

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	March(Prof)
Major(s)	Architecture
Exchange Institution	National University of Singapore
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 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	\$0
Accommodation	\$2200
Return Airfare	\$1000
Local Transportation	\$100
Meals	\$600
Visa	\$60
Health & Insurance	\$1000
Personal Spending	\$3000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$200
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Travel during semester to other countries cost more than expected!

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

I spent much more than I initially budgeted for, as I did more travel during the semester than I expected.

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

I used an ANZ card, which I recommend. There were ATMs and ANZ branches throughout South East Asia, so I saved money on withdrawal fees.

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

I would recommend using an ANZ account, due to their large number of ATMs in South East Asia. I would highly recommend bringing more than one card overseas, as I lost mine and it was difficult to organize a new card replacement. A lot of places in Singapore and South East Asia only accept cash, so it is always

good to carry cash with you.

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

It cost around \$1 for a can of coke. Coffee is often the same price as New Zealand.

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, however the university helped with the process a lot. Most of the visa process was completed on the university campus after arrival in Singapore. I think the student visa cost around \$60. An entry visa was not required; I entered Singapore on my New Zealand passport with no other documentation.

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

Follow the process explained by the University, and complete everything on time.

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?

Yes they had a mandatory health insurance policy and it cost around \$60

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

I used a comprehensive AA Insurance policy. I am currently going through the insurance claims process, and I am finding it quite difficult.

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					
AR5011	English	ARCI451	15	3	Wasn't really relevant to the VUW course equivalent as was based on writing a dissertation, which is not done for my degree at Vic.
AR4102	English	ARCI411	30	3	There was a lot of group work and presentations involved. However, this

					made it really easy to make local friends.
PS1101	English	Elective	15	4	It was interesting learning about politics from a different perspective as an elective course.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

You initially apply online for your module choices in order of preference. If you are unsuccessful in your module selection, you can apply for different modules once the semester has begun. If you are still unsuccessful after your second module selection, you have to complete an appeal process and get signed permission from the lecturer to join the class.

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 was able to eventually enroll in all my modules, however it was difficult and stressful, as I had to go through the appeal process to get in to one of my modules.

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

If you don't get all your initial modules selected, still attend all classes as otherwise you will get far behind if you are accepted late into the course.

Academic Experience

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

I found that the work ethic was more intense than at Victoria, and that students generally worked much harder. I also found that there was more student interaction in tutorials and studios, probably because class participation makes up a larger part of the course grade.

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?

I found that the teaching style at NUS was quite similar to that at Victoria, with weekly lectures and tutorials. Design studio also had a similar teaching style, with two 4-hour studios each week. I found that there was much more group work compared to Victoria. The workload was also quite similar for each module. Local students have to take more modules, so have a higher workload than exchange students.

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 taking 16 module credits, which is 3-4 modules, as that is the minimum required to cross credit for a full time Victoria course, and to get Studylink.

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

Time management skills are very important, as most exchange students travel a lot during the semester time. Therefore, in order to academically succeed, it is important not to leave assessments to the last minute!

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

I found that the facilities were very good, there were many computers available for use and the internet/wifi was excellent around campus.

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 a native language of Singapore, and most locals speak English very well.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Student housing. I stayed in PGP for 3 weeks and then moved to Cinnamon College in UTown for the remainder of my exchange

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

PGP was slightly cheaper than UTown, self-catered and closer to the campus MRT station, however the facilities were much poorer, the accommodation was unclean and unhygienic, there were less exchange students there and it was quite antisocial.

I moved to Cinnamon College in UTown, which was slightly more expensive, however was much nicer and

newer, with facilities including great study areas, a new gym, rooftop pool, and a 24/7 Starbucks. It was generally much more social living at UTown, and I enjoyed it much more than PGP.

However, the main downside of Cinnamon College was the compulsory meal plan. I found that the food was not that great, and I often ate elsewhere

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would definitely recommend UTown Residence.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in a week before the semester started, which most exchange students also did. Therefore I was able to attend the exchange students orientation events. I think you can move in up to 2 weeks before semester starts, however you have to ask permission.

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

Where I lived had a compulsory meal plan, however the food was not that great. In Cinnamon College there were small kitchenettes on several floors, however the cooking facilities in these kitchenettes were minimal. There were also several food courts and food outlets within UTown, offering a wide variety of food options.

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?

Definitely apply for UTown Residence as your first choice

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 very easy to make friends with the other exchange students. I found it quite easy to make local friends in my design studio paper, as we had a lot of group work. However I generally found the local students much more reserved compared to Vic students

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

I found it quite easy to adjust to Singaporean culture, as it was very western in comparison to the rest of South East Asia.

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

I didn't find any cultural differences challenging.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I appreciated the high level of safety and security around Singapore. I also really liked the local food. Singapore is such a mix of different cultures, and I really appreciated meeting a diverse range of people.

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

The local students in my classes, especially my design studio were extremely friendly and welcoming. They shared their culture with me, and were interested in New Zealand. I found that the staff members of NUS also treated me extremely well.

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?

Singapore is an extremely multicultural society, so I think it would be very easy for students who are visible minorities to study at NUS.

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

I faced no discrimination in Singapore.

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 wide number of organized activities available for students. You can sign up for these activities during a BBQ evening as part of the exchange students orientation.

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

I would recommend traveling around South East Asia, especially during the mid semester break and E-learning week (when all classes are online for a week). My favourite places that I visited were Myanmar, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

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

As part of your student visa, you are not allowed to work on exchange.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1 Camera

2	Multi zone power plug adapter
3	More than one credit card
4	A backpack
5	Warm clothing – the air conditioning around campus can be freezing sometimes!

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

1	
2	Apply for UTown Residence for your accommodation choice
3	Travel more at the start of the semester when the workload isn't too high!
4	Budget for more than you expect to spend!
5	Join the exchange students facebook page before you arrive – there are a lot of events organized through here

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Go on the Singapore Night Safari
2	Swim in the rooftop infinity pool at Marina Bay Sands
3	Eat lots of local food - chili crab is delicious!
4	Explore Singapore
5	Travel around South East Asia!

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 the most amazing time studying aboard in Singapore. I had some incredible experiences and met so many amazing people.

I gained a completely new perspective of the world travelling through Singapore and South East Asia. Living in Singapore made it easy to travel around South East Asia, as the airport was close, and it

It was also great to live in summer for 6 months.

NUS was such a fantastic university to study at, with great learning and study facilities. The living experience there was truly state of the art, and it was such an amazing place to study.

I am so grateful for Victoria Abroad to give me this fantastic experience.

