

# Vic OE Evaluation Form

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

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	LLB, BA
Major(s)	POLS
Exchange Institution	California Western School of Law
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1, 2013

## 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	\$1000
Accommodation	\$4000
Return Airfare	\$1500
Local Transportation	\$78 (bus card p/month)
Meals	\$2500
Visa	\$500 (incl. interview costs)
Health & Insurance	\$300
Personal Spending	\$2000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$40 (p/month)
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	I hadn't expected to have to pay so much for textbooks and school-related materials. On the whole though, the cost was more or less what I had expected.

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

**Expense were roughly as expected.**

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

**I used an Air NZ OneSmart travel card which was really helpful**

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

**Set aside additional money for text books, they're really expensive in the US**

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

**\$1**

**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 had to apply for a student visa. The US visa process is very thorough and drawn out. They take it all very seriously, so expect to have to attend an interview and have all your financial affairs in order.**

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

**Get on to it as early as possible, and make sure you provide exactly what they ask for.**

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?

**No.**

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

**Southern Cross. I would definitely recommend it. Was a painless process.**

**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
<b>VUW Trimester 1/YEAR</b>					
Surveillance and Civil Liberties	English			5	Fascinating look at the legal issues arising with regards to the recent NSA spying scandals
International Environmental Law	English			4	Well-rounded study of the current state of international environmental law-making. Very interactive class
White Collar Crimes	English			4	Interesting course dealing with the prosecution of white-collar crimes like bribery and insurance fraud. A lot more thought-provoking than it sounds


**VUW Trimester 2/YEAR**


**Course Registration/Enrolment**

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

**Registration was relatively straightforward. Most of the application process takes place before you leave, with plenty of help available to guide you through.**

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 enrolled in all the classes I selected. I think being a foreign student helped to get my first choices.**

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

**Choose the courses that aren't available at Vic, they always prove to be the most interesting to somebody with an outside perspective.**

**Academic Experience**

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

**Classes were a lot smaller, which obviously helps create a more responsive and interactive learning environment. The comparatively small size of the school (300 students) meant the overall experience was a lot more individualized than Victoria. Having said that, there was very little in the way of student initiation/orientation.**

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 classes that I was enrolled in, by virtue of their size, were a lot more interactive. The lecturers were knowledgeable and engaging. All of classes were completely internally assessed, so the workload during the trimester was slightly more than I was used to, but a lot less stressful come exam time.**

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?

**4 courses per trimester are definitely manageable. Most students were taking upwards of 5 classes at a**

time. As such, there are far less requirements/assessment throughout the trimester than is usual at Victoria.

**I would definitely recommend visiting VUW students enroll in courses that aren't offered at home. The course catalogue is a lot more diverse at Cal Western, and often results in exposure to legal topics most NZ students don't encounter during their studies.**

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

**Much like VUW, if you get involved and keep a handle on your workload academic success at Cal Western is definitely within reach.**

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

**The computer and library facilities were much like those at VUW. One advantage of the Cal Western is the free-printing perks (if you're in your final year you don't pay a cent for printing!)**

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?

**Off-campus apartment**

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

**Cheap, spacious and relaxing.**

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

**As Cal Western doesn't have any form of Uni-affiliated housing, your only option is to rent off-campus.**

How early can you move into accommodation?

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

**Self-catered**

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

**As above. San Diego is a relatively compact city, much like Wellington. As such, everything (inc Uni) is very easy to find.**

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

**Contact Cal Western before you leave and get in touch with a lady named Susan O'Dean-Sekeres. She is the unofficial go-to housing lady and is more than happy to help Kiwis out. Finding an apartment would've been very difficult without her.**

## **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 there was no official student orientation, it was a little harder to make friends initially. Also, because Law is a graduate degree in the US, everybody in my year was at least 4 years older than me. Having said that, everybody was incredibly friendly and I made a bunch of friends in no time.**

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

**I'd spent a bit of time in the US before, so the general culture of both San Diego and Cal Western was pretty easy to adjust to.**

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?

**Americans are a lot friendlier than most people give them credit for, and were more than happy to help me out when I needed it.**

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

**As above.**

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?

**It would very easy for students with disabilities to study at Cal Western from what I could tell. California is a very tolerant and accepting part of the US, so it is hard to imagine any of the abovementioned minorities facing any distinguishable hardship.**

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

**Not at all.**

## **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 a bunch of clubs and student organizations, but most of them tended to be centered around particular classes or courses.**

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

**Get out as much as you can! San Diego is a beautiful city and the coastline is amazing.**

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

**You aren't able to work in the US on the type of student visa I had.**

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

### 5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Sunglasses
2	Jandals
3	Stretchy pants (the Mexican food in San Diego is unreal)
4	Some form of laundry bag (very few apartments have laundry facilities, so be prepared to have to hang at the launderette)
5	A camera

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

1	Don't bother taking a jacket or raincoat- it didn't rain once in the 5 months I was there!
2	Pick a spot/attraction each weekend and go for it.
3	Eat as much Mexican food as you can- it's life-changing
4	Pack light and buy clothes over there – it's much cheaper than at home
5	Study in a windowless room – the constant sunshine is torture if you're stuck inside

### Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Head down to Mexico – you can walk across the border from San Diego
2	Head out to the La Jolla/Torrey Pines coast
3	San Diego Zoo is a must
4	Get to an NBA/NFL/NHL/MLB game
5	Head up to LA and go to a concert

### H: Personal Experience

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

**Going on an exchange to Cal Western was hands down the best way to finish off my degree. The US is such a fascinating place, and sunny California has it all. The weather is incredible all year round, and the amount of time I spent outside exploring or at the beach was awesome! The time that I spent at school was also fascinating, with Cal Western offering a unique range of courses and content that would never be offered at a NZ university. I couldn't recommend a**

VUW exchange to San Diego more!

