

Vic OE Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BCom
Major(s)	Finance
Exchange Institution	East China Normal University, Shanghai
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2 nd & 1 st Trimester over 2013-2014

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	\$30 per trimester for the language program
Accommodation	\$1000 per trimester for International exchange dorm no.1
Return Airfare	\$2200
Local Transportation	Bus~ 40c taxi from the campus to the furthest city centre ~\$14. Other centres much closer
Meals	~\$3 for a cheap Chinese meal, ~\$15 for a full western meal at a nice place. ~\$10 for an average place
Visa	Can't remember exactly but ~\$100
Health & Insurance	\$60 per trimester
Personal Spending	I spent way too much. Perhaps \$3000 per trimester but I lived very comfortably and didn't really deny myself anything. That was with eating very well, including going to gym and taxiing pretty much everywhere. This also included some travelling to nearby cities and staying in hostels. Alcohol prices are cheap in supermarkets, but even more expensive than here when going to clubs etc.
Communications (phone, etc.)	~\$20 month. I never used wifi so I ran out of data quite often though. Data is required for most popular communication (WeChat!)
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Taxis are amazingly cheap, however if you want to eat Western food, which you probably will after awhile, then the prices are on par with NZ, however the quality is generally quite good. I was also expecting to spend much more on accommodation, but they had recently opened dorm no.1 which is much cheaper (\$8 per night) so this freed up a lot of cash.

How did your financial expenses compare to what you originally expected to spend? They were about the same as what I expected I think, except for accommodation. I ended up spending much more on food because I got sick of Chinese food, even though it tastes good.

By what means did you maintain your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, foreign bank account, travelers checks, etc)? I saved up a decent amount before leaving, but still received the student

loan while over there, which in honesty would have been enough by itself if I'd been more careful with spending. I used my Visa Debit to withdraw cash at ICBC ATMS without any trouble. I took two cards from different banks with me though so as to avoid trouble. I did actually lose one so I would recommend the same.

What financial advice would you give students attending the same university as you? Something that I didn't do: plan how much you wanna spend each week, take it out in cash and stick to it.

What was the average cost of a can of coke or coffee in your host country? 60c

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? From memory it didn't take long. Two weeks in total I believe and I had no major difficulties. ECNU is very organized though, so they sent everything out really quickly which helped.

Do you have any advice for future students when applying for visas to your host country? It was about a year ago so I'm afraid I can't think of anything except for doing it as early as possible to avoid stress.

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? They had recommended insurance which only costs \$60 (300rmb) per trimester. I think it was full coverage and looked good but I never had to claim.

What insurance company did you use and would you recommend it to future students? I used the above.

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					
Language Program	Chinese	CN 102	60	3	The teach never speaks English so this was tough to begin with, but they didn't mark too harshly.

Issues in Modern Chinese Society	English	General elective		3	A lot of content to learn but again, the marking wasn't too strict.

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR

Language Program	Chinese	CN211	60	3	Easier than the first one actually because I could understand the teacher
Chinese Society brief introduction	English	Still haven't got faculty approval because I had to change paper		2	Really interesting course. A lot to potentially learn but there is no exam, just a presentation you can do on anything about China.
International Marketing	English	Exempt from MARK302		4	Marking was harsher on this one, also a lot of readings and content each week. Great course though.

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available? Very straight forward. They have 2 days at the beginning of the semester where you go through checkpoints to get things done. Very well organized.

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? No problems at all. Just make sure you remember to actually register on time. Even then they are flexible though.

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

you of course. I found the teachers to be really good and very well qualified, and the content was really up to date.

Academic Experience

How did your academic experience differ from your time spend at Victoria? Did the academic experience meet your expectations? In general the teaching was very relaxed, as well as the testing. Much less intense than Vic. That said, if you put in the effort you can still learn a huge amount. I loved the courses there. Lots of academic freedom to study what interests you.

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? As above, much less intense, more relaxed, but still content rich.

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 took the standard language program + some afternoon classes. I had a very well balanced lifestyle, where study didn't overwhelm me. Some other students struggled a lot, however.

What advice would you give VUW students about succeeding academically at your host university? Don't mess around too much. The standard language program allows you to miss 30% of classes. Anymore and you can't take the final exams.

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your host university? Library wasn't fantastic, so most people go to cafes with wifi to do assignments. I never used the uni computers because they even looked useless. Internet access at my dorm was fine though. I just bought a cable and plugged no problems. You can buy a router too, but I didn't care enough to do it.

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? I was already signed up for the language programs. You can do an intensive 6 hour a day course, I just did 3 though. I'd only done one uni paper before going there so my first ~3 months were pretty traumatic when I was out by myself, but you learn pretty quick. The more you know beforehand though, the nicer your experience will be.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in? Dormitory, one room with roommate.

What were the pros and cons of this form of accommodation? Risk of getting a crap roommate. Not much privacy, but very cheap.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students? I was happy with my accommodation for my 2nd semester there because I had a really good roommate who had his own life. My first semester though wasn't so nice because my roommate didn't speak English and he wasn't very socially aware so I didn't get much sleep or privacy. Depends on the importance you place on sleep and saving money I guess.

How early can you move into accommodation? I moved in 2 days before classes started. I'm sure you can move in much earlier if you ask.

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

Full kitchens and fridges were provided on each floor. If you wanted food on campus that was cheap (\$2) there were canteens nearby. They were good but they require a bit of trial and error. There was a café that sold average western food, Korean food, rice burgers and a bunch of other stuff covering a wide range of prices.

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? Make sure you keep all the documents and paperwork they give you because it'll save a lot of hassle later on.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

What was it like making friends? How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students? Making friends was easy inside the dorms because everyone was other foreign students and many spoke English and later on I would speak Chinese with those couldn't. In terms of local friends, I had a few language buddies. Some were easier than others to get along with. People are actually quite friendly over there, but it took me awhile to discern that.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange country/university? The first 3 months were really tough. Even though I had some friends, I went through massive culture shock and still felt alone. I should've joined more clubs and got even more involved to help this but I felt stuck for awhile.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? How would you recommend students to prepare for these differences? The place is hugely loud. The things I found super annoying to begin with were: The traffic noise, the traffic itself, people pushing in lines, people staring, people spitting, loud talking, loud eating. By the time I left the only thing that still bugged me was traffic noise though.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? People there are super friendly once you can actually speak with them. They really appreciate the effort.

How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students? The university staff are awesome. There is a really good vibe towards international students there. Local people treated me well as long as I did the same to them. Some people are just nasty to everyone though, including other locals. I had

to keep reminding myself that some of these people barely make ends meet and have lived some really tough lives.

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? Disabilities: For the most part I could see wheelchair accesses to at least the new buildings. The campus is pretty modern for the most part. Most buildings have elevators, definitely all the ones I used regularly. LGBT: my roommate was gay, but because our close friends were mostly foreigners (purely because of language) who were open minded enough to travel to China in the first place, he didn't have any problems with them. He didn't let Chinese people know though, except a few. As far as I know LGBT is still a rather contentious issue in China, however, in Shanghai you'd be less likely to face discrimination. I know that there were several gay bars and clubs there and my roommate was dating a Chinese guy at one point. Visible minorities: Unfortunately I can't really say for sure. In my group of friends were two black French guys, who didn't seem to have any trouble, for example they did well with girls etc. I have heard that there are pretty strong stereotypes in China about minorities though so I guess it depends who you're talking to.

Did you face any issues regarding discrimination in your host country? What were they, and what advice would you give to future students? I wasn't allowed to stay in some hotels simply because I was a foreigner, which is standard policy in a few places. Also sometimes taxi drivers will be less likely to pick you up because they don't want the hassle. Apart from that, no. Sometimes I thought I was but I slowly realized it was just because my language skills weren't up to scratch.

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 sports clubs out there, which I never joined. I went to the gym with a friend instead. There were opportunities to learn things like calligraphy, tea ceremony, Chinese instruments. I would recommend doing something specifically Chinese. I wish I learnt more about Chinese culture, and these classes are meant for that.

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays? There are some great cities nearby like Suzhou and Hangzhou which are great for getting away for a few days, but don't forget Shanghai itself. There are so many places there that have nice restaurants, parks, cafes, bars. Even after 10 months we were discovering new, awesome places to chill. Just ask around and make an effort to explore. The internet is good but because Shanghai is developing so fast new places are popping up constantly so word of mouth is better.

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? Off-campus? Don't know about on campus, but there were plenty of English teaching jobs around if you asked the right people. I personally worked as an extra in a movie being shot there. Sometimes you'll meet people who have been there for awhile who just know about stuff. It's just a matter of connecting.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students? I'm really not sure about this, but I did get offered an internship at an engineering company over that I found online. I turned it down though because it was pretty slave labour.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Hand sanitizer.
2	Plug adapter
3	Ear plugs
4	Eye sleeping mask
5	Download the app "pleco" – this will save your life.

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

1	Be aware of the culture shock phase and force yourself out of your comfort zone everyday. Remember you are in their country and you're the one who needs to be humble enough to change.
2	Make an effort to be confident and get involved as early as possible. Open up to people. Just because you'll be leaving soon doesn't mean you can't make real connections.
3	Keep a journal of what your experiences are. This not only will keep you entertained for years to come, its invaluable to sorting your thoughts out, which will be chaotic, while overseas.
4	Explore. Travel as much as possible and SPEAK the language as often as you can. They'll love it.
5	Learn about the culture. The more you learn the more you'll learn to love the place.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Yunnan. A beautiful province. I backpacked there by myself and it was amazing.
2	Spend some time alone. I didn't realize how crowded my life in NZ was until I got used to just going to a nice café and just thinking over some coffee or whatever. Slow down the pace to gain perspective.
3	Find a nice place to go and invite people to go with you. It's a great way to both explore and make friends who are on your wavelength.
4	I went to Hainan, Sanya – the Chinese Hawaii, and it was cool.
5	I flew to Hong Kong which is also incredible. I just wish I went to South East Asia!

H: Personal Experience

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

In hindsight my first 3-4 months in Shanghai weren't the best. I had friends and stuff, often went

out and went travelling but because of the language and because I didn't really know myself very well, I still felt pretty lonely. I wanted to be home but I forced myself to stay because I wanted to overcome it so I extended my exchange. From then though, I started realizing that I wasn't really being myself, and was trying too hard to please everyone. I found better friends and got much better at the language, and from then on my experience became much richer. I did things that genuinely interested me, and pretty quickly I found myself doing oil painting on the M50 art street in Shanghai, being an extra in a movie and going travelling solo. Even everyday life became full of learning because my friends loved doing things like getting excited about Chinese, exploring, discussing philosophy and a whole bunch of other things that I had thought I was "too cool" for when I was in NZ.

Not to sound melodramatic but it was seriously the best year of my life. The amount I learnt about myself has completely changed my way of living and view of things. I'm excited about my future again and I've made the best friends of my life. Now all I have to do is apply what I've learnt to NZ again, as well as fight off this reverse culture shock which is already hitting pretty hard.