

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VICTORIA ABROAD AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BA
Major(s)	INTP, French
Exchange Institution	Université de La Rochelle
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 2, 2015 + Tri 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	\$20
Accommodation	\$400 per month
Return Airfare	\$3300
Local Transportation	\$40 for one year bike subscription
Meals	\$70-100 pw
Visa	\$0
Health & Insurance	\$600
Personal Spending	
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$30 per month
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?

I definitely spent more, since when you are overseas you want to try and experience everything.

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

I used a credit card with Parisbas, which was very efficient apart from the fact that when you paid for something there was a delay from when you paid for something, until your money was deducted

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

Try to make a weekly shopping list and don't shop day by day or when you feel hungry. There is a small corner supermarket just by the university that is overpriced in comparison to the main one a bit further away.

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

\$2.00

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?

I had a European passport.

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

Keep an eye on the appointment you have to go to, as I know any people who forgot about it.

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, it was approximately 142 euros

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

I used SMECO, I would recommend it, they were very helpful and friendly.

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					
Littérature et Interculturalité	French			3	There was a power point and a special exam at the end of the course for exchange students. The books we had to read were really difficult though.
CUFLE	French	FREN301	20	3	This was the best course I took. The teacher was incredible, the class was really engaged and as well as learning we

					laughed a lot too.
Science Politique	French			5	This was incredibly challenging and there was only one other exchange student in the class. The exam was an oral exam and very difficult.
Grands Mouvements de l'histoire de l'art	French			2-3	There was also a power point for this with a multi-choice exam at the end, so if you memorized and could go to class it was very achievable.

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR

Poésie	French			2	This was pretty simple as it didn't require very much. It also had a specially written exam for exchange students.
CUFLE	French			3	This was a laid back class which was really well-prepared and the language class was great. The chosen option of art history was not good at all.
Anthopologie et art	French			3-4	This course was quite hard to follow as it wasn't very well presented, laptops weren't allowed, and so it was hand-written notes in French for two hours. As the only exchange student I was allowed to write an essay at the end instead of the 4 hour exam.

Littérature et arts visuels	French			5	In this course the teacher spoke incredibly fast, so fast that the French students asked him to slow down. There was not a special exam for the end and the exam itself was incredibly difficult.
Grands Mouvements de l'histoire de l'art	French			3	This was a continuation of the course in the first semester and it was easy enough to follow if you did some work at home memorizing movements and paintings.
Grands Mouvements de l'histoire littéraire.	French			4-5	This class changed timetable weekly and only began half way through the semester. It was very difficult to follow, fortunately the exam was multi-choice at the end, but it was impossible to understand the content.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The registration process was a bit of a nightmare. There was one teacher who was in charge for students from New Zealand and Australia, but he wasn't directly linked to the university courses we were taking and so it took about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the semester until we were enrolled in our classes. This also meant that when a course had information that was online, we could not access it. There was one office with one member of staff, who left half way through the year who was in charge of courses, but in regards to exchange students she never knew what we wanted or how to help us.

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?

Successful after most of the semester had passed. Though unfortunately most of the courses I had wanted to take I wasn't able to.

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

Be prepared that most of the classes you want to take will clash or will have a timetable that changes frequently, making it difficult to attend.

Academic Experience

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

Not at all, I found the courses I was taking to be very dull, with unenthusiastic lecturers and no support for exchange students. The university itself was also very run down.

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?

WUW teaching is at a much higher level. It was questionable whether some of the lecturers should be teaching in La Rochelle or whether they had had any training.

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?

Roughly 20 ECTS, more than that is incredibly difficult.

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

Memorisation and spending lots of time speaking French

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

Very small and there was only one printer for the entire university, which often didn't work. The computers didn't work very well, but the internet was usually pretty good.

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?

There was a very good course in French as a foreign language called CUFLE. I would definitely choose the CUFLE course. It was the only course I enjoyed and found was taught well, when you were lucky with the lecturer you got.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

University accommodation.

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

There were no cons. It was incredibly cheap, modern, close to university and warm.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Jean Jouzel

How early can you move into accommodation?

Whenever you would like to once you have a room.

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

You could have a communal kitchen or a personal one. Your rent would be slightly higher if you had your own kitchen.

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 easy to find the accommodation, though the office was a little bit challenging to find.

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

Make sure you apply to CAF as they pay for half of your rent every month and you don't have to pay this back.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Quite successful, though like most exchange students, most of my friends were also other exchange students. I had about 5 good French friends and then the rest were exchange students.

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

Really challenging. At Victoria, there are a lot of systems in place to welcome exchange students and to integrate them into the university life. In La Rochelle there was virtually nothing to help exchange students integrate. There were also no clubs or societies that you could join to make it easier to connect and make friends with French students. In Wellington, the university has so many areas to socialise or to study, whereas this really lacked in La Rochelle.

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

The French students tended to be stay in groups and seemed quite hostile especially as an outsider. It was really difficult to make friends in lectures because you would be ignored. I would advise people to make friends in their CUFLE class if possible and to try and find an activity to do that is independent from uni to meet other French people.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The good French friends that I did make, showed me places around La Rochelle and we had a great time together comparing cultural differences, socializing and trying lots of the cuisine.

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

The local people were incredibly friendly, much more so than I had expected. The university staff were, for the most part friendly, but many of them really didn't like exchange students and there were classes where they even admitted to finding us a waste of time as we were just here to learn French. There was also a bit of racism I found in regards to Asian students, there was a lot of joking about their names and one teacher

told all of the exchange students, including myself to not take his class as it would be too difficult and that the other teacher could speak Chinese so that would help us all.

The students were nice enough. The ones I had as close friends were wonderful, but there were also students who were not at all interested in acknowledging us.

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?

With disabilities I think it would definitely work. There was a lift and there was a disabled bathroom available. For LGBTQ+ I think there also wouldn't be an issue. As previously mentioned I thought the Asian students were treated a bit badly sometimes, which I thought was very unprofessional.

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

Personally, I did not face any discrimination.

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?

I know that there were sports that you could be involved in as well as dance classes and two choirs. I would recommend the choirs as I heard very positive feedback from people who joined them.

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

There are some really nice places around La Rochelle and even a bit further away. If you book ahead enough you can get really cheap tickets to Bordeaux and other cities. La Rochelle itself has some really nice sites as well; the towers, the beach, the cafés, churches and all the little shops.

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

Nothing that I was aware of.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Nothing that I was aware of.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1 A good camera

2	Vegemite/marmite or timtams as everyone craves them after a while.
3	Good shoes to do some nice walks around the place
4	Your togs for summer days at the beach
5	A good rain jacket for when it rains

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

1	Be prepared that your courses often don't work out.
2	Try and make friends with a French student that has legible handwriting.
3	Be aware that lots of lecturers don't allow you to use laptops
4	Rent the yélo bikes with the yearly subscription-it saves you so much money
5	Explore the city centre in your free time-it's not very big and there are really nice places to study, though beware, most don't have wifi, if you are in need of that.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Walk along the beach and round to and/or past Les Minimes
2	Go on the Ferris Wheel in the warm months on a good day and see the city from above
3	Go to île de Ré
4	Visit the towers
5	Go to Paris and Bordeaux and other cities if you have the means and time

H: Personal Experience

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

I'm incredibly glad that I went on this exchange because I think it is good for every New Zealander to leave the country and experience what life is outside our paradise. Unfortunately, I was incredibly disappointed by the lack of quality education at La Rochelle university and for that reason I wouldn't recommend it. There was not a single course except for one that I enjoyed and learnt something valuable from. On the other hand, La Rochelle as a city is beautiful and it is just the right size to be able to get to know it incredibly well in one semester, let alone a year. The people from this city are incredibly friendly and accommodating and I learnt French thanks to many of them.