

Vic OE Evaluation Form

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	LLB/BSc
Major(s)	Psychology, Theatre
Exchange Institution	University of California Santa Barbara
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 2, 2012

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	No books required for my courses
Accommodation	\$600 per month
Return Airfare	\$1300
Local Transportation	Free buses available to UCSB students but you'll also want to buy a bike once you get there from craigslist or equivalent
Meals	\$8 - 10
Visa	\$200
Health & Insurance	\$600
Personal Spending	\$500
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$20 per month
Other fees (specify)	\$60 for club fees
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Food was a lot cheaper than expected. I chose to live in the University owned apartments which are cheaper than most of the houses in town. Renting a car is expensive if you are under 26

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

I budgeted for a lot more than I spent which meant I had money left over to travel with.

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

I used a foreign bank account, it was easy to set up and I took my money over as a bank draft.

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

Plan to spend more than you expect to.

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

The coffee in the US is, as a whole, very, very bad, so be prepared for that, and cost anywhere from \$1.50 (on campus filter coffee) to \$5 (best coffee I had at Proof bakery in Los Angeles).

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?

\$300 ish. The process is very straight forward. The only annoying thing is having to go to Auckland for the visa interview but this is simple to book online via the consulate website. The actual interview didn't take very long but you do have to queue up (once going through airport type security).

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

Have all your documents (proof of finances etc) with you when you go to the embassy. My interview was very easy but I know of other students who were interrogated because the amount of money they had proof of was something like \$30 under the estimated budget the university recommended.

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?

All UC universities require you to have health insurance and your travel insurance will not suffice. It was around \$500 but then you can go to the doctor, dentist, physio, dietician, and more on campus for free. If you have onward travel you can also see the travel doctor. I was travelling to Central America after my studies and all of my vaccinations and antibiotics for on the road cost around \$60 as opposed to the \$300 plus it would be in NZ.

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

I bought the UCSHIP as health insurance. For travel insurance I used 1-cover.

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					
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Psychology of Memory	English	PSYC 3XX	20	5	The teacher was fantastic and the course was well taught
Psychology of Close	English	PSYC 3XX	20	2	While the topic was interesting the course

Relationships					was poorly taught
Medieval Theater	English	THEA 3XX	20	5	Excellent course, very interesting and well taught

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration was all online and was straightforward

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?

Unfortunately as new exchange students to UCSB we do not have priority in registering so some of the courses were full by the time I was able to sign up (at 4am one morning). Some teachers let you crash the courses once you arrive at the university and I recommend emailing the lecturers and going to see them when you arrive (before classes start) if you really want to get into a particular course that is full.

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

Academic Experience

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

Academically I found the courses surprisingly accessible. This really varies depending on the department, but my psychology courses had two multiple-choice tests as the only form of assessment. It's a different mind-set where students can actually achieve 100% on a test and do aim for this.

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 was much the same in my courses but the workload was a lot lighter.

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?

Three courses of 4 credits is a good amount. The memory course I took was fantastic. The professor really knew his stuff.

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

Group study is a great way to bond with American students.

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

The library has a fantastic view (which rivals even the Kelburn library) from the 8th floor but this does not aid productivity on this level. Internet access is open to everyone (no login required) so sometimes there are people who are obviously not students taking advantage.

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?

University owned apartments, Santa Ynez

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

It is very cheap, has a gym, comes furnished, has a lot of international students and is easy to organize. However, it is a bit far away from the real heart of Goleta (Del Playa)

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

A lot of the international students stay in these apartments so it's a great way to make those kind of friends. If you want to get amongst American culture I'd recommend looking on craigslist for a spot in a house where someone will be away for a quarter.

How early can you move into accommodation?

One week before classes start

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

There are on-campus meal plans available but I just cooked in the kitchen in my apartment.

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

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

Don't sweat if you miss out on a spot in the apartments. Lots of my friends arrived with nowhere to stay and found a room or met people to rent a place with.

G: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Most of the friends I made while on exchange were international students. I think this is because there were a lot of them in the apartments where I lived and also because they wanted to do the same things I did (e.g. go away in the weekends, explore Santa Barbara etc)

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

It's a very similar culture to Vic.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? How would you

recommend students to prepare for these differences?

Be prepared to have your accent mocked on a daily basis.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Santa Barbara has great Mexican food. Also Del Playa on the weekends is a very unique experience

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

People will fall in love with your accent and treat you kindly

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 Santa Barbara is quite an accepting place.

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

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?

I joined the excursion club. They take you surfing, on tramps, on camping weekends and have great parties. I found it difficult trying to find a club that would accept me as I was only at the university for a quarter and they were looking for a year-long commitment

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

I most enjoyed going to concerts in new places, generally places I wouldn't have gone to otherwise. The Grand Canyon is a must-see, as are Las Vegas, San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles.

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

I didn't look into work opportunities.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Vegemite
2	Whittakers chocolate
3	Vogels (all the bread in the States is sweet)
4	A good attitude

5 A good camera (or buy it there, it will probably be cheaper)

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

1 **Pack light: If you forget something, you can always buy it in the States and it will definitely be cheaper than if you bought it in NZ**

2 Make use of your weekends: travel, explore, socialise

3 Start thinking of Halloween costume ideas (you will need at least 3 different outfits)

4 Go to at least one sorority and fraternity party – it's definitely an experience

5 It's not going to be as scary as you think it will be

Top 5 Things to do

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

1 **Grand Canyon**

2 San Francisco

3 Yosemite

4 New York

5 Portland

I: Personal Experience

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

My exchange at UCSB was the time of my life. I met the fantastic people from all over the world. I was terrified of going but I am so glad that I took the plunge, as it is a period of my life that I will always treasure and never forget. Santa Barbara is an idyllic setting. In between classes you can walk on the beach or go for a surf. But while the courses I took were really interesting, it is the time I spent exploring California with my newly made friends that was the highlight of my exchange.