

Vic OE Evaluation Form

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BCA
Major(s)	Accounting, Commercial Law
Exchange Institution	Renmin University Beijing
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2012 tr2

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	\$40
Accommodation	\$2400
Return Airfare	\$1400
Local Transportation	Less than \$100
Meals	~\$700
Visa	\$140
Health & Insurance	\$380
Personal Spending	~\$2500
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$60
Other fees (specify)	Laundry \$10 for 10 washes, internet-\$10 5 months
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Electricity, I didn't know we had a set allowance for usage, I used mine quick quickly over Summer for the air conditioning, I paid \$10. But if you stay within their limits you won't have to pay for electricity at all.

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

I think I spent a bit more than I expected mainly because I did a bit of travelling and I didn't account that into my budgeting. Also from the description I got about the accommodation, they said there was a kitchen. When I went to see the kitchen it only had a microwave so I wasn't able to cook any meals there, food costs were a lot higher than budgeted.

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

Credit card is always handy to have in case of emergency, the main one being in hospital, they expect you to pay up before they look at you. Nothing is subsidized here.

All students at Renmin are required to have a bank account with The Bank of China, you have to put money on this as this account connects with your student ID so you can pay for food and internet.

I just used my VISA card each time I needed to get money out.

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

Save save save because there is so much cool stuff to buy and you'll want to travel around China when holidays come around.

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

Coffee was the same price as back in NZ and a can of coke, if you went to a supermarket about 36 cents.

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 had to apply for a student visa for China, it wasn't difficult as long you have all the paperwork with you. I think it cost \$140 and took a week to process.

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

Have all the paperwork ready.

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?

They did have insurance if you didn't already, I can't remember how much it cost but it would be less than \$40 however I don't know what it covered.

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

Southern Cross Insurance, yes I would recommend it. The staff are helpful if you need any questions answered.

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	VUW points/credits	Rating (1-5)	Comments
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		elective	value		
VUW Trimester 1/YEAR					
Speaking	Chinese	Chin211	15	3	
Writing	Chinese	Chin211	15	3	
Listening	Chinese	Chin211	15	4	
Comprehensive	Chinese	Chin211	15	3.5	
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available?
Admin at Renmin is useless, all the information I got was through word of mouth from the international students.

First you have to get at least 6 photos of you as they'll be using them for IDs and Visa processing. On the first days you're handed a sheet where you fill out what course you're enrolled out, here you also sort out your visa, insurance, given your student ID and also able to purchase an internet package.

On another day you have to stand in a huge line with the rest of the domestic students this is where you get your photo done for your e-card. Beforehand you have to go to the bank to open an account as the e-card is linked up to your bank account which enables you to buy internet and food.

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?

As I doing the Chinese language course there was a day set for us to register for this. In the Language Building you choose which level of Chinese you're at, depending what level you're at

you may have to set an entrance exam. You're given a slip where you print your name, student ID, then in a few days time they'll put the lists up to see what class you made it into. However during the first week of class you're able to move around levels to see what suits you best but you'll have to take the entrance test again.

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

My advice would be to not to worry if you feel you don't know what's going on because you'll get there in the end, try and laugh at the situation!

Academic Experience

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

It met my expectations, it had everything that Vic would examine for example, there would be weekly tests, midterm and a final exam. There was a lot more things to learn here at Renmin as you had 15 hours of Chinese a week to go over. But I felt it was more relaxed here to learn than at Vic.

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?

Here at Renmin it's all taught in Chinese, this was something I wasn't too keen on at all as the teachers back at Vic would use English, I didn't like it at first as I couldn't understand anything the teacher would say, even the basic commands. Now I'm glad they just used Chinese, it makes such a difference to your learning.

We had classes for speaking, listening, comprehensive and writing which made it better for my learning as we were able to concentrate on these areas more.

I think the workload at Renmin was a bit more than at Vic as you would have 15 hours a week of Chinese meaning a heap more words to learn!

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?

At Renmin if you're doing the Chinese Language course then you'll be doing 15 hours of Chinese a week, these classes consist of speaking, comprehensive, listening and writing.

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

university?

If you're taking Chinese, go out and talk to the locals, it's a lot of fun and who knows what you'll learn!

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

I didn't see many computer facilities except for the library, but they were always taken. On one of the floors of the library there was a floor for you to watch movies, it had their own couches and private space. Internet access was not available over the whole access just the main buildings and also dorms. Some dorms would have wifi others you would have to use a cable. The library was huge, there wasn't much space to study surprisingly and if there was, it would always be taken up! Studying in a café on campus or in your room would be a better option.

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?

As I knew I wanted to do an exchange to China to study the language I took 100 level Chinese at Victoria. However if you were to do business at Renmin they did do a short course for beginners and intermediate Chinese.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in a dorm located in the university. I had my own room and bathroom.

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

The pros were that you had your own personal space, privacy and best of all bathroom. In the other dorms, though it was half the price of what I was paying, they had to share bathrooms and only had hot water for showers at certain times of the day.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Stay in a dorm provided by the university which had your own room and bathroom, though it might be a bit more expensive it's definitely worth it.

How early can you move into accommodation?

The paperwork I received from my uni, I think it was 2 weeks before university started.

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

I was told there was a kitchen but it only had a sink with cold water and a microwave so it didn't give me much choice than to eat out every meal which was awesome! In the university there were restaurants and canteens dotted around the campus. It was mostly Chinese but there were a few Western and Korean restaurants.

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

Majority of students lived on campus, it's a lot more convenient. If you wanted to live off campus you have to register yourself with the police.

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

Apply asap! The building I stayed in was the most popular and it goes fast.

G: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

At first I found it pretty nerve racking making new friends, I didn't know what to expect (if there would be any language barriers) but during the first week everyone is feeling just the same and wanting to make a new friend! Once you made a friend, they would introduce you to their friends they made etc. I had a few local friends, this was through the language buddy program they had and I made a few from swimming.

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

Surprisingly I didn't find it too hard to adjust to the Chinese culture as much as I thought but made me more interested to learn about it.

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

I knew I wanted to go on an exchange a year before I left so I had that time to prepare myself mentally. However something I'll never get use to is the spitting! But researching on the country itself for example, the social customs, food and history can help prepare for cultural differences.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The social customs they do when it comes to festivals they celebrate. Everything they do is very symbolic.

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

When locals would spoke to me in Chinese, assuming I was a local, they soon realized I was a foreigner and always asked what country I was from. When I told them I was a NZer they said 'Oh but you look Chinese' and then I would have to explain the long story that I was a Chinese decent but born in NZ. They found this extremely interesting!

Chinese students were always keen to practice their English with me and this was a good opportunity for me to practice my Chinese with them.

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?

Because of the language barrier I'm not too sure if I saw any services for the disabled. I know in China the topic of being gay, lesbian, bisexual transgendered is not widely accepted as it is here in NZ.

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 face any discrimination but those who had blonde hair were always asked to have their photos taken at touristy spots or get stared at. Advice? Go along with it if they want your picture taken.

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?

The international office organized two trips for us, one to the Great Wall and another was indoor skiing otherwise I know there were a lot of clubs and sports offered but offered to domestic students. If you knew a domestic student in the club or sport you wanted to do they could get you in.

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

Beijing is a huge place with lot of things on offer, apart from the main touristy things there are markets, lots of shopping, temples, parks and gardens to visit otherwise hopping onto a bus or

subway and getting off at a random stop to explore.

During holidays it was popular for students to travel outside Beijing and cheap to do so too.

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

Teach English off campus otherwise it was hard to get a job unless you spoke good Chinese.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

None.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Chocolate
2	Deodorant
3	Insect Repellent
4	Warm clothes
5	Photos of NZ

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

1	Don't be afraid to talk to the locals
2	Come with an open mind
3	Get lost
4	Write the address of the university in Chinese characters
5	Wake up early to experience a Chinese Breakfast out in the streets or in a canteen.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Great Wall
2	Forbidden City
3	Summer Palace
4	Visit a Hutong
5	Shopping at one of the many clothing markets

I: Personal Experience

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

This is a decision I'm not regretting at all. Before coming to Beijing I was apprehensive, nervous and scared being this was my first time to travel alone to a foreign country! But that quickly changed and now I'm staying in Beijing for another semester. Coming back to Wellington I've definitely noticed a big change in my Chinese and this was my ultimate goal for this exchange. With just 5 months of being immersed in the language I feel I'm a lot more confident in my speaking and listening has improved immensely! I've met some really cool friends from all over the world and learnt so much about other cultures and new words. An awesome thing was that we were all learning Chinese at around about the same level so it was nice to be able to converse with another and help each other out. My exchange experience has opened up new interests such as learning about their amazingly rich history and Chinese customs which differ significantly from what we do here in New Zealand. I've been really lucky to be able to travel around China, the country is so vast that it's incredible to see how different each part of China differs from where I'm staying in Beijing, the way of life, cuisine and landscape. I'm excited to be heading off again to start another semester in Beijing and waiting for many more adventures to come.

