

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	LLB/B.Com
Major(s)	Law, Accounting, Taxation
Exchange Institution	Macquarie University, Sydney
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	T1/2015

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	\$550
Accommodation	\$3, 000
Return Airfare	\$600
Local Transportation	\$150
Meals	\$1, 000
Visa	\$0 (NZ citizen)
Health & Insurance	\$350
Personal Spending	\$2, 500
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$150 phone + \$250 internet
Other fees (specify)	-
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	\$100 (medical prescriptions when sick)

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

I spent the same as expected for my essential costs (Food, transport, communications). However textbooks cost about \$100 more than I expected per subject. It balanced out alright though because I only needed to buy textbooks for two out of four courses. I also spent more on entertainment/extra travel costs than planned. But overall, there was not much deviation from my original budget.

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

I opened a Visa Debit account and a savings account while overseas, and monitored balances using an app on my phone. ANZ Australia has a savings account that does not have a required minimum term, and which allows you to withdraw any amount from it without losing interest. This was quite useful as I put the bulk of my money in the saving account to avail myself of maximum interest, transferring funds into my cheque

account as required.

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

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

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 did not need to apply for a visa as I am a New Zealand citizen and so am permitted to study on my New Zealand citizenship as a domestic student in Australia.

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?

My host university has mandatory health insurance (Overseas Health Cover), which they organize for students at a cost of AU\$320 (i.e. between NZ\$350 and NZ\$400 depending on exchange rates). This needs to be paid after exchange confirmation and prior to arrival. Macquarie University will email students to start off the process.

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

I used Southern Cross Travel insurance for travel and contents insurance. I would recommend it to future students as it is not too expensive, and is easy to set up.

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					
Remedies (Law)	English	LAWS 300-level elective	15 points	4	The focus of this course is calculating tort and contract damages, so it is useful to have a sound grasp over related

						principles beforehand. There is quite a lot of readings (about 150 pages a week). Course is 100% internal, with three pieces of assessment.
Tax Law (Australian)	English	LAWS 300-level elective	15 points	4		Engaging lecturer. Assessments were useful for learning. Course is 100% internal with two major assessments and 20% from a series of weekly submissions and class participation marks.
Introduction to Management Accounting	English	ACCY 223	15 points	3		Very well taught. Clear instructions and clear slides. Fairly assessed. 40% internal and 60% assessment
Accounting Information Systems	English	ACCY 225	15 points	3		Very well taught. Clear instructions, engaging tutors and lecturer and fairly assessed. 50% internal and 50% external assessment.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR – N/A						

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

1. Apply for approved courses at Macquarie University (course needs to first be approved by equivalent faculty at VUW)
2. Receive course confirmation from Macquarie University by email (this takes 8 to 10 weeks after the final date for application)
3. Enrol for courses online at Macquarie University (physically) on study orientation day. I had some trouble with this as I was enrolling in 200 and 300 level courses, and the university had not processed my prerequisite waiver by orientation day. I had to apply for the waiver again to get it approved.

Students volunteers are on hand to help you enroll online. However, if there is any difficulty with the administration side of enrolment (e.g. waivers not processed), students will need to directly contact the Macquarie University faculty for assistance. It is important to do this asap and make sure the faculty member understands that the request is urgent as otherwise requests take quite some time to process, and non-enrolment will prevent students from signing up for and attending tutorials.

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 enrolled in all the classes I was approved to enroll in, which was good. However, I did have to go back and forth between several faculty members to get my waiver request processed on time to attend tutorials. This was a bit frustrating as I was new to the Macquarie University systems and had to find out what to do for myself (reception staff at faculty buildings did not seem to know what to do to assist).

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

- Be aware that Macquarie University course approval does take some time and don't stress about it. They will get back to you at least a month before classes commence.
- Make sure you do your research on enrolment and possible issues that can arise before you leave for Australia. This way you will be better prepared for any problems once you do arrive, and so will be less stressed.

Academic Experience

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

I had a brilliant experience with my two commerce courses and have retained almost everything that was covered in them. It was also enjoyable working with the students on group assignment as the majority of them are very switched on and eager to pull their load. This differs slightly from my VUW commerce experience, especially in terms of student enthusiasm.

I had a mixed experience with my law study. Personally I enjoyed the content of my tax course better than remedies, partly due to the fact that students were required to actively participate in discussions. Overall, there was no Socratic teaching used, which did make it slightly hard to think about content as it was being

delivered through lectures. A major positive with the course was that all readings were uploaded to the Macquarie University student portal by the lecturer. This made it both easy and inexpensive to access course materials – no purchases were required.

Lectures are all uploaded online which makes it easy for students to review material covered, or catch up on content covered in missed lectures.

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?

With law courses, the basic teaching and assessment style was similar to VUW. The only differences were the lack of Socratic method used in lectures, and the fact that lecturers were tutors. Also, elective courses have tutorials, which is not the case at VUW.

As both my law courses were 100% internally assessed, the assessment workload was higher during the trimester than it generally is at VUW. There were also weekly tutorial submissions for my tax course, which does not generally occur with VUW elective courses. Although readings were voluminous, it was possible to pass the course well without having done them as most of the material is also covered, in the depth required, in lectures and tutorials.

The accounting courses were taught identically to VUW. The workload and assessment style was also similar.

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 would recommend 3-4 courses for students visiting Macquarie University. If students seek to spend a large portion of their time abroad travelling, I would recommend three rather than four courses. I would strongly recommend accounting courses at Macquarie University as they are very well taught and do not have heavy attached workloads.

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

I would recommend focusing on material covered in lectures, and attending tutorials with a bit of prior preparation. Completing the reading is an added bonus but not essential.

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

Similar to VUW. The IT helpdesk is constantly manned and right next to the computer suite which makes for easy access to 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?

English is the native language in Australia

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed at Macquarie University Village. This is student accommodation across the road from the North Ryde Campus. I had a bedroom + ensuite in an individual 5 bedroom house and shared living, dining and kitchen areas with four other students.

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

Pros:

- Great way to meet new people. I had very friendly flatmates who introduced me to their friends at social events and helped me to integrate quickly and easily
- Less than five minute walk to university campus for classes, gym and access to Wednesday and Saturday vegetable market
- 15 minute walk to mall (with retail stores and groceries)
- 3 minute walk to bus stops
- Amenities cost was a set amount (\$18) paid along with rent regardless of the amount of water and power consumed
- Own ensuite → don't have to share a bathroom

Cons:

- More expensive than non-university accommodation
- Same potential for flatmate conflict/issues as would arise when flatting generally

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would recommend the Village.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Students can move into their accommodation in mid-January for trimester one. The trimester starts in mid-February. Students need to give the Village their date of arrival and their accommodation will be made ready accordingly.

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

The Village offers both catered and uncatered accommodation. I lived in uncatered accommodation and cooked either alone or with my flatmates.

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

I lived on-campus

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

- Apply to more than one accommodation provider to increase your chances of finding a suitable room
- Read the accommodation contract carefully, and ask for further information (especially regarding flat inspections, added costs/hidden costs and other liabilities)
- If the room you are assigned is not suitable (e.g. not clean, in a house with flatmates you feel you will struggle to live with) feel free to ask for a swap. The worst they can say is no. It is better to try instead of living in difficult conditions for 6 months to a year.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Living at the Village made it quite easy to make friends. There were plenty of social events to which a range of students went, allowing me to meet lots of people. My flatmate was particularly friendly and it was through her that I made a lot of my friends. Most people I made friends with were international students as my accommodation was mostly filled with them. I met some local students with whom I am still friends through volunteering at 180 Degrees Consulting at the University.

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

The culture is pretty similar to New Zealand so I didn't have to adjust much. The only difference is customer service in general is slower.

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

No major challenges

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

People were very friendly and helpful despite Sydney being quite a big and busy city. I also enjoyed the number of festivals and events on around the city. There was always something new to explore and experience.

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

Everyone was very friendly and helpful. I did get some friendly ribbing about being from NZ and was the butt of some sheep jokes but it was never malicious.

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?

To my knowledge the university is quite supportive of students with disabilities, and of different sexual orientations. I did not meet any students falling within those categories however, and therefore do not have much further information.

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

No major issues regarding 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?

There are a range of sports groups operating at the University gym including group classes. The university offers a range of business-related clubs that students can join. The range is quite wide, from investment clubs to marketing clubs and accounting societies. Other faculties also have similar activities. The university also offers exchange students a tailored Global Leadership Programme. This is similar to VILP and is a good way to engage with other students. The Programme takes students on trips outside the city, which is quite a nice opportunity.

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

Macquarie Centre, the mall beside the University, is always looking for students to work retail jobs and at the foodcourt. Pay is usually minimum wage (AU\$16.00 per hour). I did not come across any job opportunities on campus.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I volunteered as a student management consultant at 180 Degrees Consulting – Macquarie University branch. This gave me valuable work experience in carrying out market research and strategy formulation for a social enterprise client, while meeting cool, like-minded students. There are also volunteer opportunities with GLP.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Beach gear
2	Sunblock
3	A table fan (it will probably need to run constantly over the summer)
4	Insect spray (Living areas with grassy/woody surroundings tend to attract spiders. Spraying your room every week keeps them out)

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

1	Do your research on university, accommodation and things to do before you leave
2	Put yourself out there and try things that you aren't comfortable doing. Chances are you'll be glad you did.
3	Don't forget to keep up with study. While it's easy to get super involved with exploring the city/country, it's important to do at least the bare minimum required to pass.
4	Be patient. Things work a bit slower at the university than we are used to at VUW. But rest assured, they will still be done on time.
5	Download TripViewLite on your phone to help you use public transport. Don't let distances stop you from exploring the city.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Visit the Blue Mountains for the weekend
2	Go bar hopping in Sydney CBD – the range of places to visit is amazing
3	Visit at least three beaches and take a surfing class
4	Go to the theatre to watch a live musical
5	Visit Jamie's (Jamie Oliver's restaurant in Sydney CBD)

H: Personal Experience

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

My exchange was the perfect balance of getting the chance to explore Sydney and finding rewarding work experience that was pertinent to my career goals. Sydney is a fantastic city with a lot happening, waiting to be discovered. Within my first week, I'd already attended the Chinese New Year Parade, the Sydney LGBT Mardi Gras, and met people from more countries than I had in my years in Wellington. That week set the standard for the rest of my stay. What I enjoyed most about Sydney was how immensely multicultural it was. I had the opportunity to try engage with people, food and entertainment from parts of the world that I never expected. Being used to being the person initiating others into my culture, it was a pleasant surprise finding myself so often on the opposite side of that relationship, and I made the most of it. Amidst all of the life experiences, I also developed skills and experience relevant to my field of study and career aspirations. I was selected to be part of a team of consultants at 180 Degrees Consulting, an international volunteer consulting organization. My team was worked to help our client, an Australian social enterprise, identify how to grow its organization which was both an enjoyable and rewarding experience. The skills, training and experience I gained from this have been invaluable, as were the friendships made in the course of work. All in all, I have a wonderful, rounded experience – one I would strongly recommend.