

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor Degree of Commerce
Major(s)	Marketing and Information Systems
Exchange Institution	Groningen University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 (Feb – June) 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	NZ\$100 per class – however some classes did not require bought books and/or provided readings
Accommodation	
Return Airfare	NZ\$2,500
Local Transportation	I didn't not catch busses as it's the Netherlands and you bike everywhere! If you are catching the train across the country try and get a group ticket, which will only cost you NZ\$14. With this ticket you can train between your destination and back as many times as you want in that day. Otherwise the tickets cost around NZ\$25. Plus don't get caught without a ticket as they will find you around NZ\$100
Meals	They have a variety of cheap supermarkets and so you can eat very cheaply if you make your meals. I could get away with spending NZ\$20 a week on food but take into account I ate toasted sandwiches A LOT
Visa	N/A as have a British passport
Health & Insurance	NZ\$1000 with 1Cover. I got the more expensive one just to be on the safe side as would get me back to NZ if there was an emergency
Personal Spending	NZ\$20 a week due to the alcohol being super cheap (NZ\$4 bottle of wine, not the best but does the trick)
Communications (phone, etc.)	Got given a free sim card. They have free wifi in many places so I used that and did not buy minutes and/ or texts however some people did
Other fees (specify)	ESN fees: NZ\$60 for the early bird. ESN is a MUST as you get to meet so many new people which you need to do as you will be there and not know anyone NZ\$200 for a good working bike, with a light, gears, didn't need to be repaired, had two locks and a comfy seat
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	

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

I found that I did not spend as much as I thought I would. This was mainly due to the fact that I could buy fruit/ vege and other essential foods cheaply. I also thought that I would spend a lot of money travelling, however I managed to find the cheap airlines (Easy Jet and Ryan Air) to fly with which saved a lot of money.

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

I opened up a bank account with the ING Bank. They have a big one in Groningen with lots of ATMs if need be. I tried to open one with Rabo Bank but it was too tricky and ING was very helpful and set up the bank account after one meeting. Do not rely on a Visa card, as even though Visa advertises that it can be used everywhere, it can't. The Netherlands prefer eftpos cards or cash.

Also when travelling, take some cash with you as places such as Italy like to use cash.

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

Have some coins on you on Tuesdays as after class you can head to the market where fresh vege/ fruit, Stroop waffles and other yum things are sold very cheaply.

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

I don't drink coffee or coke but I know the average bottle of wine (for a student) is NZ\$6. If you have a nose around you can find the 'good' cheap wine. You can also buy a nice packet of biscuits for NZ\$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?

I did not have to get a visa as have a British Passport

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

N/A

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?

N/A

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

1Cover was very easy to get. I did not have to use it but they were recommended to me by family and friends. They also got back to me very quickly when I had questions for them.

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	VUW course	VUW	Rating (1-5)	Comments
--------------	-------------	------------	-----	--------------	----------

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Any one at a desk was more than happy to help with enrolments or if they couldn't help they would direct you in the direction of someone who could help you. I got help from the Faculty of Economics and Business which I studied with. They are situated at Zernike Campus which is to the north of Groningen, 10 mins bike ride from the town center.

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?

Enroll asap! As the spots, especially for exchange students fill up really early. I was lucky to get into the courses for exchange students (they are all the courses I took apart from the International Marketing course).

The courses for exchange students are all about the Netherlands which makes your exchange even more interesting as know more about the country and Dutch culture than the average Dutch bear.

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

Do easy courses! As you want to do a lot of socializing when you are there as well.

Student nights are on Wednesday so don't choose a class that starts early on Thursday

Academic Experience

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

It was a lot more intense, especially for the course that was not designed for exchange students. This I assume is because Groningen is in the top 100 universities in the world and their Faculty of Economics and Business has also been awarded for numerous things.

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?

It was a lot more discussion focused which was very interesting as learnt a lot about other countries and culture. They workload was more intense as each semester is cut in half. Some courses last for only half the semester whereas others last for the whole semester. If you are taking a half semester course, you will be going from internal assignment to mid exam, to internal assignment to final exam.

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 would recommend the courses designed for exchange students as they are a lot more lax. You have to take the equivalent of a full time student at Groningen University so that can be very intense, but choose courses carefully and you'll be fine.

It may also be better to do elective papers as there is no guarantee that when you are looking at the

courses offered, that you will get into them.

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

Study hard. The Dutch students seemed to party hard but they also study hard and take their studies seriously.

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

Great!! The library is very welcoming but take your laptop as the computers are usually all taken. There is internet access all over the campuses.

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?

There were language courses available however I did not take them as they did not fit into my time table. The Dutch all speak perfect English which was very useful and they teach a variety of courses in English.

It is useful to learn some Dutch, I used Dual Lingo, as the Dutch like that you have given their language a try. Also when you are looking for food, you know what ingredients are used.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in a student accommodation called Van Houtenlaan.

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

It was a great way to meet new people as there were 7 floors filled with students. However the rooms were very small but each had a small balcony, with a ceiling to floor window and door to let in fresh air. The showers were a bit grubby but it was for a specific amount of time so we put up with it as the ability to socialise was very important.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Van Houtenlaan was great for the amount spent. There are other student accommodation that are more expensive and nicer, bigger rooms as well as ones where you have to share the room with another person. Have a look on the SSH website and you can see the student accommodation available.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Had a bit of trouble due to the fact that I arrived in Groningen before their first trimester had finished. Therefore I had to wait for the person in my room to finish their exams and move out before I could move in. Get in quick if you are going to be studying their second trimester (our first trimester) as all the cheap hostels and hotels get booked out fast as it is a small town and not use to hundreds of exchange students descending on it with nowhere to live

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

The food was fab! It was all so cheap and you could get fruit and vege all year round (e.g. avocados in the middle of winter – I was in paradise). At my hall of residence we didn't have an oven so we got inventive with the stove top and microwave. We also shared a fridge and freezer with our neighbor.

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

Everything is really close so don't fret. If you do get lost everyone is so helpful and the University has many campuses so if you need google maps you will be close to a Uni building and can log into the Wi-Fi. I also enjoyed living off campus as it gives you more reason to explore new areas (e.g. there are new and old areas of Groningen)

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

Get in quick for student housing as they go quickly. If there are no more rooms left you have to find a flat to stay in which can be good but I found it more fun and social to be in a student house with lots of other foreign students

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

I found it pretty easy to make friends. You have to put yourself out there especially in the first two weeks to make that group of friends who will be your 'Dutch' family. It was a lot easier to make friends with foreign students as they were in the same housing as me, went to the same classes as me and went to the same events as me.

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

Pretty easy as they have a similar culture to NZ in terms of values, norms and ethics. The language wasn't a barrier as most people spoke English however they did appreciate it if you spoke some Dutch as showed you tried

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

Driving on the right! Had a few near misses because of that but you just get used to it. Also they laugh at how 'polite' we are as we use the words 'please' and 'thank you' too much for them

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

How friendly they are, the food, the entertainment and their beliefs. The Dutch are an incredible group of people, very smart and generous.

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

Very well. You were treated equals to almost everyone. However you may get a straight 'no' to your face, but that is not impolite, they are just quite blunt in comparison to NZ ways of speaking

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?

They were very welcoming to everyone. It may be difficult for some people with disabilities as most of the university buildings are old and therefore were not constructed for wheelchairs and easy access. However they are working on it and sorting it out so that they are accessible to everyone. If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, they would not judge as the Dutch culture is very open and welcoming to all.

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

I did but not towards myself and not a Dutch person. It was a student from the USA who would make remarks that we believed to be racist, however he did not think so. We told him what we thought in a polite way and did not correspond with him after that. PLEASE don't think this represents all USA students as the rest of them that I meet were fab!

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?

Heaps of sports clubs. I also knew of cooking and language clubs that you could join. I did not join as wanted to travel and didn't want to cancel commitments

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

TRAVEL!! :D :D :D the Dutch have two main airports – Schiphol and Eindhoven. The two budget airlines fly out of them and they are the gate way to Europe cheaply! E.g. I went to Pisa, Florence and Cinque Terra for the weekend

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

I don't know sorry

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I don't know sorry

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	NZ flag
2	Toiletries (as they are expensive)

3	Sweets that you will miss – pineapple lumps
4	All Blacks shirt – would be great convo starter
5	Orange things – as all national events turn the city orange

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

1	The Dutch are very straightforward
2	Be on time
3	Everyone will associate Lord of the Rings with NZ, just go with it
4	Be prepared for eating stroopwaffles – the best biscuits in the world
5	Be prepared for drinking LOTS of beer as they not so much into cider

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Amsterdam
2	Den Haag (the Hague but call it by its Dutch name)
3	Go and see the tulips in spring
4	Visit as many beautiful, small Dutch towns as possible
5	Cycle along the Afsluitdijk (longest dike in The Netherlands)

H: Personal Experience

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

I absolutely loved going on my exchange. It was the best experience I have had. I grew so much since being away as it taught me how to deal with an intense situation – arriving in a foreign city, not knowing where anything is. The Dutch are fantastic, they are a truly awesome group of people. Their entire culture is full of history and anyone studying there should get to know it as you will then be able to connect history back to what is occurring in their culture today. I am not sure what to say next as everything was fantastic from the supermarkets – where you got given free coffees, to the roads – where there are specific bike lanes as they are very environmentally focused and encourage the safety of cyclists, to joining ESN (International student organization) who organises parties and trips to other cities – I went on one to Bruges, to practicing your Dutch with others over hot chips at 3am on a Sunday morning. If you choose Groningen University, I can guarantee that you will have a great time.