

Vic OE Evaluation Form



A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Architectural Studies
Major(s)	Masters of Landscape Architecture
Exchange Institution	ENSNP
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	First Trimester 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	\$150
Accommodation	\$3000
Return Airfare	\$2500
Local Transportation	\$500
Meals	\$1500
Visa	\$0
Health & Insurance	\$150
Personal Spending	\$1000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$80
Other fees (specify)	Travelling \$2000
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	The living costs in Blois were relatively low, even compared to Wellington so managed to save money while studying with rent and food.

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

The financial advisor from Victoria helped to plan the costs so there were few surprises, although in general the living costs could be kept low while studying due to sharing accommodation.

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

It is relatively easy to set up a bank account in France and to get an eftpos account there, however debit cards from NZ banks were handy as well.

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

Use the financial advisor at the University here before you leave, it helps give you a good idea of what costs you may encounter, but you will have to save a considerable amount.

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

The average coffee in Blois would be \$6

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?

No, I am a British citizen.

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

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?

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

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					
Infography	French		15	3	Really useful for refining portfolios for the internship application.
Internship	English	Elective	15	4	Probably the highlight of the trip with amazing opportunities for experience
Project Studio	French	Design	20	3	Very language intensive

					but really helpful professors.
Landscape history	French	History and Theory	15	4	Once again very language intensive but a very approachable professor, fluent in English.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The University was very prompt in responding to application forms but there wasn't much correspondence as VicOE covered a lot of the work. The Portfolio and motivational letter were the most time consuming aspects but useful to have completed for future applications anyway.

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?

Very successful, due to the small nature of the university the courses are very personable and engaging with professors so the classes are always available for the exchange students to slot into.

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

Make sure to challenge yourself and take advantage of the different curriculum which will help challenge what you are learning already, as you won't get many better opportunities.

Academic Experience

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

experience meet your expectations?

The experience was quite different to here in NZ, but this is due to the small size of the university. The fact that it was all landscape architecture gave so much more emphasis to the discipline than here, so the staff, resources and curriculum were very detailed and extensive.

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 was similar to that of here in NZ, but due to the courses we chose we were taking a couple less papers than the other students. Therefore we had more time to focus on the French aspect of the papers. Otherwise the studio environment was even better than here, with a lot of time dedicated to each student and a massive emphasis on group work benefitting the whole studio.

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?

Something similar to what I chose, but maybe branch out and if you are confident with your language ability there are some quite technical courses with a strong focus on French landscapes. Also, the internship and history papers are very useful and applicable papers to be able to complete in relation to the course at Victoria.

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

It is important to really be confident with your French and take the opportunity to immerse yourself. It is a mistake I made and meant I found some parts of the curriculum really challenging. However spend the time making the most of the resources and even sitting in on a few classes that you won't necessarily get marked in.

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

All were as good as or better than here. The library is full of international texts and publications of all the students works in design studios.

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 spent a month in France beforehand learning French at an immersion course, then within the city there was a neighboring university that offered a further course in French to help with

progression.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

A student flat in the centre of the town.

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

Great location and the place itself was owned by a student who was on exchange, so I payed straight to him saving me a lot of money. There was no downside.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Student owned apartments or flats which you can join.

How early can you move into accommodation?

About a month before the terms starts the university contacts you to ask for a meeting to answer questions and options for accommodation.

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

Options were up to you.

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

Very easy to find, but get in touch with their exchange office early so they can ask the students for you. Otherwise there are some student hostel options which are a bit further out of town.

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

Just get a place with some of the students.

G: 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 easy to make French friends, as the university is so small there were only 5 international

students in the whole school, and we were spread throughout the years.

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

It took some time to get used to their routine and study patterns particularly in French, but by getting to know the students you worked with it was a lot easier.

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

The language was the main challenge, it was really hard when it came to stressful situations with hand ins etc. but was very worthwhile persevering and asking for help from the university and students. Other than that the French way of life was really relaxing and was great to sample in a place that was so French, and non-international.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The way that study was not the only part of life was really nice, and the fact that there was a strong emphasis on social gatherings and just getting to know the students.

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

The faculty was very helpful and welcoming; they answered all our questions and helped to set up accommodation and difficulties we had with the language. Also the students were really welcoming, they included us in everything and the studio environment was very group orientated.

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?

The students were so welcoming, as well as the staff that you can guarantee that you would be accepted no matter what doubts you have.

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

None at all.

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?

The town was relatively small and the university reflected this with limited social activities but the students regularly caught up for social sports and activities so there was always something to do.

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

To travel when possible, Paris is very accessible and the surrounding countryside had some amazing sights to see.

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

The studio was always open to work in during university hours but off campus the flat that I lived in had a large living area and working areas.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There is a mandatory internship to take for two months which was probably the best experience of the university as it is so flexible to where you can go or visit.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Good knowledge of French
2	multiplug
3	Adapter for European plugs
4	
5	

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

1	Try and get an apartment or place with students there, it is cheaper and a good way to meet people
2	Try and choose some courses that are different to here
3	Research the firms in Europe you would like to work for before you leave
4	Make some travel plans, it is an easy place to travel from
5	French banks are a better way of handling money than trying to handle debit cards daily withdrawal limits

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Go to paris
2	Go to the south of France, anytime of year, whenever you can
3	Spend some time getting to know the people you are studying with, they have good tips for travelling.
4	
5	

I: Personal Experience

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

The university was a really good institution to take a new perspective of our degree, and the city itself was a real genuine piece of France that is really welcoming and had none of the negative stereotypes associated with some parts of France. Studying was a great way to experience a proper lifestyle in a foreign country and to base travelling and other experiences from.