

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	English Literature
Exchange Institution	Royal Holloway, University of London
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	VUW 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	\$0
Accommodation	\$4300
Return Airfare	\$3400
Local Transportation	
Meals	\$80 p/week
Visa	
Health & Insurance	\$460
Personal Spending	\$3000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$20 p/month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	

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

Most of my 'personal spending' was on travel, including tripping into London frequently. With a 16- 25 railcard, the trains end up being really reasonable, and my finances compared pretty well to what I had expected.

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

I used the Air New Zealand onesmart card and it was amazing. It's perfect if you plan on travelling into Europe as well, because it can hold 4 different currencies at once. The only downside was that after 3 ATM withdrawals per month it starts costing to take money out, but it's not too much of an issue because you can pay with card almost everywhere.

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

Try and budget how much you spend at the dining hall, because although food is cheap, my account seemed to go down pretty quickly. You can also use the card for the cafes and bars on campus, which is probably the reason it's harder to keep track of.

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

Coffee was around about £2 for an Americano at a cafe, but from the campus coffee machines (terrible coffee) it was £1.

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 apply for a visa, I just had to show some documents and proof of study at the border and it was fine.

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

N/A

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?

I'm not sure if they had mandatory insurance – I don't think they did. I had comprehensive travel insurance for my time though, which I would recommend.

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

I booked with STA travel, who use Allianz insurance. I didn't have to use it, but it was really comprehensive and it's nice to have that security.

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					
Literature of the Fin de Siecle	English	ENGL312	15	2	This paper was quite good, and I liked the lecturers style and she was very approachable. There was more reading of secondary texts than I was used too, but it was

					an interesting alternative. In terms of academic level, it was on par with VUW.
Theatre and the City	English	ENGL308	15	3	I didn't really enjoy this paper, it wasn't really what I expected. It wasn't too difficult, I just found it uninteresting.
Religion, Society and Culture 1000-1250	History	HIST318	15	2	This paper was interesting and well organised – equivalent to VUW difficulty.
Cultural life in Renaissance Europe	History	HIST318	15	2	I enjoyed this paper, although in some parts it was similar to the Medieval topic. Same level as VUW.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The process was pretty easy – everything went smoothly, and there was opportunity to change once we arrived also. Communication was really easy if there were any problems.

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 the classes I applied for, but not everyone did. There's plenty of time to change around once you arrive, and it's much easier to try and organise things face to face. Doing double majors in England doesn't really happen, so sometimes trying to work things out between departments is difficult, although I personally didn't have any trouble.

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

Be flexible, and apply for more than you need. I applied for 6 and ended up doing 4, which worked out well.

Academic Experience

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

Academically, Royal Holloway was on a similar level. Assessment was a bit different, but there was a lot of help available if it was needed.

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 style of teaching is quite similar in terms of lectures, although there is less contact time. Assessment was similar in regards to essays etc, although the grading system is quite different and does take a bit of getting used to.

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 papers and it was fine in terms of workload, despite only ever doing 3 at VUW. The history papers were especially good, and the history department is apparently one of the best in the country.

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

There is a lot of help available academically, and the lecturers and tutors are all really approachable, so my only recommendation would be to utilise these people.

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

All the facilities were great, it had everything we needed. Libraries were open until late, and there were heaps of printers all over campus. Internet was usually pretty good, although it did play up sometimes but they were doing upgrades so I think that was partially to blame.

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?

I stayed on campus, at the Founders Building. I got put in a shared room with a roommate which was fine but probably not for everyone- I was lucky with my roommate, but some of my friends weren't. Definitely get a room with a sink – it makes all the difference!

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

It's on campus, so it's really handy and nice to not have to think about transport. Really social, which is great, although can be noisy sometimes. There are shared kitchens on each floor, so you can prepare some meals, although they only have microwaves and hot water so it's limiting in that sense. The kitchens get pretty dirty, so be prepared for that – people don't clean up after themselves! The bathrooms were cleaned every day and for the most part they were okay, although after the Student Union party nights things could be a bit rough.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I liked staying at Founders, it wasn't fancy but the facilities were fine. There are some nice flats on campus as well, if you want to be a bit more independent with meals etc. although they're not as social.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in on the Thursday before orientation day, as did most others. The local students moved in the day before classes started, so there's lots of time to get moved in before everyone arrives.

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

The food was okay, I mostly ate from the dining hall for dinners and then did breakfast and lunch myself – Tesco is really cheap and I found the dining hall food too heavy for three meals a day.

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?

I wouldn't have wanted to stay anywhere other than the Founders Building, it's so worth being close to everyone and everything, even if it isn't the fanciest on campus.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

I found it easy to make friends. I had a roommate, and so got to know her friends from my floor, and they were all really nice. Mostly I hung out with international students, though. I think if you were going in the September semester it would be easier to connect with local students as they're starting a new year, and wouldn't necessarily be as established in their friend groups.

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

I didn't experience culture shock.

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

The English culture is pretty similar to ours, and there weren't any stand out things that I can think of. Surrey is quite an affluent area, so some of the RHUL students are quite posh, but everyone was really nice.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The pub culture over there is really great – make the most of it!

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

I was welcomed really nicely, and they make a big effort to make sure you're comfortable and doing 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?

As far as I can tell, the school was well-equipped for students with disabilities, and I don't believe there was any discrimination toward minorities.

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

No discriminations that I noticed, there are heaps of different cultures, languages, ethnicities and religions on campus and there never seemed to be an issue.

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 activities available, and we were encouraged to take part. Lots of choirs and sports teams to join, which many of my friends did.

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

London is really close, but depending on what you're interested in there's a lot to see elsewhere. I would definitely recommend doing some train travel, as it's really reasonable and easy. Try and book in advance for train travel – I got a ticket to Edinburgh for £17! We did weekend trips to Brighton, Dover, Wales, Bath, York etc – there are lots of options and they're all great!

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

There seemed to be plenty of opportunities on-campus, although I'm not sure if they were really for exchange students. I didn't really look into it as I wasn't allowed to work on my visa anyway.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I'm not sure that there would be many short term internship opportunities, but potentially some volunteer work – I think they go over all of those things on the orientation day, and it's made clear as to who to talk too if you're interested etc.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm Coat
2	Good Shoes
3	Camera
4	A good backpack or weekend bag for short trips
5	Lots of travel adaptors

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

1	Go for walks around the local area – Windsor Great Park is so beautiful, and Runnymede is really great. Make the most of the changing seasons, things change so much over your stay.
2	Tesco is amazing and cheap – make the most of it!
3	Attend the RHUL activities that are run by the uni groups – musical theatre, quiz nights etc. There are lots of things going on all the time!
4	Check out all the local pubs/bars – there are lots of them around, don't just stick to Monkeys!
5	Make the most of every single second – time will fly!

Top 5 Things to do

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

- 1 Make the most of the sunshine and sit in the quad when you can.
- 2 Write a to-do list for your priorities in London – it's surprising how quickly you run out of time!
- 3 Make the most of studying in a building that's basically a castle – take lots of photos and show them off!
- 4 Make the most of the cheap traveling around – whether it's around the UK or Europe, see as much as you can because it's so much more accessible than here!
- 5 Apply for a 16-25 card as soon as you can.

H: Personal Experience

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

Doing an exchange is something I have wanted to do for a long time, so it was amazing to finally be able to do it! Royal Holloway is such a beautiful university and I'm so glad I chose it. I met so many people that I would not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise, and I was able to see some incredible places that have been on my bucket-list forever. Studying English literature and History in England is so perfect, because you can actually go and see the places you're studying and learning about, it's amazing. There are so many people to travel and explore with, and I loved every moment of it. It was so nice going in the first VUW trimester because I went over in winter and it got warmer, and all the plants came back to life – it's so nice to see all the flowers come out! I was so so lucky with the weather and had some amazing sunshine, even if it was pretty cold to start with. All the buildings are incredibly well heated though, so it's only ever cold when you're outside. I really enjoyed my study at Royal Holloway, and I loved the way the fact that the structure allowed me to travel a lot as well. I made so many new friends from all across the globe, and this



trip only encouraged my desire to travel even more!

Photo One: The beautiful campus of RHUL!

Photo Two: The ANZAC Dawn service at Hyde Park, London.

Photo Three: The Punchbowl, Windsor Great Park. About a 20 minute walk from campus, looking like this once spring has sprung!