

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 Commerce and Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Economics and Operations Research
Exchange Institution	University of California, San Diego
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 2 2014, 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	\$15
Accommodation	\$20000 (included dining plan)
Return Airfare	\$2000
Local Transportation	Free
Meals	\$2000
Visa	\$400
Health & Insurance	\$2000
Personal Spending	\$12000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$500
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	

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

I spent more than I originally estimated

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

I used Chase bank which was on campus, signing up with a US bank is definitely the way to go, it's free and it doesn't come with any of the complications foreign cards have

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

Keep an eye on exchange rates and change money in bulk to cut costs

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

Coffee was about \$2.50 NZ

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, it wasn't difficult but there were a lot of steps. I paid roughly \$400 total for flights to Auckland (which has the only US consulate and processing fees. You have to get documentation of finances, legal status, passports etc. and then attend a 45 second interview in Auckland to get the Visa.

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

Just follow the instructions and remember that this is the boring part of your exchange!

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 all UC campuses have UC ship which is medical insurance and was roughly \$700NZ a quarter

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

I used UC ship, it's fine but it doesn't cover all of the costs of a medical visit. A couple of my friends got stung because they thought an ambulance would be free under UC ship, and they ended up paying about \$800 after insurance

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					
Mathematical Economics	English	300 level economics	15	4	Probably hardest commerce course I've taken, ridiculously abstract as well
Mathematical Reasoning	English	200 level maths	15	2	Pretty bland course but good lecturer
Supply Chain and Operations	English	200 level commerce	15	3	Content was basic but workload was a lot (all of

Management					the Rady courses are like this).
Macroeconomics A	English	Econ 202	15	2	Really easy, quite similar to high school Econ
Game Theory	English	Econ 314	15	2	
Macroeconomics B	English	300 level economics	15	2	Like Macro A very basic stuff
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Ordinary differential equations	English	Math 301	15	3	Great course, good lecturer and I liked the delivery
Intro/ Stochastic Processes	English	Math 377	15	4	Content was interesting but lecturer was confusing in his explanation
Labor economics	English	-	-	2	Really great lecturer, enjoyed this course a lot
Hip hop: politics of culture	English	-	-	2	Hilarious course, we would spent 3 hours a week discussing the various dimensions to gangsta rap and listening to hip hop tracks. Probably the most American course out there
Introduction to acting	English	-	-	1	Really fun course, we basically played acting games the entire time

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The registration process was very tedious because in order to sign up for any course you would need to fill out a template which cleared you for the prerequisites. Also for each different course you had to try find the right person to email, although they usually did reply within a day

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 every course I tried for, it's very normal to be on the waitlist for classes at UCSD and also people

change courses often in the first few weeks so don't be afraid to put yourself on a waitlist for a full course (within reason)

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

If your degree allows it try do something completely different to what you normally do. Hip hop and Acting was a breath of fresh air on Maths and Commerce for sure.

Academic Experience

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

I think UCSD is easier, and a lot of international students from other universities agreed with me. The workload is more, and because you will be travelling and at the beach a lot etc. it may seem like a lot more, but the lecturers are pretty generous with the curve when it comes to marking.

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?

They are very efficient at UCSD, finals are all marked within a week and administration does not take long there. Workload was roughly the same I think

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 did 4 upper division courses for my first two quarters and that was fine, it was nice doing 3 courses in the last quarter though so whatever helps your degree I guess. The hip hop course was a great time, the acting course too, but it depends on who you are and your degree.

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

Just set a time period that you will do your work and don't worry about your work until you are in that period. I find that stops you from procrastinating because doing a few hours work after days at the beach is fine.

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

Really ahead of NZ, the facilities are advanced, UCSD has pretty good environmental systems within place and the internet is really good.

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 (Ihouse)

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

Incredibly social, lots of outgoing international students, nice apartments (not dorms or anything), lots of drinking, closest to the beach at UCSD. If you don't like loudness don't go to I-house though, it's a loud place.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I house 100%

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in I think 2 weeks before college started, weirdly the international students all move in a week before the domestic students.

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

Ihouse had a mandatory quarterly purchase of 800 dining dollars, which could be spent at the dining halls, and specialty shops around campus. After a year I did get bored of it but it's nice not to worry about cooking, and the food is mostly fine.

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

Ihouse applications make you talk about how fantastic and motivated you are. I felt really arrogant writing what I wrote but then when I met everyone else they all said the exact same thing on their application, so just self-promote because Americans don't see it as a bad thing.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Pretty easy because of Ihouse. Americans are always keen to talk to you so its fine, and we went on a lot of large group trips so there were heaps to meet!

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

Fine, America and NZ are very similar

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

I didn't have a problem with this

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I think the culture in California is very accepting in the sense no one is judgemental about looks or appearances, I really enjoyed that mentality.

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

Really well, they were all very welcoming

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?

UCSD is incredibly accepting of all of that. The LGBT community is large, there is even LGBT housing and gender neutral bathrooms. I can't vouch for them but UCSD has a very low proportion of African-American students relative to other UC's and I have heard criticism of that, it definitely doesn't have any of the racism that occurs in the South or the Midwest though. There are also elevators and ramps for wheelchair accessibility, I'm not sure about other disabilities.

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?

There were clubs for almost everything imaginable, university is much more of a lifestyle in the states so people get really involved. Learn to surf, it's so much fun.

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

Travel obviously! The Hertz in La Jolla is really generous with students so between my group of about 20 people we rented roughly 60 cars between us for the year. There's so many great things within driving distance of San Diego; LA, San Francisco, Death Valley, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Mexico, Vegas, and even head to the national parks of Utah! Also just go to the beach whenever you can, they are so fantastic and so easy to reach.

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

I didn't work but I think J1 visa status only lets you work on campus, but there are lots of dining halls and office jobs available for students.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Again a lot, there were lots of clothing drives and Mexico trips that were based on building houses or feeding orphans etc.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Clothes
2	Beach stuff
3	Tent
4	Wetsuit (if you want to surf and you have one)
5	Bedding

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

1	Consider buying a car (definitely not necessary but could make your trips easier)
2	Learn to surf
3	Go to World Famous at Pacific Beach on Wednesday night for cheap delicious lobster and avocado tacos
4	Go out for Taco Tuesday if you are 21

5 If you don't have your driver's license get it

Top 5 Things to do

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Get some friends and do a road trip up the Pacific Coast highway, take your time and plan minimally, it's a phenomenal trip |
| 2 | Spend some time in Mexico |
| 3 | Go to Vegas if you're 21 |
| 4 | Organise massive group road trips to national parks, they are a lot of fun |
| 5 | SUN GOD |

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 a phenomenal time on my exchange. I got exactly what I wanted out of it; I spent most of my time at the beach, did lots of travel and met some incredible people. I really loved the relaxed vibe of San Diego, and I lived a lifestyle very different to Wellington. American campuses are a lot of fun, and there is so much to see in California. West is best!





