

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VICTORIA ABROAD AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Biomedical Science
Major(s)	Human Genetics and Molecular Pathology
Exchange Institution	University of Surrey
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 2, 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	\$50 (I didn't buy any textbooks, used the ones available in the library)
Accommodation	\$4000
Return Airfare	\$2000
Local Transportation	I walked everywhere but the train cost \$30 to get to London and was much more expensive to get anywhere else.
Meals	\$30 (each week)
Visa	N/A
Health & Insurance	\$400
Personal Spending	\$1000 (in total)
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$100 (in total)
Other fees (specify)	-
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	The Laundromat on campus was quite expensive (\$9). Everything was about the same price as NZ

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

The cost of food was about the same as NZ but train transportation to get to other parts of England cost more than I expected and the accommodation price was quite high but you had to pay it in one installment which made it more difficult.

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

BNZ has a cash passport that I highly recommend. You use it like a mastercard and there is an easy to use app you can install on your smartphone, which made transferring money and keeping track of the money easy.

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

Don't open a bank account unless you have to- there are large fees for international students. Use a cash passport or an equivalent.

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

\$5.50 from Starbucks.

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 a British passport so did not need a visa and made the whole process of travelling in Europe much easier.

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

Not applicable.

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?

Insurance was not mandatory.

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

Downunder Insurance NZ

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					

BMS2037	English	No equivalent, contributes to HGen major.	15	3	There was a lot of overlap with BMSC117 Vic course
BMS2038	English	BMSC243	15	4	Similar to equivalent Vic course.
BMS2036	English	BIOL241	15	4	Similar to equivalent Vic course
CHE2024	English	BMSC243	15	3	Very difficult if chemistry is not your major

Course Registration/Enrolment

Please describe the registration process at your host university. What kind of help was available? There was an enrollment day where you sign off what you were studying. You were then sent your timetable and were introduced to personal tutors and international student tutors. Any problems I had the tutors were very good at helping me and ensuring I could do all the papers that were required.

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 successfully enrolled in all the papers I needed to enroll in and the personal tutors were very good at helping me with any clashes or problems I had. If you have any problems find someone to talk to- they are more than happy to help, especially if they are papers you are required to do by Victoria University.

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

The modules at Surrey university are completely separate so choosing papers from different modules is not recommended. I was required to take a chemistry paper as well as biology papers which meant I had a lot of clashes which made it easy to fall behind so try to stay in one module.

Academic Experience

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

It was about what I expected. It was slightly more free-form than I expected.

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?

It was very similar. I found the workload slightly less than at Victoria. There were fewer lectures per week

and fewer labs if you are a science student but that meant more time on your own studying.

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?

It is required that you take 4 papers you don't get a choice to take less.

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

Attend all the lectures and ask for help when needed. I found it easier to fall behind, as there weren't as many tutorials as I was use too.

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

Very good. The wifi is fast and easy to access. There are lots of computer labs on campus and the library had very good and easy to use facilities with friendly helpful staff.

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?

Not applicable.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

On campus accommodation.

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

It was quite expensive and you have to buy your own cooking utensils and bedding, etc. but it is handy being right on campus and only a few minutes walk from the supermarket or town.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

On campus accommodation. I didn't look at off campus options but the on campus accommodation was very handy as it was close to both the town centre, Tesco supermarket and being right on campus means you don't have to use the bus system.

How early can you move into accommodation?

A week before class starts- they give you a move in date.

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

On every level of each on campus accommodation there was a shared kitchen with an oven, stovetop, microwave, fridge and freezer, etc. to prepare your own food. You have to buy your own pots and pans, etc.

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

Not applicable.

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

The cheapest options at Surrey University are still really nice- the only con is that the cheapest is not on campus so you have to use the bus (which is very unreliable) or walk. They try to make sure international students get a room.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

It was very easy to make friends with other international students as we all had a 3-day orientation together. It was harder to make friends with locals, especially in class. The classes were very big and hard to approach people in that setting. During the labs I had it was easier to make friends as you were in a smaller group.

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

The culture was very similar to NZ.

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

None.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Culture was very similar to NZ

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

Everyone treated me how they would treat each other. I didn't experience any discrimination.

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?

It is similar to NZ so I assume they are accepting of students with disabilities, etc.

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

No discrimination.

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 is a huge fair for both societies and sports where you can go check out what is on offer. There are hundreds so there is something for everyone.

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

The university organized day trips that you could go on to different parts of England, e.g. Cambridge, Cardiff, Bath that I highly recommend. It is a lot cheaper than going by train or bus. However, the train system is very good and goes just about everywhere.

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

I didn't look at work opportunities.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I didn't look at volunteer opportunities.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm waterproof jacket during Winter
2	Plug adapters
3	Waterproof shoes
4	It's very similar to NZ, you just need what you would pack on a normal holiday
5	-

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

1	Join a society or sport group offered by the university
2	Take advantage of the student union trips
3	Get to know other international students- you can explore parts of the country together
4	Everyone is very friendly and will help if needed
5	Try and prepare for just how dark and gloomy the Winters are. It gets dark ~3:00pm and the sun doesn't rise until ~9am. It can be hard to stay positive with a heavy workload during that time.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Spend a day doing all the tourist stops in London
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2	Go punting down the canals (available in almost every town)
3	Go for the weekend to Dublin
4	Take a walking tour of Guildford (free and get to know the history of the town)
5	Visit the beach (even in Winter)

H: Personal Experience

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

My exchange experience will be one of the top highlights of my university experience. Although I didn't go to a non-English speaking country and get a huge culture shock it was a great opportunity to see the opportunities with my degree over in the UK and explore somewhere I had never been. I am quite a shy person so the experience challenged me and I now have life long friends with not only local British people but also other international students from Surrey University. I used every available moment to explore all over England and tried to visit as many countries in Europe as I could. I believe the exchange program is a fantastic opportunity and everybody should give it a go.