

# 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)	Geography and Cultural Anthropology
Exchange Institution	Lancaster University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 2 2015 – 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	\$30 – basic stationary, borrowed books from library
Accommodation	\$7452 including deposit/bond
Return Airfare	\$2428
Local Transportation	\$5 return bus to/from town – campus
Meals	\$2-10 cooked by self
Visa	N/A
Health & Insurance	~\$500 (more expensive than normal)
Personal Spending	\$1000
Communications (phone, etc.)	Similar phone pricing as NZ
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Eating/drinking out is more expensive than in NZ Bought a railcard for \$60 which I got back in train ticket discounts Groceries can be more/less expensive depending on personal preference Spent a lot more than expected on going out/clubbing etc because higher prices

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

Spent a bit more than expected. Before going you hear people say England is super cheap, but it wasn't as much as I expected. Some things are cheaper whilst others are more expensive so expenditure can go either way depending what you spend your money on.

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

Withdrew a large sum of cash when need be and stored it safely in my room. That way I didn't pay bank fees for constantly withdrawing money or transferring from an NZ bank account to a British one.

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

Cash is used a lot in Britain. Get your groceries delivered (if you live on campus) as it can save time and money. Going clubbing or drinking can be very costly and regular, include it in your budget if you like to party. Buy a youth railcard, you will use it and it will pay off.

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

Average cup of coffee about \$6, maybe more, however coffee is overpriced and terrible there.

**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?

Didn't apply, am a British citizen.

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

N/A

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?

N/A

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

Southern Cross, it's good

**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 2/2015</b>					
LEC327 Geographies of Health	English	GEOG312	16	4	Very different and includes new, topical content and approaches
LEC211 Spatial Analysis and GIS	English	GEOG215 Intro to GIS	16	3	Really good way to learn GIS without any prior knowledge
LEC216 Environment and Society	English	Elective	16	4.5	A lot of content, concepts and theories. Somewhat similar/related to GEOG217
LEC325 Urban Infrastructure in a Changing World	English	Elective	16	2 (because I enjoyed it)	Favourite course, really engaging content and lecturer. Highly recommend

<b>VUW Trimester 1/2016</b>					
LEC329 Global Consumption	English	GEOG316	16	4	Thoroughly enjoyed and would recommend. Good lecturer and really good course structure/content
LEC201 Introduction to Eco-Innovation	English	Elective	16	2	Good course, really new and interesting
LEC218 Development, Geography and the Majority World	English	GEOG212	16	3	Good, enjoyable, everything you need for development studies
LEC326	English	GEOG320	16	3.5	Really good, very topical and relevant to new developments in geography and the world

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Had to register in person at a sign up day in the week before lectures started. Was able to get any needed advice

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?

Had to change a few of my choices because of clashes or because I found out there were new/other ones available that I preferred taking. Was able to get into all the final ones I wanted. Don't stress about registration, it'll all sort itself out. Get more courses than you need to take signed off before leaving.

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

Use the exchange student study handbook available on the website, it'll tell you everything you need to know. Choose courses that aren't necessarily available at VIC. This university has some really cutting edge courses that you can study and are worth taking. You can add/drop courses within the first two weeks of lectures.

### Academic Experience

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

meet your expectations?

Lancaster University has one of the best Geography departments in the world. I was able to study courses at a much higher standard or ones not available at Victoria. I thoroughly enjoyed the academic experience at Lancaster and all the facilities it had to offer. It's an institution, one that people are proud to be a part of. The academic side of my exchange exceeded my expectations.

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 teaching style is fairly similar. You get more contact time with your lecturers throughout courses. Students are expected to do more readings than at Victoria. The workload ends up being about the same level, it's just spread slightly differently. Assessments require similar skills – essay writing and exams (depending on area of study of course).

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?

I recommend the fulltime student workload. For Geography, all third courses are exceptionally good. Take any of them and you won't be disappointed.

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

Do not fall behind on readings, make sure you do them every week. Don't leave assignments until last minute. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer. Be prepared to be asked a question in lectures, you will get brownie points if you answer. Make friends with people in your courses (its common to do so), they come in handy when assessments and exams come up.

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

All very good and abundant.

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?

N/A

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Campus college accommodation

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

Pros - Everything you need is within walking distance. If you join societies they hold meetings/trainings/socials on campus and it's easier to get to. You can wake up ten minutes before a lecture and still arrive on time. Life is good on campus. Don't have to catch/spend money on the bus everyday.

Cons – It can become a bit of a bubble and disconnected from the outside world

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Campus, any college is good. The townhouse option in Grizedale or County can be really fun and social, but (apparently) can get a bit messy. Any type of room is good though.

How early can you move into accommodation?

One week before lectures start. May be able to ask for earlier if need be.

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

Self-catered with kitchens in each flat. There are food outlets on campus which are pretty good.

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

N/A. If you live off campus you have to catch the bus a lot, so would recommend buying a bus pass which is pretty expensive.

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

Apply by the deadline. Pick a college/room based on price or number of flatmates etc. Don't worry about college reputations.

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

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

Was easy to make friends, especially because people like kiwis. As a female it was sometimes hard to make friends with males (something which isn't normally hard for me) because of the way the two genders interact. It didn't stop me, it's just something I didn't expect. It's really easy to make friends with people on your courses in lectures/seminars. Join a society to meet people! Societies are really social.

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

I settled in quickly and easily. After a while I noticed some subtle cultural differences which took some adjusting to. It is different living on campus slightly separated from town rather than a university integrated into the town. There isn't as much of a coffee/café culture in Lancaster, but there are other things to do. There are differences but nothing so outrageous that it's hard to adjust to.

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

Genders are prominent in England. Some social interactions are different purely because of it e.g. like talking to the opposite sex. There are more social formalities and a lot of small talk (especially about the weather). They aren't that passionate, they can be quite indifferent and indecisive about some things. I found those a bit challenging because of who I am as a person. Be open to their way of interacting and learn to enjoy talking about the weather. Oh, the lack of sun was challenging. It can get quite miserable not seeing blue sky or sun for weeks, particularly in the winter. Book a sunny trip for the winter break, it'll be worth it.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Good sense of humour, know how to have fun. Good train travel.

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

Everyone was really welcoming, nice and friendly. Students were inclusive and fun to be around. Staff were happy to help and really approachable.

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?

Very easy, lots of support for LGBTQ and disable students.

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

Didn't 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?

Any type of society you can think of, there is one. Join at least two to meet people and get involved. Hiking society is really good as well if you want to go on daytrips on the weekend.

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

Go to the Lake District. London is nice but expensive. Visit some of the big cities for a weekend trip.

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

Not sure, didn't work.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Lots, the university has a lot of career fairs which open up internships and other networks. Join the Animal Care Shelter as a volunteer to play with animals all the time.

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

1	Warm clothes (scarves and gloves)
2	Hiking boots, if you like the outdoors
3	Pair of proper winter boots
4	Power adapter
5	

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

1	Talk to people on your course and become friends with them
2	Buy a purple card
3	Buy a railcard
4	If living on campus, get your groceries delivered
5	Get involved in lectures and use all the facilities

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

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

1	Join a society – sport or cultural or anything, just sign up and go
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2	Go on a trip to Manchester
3	Experience Whoops Wednesday – Lancaster Uni thing
4	Explore the lake district
5	Get involved with university events

### **H: Personal Experience**

My time at Lancaster University enabled me to study higher quality courses than those at Victoria. The academic experience was impeccable and well worthwhile. The social atmosphere of living on campus was completely different to Victoria with bars and food outlets for socializing all within walking distance. The sporting facilities on campus were superb, with the sports centre being a place I frequently used. Sports teams in Lancaster and England are much more active and competitive than here. Every Wednesday afternoon sports teams travel around the North West to compete in various leagues, which I loved being a part of. There are a range of other societies which make socializing and campus life more fun. Lancaster University feels like an institution which I'm proud to have experienced and been a part of. My exchange pushed me out of my comfort zone in a good way, and I'm glad to have studied at Lancaster.