

Vic OE Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VIC OE AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Psychology, Linguistics
Exchange Institution	Royal Holloway, University of London
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1, 2014

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	N/A (used library books)
Accommodation	\$5000
Return Airfare	\$3500
Local Transportation	\$1000
Meals	\$1000
Visa	\$200
Health & Insurance	\$700
Personal Spending	\$1000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$50
Other fees (specify)	\$3500 (includes travel to other locations, countries, hostels, etc)
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	An unexpected cost was paying to print plane tickets at the airport – RyanAir requires you print your own boarding pass and if you fail to do so, you incur a €15 fee. Other than that, most purchases cost roughly the same as they would in New Zealand.

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

I spent how much I expected to spend, though I spent more on food and travel than I expected and less on personal spending.

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

I used a Cash Passport, which allowed me to load multiple currencies onto the same card and then use it like an ordinary EFTPOS card. I transferred money into this account through my NZ bank account.

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

Make sure you sort out all of your StudyLink details before you leave, because it's a lot harder getting in touch from the other side of the world.

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

Coke cans cost \$2 (£1) and coffee cost \$5 (£2.50).

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 applied for a student visa, which allowed me to study overseas for up to 6 months. I began my application in November and submitted my online application on November 9. The online application included questions about my employment and travel history, and how I planned to finance myself while living abroad. I paid for the visa online (\$164). After about a week, I had an appointment at the Wellington Biometric Office where my fingerprints were taken and my application details confirmed. Once this was completed, I sent the completed application and my passport to Auckland, where they were then sent to Manila. By early-to-mid December, I received my passport with my visa inside.

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

Apply early so you don't get stressed about whether you'll receive your visa in time.

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?

I used Rothbury Insurance Brokers Wellington. I luckily did not need my insurance, but it was nice knowing it was there.

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 1/2014					
PS1021 Learning and Memory	English	PSYC100	15	5	Very good course with comprehensive coverage of introductory psychology concepts.
PS1061 Sensation and Perception	English	PSYC100	15	2	The lecturer was fantastic but the content itself was not very interesting – would not recommend to students who are not keen on the biological

					side of psychology.
PS1110 Introduction Abnormal Psychology	English	PSYC100	15	4	Incredibly interesting with a great lecturer.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

I had to change my course selections multiple times as up-to-date information was not available until a few weeks before I arrived at my host university. I had to figure it all out for myself as there was very little support offered. Times of classes are not known until a week before classes begin, so choosing a good timetable is not possible.

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 did not get into all the classes I wanted to do because there were timetable clashes.

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

Try your best to avoid choosing classes in multiple disciplines, as this will minimise the risk of timetable clashes.

Academic Experience

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

At Victoria, I am probably a lot more dedicated to my studies. This is not to say that I did not try while studying at Royal Holloway, rather that I put less pressure on myself than I do at home because I wanted to ensure that I enjoyed every minute of being there.

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 much lower: classes were a two-hour lecture once a week, and only one tutorial throughout the whole term (at Victoria, it is more likely that I would have three one-hour lectures a week, along with at least an hour long weekly tutorial).

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?

They are very picky about who they let into courses so personally I would take whatever is offered.

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

Go to class, do your readings and avoid all-nighters to finish assignments.

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

Internet was very fast and available nearly everywhere on campus (as long as you were close to a building). The computer facilities were good and there is an app available which tells you where you can find free computers.

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?

N/A

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Hall of Residence

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

It was very convenient as classes were in the next building.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Hall of Residence

How early can you move into accommodation?

When the semester starts, otherwise you can pay an additional fee if you need accommodation prior to the semester starting.

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

My hall was a catered hall so there was a dining hall available; however, it was pay-as-you-go so you paid each time for your meal but the food was heavily discounted (around NZD\$3 a meal).

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

N/A

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

If you are applying for Founders Hall, apply for a room with a sink.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

International students were a lot easier to befriend. Sometimes people in the same hall would knock on your door and introduce themselves, and I also made local friends through my international friends staying in flats with local students.

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

The biggest shock for me was going into the city because London is much bigger than any city I had experienced before and the number of people around was quite overwhelming at times.

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

Street harassment is a lot more aggressive than it is in New Zealand, so I would not recommend walking by yourself at night (being alone at night on campus was perfectly safe though).

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

People were very polite and would always hold doors open for you, regardless of how far away from the door you were. I also really loved how diverse London is – it is filled with people from all races, ages, and backgrounds.

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

Students and local people were friendly and curious about New Zealand culture. I did not have many interactions with university staff.

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?

There seemed to be a lot of support for most people, including an LGBT society.

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

N/A

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?

There were lots of clubs available but I did not join any because I wanted freedom to make my own choices about how to spend my time.

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

I travelled around Western Europe in my break, and took part in weekend tours to other parts of the UK and France. I also spent a lot of time in Central London.

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

On-campus students could work in the café/food services. Off-campus, students worked in part-time jobs at nearby places like Legoland or the local shops. My visa did not allow me to work so I did not look far into this.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

As aforementioned, my visa didn't allow me to take part in those sorts of activities so I didn't look into it.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Raincoat.
2	Credit/debit card – otherwise it's near impossible to book anything online.
3	Your laptop – so much more convenient than trying to find an available campus computer. Only you (and campus security) can get into your room so it's perfectly safe bringing it with you.
4	Smart phone. When I was travelling without my laptop, my phone (and the free hostel wifi) meant I could still use the internet, plus it doubles as a camera.
5	Backpack – much easier to use while travelling than a suitcase, however small. I used my hand luggage sized trolley bag and even that was quite difficult to navigate. You'll get good at packing light so the size is not an issue.

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

1	Buy a 16-25 railcard. It costs £27, but you save 1/3 on all rail tickets – trains to London are expensive so this is a worthwhile investment.
2	Pack VERY lightly. Sending stuff home because your bag exceeds the limit is expensive and time-consuming.
3	If you have a smart phone, buy a SIM card that comes with a data plan. If you don't, buy a cheap cellphone that can send texts and make calls, because you never know when it will be necessary to make a call.
4	Always have cash on you rather than just having a card – most places have a £15 minimum charge for using a card and some places only accept cash.
5	Don't just stay in London. London does have a lot of amazing things, but the best thing about it is that it is so close to everywhere else in Europe – make the most of that!

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Visit the Harry Potter Studios in London. Bring a camera with lots of space, and tissues in case you get emotional thinking about your childhood obsession with Harry Potter.
2	The Royal Holloway campus is beautiful, so take time to explore it properly. When the weather was nice, my friends and I would buy food from the school shop and have a picnic in the fields.
3	If you're a Beatles fan, go to Liverpool for a night or so and visit the Cavern Club (preferably a night where a Beatles tribute band is playing). The bus fares are cheap and it doesn't take too long to get there.
4	Camden is a really cool area to visit if you like markets/Cuba Street. Haggle with anyone you want to buy something from, because the price they offer is rarely their best price.
5	Thorpe Park is a really great amusement park, only about half an hour from campus.

H: Personal Experience

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

It feels impossible trying to condense my exchange experience into one paragraph. It was only five months, but they were the most incredible five months of my entire life. After living in the same town for my entire life, I travelled to the other side of the world completely alone to a place I'd never been and where I knew no one. Other exchange students were in the same boat, so making friends was much easier than I anticipated. Classes were good, but it was the experience of living in a different country that has stuck with me. Nearly every weekend I was either going into London to explore, or I was visiting other countries and seeing their sights. Within the first month, I had already gone to a concert, toured the Harry Potter Studios, and visited a friend in Scotland. In April, I spent an entire month living out of a backpack with two good friends I made at Royal Holloway. We stayed in hostels and befriended other travellers, and spent all day wandering whatever city we were in. I never expected to spend Easter 2014 on a ghost tour in Edinburgh, or that I would fall asleep in front of the Notre Dame after spending all night in a bus to Paris. I had so many fantastic experiences and it is truly a time that I will never

forget. Despite this, it is easy for me to choose my favourite memory. I chose to study in London because many of the musicians I love live there, and I thought it would be amazing to be in the same environment that nurtured their talent. I would be lying if I said that I did not also hope that there would be a chance of bumping into these musicians. One night, my favourite band held an album signing in Central London, and I finally met the men who have inspired me since I was 15. There they invited me to a DJ set they were having, so I also got to dance with my favourite musicians and take photos with them. I left London with not a cent to my name, but with friends all over the world, memories that I will never forget, and the feeling of being at home in a different country.