

Vic OE Evaluation Form

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BSc
Major(s)	Environmental Studies, Development Studies
Exchange Institution	Universidad de Jaén
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Semester 2 2012 and semester 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	\$85
Accommodation	\$2440 (190€ per month semester 1, 170€ per month semester 2)
Return Airfare	\$3400 (including stops on the way)
Local Transportation	\$34
Meals	\$815
Visa	-
Health & Insurance	-
Personal Spending	? depends on how much you travel...
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$85
Other fees (specify)	-
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Travelling- you can spend a LOT on that... Going out for meals (tapas) or to clubs is extremely cheap in Jaén

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

In Jaén everything was a lot cheaper than I expected, but I could easily spend that money on weekend trips
 By what means did you maintain your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, foreign bank account, travelers checks, etc)?

I took out a relatively large amount of money to avoid bank fees and then hid it in my room 😊

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

Don't worry about daily costs like food or accommodation- it's a lot cheaper than in Wellington. But you will want to leave Jaén from time to time so the more money you have for travelling the better!

What was the average cost of a can of coke or coffee in your host country? \$3

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've got a German passport so I didn't need a visa

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?

No- you need to have a health insurance but it's up to you what you get.

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

My normal insurance covered me for Spain as well

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 2013					
Geografía humana II	Spanish	GEOG112	12	4	Very boring classes and hard marking on the exam
Geografía regional del mundo	Spanish	GEOG212	12	2	Very enthusiastic lecturer, makes exceptions for exchange students
Planificación territorial y turismo sostenible	Spanish	TOUR250	20	2	Same lecturer as geog. regional
Sistemas de información ambiental	Spanish	200-level GIS	12	3	

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR 2012					
Población, territorio y medio ambiente	Spanish	ENVI214	12	4	Boring lectures
History of the universe	English	300-level development studies	9	1	
Educación ambiental	Spanish	300-level geography	12	3	
Geología	Spanish	300-level geography	12	5	
Ecología I	Partly English, partly Spanish	300-level geography	12	3	

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available? You have to fill in lots of forms but staff are nice and you can get a buddy to help you with that. 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? I got into all papers I wanted to do. Even though you think you enroll before you go to Spain you have to do it all again (a few times) once you're there. Do you have any advice for future students when choosing and applying for courses? Go to as many lectures as possible in the beginning to make sure you actually want to do the papers you're enrolled in.

Academic Experience

How did your academic experience differ from your time spend at Victoria? Did the academic experience meet your expectations? The standard is a lot lower than at Vic, but if you do courses in Spanish that's good to get used to the language. 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? In the beginning I felt like in school- classes were quite small and lecturers treated us as high school teachers would. It's really easy to talk to lecturers and get them to help you. The first semester I didn't have to do anything (almost) until exams and then had to study a lot, in the

second semester I had quite a lot to do all the way through the semester and then exams at the end. But it was still a lot less than at Vic.

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 did 4 and 5 courses each semester plus 1 or 2 Spanish language courses. I definitely recommend the Spanish courses!

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

Talk to the lecturers, make sure they know who you are & that you're trying and go to lectures. That way they're more likely to help you or make exceptions.

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

Very basic compared to Vic.

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 did Spanish papers at Vic and then extensive Spanish courses in Jaén.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

A shared flat

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

Pros: you can stay with Spanish students or other exchange students; cheap; easy to find in Jaén

Cons: problems with landlord

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Flats- hardly anybody is staying with a family or in university accommodation in Jaén (a lot more expensive)

How early can you move into accommodation?

I stayed in a hostel for the first 3 or 4 days and then moved as soon as I found my flat. There is a lot of offer for furnished flats in Jaén.

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

I cooked myself. Could have cooked together with flatmates.

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. Make sure you have a good landlord (I had some problems in my first flat as did some others who moved again after a few weeks).

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

No.

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's very easy to get to know other exchange students. It's harder with Spanish students but I do have a few very good Spanish friends now.

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

A lot harder than I expected it to be (I've been studying abroad in school and am an international student at Vic and never had had any problems before). It actually took me several weeks to adjust.

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

Not getting anything done on time and spending several hours in queues (not just university, also getting an internet contract for example). And the fact that Jaén is just a lot smaller than Wellington and attitudes towards studying are very different. You can't really prepare for that except for knowing about it and just accepting what happens around you. Once you do you stop minding it so much and actually enjoy it!

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Tapas! It's free food you get with drinks in Jaén and a few other provinces in Andalucía.

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

Depends- indifferent, interested in New Zealand, helpful if you ask for help (and talk to someone who is interested).

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?

It'll be harder finding a flat that's equipped for a disabled student. For the other questions I didn't see any issues with it during my stay.

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

No. Everybody though New Zealand is a really interesting place to come from.

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?

Very few clubs and it's hard to find out about them. I went to the uni gym which was okay.

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

Travel! There is so much to see in Andalucía (cities and beaches), the rest of Spain and of course Europe. Also, you probably wouldn't want to stay in Jaén all the time because it's quite small.

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

There were limited opportunities to teach English on campus (because of the economic crisis university is employing less students to help in English classes). It's quite easy to get jobs teaching English in families though- just ask around. It'll be hard getting any other jobs though as unemployment is huge in Jaén.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I didn't hear of anything.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Summer clothes (and clothes for strong rain! I definitely underestimated that...)
2	Sweets from New Zealand
3	A backpack/ small suitcase for weekend trips
4	Guidebook for the regions you're interested in
5	Books in English if you like reading- they don't have a lot of those in the few bookstores there are...

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

1	Don't despair over the andalusian accent- you will get used to it even if it doesn't feel like it in the beginning!
2	Make sure your lecturers know you and they'll be a lot more likely to help you
3	Take the free extensive Spanish classes (even if you don't plan on attending them all they can be a huge help)
4	
5	

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	In Jaén: go for tapas!
2	Cabo de Gata (beach that's not too touristy)
3	Granada
4	Sevilla
5	Cordoba

I: Personal Experience

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

I had such a varied experience. It definitely wasn't like what I expected- some things were extremely positive, while others definitely weren't (which made sure that I appreciate coming back to New Zealand now!).

One thing that I expected to be very different was the other exchange students' attitude. Erasmus students (exchange students from Europe) in general expect their semester abroad to be a lot more about drinking and partying, and if you go to Jaén to get to know Spanish culture and language it can be quite challenging to fit in. I also had a few issues with my first landlord- make sure you get a contract and you like your landlord. There is so much offer of flats that you don't have to accept anything that you think seems a weird.

To get away from all of that you've got great chances of travelling.

Jaén is a very small city, which on the one hand means you don't have many chances of going shopping, sightseeing or clubbing, but is a huge advantage for getting to know people, and it's very cheap (flats, going out for meals and drinks etc.). There are a lot of tapas bars in Jaén. I still think it was a good choice to go to Jaén and not to any of the other cities in Spain.

Academically Jaén is a lot less challenging than Vic- which doesn't mean you have to spend less time studying (you do need to go to a lot of mandatory events and should go to lectures), but the way of studying is very different. Sometimes you just feel like you're wasting your time being in a compulsory tutorial doing things you could do yourself in half the time, and in my opinion you are expected to think yourself a lot less, while you have to remember facts a lot more.

Overall, even though this might sound quite negative I wouldn't change it at all- it's a great experience to have had, and even though I'm glad I'm not doing my whole Bachelor in Jaén it was an experience I wouldn't have wanted to miss!

