

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	LLB/BA
Major(s)	History
Exchange Institution	Bucerius Law School
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 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	€70
Accommodation	€400 per month
Return Airfare	\$1950 (nzd)
Local Transportation	FREE – transport within Hamburg is free for students. Bucerius will give you a card during orientation.
Meals	€1,400 for eating out and supermarket shopping over the total time I was there. I ate out a lot – so you could definitely save money by making your own food. I’m also a real foodie so didn’t mind spending money on food.
Visa	€50
Health & Insurance	€159 for Health and Liability insurance \$371 on travel insurance (nzd)
Personal Spending	It really depends on how much travel you do... This is hard for me to calculate as I also travelled for a month at the end of exchange.
Communications (phone, etc.)	€20 per month for 1.75GB of data, minutes and texts
Other fees (specify)	The main fees that I had was using my NZ debit card and having to pay 2% every time I used my card overseas...

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

I didn’t really have a budget for this trip but I spend more than I intended but I also did way more travel than I thought I initially would! Try and save as much as possible as you don’t want to miss out of experiences because you don’t have enough money. Also be prepared to spend more money on food than expected...Near the end of exchange we ate out everyday.

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

I got a German Bank Account – Bucerius sets this up for you and it is ready to go when you arrive. I didn’t have a travel money card so I just used my debit card but if I did it again I would get a travel card.

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

Be aware that it costs about \$40 to make an international transfer so try to only do this once – so figure out how much you think you will need. Also if you get a German Bank Account through Bucerius there is no

internet banking and you only get an ec-card, which is like an eftpos card and therefore you will still need another card for making online transactions such as flights and accommodation. I would recommend getting a travel money card and preload it before you go (or when the exchange rate is good!) to avoid paying fees when using at ATM or being charged 2% for every transaction.

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

Coffee and coke was usually about €3-4 but there aren't overly popular. You can buy a kebab for about €3.50 and coke is often more expensive than beer...

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?

You can arrive in Germany without a visa and then apply for a student visa once you are in Germany. Bucerius organizes all of this – you send them documents prior to arriving and they will take your passports on the first day of orientation. Be aware that you won't be able to travel overseas in the first two weeks as your passports will be with immigration.

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

Send you documentation to the International Office on time so they have all the documents ready to go and are able to organize your visa for you.

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?

I got health insurance through Bucerius and I also got liability insurance (which was compulsory if you are in the dorms or subleasing from a Bucerius Student) and it cost €159 euros for both of them.

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

I went with Bucerius' insurance but I also had travel insurance with Southern Cross – I didn't have any issues but I didn't have to make any claims.

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					
German Survey Law			8	2	Compulsory class – quite dry at times but often taught in blocks.
Emerging Economies			8	3	This course doesn't have a big "law" focus – it is more about international

					banks and how they function and their philosophy.
Conflicts of Laws			8	3	The content of this course is interesting but it is a lot more work than other courses. The lecturer (Professor Hays) is quite difficult to follow at times but it was useful for other courses
Negotiation			4	1	Great course! Definitely recommend taking this course. The class is small and there is a big practical focus.
Introduction to Intellectual Property			4	1	Good course – very brief overview of trademarks, patents and copyright. Easy to follow and interesting
International Commercial Arbitration			8	3	Very interesting course taken by a well known international arbitrator. There is a practical aspect to this class and you can choose to do an arbitration or an exam
International Competition Law			8	3	Also a good course to take if you haven't done competition law. It has a good international aspect and the lecturer was very engaging. The only thing was that the assessment for this course was an essay which was due at the beginning of January, so you have to do it over the Christmas break.
Corporate			8	2	This was a block course

Governance					and majority of it was held over one weekend. Although the content could be a bit try the lecturer was great and the assignment was a very easy group presentation
Introduction to EU Law			4	2	An overview of the EU system – I found it interesting to see how a different type of legal system worked.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration was extremely easy! The International Office at Bucerius is amazing and will walk you through every step of the way. It is an online registration process just a few weeks before the program starts.

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 successful in getting almost all of my classes (except one). I would suggest in enrolling in as many as you are interested in because you can always drop classes when you arrive – you were allowed to attend one class and then decide to drop after that class if you don't like it.

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

Make sure you check the timetable before signing up for classes – lots of the courses are taught in blocks (so often you will have 5 or 6 days off if you plan it correctly!). Take classes that interest you but also be strategic and take courses that have a final exam and also courses that have an essay.

Academic Experience

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

It was much different to Victoria because some weeks I spend a substantial amount of time in lectures and other weeks I had only one or two classes. Also there are two six week semesters so they work is much more condensed. It is the best law school in Germany and they are proud of their reputation and they make a real effort on the international program with lecturers from around the world. There is a big international focus and the courses are interesting and make you think! Definitely meet my expectations.

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?

The teaching really depends on the particular lecturers but the classes are much smaller – often 25 to 50 people. Some of the courses will mark you on class participation but they don't use the Socratic method as much as they do at Victoria. I did less study than what I would do at Victoria but you do really need to commit to 5 days of study and exam week can be full on as you don't get a study week like you do at Victoria. For each course there is usually only one form of assessment (final exam or essay) – so it is less work than at Victoria.

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?

Victoria students have to take 30 ECTS – most people take between 20 and 24, so unfortunately we have to do more courses than others. Therefore I recommend taking 4 ECT point classes, so you have less exams!

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

Commit yourself to about a week of full on study before the exams and don't go away the weekend before exams. All the exchange students are in the library studying – and often go and get dinner as a study break!

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

The library is great – it is open 24/7. It can often be hard to find a seat but it is small so you shouldn't have to walk far to find a free one. There is also a cafeteria that has reasonable food and for a pretty cheap price and a coffee shop with cheap coffee and sandwiches. You can also get dinner at the University at the Coffee Shop which is good during exams.

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?

All the classes are taught in English – so you won't have a problem with any of the courses or the University. You are able to get by without knowing much German as many people speak English but it is probably good to learn some key phrases, as you will need it at the supermarket and shops etc. Bucerius offered a language course but make sure you are committed to learning German before signing up – I did

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Sub-lease from a Bucerius Student who was on exchange in Texas when I was there.

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

A nice apartment, close to the Uni and everything was set up when I arrived but since I was not in the dorms I initially felt quite isolated.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would recommend applying for the dorms first. There are limited spaces for the dorms so you really need to get in fast. Gustav is the best dorm and very close to uni and the facilities are reasonable – it is more of a

flat share than dorms because you have a full kitchen and bathroom and you share it with 3-8 people. If not you can try and get a sublease through the Bucerius Intranet – this where Bucerius students going on exchange list their apartments. Subleases are often more expensive and are also limited.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in a week before Uni started but I had flexibility due to having a sublease.

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

I had a full kitchen in my apartment and the dorms also have cooking facilities. Bucerius also have a cafeteria where you can get lunch and a coffee shop for snacks and dinner.

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

Try and get onto accommodation as soon as possible as it is difficult to get accommodation in Hamburg!

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 extremely easy to meet people at Bucerius! There are about 110 exchange students and Bucerius makes a real effort for everyone to get along during first days of orientation – they even organize a bar for all the students to go to on the first Friday! It was extremely social the whole time and you make friends immediately. It was harder to meet German students as we did not have classes with them but Bucerius also has “buddy families” where a small group of international students are placed with the German students – so sign up for this!

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

The people in the international office at Bucerius were extremely welcoming and since it is a small university it was very easy to adjust to the culture!

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

It is good to know a little bit of German – I didn't know any and initially found it a little overwhelming but I soon got used to it and many German's speak excellent English so don't be afraid to ask for help!

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

Excellent! Bucerius is very welcoming and they make a real effort to include the international students.

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?

There were opening gay people on my exchange and it was no problem at all! Germany is very accepting of

differences and there is little racism!

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

No people are generally very friendly and happily spoke English to us and socialized with us.

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?

The biggest extra-curricular activity available to exchange students is model UN – lots of exchange students participated in this! I think you could also take part in sport and band but it may be difficult if you want to do lots of travel.

The international office organizes an activity or outing for exchange students every week and definitely take advantage of this! They organize trips to nearby towns, museums, art galleries, walking tours, a trip to a concentration camp and even organize a gluhwein (mulled wine) evening.

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

Hamburg is in a perfect location to do lots of trips! We did trips to Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin, Prague, Krakow, Stockholm, Spain, Munich and Cologne. Take advantage of cheap flights with Easyjet and Ryan Air.

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

I didn't know of anyone who worked while on exchange and to be honest I don't think you would really have time.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Two students got internships and stayed in Germany when exchange finished. However, most internships require you to speak German.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A rain jacket! It rains a lot in Hamburg
2	Get a travel money card! Although you can set up a German Bank account you only get a e-card and it cannot be used like a credit card or when booking flights or accommodation. You can also use a travel money card for transactions outside of Germany and not pay fees for getting cash out.
3	Take an extension cord with 4 NZ outlets and a power adaptor! That way you can use multiple devices at once.
4	Portable charger because phones always go flat at the most inconvenient times
5	Panadol – you can't get panadol at the supermarkets and it is more expensive than at home. Also bring any medications from home for the entire length of your trip as it may be hard to get in Germany.

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

1	Try and enroll in all the 4ECTs credit courses, not the 2 credit ones.
2	Don't be afraid that you don't know anyone before going! It is so easy to meet people, incredibly social and by far the best semester of my 5 years at university. Be open to new experiences!
3	TRAVEL as much as possible! But don't book everything beforehand; things will come up spontaneously as people organize weekends away. Go to Berlin (go twice there is SO much to do there) and it's only 3 hours away
4	Get onto accommodation asap and make sure you check where the accommodation is and how you get to and from Bucerius.
5	Buy a bike! Hamburg is very bike friendly and I know so many people that got cheap bikes at the flea markets and then sold their bikes at the end for the same price or more.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Try and get tickets to see a Saint Pauli Game! Get there early, as they can be hard to get!
2	Go to Oktoberfest in Munich!
3	Loads of cute cafes and food places in different areas of Hamburg – make the most of your free transport and go to different areas. You can even use the ferries for free!
4	Go pedal boating in the Alster (lake) before it gets to cold
5	Enjoy the gluhwein and Christmas markets all around the city!

H: Personal Experience

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

My time at Bucerius was amazing from beginning to end and undoubtedly the best semester of my entire 5-year degree. I met the most amazing people from all around the world, we did so much together from travelling to nights out and studying together it is incredibly social and you will come away with friends for life. A large part of exchange is about the 'experience' but the courses at Bucerius are interesting, intellectually stimulating, practical and useful – so don't be put off by the fear of the courses being harder than other exchange universities as the lecturers are extremely helpful and it's definitely easy to balance the study, party, and travel! I highly recommend going on exchange and choosing Bucerius as your host university, you will have the opportunity to travel incredible places, meet great people and learning so much about the world and yourself.

