

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 Architecture
Major(s)	Architecture
Exchange Institution	Rhode Island School of Design
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 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	No books but art supplies were a lot about \$260 and then maybe \$40-50 on printing
Accommodation	\$4,900 living on campus, it is a more expensive option
Return Airfare	Around \$2,000
Local Transportation	Providence has free buses for all risd students with a student ID
Meals	\$2,700 meal plan with the university
Visa	\$200 for the i-901 I think maybe a little more for the processing fee
Health & Insurance	\$400 compulsory health insurance from the university and then already have travel insurance with my family
Personal Spending	\$400 for extra travelling and local spending in Providence
Communications (phone, etc.)	I found phones expensive here so it was just under \$55 for a month but unlimited texts, calls and data, was the cheapest I could find that had everything, some exchange people didn't bother with this but I found it really handy for my American contacts and google maps to get me everywhere
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Phone plans, it was very hard to find a phone plan that had a decent amount of data, texts and calls for a cheap price what I can get for \$20 in NZ was \$60 in US

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

Because of packing light I had to buy a lot of art supplies here, which added up to a lot across the semester, which was unexpected, printing is slightly more expensive here as well so even that begins to add up.

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

I used my air new Zealand one smart card which is perfect it's a debit card that can hold up to 4 currencies I think. I would just transfer money onto it (takes 1-2 working days) and then use the card; it automatically charges you to the currency you are in. Easy as

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

Be prepared to make multiple trips to the risd store and it may not seem like much but definitely adds up. Make the most of the free buses across providence and save money for bus trips to Boston and New York for sure. Things just seem to be more expensive here

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

Maybe around NZ\$4-5 for a coffee slightly more expensive here

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 and F1 visa. I thought it was going to take a long time but it wasn't that bad, the host university sends you your i-901 documents you fill them out then they process some stuff and send it back to you and pay the online fee I think then make an appointment to see the US consulate then they process your documents and approve you and then send passports and your visa to you. I think that's the most of it was kinda overwhelming at first but the last stuff all happened in like the last 2 weeks before leaving for me

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

Just read all the documents carefully and understand when you have to leave the country I think with the J-1 you have a 30 day period from when your visa ends to leave and with the F-1 I had a 60 day grace period. The main thing they want to know when applying/accepting your visa is that you have a definite flight out of the US

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 it was \$400.00 which in comparison when looking at other options or another US university's recommended insurance it was pretty cheap, they just want everyone at the university to be on the same insurance plan. It was HTH Worldwide Health Services

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

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					
21 ST Advanced Studio	english		6	4	Much like a studio at home, very challenging and a lot of work but learnt a lot! Always

						pushing you to keep developing and progressing
LAEL LE22 Modern Architecture	english		3	3		Like a history class with weekly readings and proposing discussion questions and then a final paper due at the end, wasn't anything harder than I expected. The professor was very interesting and held really great lectures
ILLUS 2016 Drawing	english		3	2		Was a figure drawing studio that had small weekly assignments and a drawing suite for the final but was very relaxing and not that demanding, absolutely loved it. The professor was great and taught me a lot of things
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR						

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The exchange co-coordinators set up meetings for all of us with our departments to register and they prepared us for add/drop forms if we couldn't get into the classes we wanted where you would have to go

any ask professors if they could have you in their class but I didn't have any problems it was super easy I got into the ones I wanted and they even registered me for the drawing class which was out of the architecture department but I know other exchange students didn't get into the classes they wanted/had some troubles. But very well organized and very helpful!

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?

Got into all the ones I wanted, be prepared with a few backup options in case the ones you wanted to get into are full as all the students have already signed up for these so its really a matter of space

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

Make sure you talk with the coordinators/departments at home to know exactly what kinda courses you need to take to cross credit (if that applies to you) so that you don't have to repeat a semester for something because none of the courses on exchange ended up counting.

Academic Experience

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

Because it is a design school it was definitely different in terms everyone's lives absolutely revolves around studio, other courses (liberal arts and theory) are almost treated as minor electives and studio holds all priority. Students are very dedicated to their work and work till all hours of the morning throughout the semester. Studios are a lot smaller 10-12 people so you form a great relationship with everyone and your professor. The whole school is about creating and a lot more conceptual than at vic which was great to learn slightly differently.

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?

Style wasn't too different overall but studios are 6 hours long and you must stay there for the entire time working and my advanced studio was twice a week. Also in the arci studio it is mixed years so you have 3,4 and 5th year under grads and grad students in it, which at first was super intimidating at first but I really enjoyed it! Also not everyone does the same studio like at vic, instead you sign up in this lottery on the first day to get into a studio you want (there are a lot of choices with a huge range of what they will be doing). The professors are very dedicated and passionate which is very motivating.

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 think the minimum 12 credits were enough it was a full workload. Studio's are a must and definitely try to do something out of your department if you can as they have SO much to offer, might as well make the most of it.

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

Its a lot about effort, progress and participation. As long as you communicate with your professors you'll be fine just be prepared to work hard.

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

Library's are amazing just dedicated to design books basically, wifi basically everywhere for risd students, all across the campus. Because risd is known for their hands on approach especially the architecture department

computers are not a priority, all of the students are required to have the programs on their laptops so in the architecture department there is one small computer lab which getting close to finals was very hard to get onto one to use but I would just get in really early

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 housing, 15 West

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

Super easy, people live on campus at all years, it's not like a first year hall but more just an apartment building, only a 5-10 minute walk to uni and the library was actually in the building which was so handy. Very central to risd and downtown. Cons that it is an expensive choice but in being in the winter I was glad for the unlimited central heating! A lot of my friends that I made actually lived in the building as well

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Either, I loved living on campus and many of the risd people I met all did but basically all of the exchange students lived off campus and they found it fine

How early can you move into accommodation?

Not early at all, move in is the day before class started, and move out is the day after the last day of review week

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

The meal plan was great because there were a variety of places to eat across campus so it didn't become monotonous and the food was really good. Also the café in the building I lived at were amazing for people with allergies or food problems they would make you whatever you wanted

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

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

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 met most of my friends through my studio and my roommate; everybody is really friendly and lovely so it wasn't hard

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

Not too bad because a lot of stuff is just the same as NZ I wouldn't say there was many culture shocks at all to being in America but more to being in an art school

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

Tipping I always asked my friends because I would always forget

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I loved being at an art school, everyone is so creative and thinks in a different way. It been awesome meeting people from all different departments as well because they are all doing such interesting things!

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

Amazing, cannot believe how helpful and lovely everyone was

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?

At risd everyone is accepted. People truly express themselves here I know it sounds like a cliché that everyone is welcome but seriously

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

No risd is actually very international so there are a huge variety of cultures around. Did not come across any discrimination of any kind. They love kiwis!

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?

They always have so many events going on, shows and lectures so definitely get involved with as much as you can! And there is some collab with brown university, which is really cool. Risd is not known really for its sports but there are a lot of clubs

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

100% New York, Boston, Newport if I had more time I would have liked to go up to Maine as well

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

None off campus because I don't think the visa allows for it but I know an exchange student who actually working in one of the risd offices

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

All risd students do internships which is really cool but with the visa I don't think you are allowed to work but I guess volunteer would be fine if you had time

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Camera 100%
2	Really good winter boots- if you are going to be there in winter you will need them the snow is everywhere
3	Pineapple lumps because they have no idea what they are here, no one should be deprived of that

4	Your great kiwi accent because people love it
5	Easy going attitude

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

1	Slang, I found myself re-wording a lot of stuff because they had no idea what I was saying just cause of slang which I actually didn't even think was slang
2	Be prepared to work really hard, you will achieve a lot but it is demanding
3	Take a course outside of your department for sure
4	Be prepared for the cold, winter was a real winter
5	Get involved and explore right from the start because before you know it you'll have two weeks left trying to cram everything in and get through finals week

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	New York no doubt
2	Providence is known for great food so try and eat out there are so many amazing places
3	Walk around Brown University
4	Newport Cliff walk was gorgeous
5	Boston public gardens

H: Personal Experience

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

I cannot believe that my already exchange already is over! this has been the greatest thing I have done in my life so far. The amount is satisfaction to move away from home, live across the globe for a semester, attend a AMAZING design school, meet amazing people and see amazing sights all by myself ahhhh I definitely did not want to leave. I travelled through Canada before school started which was beautiful, Canada in the winter is breathtaking as is Providence. I absolutely fell in love with providence and the friends I made. I really loved just diving into the risd culture and life and mainly left travelling for before, after and spring break, which I absolutely reccomend. When applying for this exchange I wanted to go to risd for its rep as this prestigious design school, proximity to New York , put myself out of my comfort zone and just to have an incredible experience and I feel everything was truly fulfilled and exceeded beyond I didn't not think I would be this sad to leave or have gotten this much out of it. Truly.

