the place where I cooked my own food. The hardest part is making sure you are buying the right things as all of the labels are in German. For about 2 months I was buying turkey meat thinking it was chicken until a German friend set me straight.**

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

**It was pretty easy to find. With Google maps and things these days there is no real worry. In terms of things to know about living off-campus, in reality it's just like flatting.**

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

**Get in quick! If you are keen to be in the suggested accommodation then make sure you express your interest as soon as the host university email you about it. Some people missed out when I went and flatted with German students instead. There is nothing wrong with this but if you don't want to do that then don't hesitate.**

## **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 is easy. The German student's are used to international students or "Erasmus" (as they call them) coming and going all of the time. You will find when you travel alone that you become more open to speaking to others and it's not hard to strike up a conversation, especially when you have a kiwi accent.**

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

**It was really easy. The university is quite small so you will get to know most of the people really well. It's just like being in one of your second year or third year majors with lots of social events and things going on all of the time.**

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

**I don't think anything was overly challenging aside from a few language barriers. I guess the hardest thing to adjust to was the German sense of humor... They don't quite get it when you are speaking**

**sarcastically which is something we do quite often in New Zealand.**

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

**The food and the beer. There is nothing like sitting in the local beer garden with a mast full of Wheat beer. There is a big Italian influence there too meaning there is plenty of Gelato, pasta, and pizza to go around so you will never go hungry.**

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

**Everyone treated me fine. I only ever had one incident where someone was reluctant to speak English to me but otherwise you will find that they are open and inviting people**

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'm sure there would be no issue.**

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

**Nope, none at all!**

### **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 many sports clubs and things around the city so it is really up to you to organize this. If you are into football then your in the right place as they are soccer mad over there. Otherwise the uni is always putting on lots of social events like BBQ's so it's a great opportunity to mix with the local students and make some life long friends!**

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

**There are plenty of cool little towns nearby where you can see roman ruins and even small Castles. Some of these places are even just a bike ride away. But if you have lots of spare time then I would suggest getting a train pass and booking tickets to visit all of the great countries surrounding Germany.**

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

**I'm not sure about this as it would potentially require you to organize a different type of Visa before you left and you would probably need to speak German fluently.**

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

**Again it would be the same as my answer above. I certainly didn't come across any such opportunities and I don't know of any other international student's who did.**

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Kiwi Souvenirs to give to people you meet</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>A smart phone with a good camera</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>A descent amount of spending money for travel and shopping</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Depending on what season you go make sure you take both winter and summer clothes as I copped the snow in the winter and 30 degree heat in the summer</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Take a laptop with design programs installed on it and also some basic stationery for designing as you don't want to have to buy anything over there like that</b>

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Enjoy every moment. It seems like a long time before you leave but it will be over in a heart beat.</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>It's a long way to go to get to Europe so travel as much as possible while your there. Most countries are only a short train journey away so get a Bhan Card to save yourself money.</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Learn as much German as you can. It's the perfect time to learn while the language is all around you.</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Buy a bike to get around town. It will save you money and time if you don't want to walk everywhere.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Open a German Bank Account because as cash is used everywhere and it's expensive withdrawing it from your NZ account.</b>

### **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>Depeneding on when you go... Visit Stuggart when the spring festival is on. It is like a mini Oktoberfest!</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Try as much of the local food and drink as possible</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Go to the local lake in the summer for a swim</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Visit Munich. It's about 3 hours away but is one of the coolest places in Germany with many of the old traditions still very much alive.</b>

5

**Go up the top of the tower in the center of the city. For a couple of euros you will get the best 360 view of the city and a good workout by the time you reach the top.**

### **H: Personal Experience**

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

**Being an exchange student has been an important chapter of my university life. I have met some fantastic people with whom I will remain friends with for the rest of my life, and I have seen places I could never have dreamed of. I am very glad that I took part in the programme and I would like to say a big thank you to VUW Overseas Exchange for giving me this golden opportunity.**