

# Vic OE Evaluation Form

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Masters in Landscape Architecture
Major(s)	N/A
Exchange Institution	ENSNP, Blois, France. Agence RADAR, Paris.
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Semester One, 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	\$0
Accommodation	\$3000
Return Airfare	\$3000
Local Transportation	\$500
Meals	\$2000
Visa	\$200
Health & Insurance	\$600
Personal Spending	\$5000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$400
Other fees (specify)	French lessons - \$2000
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	All the little things add up very quickly. Things such as the private insurance on your apartment, metro tickets, phone bills, internet, printing, and THE EXCHANGE RATE!

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

My financial situation for the exchange consisted of a savings (from working over the summer 2011-2012) that I managed not to spend during my year of University prior to the exchange leaving date in November. This money spent on travels during my exchange, yet it disappeared quickly in setting into France. There were a lot of additional expenses (such as insurance for accommodation) and additional daily expenses (transport in Paris is through the roof) that I did not expect. As a result, I after 10 months in France, I had exceeded a credit card, \$2000 overdraft, and spent my \$5000 and borrowed a lot of money off my parents.

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

I highly recommend setting up a bank account in the exchange country to save additional fees. I had studylink coming in most of my stay (apart from 2 months) and this was very helpful and I had course related costs. At the end of the stay, my parents were lending me money to cover living expenses.

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

The time they spend in Blois is very cheap. Accommodation and living expenses are minimal and there is not a expensive night life as most people drink at their flats and there are no bars to go too. Nevertheless, it is the internship (depending where they decide to go) which is very expensive. Budget for this.

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

Well I could not pay more than 2 euros for a can of coke and they always drink espresso coffees which are about 1 euro. A nice bottle of wine ranges from 4-6 euros. Happy Days.

**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?

I had to apply for a Long-Term Student Visa at the very last minute. It was difficult as the university in France was slow at accepting my application and you cannot get a visa until you have their confirmation letter. It costed about \$200 overall.

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

There is not much you can do about that situation above, so just be aware and get all prior paperwork ready for the acceptance letter from ENSNP.

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?

I brought my insurance through a family member at Flight Centre as it was cheaper.

### 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
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<b>VUW Trimester 1/YEAR</b>					
LAND History	French	N/A	15	5	In depth French...
Design Paper	French	Design	15	4	
Infographics	French	N/A	15	2	Easy Adobe Suit skills.
Internship	French	N/A	15	4	AMAZING!!!!!!
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					

### **Course Registration/Enrolment**

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

The enrolment process was very confusing in the initial stages of applying while I was in NZ. But once I arrived to ENSNP, the staff there very very helpful to insure I was comfortable in/out of university. They are very knowledgeable and willing to help with any problems.

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?

Do not worry/panic. They will introduce you to all the class and staff members, show you around the campus and organize your initial few weeks classes for you on the first day.

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

Learn as much French as possible before you get there and try your hardest to push it during you time there. It will help you find an internship (required part of the course for ENSNP) in later months. The more you learn the language and culture, the more you will enjoy your semester there.

### **Academic Experience**

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

The easiest way to explain the difference is that VUW is a landscape “architecture” course. We focus more on the aesthetics, designing space, beautiful renders and have little ability/weight put on site analysis. At ENSNP, they are classed as landscape “engineers” and put a lot of weight on site analysis and solving a problem rather than designing certain experience or emotions in a space.

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 workload is also very intense and the language barrier is difficult to overcome! They run design studios for a full day and all the members of the class work very intently throughout this 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?

As I did not have a high level of French in the beginning months, I only took 3 out of 7 courses (that the other students must complete). This had a impact on what other class members though of my ability to be in their class. Even though it is more work, I would recommend picking up another two classes (max) to see class members more often and get involved more in the school life.

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

**LEARN FRENCH!!**

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

All at a very high standard as they have all Mac computers throughout the school and are located in a very new building in the centre of town. There is free printing of all sizes and there are classes to learn all the new programs! I was very impressed.

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?

As soon as it was confirmed that I would be going to France, I enrolled in FREN 101 at VUW in the

first semester and took night classes at Alliance François in Wellington. Due to the workload of university in Semester 2 of 2012, the French classes were more a “inconvenience” which was a large regret once I arrived to ENSNP. In addition, I went a month early to go to an intense course at Alliance François in Paris. This was very helpful and a amazing experience. Once you arrive to ENSNP, they will give you the option to join additional (free) throughout the semester.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

First month in Paris, I stayed with a host family that was apart of Alliance Francois. In Blois, I shared a one-bedroom apartment from a student from Blois who was on a exchange to Dublin. It was great arrangement and very cheap. For the last 4 months of the internship, I was based in Paris. This was VERY expensive and I fell directly into the “Paris trap” and paid a lot of money for a 8m squared apartment as I got a internship very close to the time I moved in. In the plus side, the location was perfect and it got me to go out of the house and meet people and enjoy the Parisian Culture.

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

Host Family – Although the family was lovely, and very welcoming. It was hard a lot of the time as I felt I was being watched all the time and could not go out at nights and enjoy the Parisian nightlife. Next time, I would look for a hostel or private apartment.

Apartment – There is limited places available, take what ever you can BUT AVOID THE HOSTELS!

Paris – Great location in the heart of Paris and able to bike everywhere but TOO expensive for what I got.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Refer to above.

How early can you move into accommodation?

It will change each year.

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

Had to cook myself the entire time. No meal plans available.

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

I lived off campus and thought it was a great way to experience the real French culture. Start looking early on at ENSNP and for the internship. Don't hesitate to email ENSNP a month or two in advance and ask for help, they communicate with all the students a lot and will be happy to help!

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

Every Year is different.

### **G: Personal & Cultural Connections**

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

This proved to be hard with the language barrier in the beginning and I found I made the best friendship with those who spoke the most English. Although, the entire class was very nice and very close. In our first week, we were lucky enough to go on a trip to the West of France and kick off the semester on a high note.

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

Amazing! Great food, friendly people, Nice café culture, never worked/studied on the weekends, beautiful language, and great times.

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?

How the French are expected to speak at least three languages fluently otherwise they are unable to get a good job. They knew how to party and the gay culture there was something else (in a positive way!).

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

Refer to 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?

As a gay man myself, it was never ever a problem. I love how liberal France and ENSNP is and how it does not phase anyone! There was one deaf girl in the year below me at the university and she was managing fine.

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

No, not at all. Good, Happy, Fun times.

### **H: 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?

I played badminton on a Wednesday... that was the only sporting choice ENSNP had.

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

TRAVEL!! Otherwise, Party, chill, enjoy life.

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

Not much at all in Blois itself.... Paris is only a hour by train though!

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

LOTS! As it is apart of the school year, ENSNP had lots of relationships with local and French companies to do internships.

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

1	Pastries
2	French!
3	Great Memories and travel experiences
4	The professional and academic experiences
5	A clear mind to keep on Studying at VUW

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

1	Take a NZ Multi Plug! Handiest thing while living overseas.
2	Get onto your intership as soon as possible!
3	Just relax and enjoy the cultural differences.
4	Really push the French before you leave.
5	Save lots of money for TRAVEL! Your in Europe! She's a beauty!

### **Top 5 Things to do**

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

1	Pick the coolest city to do your internship in! Eg: Paris, London, Barcelona
2	Push the French (again)
3	Have fun, go out, make lots of friends
4	Drink lots of amazing wine!
5	Eat lots of Cheesy and Baguettes on the canal!

### **I: Personal Experience**

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

This was the most amazing experience. From the time I left New Zealand, I never looked back and I see myself moving to Paris in the near future!