

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, Bachelor of Commerce
Major(s)	Psychology and Marketing
Exchange Institution	University of Leeds
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2015 Tri 2

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	\$5,000
Return Airfare	\$2,200
Local Transportation	\$500
Meals	\$1,000
Visa	\$0
Health & Insurance	\$550
Personal Spending	\$5,000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$200
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Food was very expensive (even groceries) and I did not budget appropriately for the fluxuating exchange rate. There were also lots of things I hadn't budgeted for when travelling around Europe like tourist activities, expensive last minute hostels, public transport (particularly the underground) and getting to and from airports.

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

I was very good with my money in that I didn't spend anything on material items and just spent money on experiences. However, the exchange rate changed significantly (for the worse) just before I went over there and so I went significantly over budget.

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

I used a travel passport the whole way through and took my visa debit card as a back up as well. The travel passports are really easy to get from the bank and then you can just load currencies on to them. It pays to have a visa card as a back up though because not all currencies can be used on the travel passport and it also takes around 4 working days for the money to go onto the card.

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

Cook as many meals as you can and when you eat out look for two for one deals. There are a lot of cheap student pubs so it's worth looking into those. Also when wanting to travel around England or Europe busing is really cheap and sometimes flights are as well – both of these options are generally cheaper than trains so don't bother buying a railcard or pass.

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

Around the same as here but in pounds..... so around £1.50 which is equivalent of around \$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?

I only hold a NZ passport and no UK passport so I did need a visa to get into the country. However, because I was only there for 6 months I was able to get a free student visa on arrival. To get this you need to bring your University acceptance letter and you return flights in and out of the country. I also brought accommodation details and bank account screenshots just in case.

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

I recommend being in the host country for less than 6 months because then there is no hassle with the visa, you don't have to contact the embassy and it is free (as opposed to the student tier 4 which is around 300 pounds)

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 – insurance was included in the accommodation fees, however, I still strongly recommend getting travel insurance

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

I got the comprehensive insurance cover from STA travel and it had a replacement policy for lost/stolen items which is really good. It was also a reasonable price for 6 months of travel.

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					
Social Work Perspectives in Drugs and Alcohol	English	Social science elective	20 200 level points	5	Very hands on and got to talk to people with past drug addictions
Social Work Perspectives in Mental Health	English	Social science elective	20 200 level points	5	A lot of mental health models explored so crossed over with psychology largely.
History of the Body	English	Science elective	20 200 level points	4	Very interesting to see where today's anatomy has come from

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

I found the course registration quite difficult. There was little communication from Leeds or from VUW in terms of what I needed to when. There were also a lot of course that weren't available to international students which I hadn't originally been aware of which limited my choices. I personally didn't find any help that was helpful for this task so spent a lot of time doing it myself.

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 had originally signed up to completely different modules but when I arrived they were no longer available and so I had to reregister into different modules when I arrived. This was difficult because I had to see whether I could get them cross credited or not to VUW before a certain cut off date and there wasn't very quick responding. I recommend having a contingency plan and checking with the VUW department before you leave if those other papers would be acceptable to get cross credited if needed.

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

Have a lot of options ready to present to the VUW department when talking about what you can cross credit.

Academic Experience

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

The academic experience was very different to VUW. There were a lot less contact hours with the university and more work required to do on your own. The lectures were also very small (more like classrooms) which meant they were much more interactive and I was able to meet people in them. I didn't have any expectations going in but the academic experience overall was very enjoyable as my papers were very interesting.

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 style of teaching was much more informal and it was largely discussion based which I enjoyed. I found it much more engaging than VUW. The workload was much less than VUW even though it was fulltime study.

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 definitely recommend taking 60 points in Leeds. A lot of modules are 10 points which makes it hard to fill up this 60 points so it is easier (and less stressful for your timetable) to try and find 20 point modules.

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

Build a relationship with the lecturer – they are the ones who make and mark the assignments and tests and always make sure you are aware of what you need to achieve in your assessments.

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

The libraries were pretty outstanding and the internet was good. There are quite a few different libraries so make yourself familiar with these – people are led to believe that Laidlaw is the only library but really it is just the busiest.

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?

In the Halls of Residence

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

Pros: it was easy to meet lots of people – we formed a tight group of around 40 of us. There were also mainly international students which I particularly enjoyed because they were a bit older (20-23) and

wanted to travel lots. Although the English people were great for their local knowledge they weren't very keen on travelling.

Cons: we had a kick out/quiet time which you wouldn't get in a flat.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Montague Burton, Henry Price, Leodis (all very close to campus)

How early can you move into accommodation?

About a week and a half before university started.

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

We had kitchenettes because it was self catered – I would definitely recommend doing self catered. The hall doesn't provide you with many cooking utensils so I recommend getting everything second hand (usually you can do this from the student association). Otherwise we had a stove, oven, microwave, fridges and lots of storage space.

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

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

When filling out the application make sure to say that location is the most important. Being close to the uni/on campus makes everything so much easier and decreases the cost of public transport.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

It was really easy to make international friends and I still keep in touch/have visited a lot of these friends since the exchange. We meet quite a few locals still at the hostel, through university clubs and at bars and pubs which meant we got invited to house parties and things.

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

Hardly had to adjust – just missed the coffee at home

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

Didn't find any cultural difference – except that 'pants' means underwear

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The pub culture was very cool as was their football culture.

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

Was treated very well – everyone seemed to love the kiwi accent

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 – there were so many groups and clubs that supported everyone's needs. The university was incredibly good at getting people involved and ensuring that everyone had a place where they could meet like people. There were lots and lots of different communities and all were largely respected.

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

No.

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?

Everything you could think of. We joined a social netball team which was really great and allowed us to meet lots of people. There was also a large snowriders club which was a tonne of fun.

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

Try and find cheap flights away and then stay at air bnbs or hostels for a weekend. Would also recommend doing lots of day trips around the larger Yorkshire area – there are lots of beautiful hikes and some places where Harry Potter was filmed.

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

The 6 month student visa that I got on entrance didn't allow me to work so I didn't look into job opportunities.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Unsure.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Merino thermals
2	Pair of waterproof and comfortable boots
3	Travel diary
4	Cash passport
5	University entrance letter (have on you whenever travelling)

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

1	Get involved – so many opportunities in the student union
2	Familiarise yourself with the ticket process for the clubs/bars in the union and around Leeds
3	Get a phone plan with lots of data – you will hardly ever text
4	Save the number for ‘Amber taxis’ in your phone – they are a cheap student taxi
5	Register for student health as soon as you get there

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Do a day trip to York (train)
2	Visit the Leeds Abby (bus)
3	Go to Fruity Friday in the student union
4	Do a weekend in Newcastle (bus)
5	Do an Otley Run

H: Personal Experience

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

I had heard people come back from exchange and say it was a life changing experience and kind of thought nothing of it and didn't believe them. When I came back though I told everyone the same thing – it is a life changing experience and an opportunity that can't be missed. I made lifelong friends, I loved every aspect of travelling from the historical sights, changing cultures and the lack of sleep from overnight buses. Being able to live in a different country and actually study there also gives you a whole different perspective of the place. I loved England but it did make me very grateful for the kiwi lifestyle we have here.

