

Vic OE Evaluation Form

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bcom
Major(s)	Accounting, Commercial Law, International Business
Exchange Institution	University of California Irvine
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 2 2012, Tri 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	\$60-\$190 per book
Accommodation	\$530 per month (UTC off-campus apartments)
Return Airfare	\$1700 to and from LAX
Local Transportation	\$2 one way bus trip/\$5 day trip (all around the OC)
Meals	\$60-75 per week on groceries
Visa	\$380
Health & Insurance	\$500 (UC health insurance), \$400 1cover travel insurance
Personal Spending	\$100 per week (max)
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$50 per month (AT&T unlimited everything)
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	UCI e-tech fees (\$75 per quarter), no other unexpected costs really.

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

-I was actually pretty surprised with how cheap everything was. Food and other necessities were relatively cheap compared to here in NZ. Books were roughly the same in price though.

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

-Travel card and foreign bank account with Wells Fargo

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

-I found travel cards quite economical. I only topped them up 3 times in the whole 8months that I was

overseas. (\$10 cost per top up with ANZ). That also meant that I didn't have to lose money with every conversion/other fees if I used my debit card there for example.

-I also set up a bank account with Wells Fargo and deposited money, which eventually came in handy when I lost all my cards and had to wait for a few weeks to get new ones mailed from NZ.

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

-I don't drink coke or coffee.

-LOL. Food and drinks are usually cheaper there than in NZ though.

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, it was pretty straightforward.

I followed the instructions on the NZ US Embassy website.

http://newzealand.usembassy.gov/how_to_apply.html

-SEVIS fee \$180

-Visa/appointment - \$200

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

-Make sure all instructions are followed carefully and always double check that you have all the required documents before going to the interview (which was in Auckland for me).

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?

-Yes, UCSHIP (student health insurance) \$385

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

-1Cover. Cheapest with most coverage

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					
INTRO MANAGRL FINANCE	English	FINA201	15	3	Questions on the exams were reasonably easy as long as concepts were understood. Tests only, no essays, no

					participation in class.
BASIC ECONOMICS II	English	ECON140	15	1	Lectures were heavily based on the book and questions asked in tests were very basic. The lecturer even made a comment that it was not really necessary to go to lectures... Tests only, no essays, no participation in class.
INTERNATNL BUSINESS	English	IBUS201	15	3	Plenty of readings, also from outside sources and current events. It was a pretty demanding subject compared to the rest in terms of workload. We had one essay due, occasional attendance check, and two multiple-choice tests. Mildly boring 3 hour lectures once a week with a lecturer that spoke in a monotone. It was nice though that what we were learning was applied to the real world.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
PRNCPLS OF ACCOUNTING II	English	ACCY223	15	3	Much easier tests in comparison to ACCY223. Tests only, no essays, no participation in class.
INTL MARKETING	English	Mark302	15	1	The course was very easy, as we had no real assessments apart from weekly clicker quizzes

					(which were very straightforward, as long as you read the books) as well as one group presentation at the end of the term graded by both students as well as the professor. It was fun getting to work in a group where we had to present a marketing plan for a product we made up.
GLOBAL ECONOMY	English	None	15	1	Easy topics, easy multiple-choice tests, very basic economics. Although it was interesting learning from an American point of view, also giving me an insight of how America views the rest of the world in terms of economics.
WORLD RELIGIONS I	English	None	15	2	Out of all the courses I took, this was probably the most interesting. The topics we studied were on 3 different religions, how they differed and how they were related. The questions on tests and other assessments were subjective, so it was hard to go wrong. However, it was also very demanding in terms of workload. Weekly opinion based essays, and two big essays for exams.

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

-Registration windows for classes open at different times depending on your year level. International students get priority however, before most undergrad students, so registering for courses was not really such a big issue. They were also less strict in terms of meeting prerequisites and professors also had a say on whether or not you can join their classes. Academic counselors were who we needed to keep in touch with when we wanted to enroll in certain courses.

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?

-Quite successful. It was not very difficult. As long as you enroll on the day that the enrollment window opens, you should be fine. If however, you do end up not being able to enroll in a class because it was full, you can always try talk to the academic councilors or the lecturers to ask if they could make you an exception. Seen it done more than once to international students, including myself.

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

-Ratemyprofessors.com

Academic Experience

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

-I initially expected it to be harder, also requiring in-class participation through discussion. But it was more the opposite. Most of the subjects did not even have much workload/homework. For in-class participation, clickers were used. Lectures were the same though with how they were run, etc. But it was easier to get to know and approach lecturers and sometimes getting to know them could also affect your grades for those classes.

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?

-Same style of teaching, less workload.

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 at most. I took three courses during my first quarter and it gave me more time to travel and also attend club activities. I had four courses during my second quarter and although it was manageable, I did feel like all I did on my last quarter was study as opposed to make more memorable memories :P It is essentially up to you your personal preferences.

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

-Although most reviews say that courses there are easier, don't slack off on studies, as final exams could unexpectedly be very much harder than midterms. Also, visiting professors in their office hours to ask questions are helpful.

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

-There was wifi everywhere on campus which was helpful. Plenty of study rooms/rooms with computers. They had more than one library on campus. I thought that was pretty cool.

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 apartments. (UTC) Stanford Court

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

-It was the cheapest form of accommodation; literally a 5minute walk to class, nice modern layout. Cons: the walls were thin, but it was like that for pretty much all of the other accommodation options at UCI anyway.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

-I highly recommend UTC apartments to students, very cheap and close to campus. It was good for me since I had so many activities on campus.

How early can you move into accommodation?

-Depends on the lease.

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

-You could also purchase meal plans even if you live off-campus, but I chose to cook instead. All main housing options around the uni have kitchens.

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. UCI has a couple of sites for these things. There are also a couple of facebook groups dedicated on housing.

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

-I find off-campus housing more worth it as opposed to on-campus, which are more expensive and actually further from lecture halls.

G: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

-Not so hard if you put the effort into it. I was active in 5 clubs and joining clubs is a really great way to meet people. I have found Americans to be very approachable. They were always eager to learn more about me and NZ.

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

-If anything, it was more of an issue with the accents. It wasn't hard too understand theirs, but vice versa, I found myself having to slow down sometimes and repeat. Some nz lingo they don't understand either.

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

-Other than the accents, nothing really. Some kiwis may find it offensive or hard to understand that some Americans really just don't know where NZ is. They think it's either in Europe or Australia. I wasn't too bothered by that though. To prepare: Just come with a very open mind and embrace the differences. Oh, I was also not expecting that at least 80% of the school population would be Asian. It was cool though.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I'd have to say that in general Californians are less reserved when meeting people for the first time. I guess this is what makes them more approachable for me.

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

Everyone is always so interested that you have a different accent. I guess initially this is one of the biggest factors why people wanted to get to know me better.

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?

-UCI, and most Californians actually are pretty accepting of LGBT and those with disabilities. UCI has a disabilities services center and an LGBT resource center. The students and staff are very supportive.

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

Not really. Be open-minded.

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?

-Many and all kinds. They literally have hundreds of clubs at UCI and I recommend joining at least one or two. I was in 5, I would've joined more if I had more time :P

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

-Travel? Las Vegas, Grand Canyon, San Diego, LA, dozens of beaches. All very close.

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

-I am not too sure about employment.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

-Not too sure about internship opportunities either as I did not really explore. There are plenty of volunteer clubs though which organize volunteer events and such. Great way to meet people also!

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Some NZ goodies! :) Share your culture, and also just in case you get home sick.
2	-
3	-
4	Underwear
5	Not sure what else as I really advice traveling light

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

1	Be open-minded. Be open-minded.
2	Make the most of your exchange. Meet people. Travel. The outcome really depends on what you make of it. There are plenty of clubs at UCI that VUW doesn't have. Join them!
3	Maybe halfway through, start preparing mentally and emotionally for the trip home. You would not want to get caught off-guard.
4	Record events, travel diaries and blogs are always good. And take photos. You don't know what you'll really miss till you're gone.
5	Pack light. I packed light and ended up coming home with three suitcases.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Food trips! I was always around Vietnamese food, Mexican food and all you can eat Korean BBQ. UCI students are also obsessed with bubble tea. AKA 'boba'. That's Asian American culture for you I guess.
2	Go to Disneyland! Its 20 minutes away. I got a pass and went every week :D
3	Trips to LA/SD/Vegas
4	The beaches around UCI are really nice. E.g. Huntington beach and Newport

I: Personal Experience

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

My exchange experience was beyond amazing I do not even know where to begin when I am asked to describe it. I went to America with nothing but a half empty suitcase filled with two weeks worth of clothes and came back with three nearly overweight suitcases and plenty of memorable memories. I came with an open mind which made it easy for me to meet and relate to many people from different places and backgrounds, traveled and got to see a bit of America, tried their food, learned their lingo and most of all, made life long friends. A big part of why I enjoyed my exchange so much was because of the people that I have met there. They truly made a difference to my experience overall. So I encourage anyone going, to really be out there and have fun! I have made life long friends, not just from America, but also around the world. Now I have places to crash when I go to Europe. 😊

