

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

Student Details

VUW degree(s)	LLB/BA
Major(s)	Law, International Relations and Spanish
Exchange Institution	Lyon 3, Jean Moulin
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 2, 2016 (Aug – Nov)

Finances

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	None.
Accommodation	\$2,700. Around 500 euro a month in a flat plus some more for staying a backpacker at the beginning.
Return Airfare	NA
Local Transportation	\$210 30 euro per month for a student transport card. One off payment of 15 euro for Velov bike system to be added onto the card.
Meals	NA
Visa	NA (European passport holder)
Health & Insurance	Roughly \$400 with Southern Cross. Then there is a insurance you buy on arrival at your university for \$30.
Personal Spending	Probably about \$4000, but hard to estimate given the weekend trips, study link assistance and accommodation issues.
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$120 I paid 20 euro a month with Free Mobile. Great plan with lots of data, however they took two months to cancel my account, and charge excessively for things not included in your plan.
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Accommodation costs. It was hard to find a well-priced flat. I found that August was the hardest time to find a flat as most people had organized it before going on break in June. The reviews quoted cheaper prices than what was available. Examples of monthly rent paid by kiwi friends - \$500, \$730, I paid \$800 and another friend \$1,160. There is university accommodation. This is cheaper.

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

Food is cheaper than in NZ. But more expensive than other European countries.

Local transport was cheap, except for the airport connection which was \$25 on the tram (only option).

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

I used a travel card (cash passport) and did big monthly withdrawals. I didn't need a bank account as I couldn't apply for CAF so I skipped the hassle. I had my regular debit card as a back up. I would recommend this, as one of my cards wore out and wouldn't be read and you cannot send bankcards internationally. So it pays to have a spare.

It is good to have a French card (or a friend with one) to book cheap train tickets on Ouigo to Paris.

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

The cost of exchange will depend on the lifestyle you live while in Lyon. I found that you could cook cheaply and live cheaply if you wanted. I.e. walk everywhere and eat at home. While I tried to cut costs I also wanted to make the most of my exchange. There will be lots of dinners out, drinks and trips where you will spend your money.

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

Usually around \$3.50. But there are machines on campus that have coffee and hot chocolate for 30 euro cents – 50 cents NZD.

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 have a European passport.

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

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance? Yes, it was around \$30 and you paid on arrival.

What insurance company did you use and would you recommend it to future students? I used Southern Cross as it is the cheapest. However I didn't make any claims.

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 2/2016					
European Data Protection Law	English	300 level law paper	6EFTS	4	Interesting course and very relevant. Taught by a young lawyer from Interpol.
European Business Law	English	300 level law paper	6EFTS	1	The lecturer was always late, had a breakdown

					halfway through term. Terrible. But the exams were straightforward.
Introduction to Human Rights Law	English	300 level law paper	6EFTS	2	Interesting cases. Enthusiastic teacher.
Comparative Constitutional Law	English	300 level law paper	6EFTS	4	Best lecturer of the bunch. Solid paper.
Paradox and Conflict in EU Law	English	300 level law paper	6EFTS	3	Same lecturer as above. Quite topical – studied Brexit.
French Language	French/English depends on the level you are in.	General points towards degree	5EFTS	3	Improved my French. There are 13 different levels. The teacher for the top levels is very strict and a bit of an ice queen. But you can win her over if you try hard.
Introduction to French Culture and civilization	English	General points towards degree	2EFTS	3	Learning facts about France for a multi choice test at the end of term.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The process is online and is not too bad. You are sent your login details by email. However I found the office staff very impatient and hard to deal with. I needed special permission from Victoria Uni to take seven papers. If you plan to do this, I would recommend having this organized in advance. I would recommend having all possible papers signed of by Victoria Uni first. The staff at Lyon are busy and do not go out of their way to help you. Some of them are very rude.

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 did eventually get all the papers I needed. It may take some persistence. Have patience.

Academic Experience

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

Lyon is not the university to choose if you want a fulfilling academic experience. Most of the lecturers are expats living in Lyon who take a course on the side of their regular work. University is free in France, so the students expect very little from the lecturers. The lecturers can be late, or cancel classes at last minute, or

even come unprepared without notes.

This may seem a bit doom and gloom, but the city itself is amazing. You are on exchange so you will always have a good time.

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 differs from teacher to teacher. The expectation and workload is far less than at Vic Law School. It is more about memorizing things than analyzing.

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?

Most students take 4/5/6 papers, the two compulsory and then a few others. I did seven and found that this was fine. I would recommend doing as many as possible to make the exchange worthwhile (knock off as many as you can). But you do need an email from your university saying you are allowed to take seven papers.

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

Make sure you go to class. First it's compulsory, second it's a good way to meet more people. If you go to class you will find you won't have to study as much.

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

The library is good, but often quite busy. The Internet is similar to Victoria – a login service. The staff in the library are patient and will help you with printing and logging in to the computers.

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 wish I had prepared, but don't worry you will learn quickly, I did. I found that the compulsory French course improved my French considerably, and obviously the daily exposure of being in France! There is a multi choice test at the beginning, which will help the university place you in a class. I did a fair bit of guesswork on the ones I didn't know and so I got into quite a challenging class. I would recommend this, as you will improve more.

Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

In short - I lived in a backpacker for the first week and a half until I found a flat. I lived in this flat for a month before I had to leave. I then couch surfed with friends/ stayed in a backpacker until the end of my exchange.

Before going I had read that living in an apartment is the best way to do things. And while I agree that it's probably the most fun, I wouldn't recommend it.

When I arrived in Lyon, my French was rusty. Trying to set up flat viewings was very difficult because the competition was tough and people don't bother with foreigners. A lot of the places I went to see were strange and expensive. Most landlords need you to stay for a year as the paperwork can take months to complete. It was a hard sell for four months! Not to mention all the paperwork you need but don't have as a foreigner (bank acc, parents income etc.)

I ended up in a flat with two other students in a good part of town (6th arr) right on the river. However the landlord seemed to be living there too. She would sleep at her husband's but use the flat for daily living. She would drop by at 10pm to check on us, and tell us off for leaving lights on or wearing shoes in the house. Once she brought her drunk husband to our house to sleep on the couch to sober up. He was very abusive and shouted at us. In summary it was a nightmare. Because we were staying for less than a year we didn't have a formal contract with her. We wanted to leave but had paid a month in advance and bond. We had to threaten to report her to the police for illegal flatting (We think she was claiming a benefit for living in the flat on her own). And she eventually gave our bond back and we had to leave that night at 11.30pm.

In summary it sucked.

I would only recommend flatting if you have very good spoken French and have the stamina to spend up to two weeks looking for it. As a foreign exchange student you are vulnerable to scummy landlords and expensive prices.

My friends had similar issues in finding flats, and had to lie about how long they were going to stay etc. While the halls can be far away and not as social as a flat they are cheaper and less stressful. Some paid about 170-250 euro a month and then get a lot back from CAF.

Personal & Cultural Connections

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

I made lots of friends, at the backpackers and in my classes at uni. Most of them were exchange students who were looking for a similar experience.

I wouldn't expect to make many local friends. The French stereotype is true after all, they can be a bit exclusive and standoffish. I didn't have any contact with French students in the SELF programme, because it is all international students. But I did make friends with my friend's French flatmates, and their friends and so on.

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

I found French people to be a bit cold and standoffish. They take time to trust and warm to foreigners. However, once you get to know them they are amazing friends.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The food – Sitting on the river bank with lots of young people with cheese and red wine for 2 euro!

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

At risk of sounding super whiney, the staff at uni were also cold and indifferent. They are not very helpful. When I had problems with my accommodation I went to see three different people and they all said it was not their role and directed me elsewhere.

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 don't have much experience in this. I often saw non-hetero couples being affectionate at university. I would say it is more accepting than in NZ.

France was in a state of emergency due to recent terror attacks and sadly there is some antipathy towards Muslims.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

Weekend trip ideas

- Get a train to Marseille and stay a day (and then get a local trains to Cassis – the most amazing blue Mediterranean sea)
- Go to Nice, and visit Cannes and Monaco (another country that can be visited in an hour or so)
- Go to Annecy – We went by Blabla car for the day. On Sunday they have a beautiful traditional market, you can walk around the lake and visit the old town.
- Chamonix – ski town in the Alps, the bus goes via Annecy so you could combine the two. There is some grea walks but I would plan this last minute so that you can check the weather.
- Paris, of course 😊

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A block of Whitakers chocolate
2	A multi box (so that you can plug all your gadgets in with just one converter
3	Large carry on luggage backpack, so that you can travel in the weekend with cheap flights
4	A credit card or debit card as backup access to your money
5	A coat, Lyon in winter is surprisingly cold!

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

1	Baguette and cheese all day everyday
2	Make sure you have all possible papers signed off by Victoria University, so that you can change if you need to on arrival.
3	Get a student travel card. Do this as soon as you arrive because in the first week of uni the queues are so long. You pay 30 euro a month and it includes the bus and metro. So for a euro a day you can use public transport. I paid all four months in advance so I never had to queue again.
4	Get a bike pass. This is a must, it is so cheap and a great way to get home after the metro closes (11.30pm). You pay online (13euro for a year) and it connects to your travel card.
5	Most of all, enjoy it! I cannot believe I am back in cold windy Wellington!

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	All the amazing museums and art gallery's
2	Parc de la tete d'or

3	Sucre nightclub – buy tickets online in advance
4	Weekend trips to other French cities
5	Have dinner in a Bouchon Lyonnaise

Personal Experience – write 1 paragraph about your exchange experience

Studying overseas is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I would recommend going on exchange. However I would not recommend Lyon III University. It doesn't organize social events for incoming students, the staff are unhelpful and the courses are low quality. Very disorganized! I have travelled a lot (Iran to India you name it!) and I have lived overseas. However going it alone in Lyon is still one of the toughest things I have done. I was unlucky with my flat, but I feel that there was not enough support at the university for exchange students. So, if you haven't got much French or travel experience I would look elsewhere.

While sleeping on couches was not the ideal situation, I still had an amazing time. I made lots of friends, travelled and experienced la vie Francais. The city itself is wonderful. The transport is really easy to figure out and the wine and cheese is cheap!

Don't worry too much you will learn a lot and have fun anywhere you go! Go on exchange!

Date – August 2017

