

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 of Arts and Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Sociology, Environmental Studies and Development Studies
Exchange Institution	Lancaster University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1, 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	
Accommodation	\$4,100
Return Airfare	
Local Transportation	\$500
Meals	\$2,000
Visa	
Health & Insurance	
Personal Spending	\$1,000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$200
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Transport around England was more expensive than I thought, especially their privatized rail system! Everything else, such as accommodation, was what I expected.

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

About the same.

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

I was able to get a bank account within the country, which I would highly recommend.

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

Find the cheapest accommodation possible. Halls of residence were recommended by the universities, but I was able to find a house to share with other flatmates. This was hugely cheaper, and it was much nicer to have my own place and become close to the flatmates.

Also, apply for jobs! Many exchange students I know didn't but I did, and it was really beneficial for my finances then as well as future plans.

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

The same as New Zealand.

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 didn't have to as I had a passport for the host country, so unfortunately I have no knowledge of visa applications and can't offer advice, my apologies!

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

As above

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, they didn't.

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

I did not use an insurance company and luckily did not need one. However, perhaps I would still advise future students to use one if they want to!

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					
Climate and Society	English	ENV314	15	4	The whole class struggled with the lecturer, his communication and style really added to the difficulty.
Global Consumption	English	Elective	15	2	Did not teach me anything new
Gender, Sexuality and Society	English	Elective	15	2	Again, did not teach me much, but was still valuable
Modernity and its Discontents	English	Elective	15	4	Possibly my favourite course out of the whole degree!

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Help was only available during the enrolment week. Requesting help by email etc prior to that was difficult.

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?

The courses available were pretty different to what had been previously advised – so perhaps be prepared in case of disappointment.

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

I found information about courses is really hard to access and to predict. I'm not sure there is anything students can do about this, however.

Academic Experience

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

It didn't really differ, perhaps because New Zealand and England have pretty similar, Western cultures.

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?

Yes, about the same

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?

My load of four courses was fine. I'd definitely recommend the Sociology department at Lancaster, but in particular the higher level courses.

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

The same advice as would be given to succeeding at VUW

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

It really wasn't great, especially as the library has been under-construction and un-usable for so long! It would have been good to know about this prior to arrival.

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?

Houseshare/flat

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

Pros – about half the price of student halls, easier to become close to flatmates

Cons – more work required on your part to find available flats

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Houseshare/flat

How early can you move into accommodation?

As early as you want/can find something

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

Any options 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?

It took a couple of months of internet research, and I luckily had accommodation in the UK before the trimester so could use that while I was viewing flats. I think this option would be easier if the two exchange universities provided more assistance and information with this. All I can recommend is using all the UK renting websites, such as easyroommate.co.uk, studenthousinglancaster.co.uk

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

Definitely look into off-campus accommodation!

F: 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 pretty easy!

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

Very easy – I find the cultures pretty similar

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

I personally didn't find any cultural differences challenging.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Friendliness.

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

Very well.

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?

I think Lancaster University would be alright – from Gender Studies I got to know a welcoming, indiscriminating community. Hopefully others would have the same experience. I still think parts of England can be conservatively close-minded though, so I can't say discrimination is not possible.

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

I didn't. I can't say whether this is indicative of luck/chance or of indiscrimination.

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?

A long list, all pretty much the same as at Victoria.

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

If you're near Lancaster, explore the surrounding area like the Lake District, which is great for hiking. Manchester is also really fun.

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

There is an online database for on-campus, but it seems students have to find these opportunities off-campus themselves.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

The careers service had information about some internship opportunities, but I didn't find any.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm clothes
2	Study equipment like laptops
3	A few nice things to remind you of home
4	Walking shoes
5	I'd recommend packing as little as possible – anything you end up needing can be easily and cheaply found in the UK!

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

1	Be prepared for how small this town is
2	Know how cold it is up North

3	Know that the university is not in the town centre at all – it's on the very outskirts of the town
4	Off-campus accommodation will save you a lot of money!
5	Most importantly, find out everything you can before you sign up, so you choose somewhere you like

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Hike, for example in the Lake District
2	Go out in Manchester, they have a great music scene
3	Explore some of London
4	There's much more of a diversity of cultures and language compared to NZ, not much up North but especially in London. Make the most of this, for example by meeting new people, learning new languages, etc.
5	Make the most of using the country as a springboard to Europe!

H: Personal Experience

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

It's hard to sum up by exchange experience! I should say that Lancaster was not what I expected. In particular I was not expecting it be so small, and cold! I think it might be easy to feel a little isolated at least at first, perhaps especially because it is a little disconnected from bigger cities. This may not be the case for people who prefer rural, smaller areas. However, something also contributing to my mismatching expectations was, it seems we have to select exchange choices so much earlier than we actually arrive. My thoughts and wishes definitely changed over this 6 months – 1 year gap. Once I actually arrived in the country as well, it was easier to be more aware of these choices we were initially given. In comparison, the options seem very abstract when having to choose earlier in NZ. I understand systems are in place for a reason, but I think perhaps there could be more detailed information provided about the intricacies of the exchange places, and maybe more flexibility for changing our minds.

However, overall, I am very grateful for this opportunity. Making it to the UK allowed me to connect with family presently there, and historical family roots there. This is also a great springboard for exploring the rest of the Northern Hemisphere. So I am very grateful for all of Victoria Abroad's help with this.