

Vic OE Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VIC OE AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Design Innovation
Major(s)	Media Design
Exchange Institution	Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	T2 2014

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	Unsure about books, course costs vary on classes.
Accommodation	\$500 USD per month
Return Airfare	\$1850
Local Transportation	Free around Rhode Island. \$66 USD to catch train from NYC. \$27 Bus from NYC.
Meals	\$5-10 USD at school
Visa	Application fee about \$200 plus trip to Auckland for interview.
Health & Insurance	\$350 USD for my school's private health insurance (compulsory)
Personal Spending	Approx. \$80 a week on groceries, \$50 per month utilities
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$50 USD per month pre-pay
Other fees (specify)	Travelling to from the airport is \$35 to Penn station, \$66 for the train to providence.
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Food is cheaper than I expected. Art supplies, I couldn't bring much in my luggage so bought some more than I expected here. I spent a lot of money on printing costs, much more than I was prepared for. This was specific to my chosen major – Illustration and also some graphic design classes, probably not such a big expense with other majors.

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

About the same. Eating out is expensive (especially adding tip and sales tax!) but groceries are cheap if you go to the supermarket.

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

Open a bank account in your host country and try to budget from that to avoid conversion fees etc.

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

Course materials, printing and photocopying.

What was the average cost of a can of coke or coffee in your host country? **Coffee is about \$3 USD for a small (which is huge!).**

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?

My host university was really helpful in explaining the visa process, but there was a very long form I had to fill out and two different fees... It was complicated making sure I had filled out the form and paid both the fees online correctly and printed out the receipts to take to my immigration interview in Auckland. The interview was short and the visa came within 3 days in the post.

Do you have any advice for future students when applying for visas to your host country? **Make sure you know how long you can stay in your host country after the visa expires. In the US you have 60 days so if you want to stay longer you need to plan ahead.**

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, RISD has their own private insurance. It cost between \$350 and \$400 USD (I can't remember exactly) and is very comprehensive. It covers any health issues you have during your stay. I also bought travel insurance to cover any problems with cancellations and luggage loss or theft.

What insurance company did you use and would you recommend it to future students? **Travel 1st, it seems good to me.**

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 2/2014					
Image Design	English	3 rd year	20	5	
Website Design	English	3 rd year	20	4	
Publishing	English	3 rd year	20	5	
Letterpress	English	3 rd year	20	2	
Design History	English	3 rd year	20	5	

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available? **I was invited to meet with the department head and coordinator. They were extremely friendly and helpful. As an exchange student you have arrived late in the enrollment process and most classes are full. It was important to have the faculties help in figuring out which ones to take. It is very different than VUW, you can turn up to class on the first day and try to talk the professor into letting you in. The choice and timetable is overwhelming.**

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 got into the courses I wanted and a few more that I discovered through the enrollment process – called 'shopping'. My advice: try to have an idea of what is on offer and what your goals are. If you have a list of classes you want to take it makes it easier for the faculty to help you. I think being open to anything and not getting too attached to particular courses is a good idea. Let the faculty advise you but also be proactive.**

Do you have any advice for future students when choosing and applying for courses? **I found looking up the instructors work online gives me a good idea of what the course might be like.**

Academic Experience

How did your academic experience differ from your time spend at Victoria? Did the academic experience meet your expectations? **It was fantastic. The teaching was incredible and the studio environment was a place where students are interested in each other ideas and progress.**

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'm expecting it to be much more work from what I hear.**

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? **Courses are 3 credits and to maintain immigration status you must be enrolled in 12 credits (four papers). You can take 15 credits (5 papers) but four is considered a big workload as it is. I took 15 credits (five papers) and any workshops that were available. It was a big workload for me but I felt like I was really there to get amongst it and absorb as much as a can.**

What advice would you give VUW students about succeeding academically at your host university? **Participate in class, show up to every class and work really, really hard. And show your work with confidence! There are no marks for individual projects, just an overall mark for performance, decided by your tutor at the end. So it's mainly about work ethic and attitude, which flows into your work.**

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

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? **I found a room in an apartment on Craigslist.**

What were the pros and cons of this form of accommodation? **It wasn't easy (applied for about 50 places) but worth it. It is great having a flat mate who has been here for a while. I don't recommend living on campus, it looks expensive and much nicer to leave school each day.**

What accommodation would you recommend to future students? **Either finding other students on Craigslist or trying to get a flat with other exchange students. It's really cool meeting the other exchange students from around the world.**

How early can you move into accommodation? **Depends, on campus I think it is not before orientation.**

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? How satisfied were you with the food? **Food is great, cheap and healthy. Meal plans don't affect the price but make it much easier to not have to pay cash each time.**

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find? What should future VUW exchange students know about living off-campus? **It was hard to find short term or month by month accommodation. Start looking early, don't leave it to the last minute. Definitely ask your host uni coordinator for recommendations.**

Do you have any tips of advice for future students when applying for accommodation? **Research the area, find out where other students are living so it is fun and safe!**

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

What was it like making friends? How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students? **As the semester progressed I found myself getting to know students in my classes naturally. I value the friendships I made with other exchange students. It enhanced my exchange experience so much getting to know them and hearing about their countries and universities. It was easy to meet as we were all introduced at a breakfast, then we made a facebook group to keep in touch.**

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange country/university? **It's very big and overwhelming but it is very, very welcoming. The hardest part was enrolling in classes, such a different way of choosing. Outside of school the culture that was most difficult to overcome was ordering coffee and paying bills.**

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

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? **People in the United States are not shy. They are very open and direct. Within the school culture this meant honest critical evaluations of your work in group situations. This was new and difficult at first, but useful and possibly the characteristic that made my courses have so much impact on my learning there. Honest critical discussion with out worrying about hurting feelings.**

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students? **They are so encouraging and make you feel very welcome. We were told that exchange students add a lot to the school. The staff have made it very easy and have almost given us too much information on the very first day.**

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 see no problems at all.**

Did you face any issues regarding discrimination in your host country? What were they, and what advice would you give to future students? **None.**

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? **Any group you can imagine. Great if you are into sports.**

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays? **Rhode Island is the 'ocean state', with a lot of beaches and coastal areas to visit. A huge sense of history haunts every building and street (around RISD campus especially). I found it very romantic and fascinating. Everyone rides bikes here, so I bought a cheap one on craigslist and it was a great decision. I could get around cheaply, see a lot more of the area, and felt safe getting home if I needed to stay late.**

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? Off-campus? **We were told we are not allowed to do any work at all on the F-1 visa. Even for free.**

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students? **These are also not allowed on the F-1 visa, you have to get the J-1 visa for that.**

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Power adaptors for the country you are going to!
2	You don't need to take any books (the library is so amazing here)
3	Bring examples of your work from home.
4	Bring a positive attitude to do anything incase you can't take your first choices.
5	Have an idea of the area and plan some day trips or short trips around.

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

1	You can take courses from any department.
2	Bring your passport and I-120 to the first day (orientation day).
3	Start a facebook group with the other exchange students.
4	Talk to the other exchange students and share advice about enrolling.
5	Go a few days early and get your bearings. Make sure you know where to go on the first day.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Exploring the area by train, very interesting way to see the landscape.
2	Read about the history of your university. It really makes you appreciate the institution.
3	Go to Newport.
4	Watch the sunset over the city from up on the hill.
5	Definitely get a bike.

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 experience is still so fresh in my mind and I can't stop thinking about it. I loved every minute of my time at RISD and I wish I could go back! It was hard working with out my usual workspace and art supplies, but great to leave all of my normal responsibilities and relationships behind and focus on learning in a way I never have before. I made so many friends and gained knowledge about many countries through those friendships. My educational experience there opened up more interests in design, and gave me confidence to go forward. It was incredible.