

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)	Sociology
Exchange Institution	University of Hawaii at Manoa
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 2- 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	\$200
Accommodation	\$4700
Return Airfare	\$1200
Local Transportation	Free with a UHM ID
Meals	\$3200
Visa	\$300 approx
Health & Insurance	\$700
Personal Spending	\$2000
Communications (phone, etc.)	-
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	I completely forgot about the currency conversion (sounds ridiculous, I know) which added A LOT onto my total costs. Food costed a lot more than I expected- especially fresh fruit and dairy etc. from the supermarket

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

I spent a lot more than what I was expecting to pay. My budget was completely out, it was just lucky that I worked a lot before I left so I ended up having enough to get by.

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

Cash passport was a great way of managing my money- no fees or costs for transfers etc, just works like a credit card and you can use it to withdraw money from ATMS (which does have a small fee, but you can get cash out in a variety of stores)

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

Save a lot more than what you expect to be spending because the last thing you want to be doing is worrying about money. Pay for the big things before you leave- food and housing, and then once you get there you shouldn't have to spend too much because many activities are free, except for big adventures

e.g. Skydiving, shark diving etc.

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

I never really bought these items but I guess it's similar to here- I think you could get coke for about 50c in the vending machines

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?

Yes I did, and yes it was quite difficult. You have to fill in multiple forms online which ask you ridiculous questions. You also have to pay a STEVIS fee as part of studying in the US which I was not aware of. You have to attend a visa 'interview' at the Auckland consulate (literally talking to someone for 2 minutes), so you have to consider the trip up to Auckland when applying for the visa because you can't get around that.

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

Get it all done early and make sure you have enough money to complete all the steps. Don't be too nervous at the interview in Auckland- it's really intimidating but it's fine!

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 school seemed to be really strict on insurance, and tried to get you to purchase their plan which was around \$1000USD, however you can use your own insurance, just make sure you fit all the strict requirements they have, because you don't want to get caught out.

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

I used STA, since I booked my airfares through them. I definitely recommend them, I got a great deal and everyone there was super helpful.

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					
WS434 (Women and Madness)	English	Elective	15	4	Really interesting content but the 8am, 2 ½ hour lecture times were a bit of a drag. Also a LOT of reading involved and 3 7 page assignments required throughout the semester.
WS324 (Sexualities)	English	Sociology	15	4	Same as above as it was same format and same lecturer.
SOC336 (Deviant Behaviour and Social Control)	English	Sociology	15	3	Similar to CRIM papers at first and second year at VUW. Lectures were quite boring as content was just read off the slides, however the content itself was reasonably interesting
SOC341 (Survey of Social Psychology)	English	Elective	15	3	A bit of a background course covering a lot of basic theory. Interesting in some parts but quite mundane in others. I loved the lecturers though.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Course sign up online, similar to VUW. There were many advisors to help if you needed to seek advice, just look on the websites for the specific faculties.

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 quite a bit of trouble signing up to courses because it expressively said that you could not sign up to

courses until you had a visa clearance, and by the time I got that many of the classes I was wanting to take were full. I found out later that I did not even need to have the visa clearance before I applied for classes. Many classes had prerequisites but it was easy to get around them by just explaining to the professors the situation.

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

See if you can apply for courses before you go to Hawaii. Try and organize your timetable so you have a day off our take all your classes in the morning so you are free in the afternoon for adveentures!

Academic Experience

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

I enjoyed my academic experience very much. Obviously when you go on exchange you want to be able to enjoy the country and the culture rather than focusing on the study too much, and I was able to do this due to the way I planned my classes and the academic level of the courses. The expectations at UHM seemed to be quite a bit lower than those at VUW, so I found that I got better marks with less effort than I did at home, which was obviously a great bonus.

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?

It varied with the classes I took, but there was an average of around 3 hours lecture time and no tutorials per week. I had more assignments than I would get at VUW, but were less work and easier to complete than those at VUW.

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 taking the minimum course load so you have lots of time to do other things- it is so so hard to focus on study in Hawaii, trust me.

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

Get your work done whenever you have down time, which is not very often. I ended up doing a lot of work at night because there is so much to do during the day, and the night life in Hawaii is not spectacular. Fellow students are soooo friendly, so don't hesitate to ask for help- they are usually more than willing to help out! I didn't find it too hard to get quite good marks though.

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

Not as good as VUW, but definitely adequate. The wireless was more reliable than VUW, however.

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?

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

On campus accommodation (Gateway House)

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

Pros: close to campus, amazing roommates (good way to make friends), close to all other dorms (where A LOT of students stay-not just freshmen), close to dining halls, safe, clean, RA's available 24/7 for help, kitchen & laundry facilities, activities in dorms were held

Cons: quite expensive, roommates (if you don't like sharing a room)

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would definitely recommend on-campus accommodation, great way to stay social and get involved in the college life, being close to campus is a huge plus, and not having to worry about rent and regular payments etc. is great

How early can you move into accommodation?

I think it was approximately a week before school started.

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

A meal plan was compulsory as part of my housing. There was also a small kitchen with an oven, microwave, fridge, etc. I thought the food was pretty good for school food! I've never experienced on-campus food before, but there was a huge variety of food to eat, and I'm a vegetarian (also not fussy at all so I'm not sure how fussy eaters would cope). After a while all the food kind of started tasting the same however, nothing's like mum's cooking!

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

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

Be prepared to not get your first/second/any of your choices, I was put in a random hall which turned out amazing, but not what I chose. I also think it is quite rare for exchange students to be put into the apartments.

F: 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 most of my friends through my kayaking instructor at one of the recreation activities I signed up for when I first arrived. I definitely recommend signing up to those activities to meet people. Everyone in classes are really friendly, so just chatting to people around you is another way I made friends! Honestly everyone that I interacted with was amazing and so welcoming and wanting to introduce you to the island, so just don't be shy and ask people if they're into that kind of thing and they'll probably offer to take you out!

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

Not difficult at all, it is quite similar to NZ in a laid back, chill kind of way, but times that by 100 haha, so relaxed!

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

Island time is a real thing hahaha, so if you're kind of uptight about time and plans you might need to get used to being relaxed!

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The people, genuinely so kind it sounds so cheesy but you can really feel the aloha spirit everywhere. Also everyone is sooo adventurous and ambitious which is something that is so admirable and so amazing.

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

I was treated amazingly by everyone. They love foreigners, and the accent is definitely an advantage, but everyone is just so friendly to everyone- I couldn't imagine anyone having any problems.

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 easily, a huge variety of disabilities seemed to be catered for. I saw a lot of things around regarding support for the LGBT community- there was even an event called 'No Hate in 808' which was an awareness project which seemed really successful.

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

Nope, none at all.

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 were sooo many clubs, intramural sports teams, outdoor activities etc. available. As I said earlier, I definitely recommend the outdoor activities run by the recreation center, such an amazing way to make friends and start adventuring- really reasonably priced too- like \$5-10 for hiking, surfing, kayaking etc.

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

There are ENDLESS things to do; hike, beach, surf, skydive, snorkel, kayak, dive with sharks, just honestly everything, if you make adventurous friends you will run out of weekends.

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

There are multiple food outlets that I'm pretty sure students could apply for. I'm not sure about off campus- under my visa you were only able to work on campus.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Didn't really look into this- however there were always beach clean ups/volunteering at the Hawaiian center being advertised.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Endless swimwear
2	A fan for your room
3	Good shoes for hikes
4	New Zealand chocolate
5	Honestly hardly any clothes- pretty much no winter clothes. Trust me, wore a jersey like twice, three times

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

1	Make friends with cars, cannot stress this enough- the best parts of Hawaii are outside of Honolulu and buses take forever
2	See if you can organize a cheap phone/phone plan. Something I didn't do but regret because all of my friends got annoyed at me cause it was hard to keep in touch haha
3	See if you can apply for 2 semesters, I only applied for 1 and it was not enough
4	Say yes to EVERYTHING
5	Make friends with locals, the best parts of the island are often where tourists don't go, get out of Waikiki!!!!

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Skydiving
2	Swimming with sharks
3	Try surfing!
4	Tailgates and football games (if you're there for Fall semester)
5	Hike, hike, hike, hike, hike

H: Personal Experience

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

Hawaii was absolutely amazing, better than I even expected. If you like the outdoors then there is literally more to do here than you can possibly fit in to 5 months while you're on exchange. Manoa is a great campus because Oahu is like the best of both worlds, you are in laid back cool Hawaii where you

can drive around to the lack beaches and visit the North Shore, do amazing hikes and everything, but 20 minutes bus ride from Waikiki where it's just crazy shopping central and tourists and everything. The people there are outrageously helpful and friendly (cannot stress that enough) and the weather in Waikiki is almost always perfect. The ocean always warm, the sun burns but not quite as badly as it does in NZ, the wildlife is similar to NZ (just birds mainly), the trees here are insanely cool, just everything is like a dream and I had to pinch myself on a daily basis to believe I lived there. I miss it so much- was the best experience of my life.