

Vic OE Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VIC OE AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BSc and BA
Major(s)	Psychology, Linguistics, Statistics
Exchange Institution	Tübingen Universität
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 and 2 2013

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	N/A (No textbooks required for my courses)
Accommodation	\$90 p/w
Return Airfare	\$2700 (with two nights in Singapore)
Local Transportation	\$100 per semester for transport ticket \$100 for a bike
Meals	\$80 p/w
Visa	N/A
Health & Insurance	\$124 p/m
Personal Spending	\$16000 (including all travel)
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$30 p/m
Other fees (specify)	\$600 security deposit, \$10 p/m for medication, \$30 for library membership
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	My laptop broke and cost about \$1000 to fix, but I was lucky that my travel-insurance covered it.

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

Living in Tübingen was much as I expected. Many things are subsidized, so they are often cheaper than in Wellington.

I spent vastly more on travel than I expected, but I also did much more travel than I had planned.

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

I was extremely fortunate to be a recipient of the Baden-Wuttemberg scholarship in my second semester.

I got a credit card (necessary for booking into some hostels) from ANZ – however I suppose any credit card would do.

It is necessary to have a German bank account in order to matriculate. However I only ever used mine to pay my rent and some other fees.

I used an Air NZ ONESMART card to transfer money from New Zealand dollars to Euros. It's like a debit card but you load it from your bank account. There are no conversion fees, but there are ATM fees depending on where you withdraw. I would recommend using it over your NZ debit card/credit card as fees can get very expensive. It costs \$50 to apply for one but is worth it in the long run.

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

Try and stick to a budget. The more cost-efficient you can make your expenses like food the more money you'll have for travel and other fun activities. But on the other hand, remember that you are only on exchange once – make sure to experience all the things you want to do and don't leave regrets!

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

\$1.60 for a can of coke.

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 personally did not have to apply to a visa as I am fortunate enough to have dual New Zealand and United Kingdom citizenship. As an EU citizen I can reside anywhere in Europe without a visa.

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

I have no experience with this, but it is important to realize that Germany is very bureaucratic country and having all the right forms *before* you start applying can make everything go much quicker.

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, it was mandatory to have health insurance in order to matriculate, though the provider is the student's choice.

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

I used A-OK insurance, and I would recommend it. I used several health-providers in Germany and I have no complaints, insurance covered everything except a 5 euro charge on some necessary medication.

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					
Einführung in die Philosophie des Geistes	German	Philosophy 200-level	20 points	4	I wrote my assessments in English, and many of the readings were in English
Heiße Debatten	German	Elective	N/A	4	German-Language paper: Debating contemporary issues
Aufbaukurs	German	German 300-level	20 points	3	German Language paper: General
Spiegelschrift	German	N/A	N/A	2	German Language paper: Creative writing
Einführung in die Logik	German	PHIL211	20 points	5	I ended up dropping this course because it was too difficult in German.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Sprachphilosophie	German	PHIL 231: Philosophy of Language	20 points	4	I wrote my assessments in English, and many of the readings were in English
Linguistics for Psychologists (Psycholinguistics)	English	Linguistics 100-level	20 points	3	
Speigelschrift	German	Elective	N/A	2	German Language paper: Creative writing
Fertigkeits-Training	German	Elective	3		German Language course: General

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

I am not aware of the process for domestic students, but I attended two sorts of courses at Tübingen. For the DaF (German language) classes I filled out a form at the beginning of the semester at 22 Wilhelmstraße as to which classes I would like to take (with a maximum of three), and then paid a small amount for the courses (usually no more than 50 euros each inclusive of textbooks)

For the courses at the University I just emailed the professor explaining that I was an exchange student and that I would like to take part of their class. Usually I got an email back saying that it was no problem, and then I requested a meeting to talk about assessment etc.

Help was available from the preparatory course I enrolled in at the beginning of my stay in Germany, either the START course or the Deutsch-Kompakt-Kurs. I also found the foreign exchange liaison to be very helpful in any questions that I had.

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 was successful in nearly all the classes I wanted. However, I would urge students not to procrastinate in enrolling for German language classes as there is a very large population of exchange students and only a limited amount of places, especially for the intermediate-level classes.

For University classes I would recommend thinking carefully about language capabilities, and perhaps taking a mix of English and German-language classes. I struggled greatly in my first semester, as I took all my classes in German, and this was especially difficult in my philosophy classes. Although on the other hand, I improved more in those four months than in my whole eight years before that!

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

Make sure to look around for classes that interest you and you might not have the chance to take at VUW. Tübingen has a huge range of really interesting classes – the caveat being that they are nearly all in German. Most professors are willing to be flexible to allow you to submit essays and exams in English, but you have to make sure to ask them very early in the semester – ideally in the first week.

Make sure that you gain permission to get classes transferred before you take them. It's also necessary to realize that in Germany there are much less contact hours, so while it is tempting to fill up your timetable, they will be as much or more work as courses at VUW.

Academic Experience

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

I usually had one two hour lecture or seminar a week for the University courses, with a two-hour optional tutorial. Attendance was not taken in any course but the introduction to logic. There was vastly less internal assessment, with assessment focused on one or two essays/exams, though weekly reading summaries were expected, though not graded.

With classes being in German, I struggled a lot with comprehension, but was able to keep up with a lot of time spent in the library on my texts and copied notes from my classmates. I felt that because of this extra care, I learned a lot from my classes, and my German got much better.

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 was similar, though many less contact hours. The workload was much more on the student. With less internal assessment it was necessary to apportion a certain time of each week to doing readings/studying so as not to fall behind.

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?

If students have an aim to improve their German, I would recommend taking as many German-language classes as possible, especially the Aufbaukurs, which is very comprehensive. I would also recommend taking perhaps three University courses, but not all in German.

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

Make sure you have a regular study timetable. Form a study group. Ask if you can copy your classmate's notes (it is also a good icebreaker) if you struggle to take notes and listen at the same time. Talk to your professors about any academic concerns you have as an exchange student early.

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

Computer facilities are good, but internet is limited greatly on the University computers in computer labs and the libraries. It is much, much better to bring your own laptop (or enough money to buy a second-hand one while you are over there). Internet in Germany is much faster than in New Zealand and is also unlimited.

The library is very good, but the majority of books are in German.

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?

I prepared for this by learning German for about eight years non-intensively before leaving, five years at High School and finishing 300-level before I went..

I would recommend the preparatory Deutsch-Kompakt-Kurs, even though it is very expensive (600 euros), as it is more intense and longer (5 weeks) than the START-Kurs (3 weeks and 70 euros). It is a fulltime course with about 6-7 hours of German lessons every day and numerous cultural activities.

During the semester I took the "Aufbaukurs" which was nine hours a week and built on what I had learned in the Deutsch-Kompakt-Kurs. If you are there during the summer break there is the International Summer Course which is similar to the Deutsch-Kompakt-Kurs in intensity and price, but I did not do that as I was travelling.

In addition to this, the University runs roughly 150 courses at all levels and on different topics that can be taken during the semester.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in University-owned student housing

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

Pros:

- It was cheaper than equivalent places in Wellington – roughly \$90 to \$110 a week including all expenses and unlimited and fast internet.
- It is sorted out before you leave, so you have peace of mind knowing that you have a place to stay
- They are very warm in winter and not damp.
- Any problems can be brought to the Hausmeister (caretaker) and will usually be taken care of very quickly.
- If you are staying for two semesters it is possible to apply and move to a different room/building that you think might suit you better the second semester.

Cons:

- You have no choice in where you live, although you are asked to give a few alternatives you are offered a room and must either accept or decline as there is an extremely large demand.
- Buildings will vary dramatically. Some will have thin walls and small apartments, some will have large corridors and many separate rooms on each floor. Some will have all German flatmates and some will have a mix of international students and German students. Some are close to where

your classes will be and some are very far away. Some will need to you to pay separately for laundry and some will not. Some will have an RA, but most will not.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

It depends on the student, and their needs and wants. I would recommend thinking about what is important for them – ie, closeness to University, a vibrant student community around them, quietness, privacy etc. Some information can be found here when applying to University housing.

http://www.my-stuwe.de/cms/front_content.php?client=1&changelang=3&idcatart=601&idcat=92.

WHO (Fichtenweg) is usually the most popular option, as it is a student village with a few thousand students living there and it has a dedicated student bar as well as *many* internalevents.

All of this can be found more easily when looking for a private apartment, but this is vastly more expensive and difficult, as there are many, *many* students looking for such accommodation, and there is no guarantee something suitable will be found.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved into my room on the 1st of March, as I was attending a preparatory course. If a similar course is attended in the summer, the 1st of September. If the International course is also attended, then the 1st of August.

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

There will be cooking facilities in every student housing. Sometimes this will be shared with your floor, sometimes your flat.

There are two cafeterias that serve lunch Monday-Friday (Wilhelmstraße and Prinz Karl) and one that serves dinner Monday–Thursday (Wilhelmstraße)

They both have vegetarian options, and Wilhelmstraße has some vegan options, though they are somewhat limited.

Set meals were 2.75 euros, with Wahlessen (free choice) more, depending on what was chosen.

Set meals were a bit hit-and-miss, but generally all right and fairly healthy. Wahlessen was significantly better, with many healthy options.

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 – it is nevertheless important to say that this is a much more expensive and difficult. Tübingen is a small town, and roughly 25% of the population are students looking for accommodation.

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

Apply early, and think about what is important to you. Try to talk to students who have gone on exchange to scope out what kind of accommodation is available and where you might be happiest.

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 difficult to make friends at the start, but I am a fairly introverted person who generally dislikes parties and large events. Nevertheless by the end of the year I had made several good friends. It was very easy to make connections with international students through German language classes, living together and extracurricular activities.

I made a few German friends through the mentoring programme they had and through my classes – often just introducing myself and saying I was from New Zealand was enough to make social contacts.

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

For me it was very difficult. I would not recommend going directly from living at home to being independent for the first time in a foreign country.

In Tübingen there is a large community of international students, so students can, if they wish, live in a 'bubble' without too much culture shock. It is obviously more difficult if you wish to integrate more into the local culture, and it is easier if you want to stay for a full year.

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

There is a great deal more formality in Germany than in New Zealand. For example, professors are to be called by their title and surname. Things tend to be more bureaucratic and exacting than in New Zealand – for example when I was picking up a package at the customs office it was necessary for me to bring about four forms along with me to be able to actually take it away.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

When German people say they'll do something, they really mean it. I like the emphasis that German people put on being outside and enjoying outdoor activities. The food is awesome!

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

Local people and students were polite, but more welcoming when I spoke in German. It was easier to integrate when I mentioned that I was staying for a full year. University staff and faculty were unfailingly helpful.

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?

There is a great deal of support for mental health. I suffered reasonably severe depression when I was there but was treated satisfactorily by the doctors and counselors (English) while I was there, and the international office supported me. There is a very well-regarded hospital near the center of town, which would be able to care for a range of disabilities if needed.

There is an excellent disability office that offers supports for students with disabilities, though I did not to use it. I doubt there would be any difficulties for ethnic minorities, so long as they had a good grasp of English, as there are many, many international students.

Tübingen is a very liberal city and there is a strong LGBT community. I am bisexual and I did not find any difficulties due to that.

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

I did not suffer any forms of discrimination.

None whatsoever.

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?

German Universities do not typically have clubs like New Zealand Universities. There is a committee of students for each department – these are called a Fachschaft and they will often have events and

excursions. This is a good way to meet German students who study the same things you do

There is a group called STUDIT who mainly run for international students. They offer a mentoring service to match you with a German student to show you around. They also have a fortnightly meeting and many very cheap excursions which are a good way to make friends.

There is Hochschulsport, where the University offers many cheap sports classes from folk dancing to fencing. However these are first come first serve and fill up very quickly.

The DAF department offers some German-language related "courses" that are more extracurriculars, such as a choir and theatre productions.

Other than that, if you google your interest in German plus Tübingen/Reutlingen it's not hard to find a private group. You just have to be pro-active.

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

TRAVEL! Germany is so well situated in the middle of Europe. Even if Europe is not an option, there are many, many cheap trips and excursions within Germany organized by various groups.

With the Bahncard, train travel is quite affordable.

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

There are jobs available in Tübingen and in the surrounding villages that are similar to jobs in Wellington, retail etc. However they usually want a reasonable level of German. There is a service similar to SJS, but there is more of a need to seek them out yourself.

There are some Hiwi's (internships) available on the Departmental websites, but these are difficult to get, as it is quite competitive.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There are many opportunities for students, however it is necessary to seek them out. I can't really comment as I didn't do any internships and the only volunteering I did was walking dogs at the Tierschutzheim (animal shelter) occasionally.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A sense of adventure
2	A diary to write in
3	A camera
4	An open mind
5	Enough money to explore new things

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

1	At least learn the basics of German before you go
2	Make sure you go out of your comfort zone as much as you can
3	Homesickness is very normal, but never let it consume you
4	You'll always regret the things you didn't do more than the things you did, even if they sucked.
5	Talk to everyone, about everything. Everyone you meet is a potential friend

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Stoherkähne rides in Summer
2	Hiking
3	Europa park (has the second biggest rollercoaster in Europe)
4	Bike riding with friends around Tübingen then icecream after
5	Visit Berlin and all the other German cities!

H: Personal Experience

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

I loved my year abroad. I had a lot of ups and downs, but it ended up being one of the most amazing, transformative experiences of my life. I've become reasonably fluent in German, more outgoing, much more thoughtful of global issues, and I have a lot of friends I'm so happy I got to make.

All the clichés are true – you'll make so many friends, have the most amazing experiences and in the end you'll blink and wonder where the time went. On the flip side, sometimes it was very difficult, especially with recurrent depressive episodes. Nevertheless, I always found tomorrow was worth waiting for.