

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BSc / BCom
Major(s)	Physics / Marketing
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	\$0
Accommodation	\$3000
Return Airfare	\$2700
Local Transportation	\$15
Meals	\$50 per week
Visa	\$0
Health & Insurance	\$300
Personal Spending	\$100 per week
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$25 per month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Grocery shopping was cheaper than expected, but eating out was more expensive than expected. Trains to London more expensive than expected

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

Finances were more than expected, mostly because the New Zealand dollar got worse compared to the pound during the time.

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

I used a 'Cash Passport'. Really convenient way to transfer money from home each week.

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

If you are going to use a cash passport for money, try to transfer a bulk amount when our dollar is good compared to the pound.

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

Coffee was about £2 so around \$4.50

**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 difficult time with the visa. There are two types of visa you can apply for, a Tier 4, which costs \$800 and allows you to work whilst studying, or a Short Stay Student Visa, which is free and you just apply for at the border, but you cannot work. I applied for the Tier 4 visa in advance, which was rejected. It shouldn't have been rejected, but I did not have time to request a reevaluation, as there was limited time between getting the confirmation from the university, and the semester beginning.

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

Aim to save enough money to support yourself during the study without expecting to work, as there is a potential that the work visa could be rejected and you will need to study without working.

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?

Not that I am aware of

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

I got a year long travel insurance from STA with my tickets.

## 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
<b>VUW Trimester 2/2015</b>					
Mathematics of Weather	English	300 Level Math	15 points	3	Easier than 300 level Math at Victoria, but really interesting
Lagrangian & Hamiltonian Dynamics	English	300 Level Math	15 points	3	Again, easier than 300 level math. A good course
Critical Thinking in Performance	English	200 Level Theatre	15 points	3	Interesting

Acting: Performing the Self	English	200 Level Theatre	15 points	3	This paper was 100% performance based, so would change from year to year depending on which lecturer takes the class.
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### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration process was relatively easy, just selecting modules from the module catalogue on the Surrey website, and applying via an online form.

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?

It was easy, try to take modules from the same year, as this significantly reduces clash likelihood.

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

When choosing equivalents from VUW, check which textbooks the Surrey Uni uses from the module catalogue

### Academic Experience

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

I was surprised that the Maths papers I took at Surrey seemed easier than those at VUW.

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?

Teaching style similar

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?

4 modules (Equivalent to 4 VUW papers)

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

Understand the lecturer and what they want, I found quite often all my lecturers gave big hints of what content they wanted to see.

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

Library is a great open, bright space for learning.

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?

NA

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

University Accommodation, the cheapest band, Hazel Farm

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

Pros: Flatmates, own room, shared kitchen, super cheap by London/Guildford standards!

Cons: My particular flatmates were quite untidy in the kitchen, no lounge room.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would recommend the Accommodation I stayed in to future students, Hazel Farm is a little far away, and the busses are a little unreliable, but if you have a bike and don't mind walking it is great!

How early can you move into accommodation?

A week – a week and a half before the term starts.

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

The kitchen was good.

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 met other exchange students who didn't get campus accommodation, it can be significantly more expensive. Some exchange students overcame this by agreeing to share rooms together.

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

## **F: Personal & Cultural Connections**

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

Local friends came from my flat mates and from joining societies at the University

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

Cultures similar

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

English people seem to take things more seriously than kiwis.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Celebration of Christmas and warm English Pubs

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

Much the same as anyone else

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?

The UK seems relatively progressive

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?

Right at the beginning of the year there is a huge "Freshers Fayre", where all the societies try to convince you to sign up. There are societies for everything, I would definitely recommend.

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

Take advantage of how close London is

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

On campus, lots of students seem to work at the Surrey shop, at the café, and at the student nightclub.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Unsure

### **5 things to take to your host country or region**

1	Kiwi gifts for families you may stay with
2	Sports gear for the awesome sports park
3	Coat
4	Umbrella
5	Waterproof shoes

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

1	Get a bike to travel around
2	Join at least one society
3	Utilise the nice library facilities, it's a good way to make friends
4	There's loads of pubs in Guildford, keep exploring these
5	Get a 16-25 railcard

### **Top 5 Things to do**

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

1	Take advantage of cheap flights to nearby countries (go to Morocco)
2	Go to a big football match
3	Go to the West End Theatre

4 Take advantage of all the food markets in London

5 Check out the old historical buildings and churches

### **H: Personal Experience**

The biggest thing I will take away from this exchange is new friends. Surrey was really good at introducing all the exchange students in the beginning, and from here, I met a group of 6 others with whom I became incredibly close. Over the Christmas period, rather than travelling home to NZ, I took advantage of these new friendships, and travelled through Spain with the families of new friends, working hard to learn the language as well. We forget how isolated we are in NZ, and it was incredible to be so close to so many interesting cultures, who interact so differently to each other, despite the close physical proximity. Guildford itself is a little bit small and sleepy, but London, one of the biggest cities in the world, was just on my doorstep, and that was fabulous for food, and activities. Also, the history of Europe is incredible, and I found it so interesting to discover and learn from this.

