

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 Arts
Major(s)	Asian Studies
Exchange Institution	Korea University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2 nd Trimester 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	100
Accommodation	1600
Return Airfare	1800
Local Transportation	300
Meals	1000
Visa	80
Health & Insurance	200
Personal Spending	500
Communications (phone, etc.)	-
Other fees (specify)	-
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Food and transport cost less than I expected. Unexpected cost of paying for many vaccinations and proof of such.

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

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

A foreign bank account was made available through the university as needed to obtain Alien Registration Card and ID card however I did not use it. I used foreign currency card from ANZ and just withdrew Korean cash.

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

If you stay in the dormitory, the meal plan is very cheap if you do not mind eating the same sort of food everyday. However there are many cheap restaurants in Anam and in Korea in general especially Korean food.

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

1.50 NZD

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 a visa is necessary and the required documentation is quite large. The cost was around \$90 NZD and the issuing time was very quick.

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

The Korean visa website is not the best and communication via email was slow and unclear. Would recommend to ring the embassy or visit in person.

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?

Health insurance was compulsory as well as proof of vaccinations for TB, and other diseases. These are required. The Health Certificate form states you have to list proof of a heart scan to check for TB but I would recommend talking about this to your doctor for much cheaper options, I had a blood test for TB for half the price.

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

I used the insurance given with my travel agent STA insurance and I would highly recommend them to others.

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					
Korean	Korean	100 level	15	5	Extremely interesting and

Beginner I		language course				useful class. Teacher was great especially for how heavily we practiced speaking and communicating with our classmates.
Korean Speaking for Beginners	Korean	100 level language course	15	4		A good class brought down only by the too wide range of Korean levels with other students. Some were very beginner while others a lot more advanced.
Contemporary Issues in English	English	200 level English course	15	3		Interesting but easy. Directed more for Korean students
Academic Writing	English	300 level writing course	15	2		Very slow and not enough structure. Too easy

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration process was quite unclear and there were significant issues international students faced with the Korea University website only being accessed in certain browsers.

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 mostly successful in registering for classes. One class I had originally enrolled in was changed to Korean language only on its first day so I was forced to drop it and choose Academic Writing, which was not what I wanted to take.

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

Stay up and apply for courses as soon as registration starts because all the Korean students do so as well and if you miss out, you will be stuck with classes not suitable for you.

Academic Experience

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

The university facilities, buildings and students all exceeded my expectations and I really enjoyed them. The

classes were a lot easier than at VUW, however I enjoyed that as I could spend more time exploring the city and learning more outside of school.

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?

There were no lectures or tutorials, instead classes of up to 30. For my Korean language class we had class everyday. All my classes were 1hr 15min and more likely to go later into the evening than 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?

Depending on how many credits you want and can transfer, 4-6 classes would be achievable as the course load is not as heavy as VUW however this was only from my experience in the Liberal Arts dept.

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

Attend all your lectures – attendance is more important than at VUW as classes are more like longer tutorials than lectures.

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

All facilities seemed advanced especially the study areas however they seemed difficult to use if you do not understand Korean and cannot ask and understand others help.

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 knew some basic Korean – it really helps to at least learn Hangul- the Korean alphabet so you can read signs. Once you learn basic phrases it is not so hard to survive in Korea. Highly recommend taking a Korean language course while you are here or even doing the summer intensive language course before your semester begins.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Univeristy Dorm – CJ International House

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

Close to university, facilities were nice, clean and got to make friends with roommates.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

For first semester especially those unfamiliar with Korean – I would definitely recommend the dormitories. However for second semester or if you know some Korean – the goshiwons are often cheaper, provide free food, are closer to University and more relaxed. Genders are very segregated in the University dorms.

How early can you move into accommodation?

There is a required move in weekend just before the international orientation week begins.

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

Two kitchens on each floor were available, large fridges and a stove top. However food is very cheap around Anam and in Seoul, that it is often cheaper to just eat out as it is more healthy than fast food in NZ. There is a convenience store close to the dormitories and a meal plan available for residents if they wish to purchase, however the food there is not the best.

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

-

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

Again, apply as soon as the application period opens so you have the best chance of getting a place. Also there is preference for students in their first semester to get a spot in dorms so apply for goshiwons as back up if you are staying on for more than a semester.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

The KUBA buddy system is really great and introduces you to local Korean students as well as other internationals. It is a bit difficult to make Korean friends mainly due to the language gap, however all students seem friendly and most are interested in international students and learning English and other foreign languages.

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

Korea is very different to NZ although it is quite modern. I found that aspects of Korea were more advanced than home whereas others were different. Koreans are proud of their country and they have a rich culture that is really interesting to experience.

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

Honorific speech and action is important in Korean society – always speaking in polite form to elders, never sit in the elderly/disabled area and make sure you bow. Koreans will really appreciate and respect foreigners who engage in their customs and show interest in learning Korean culture, even if there are parts you may not agree with.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I personally enjoy how respectful the people are to everyone. However I didn't enjoy the very fast pace of life and people such as crowds and being pushed especially on the subway. I really like the juxtaposition of both traditional Korean culture against the very popular K-Pop, K-Dramas and celebrities that dominate today.

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

By local people, if you are not Korean you will probably be stared at, but the longer you are there the more you get used to it. Communication is the biggest difficulty due to the language barrier and asking for help from teachers and staff is sometimes not clear cut. Students are friendly but difficult to approach as most Koreans are shy about their English. If you are respectful and engage with them in Korean they will more likely to help you even in English later on.

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? Quite difficult for students with disabilities. I don't think I saw any while I was studying nor any disability ramps. For LGBT students, while the younger generation is more accepting, Korea is a very conservative country and sexuality is not something discussed or to be made public. Students pursuing LGBT relationships would have a lot of difficulty and if noticed could be abused or treated poorly.

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

Not necessarily issues, but if you are not Asian you definitely stand out and feel like a foreigner. Sometimes there would be benefits to this such as cheap concert tickets for events promoting tourism in Korea but other times there would be discrimination – we were once turned away from a restaurant despite our friend being able to speak Korean. The younger generation are much more 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?

KUBA organized buddy activities every week, however outside of that it would be more difficult to join extra-curricular activities unless you spoke good Korean. They are not advertised or promoted to international students.

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

Travel around Korea as it is quite cheap. Visit Busan and Jeju Island and if you have the funds and time available visit Japan or other close neighbours as it is much cheaper from Korea. Just make sure you have a multiple entry visa into Korea.

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

Opportunities are very limited. You will need a working visa and possibly the only jobs available are tutoring English unless you have good Korean. Only other job I was aware of was as a dorm RA.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

If you stay for more than a semester you can apply to be an international buddy to new students in the KUBA buddy program

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Adapter
2	Deodorant (it is harder to find in Korea)
3	Shoes (the sizes are very small)

4 Clothes especially winter jackets in winter and pants. Clothes there are very small sizes

5 Enough luggage and room for many new purchases

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

1 Take part in all the KUBA events

2 Don't go too overboard with the cheap alcohol

3 If you are feeling homesick – keep in contact with home but also keep busy in your host country

4 Be respectful and polite of other people and cultures you are adjusting to.

5 Avoid asking questions about North Korea unless you are with Korean friends you are close with

Top 5 Things to do

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

1 Shopping in Myeondong for more expensive brands and Edae for

2 Go to Hongdae especially for nightlife

3 Noraebang – (Karaoke) is a must and very cheap fun

4 KoYo Games event against Yonsei University

5 Visit various animal and other themed cafes – Dog, Cat, Sheep, Raccoon, Hello Kitty etc.

H: Personal Experience

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

I absolutely enjoyed my exchange experience to Korea University in Seoul. The school work was less heavy than I had expected but I enjoyed this as it meant I learnt in depth while having more time to explore the large city. There is so much to see and do in Seoul and Korea itself. The KUBA buddy system was integral to my enjoyment of my exchange. I suggest that if you get a Korean buddy that you are disappointed with perhaps they don't spend as much time with you as you need, to make friends with other Korean buddies and international students until you find a group of friends that can support you and make your experience much better. I tried to soak up as much of the culture as I could yet there are still places I didn't get to see in Seoul and I would love to go back and plan to visit my friends again.