

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 Commerce
Major(s)	Marketing and e-Commerce
Exchange Institution	State University of New York at New Paltz
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 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	\$250
Accommodation	\$4,000
Return Airfare	\$2,300
Local Transportation	\$0 – didn't need to pay for transport around New Paltz. Walking everywhere is easy and the loop bus around town and the bus to Poughkeepsie is free with your student ID
Meals	\$2,500 (on campus meal plan)
Visa	\$700 (including airfare/hotel in Auckland for interview)
Health & Insurance	\$1300 (SUNY Health insurance and travel insurance)
Personal Spending	\$5,000 (depends on how often you go to NYC (\$40 return bus) and how much shopping or other travel you plan to do...)
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$175
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Everything has tax on top of the price you see, so it's never quite as cheap as you think... Not completely sure but I think it's around 7% for most things (food, clothes etc), and around 14.75% for hostels/hotels. In general most stuff was a bit cheaper than it would be in NZ, but not significantly so. They do have better sales though (when I first arrived most clothing stores had 75% off for about a month).

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

Spent a lot more than I planned to, but only because I ended up going on a cruise to the Bahamas and then to Florida over Spring Break when I'd only budgeted to go to another city or state in the USA. I also did more shopping than I'd planned. Most things cost pretty much what I expected them to though.

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

Used an Air New Zealand OneSmart card and had no problems. If you have a smartphone over there the app is really handy. Never had a need for a US bank account so it's not worth the hassle.

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

Remember that tax is not included in prices for things. Make a weekly budget and stick to it! I made one but didn't stick to it, and it made things pretty hard for me at the end of the trip. It's very easy to spend a lot of money very quickly, especially if you go to NYC a lot. Accommodation in NYC is not cheap either, even in hostels (around \$50+ a night for most).

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

\$1.50-2 for coke, \$2-4 for coffee (depends where you go)

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?

Yes. It was not difficult, but it was a long process – so start early! You have to do an online application and gather a whole lot of information/documents that they require. Then you have to make an appointment and go to Auckland for an interview and take those documents with you (you can't do this in Wellington – you have to go to Auckland). When I booked my interview the only interview times were before 10am so I had to fly up/stay in a hotel the night before. Ended up costing around \$700. Maybe \$500 of that was the actual fees for the visa (there's 2 different fees you have to pay). The actual interview etc is not difficult, just make sure you don't leave it until the last minute. The amount of time it will take depends on how long it takes you to gather the documents. From when I first applied to when I received my passport back with my visa was just over a month.

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

Do it early!! (as soon as you get your DS-2019 form from SUNY you can start the process)

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?

Yes. There is mandatory health insurance for international students at SUNY. From memory it cost a little under \$900 for the semester, but depending on when you leave the USA after your exchange you may be able to get a refund for some at the end of the semester. I left about 3 weeks after final exams ended and got about \$200 refunded at the end.

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

On top of SUNY's health insurance I also got travel insurance which covered me from when I left NZ to when I got back to NZ. It had some medical insurance as well, but mostly covered my travel/luggage. Cost just over \$400 to be covered for the entire semester with 1 Cover Insurance.

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
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VUW Trimester 1					
BUS429: Marketing Strategy	English	MARK303	15	2	About 60% of the grade was from group work. There was 12 group assignments to do so if you get a bad group like I did it's a bit more difficult. 90% of the classes are a group presentation on a business case study for basically the entire class. All learning is done from your peers doing the presenting and so I ended up learning a lot about American brands and random industries but very little in terms of actual marketing strategy. I felt like the only things we actually covered were things I learnt in 100/200 level marketing courses at Victoria. A bit disappointing!
BUS271: Legal Environment of Business	English	n/a	15	3	This class was great. I took it as a night class and our professor was an attorney during the day, so she had some awesome stories to share! The entire course was multi-choice tests and a tiny bit of class participation, and the lectures very strongly followed the textbook so it was pretty easy. Some content was similar to FCOM111 but had an American twist. Learnt a lot of other interesting things in this class too. I'd recommend it!
HIS205: The Jewish Experience	English	n/a	15	3	Ended up taking this class as I couldn't get into the other one that I wanted to. It's taught by an actual Rabbi but he is really laid back and actually tells some pretty great jokes. There was A LOT of content and the lectures were not very structured, but it was quite interesting as I didn't really know anything about Judaism before this. There's a lot of Jews in New Paltz so

					it was interesting to know a bit about their history.
HIS151: American Heroes	English	n/a	15	4	Professor for this class is great! He's very flexible and understanding – and he loved having a New Zealander in the class to compare things with and get an outside perspective. He doesn't lecture though, the entire course is just class discussion which was an interesting experience. It was a fun class though!

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

We had to choose 8 courses ourselves and rank them in order of preference (by using the course descriptions on their website). A lady at SUNY then communicated with us and registered us for classes where there was space available.

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?

Not greatly successful. Most classes in New Paltz are small (20-40 students) and they fill up very quickly. We weren't registered until the American students had already registered so a lot of my choices were already full. You can contact the professor and ask for an over-ride and some will let you but some will not. If you say that you require it for your major on your application I think they try a bit harder to get you into the class, but nothing is guaranteed.

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

Submit your course request as soon as you get access to the SUNY online application. Make sure you'll be happy with all the courses you put down. They'll try their best to get you into your top choices, but it's not always possible so make sure you have backups that you'll still be happy with!

Academic Experience

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

It was quite different, but easy to get used to. All the classes are quite small so it felt a bit like high school again. In terms of actual academics, felt like we were 'spoon fed' a lot of the time instead of having to think critically for ourselves. Even the 400 level course I took seemed very easy. The classes were easier than I expected them to be.

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?

Since the classes were a lot smaller most of my classes were mainly discussion based. Instead of lectures and a tutorial like at Victoria, all the class time seemed a bit more structured like a tutorial. There were times where I did have a lot of work to do, but the workload never seemed as bad as times I've had at Vic. Everything is A LOT more flexible there. I had multiple assignment/tests dates pushed back, or got rid of all together (and they just would give you the option of either doubling a grade from something else, or doing an optional assignment). The professors had complete control and just changed things as they wanted/as needed due to snow days/other reasons. There was also random opportunities for extra credit in some classes. Everything seemed a lot more laid back.

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?

You have to take 12 points to be considered 'full time' in order to fulfill your J1 Visa requirements. For most people this is 4 courses. I wouldn't recommend doing more than 4 if you want to have time to have fun/go to NYC etc. I'd recommend taking a subject/course that you can't take at Vic if you can! They have some cool things like dance that you can't do here.

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

Just do what you're told to do. All of my assignments/tests were explained really thoroughly, and most professors tell you what sort of things are going to be in your tests/exams so there's no excuse to be unprepared. But if you're stuck with anything, talk to the professors! All of mine were really friendly and willing to help (especially if they know you're an international student)!

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

I didn't use the library much as they had a lot of good resources online and I mainly studied in my room or in the main lounge in my hall. There's computers in all of the halls and a few computer labs around campus which were quite handy. There's wireless internet access in the halls/all over campus and I never had a problem with it!

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?**

Residence hall (Dubois Hall).

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

Pros: It's a suite. I was lucky and ended up in a corner suite meaning there was 4 rooms (each with 2 people) and our own lounge/bathroom. I automatically got to make 7 American friends.

Cons: if you're trying to sleep and your suitemates have friends over and are in the lounge it can be a bit

noisy. Only 1 shower between 8 people (though most suites only have 6 people).

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would recommend going into a suite instead of a corridor style dorm. It's a great way to meet more people and if you're used to flatting in NZ, it seems a bit more independent since it's like an apartment (just without a kitchen).

How early can you move into accommodation?

There was a university organized airport pickup at JFK/we moved into our halls on the 15th January and International orientation started on the 16th. Classes started on the 21st and most of the American students did not get back to campus until the 19th/20th so you have time to settle in before the campus gets busy.

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

There's a kitchen in the basement of all the halls, but you have to have your own cooking things (pots etc) so I never used it. If you live on campus you have to have a meal plan. I was on the unlimited meal plan which meant I could go to the dining hall whenever I wanted and had \$50 'dining dollars' to spend at other places on campus. I would recommend going on the 5 or 14 meal plan though. You have 5 or 15 meals at the dining hall per week, and then depending on how many you have, you get dining dollars to have your other meals at other places on campus. There's lots of options for other places like pizza/pasta, sushi, subs, soups, burgers etc. The dining hall food wasn't as bad as I expected, but I got a bit sick of it towards the end. But there was always heaps and heaps of things to choose from and it's all buffet style.

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

I lived on campus.

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

If you have a preference of a suite or a corridor room then write it at the bottom of your housing license (there's no actual space for it). You probably don't want to be in Esopus or Lenape Hall. They're nice, but they're really far away from literally everything else on campus. I personally would recommend Crispell as it's right next to the dining hall and not too far from classes. It's suites and is one of the halls that has been recently renovated!

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Being in a suite I automatically had 7 'local' friends, and aside from 2 or 3 people, the only Americans I made friends with were my suitemates friends. I was surprised that in classes nobody really talked to each other – I thought I'd make friends in classes but I didn't. Any Americans I spoke to though were always really interested to know I was from NZ and they always have a million questions (some of which were pretty stupid questions – but you get used to it)! Everyone was really friendly but it was definitely easier to

become friends with other international students.

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

I didn't find it very difficult at all. While there were some minor differences, nothing really shocked me enough that it was difficult to get used to.

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

I didn't find any differences challenging.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Everyone was really friendly and curious about New Zealand. I appreciated how laid back everyone was. All in all their culture isn't hugely different to ours, there's just some minor differences in the way they do things but nothing drastic enough that I preferred or disliked it.

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

Everyone was really friendly! New Yorkers have a bad rap for being rude/fast paced life style, but even in the city I found everyone to be really nice. On campus everyone (professors/students/staff) was really friendly, especially if they knew you were an exchange student. Everyone made me feel really welcome.

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?

From what I could see there would be no problems. New Paltz was a very versatile school and had all kinds of people there and I never saw any sort of disadvantage or discrimination towards people with disabilities or 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.

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 are literally hundreds of clubs to join – there's a clubs fair where you can learn about a lot of them. But anything you can think of, there's probably a club for it. I would definitely recommend joining ISU (International Students Union) as they did a lot of cool events like a multi-cultural festival/talent show, and held movie nights and presentations from students about their home country every week. They also organise some trips at a good discount too! I would definitely recommend doing some of the Outdoor Pursuits trips through the gym (Skiing, Ziplining, Ice Climbing, Kayaking, Horse Riding etc...) they're all

really cheap, but spaces are pretty limited so sign up as soon as you can once you get there, even if the trip is a couple of months away!

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

Going to NYC! I spent quite a lot of time there and never ran out of things to do, there's so much to see and it's an amazing city. It's really easy to get there and back from New Paltz as well. There's an awesome cruise that we went on for Spring Break as well which leaves from/returns to NYC which is perfect! Norwegian Cruise Lines 7 night cruise to Florida/the Bahamas – I'd definitely recommend it!

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

Most of my suitemates had jobs at places on campus, but I never looked into it.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There are clubs you can join which do volunteer work (I recommend Circle K International club). I didn't look into internships.

5 things to take to your host country or region

- 1 A good jacket if you're going to be there in Winter/Spring Semester (and possibly some snow shoes, but you can get those over there)!
- 2 As much spending money as you can. There will constantly be opportunities to go on trips or do things that you don't want to miss out on.
- 3 Some NZ foods to share with people! My suitemates were fascinated by (and fell in love with) chicken chips, pineapple lumps and kiwifruit chocolate in particular, though I gave them a large variety of foods
- 4 A camera – obviously!
- 5 DON'T take heaps of clothes if you plan to go shopping. There's plenty of opportunities to go shopping at the start of the trip and it's a hassle having to buy/pay to bring home/carry a second suitcase.

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

- 1 Join clubs or do other things to make friends – I found that everyone sort of kept to themselves in class and didn't really talk to anybody (not just talking to 'new people'), there wasn't much conversation in general which I thought was a bit strange. So don't rely on classmates to make friends.
- 2 Don't be afraid to ask your lecturer for help. It can be harder at Vic as the classes are much bigger, but I found that since the classes are quite small they know all of their students by name and are very willing to work with you and alter things for you if need be.
- 3 Don't go on the unlimited dining hall meal plan unless you have a really big appetite. Go on the 5 or 14 meal plan.
- 4 If you have a preference on the kind of residence hall you want (whether this is a specific hall or just a corridor or suite hall), put it on your housing application! Your living situation can impact your experience so if you have a preference, say so and it will most likely be catered to.
- 5 Make sure you do your course requests ASAP. And have backups! Since the classes are small you might not be able to get into your first choices.

**also one more piece of advice... I didn't book a flight from New York to LA for the end of my trip to come back home. I just got my flight home from LA with a couple of weeks spare after leaving New Paltz. That way you can decide what you're going to do before you come home once your there/you might want to make plans with new friends. So unless you already have a definite idea of what you want to do I'd leave it open ended! I ended up taking a 4 day/3 night train from NYC to San Francisco which I never would've planned for before I left and couldn't have done if I'd already booked a flight.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Go to NYC – lots! (Brooklyn Bridge, Times Sqaure, Broadway, Central Park... the list is endless!) And visit DUB Pies in downtown Manhattan if you're missing a good ol' Kiwi pie and milo!
2	Travel somewhere with friends for Spring Break if you can! It's probably the only proper 'Spring Break' you're ever going to have!
3	Explore the town of New Paltz and its surroundings (Mohonk etc). There's a lot of history around New Paltz/Poughkeepsie area.
4	Take some classes/a subject that you can't take at Victoria
5	Get involved with both the Americans AND international community

H: Personal Experience

Ever since I can remember, going to school in the USA has always been a dream of mine. My experience at SUNY New Paltz certainly lived up to my dreams. I feel like I experienced the real 'college' experience and made some lifelong friends. There were obvious advantages like being so close to New York City, but it was much more than that. The opportunities I was presented with while on exchange allowed me to get out of my comfort zone and do some things I never thought I'd do. While it was initially a scary thought once reality set in – I was actually leaving my friends and family to go and live with strangers for a few months – I wouldn't give up my experience for anything. The memories I made while on exchange will be cherished forever. I can't wait to travel more and see all my American and international friends again!



