

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 Arts and Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Sociology, Environmental Studies and Development Studies
Exchange Institution	Tübingen University
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	-
Accommodation	\$2,250
Return Airfare	\$1,800
Local Transportation	\$200
Meals	\$1,500
Visa	-
Health & Insurance	-
Personal Spending	\$1,000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$200
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Transport around Germany was more expensive than I thought, especially their rail system! Everything else, such as accommodation and food, was very affordable.

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

About the same.

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

I was able to get a bank account within the country, which I would highly recommend.

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

University accommodation is much cheaper than finding your own place. But you might prefer your own place, and you can also find your own place in the center of town, while university accommodation is further out.

Also, apply for jobs! Many exchange students I know didn't but I did, and it was really beneficial for my finances then as well as future plans.

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

The same as New Zealand.

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 didn't have to as I had a European passport with the UK, so unfortunately I have no knowledge of visa applications and can't offer advice, my apologies!

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

As above

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?

No, they didn't.

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

I didn't have any travel insurance as a personal choice. My health insurance was free from England, but most have to pay quite a bit in Germany.

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 2/2015					
The nature of sex	English	Elective	14	3	The entire content of the course focused on only two authors, which I did not enjoy. However the assessment was extremely flexible, which I liked.
Topics in Social Inequality	English	Elective	12	4	I liked this course
Comparative Politics: Middle East	English	Elective	14	2	This course was great. The topics were probably not things a

and North Africa					New Zealand course would focus on.
German A1 For Exchange Students	English	Elective	10	4	Good introductory course, but overall the knowledge we gained was very basic, and I think we could've learnt more.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Requesting communication or help prior to arriving was frustratingly impossible. As soon as you arrive it's all available, but I was very frustrated you could access help prior to arriving.

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?

There was no information about courses prior to arriving. Once you arrive there's a good selection, but some timetable clashes and complications mean you can't take everything you want to.

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

I found information about courses is really hard to access and to predict. I'm not sure there is anything students can do about this, however.

Academic Experience

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

It differed a little bit. The lectures were all 'seminar-style' – way more student participation and in some courses, hardly any lecturer-teaching.

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 differed as above, workload was about the same

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?

My load of four courses was fine. I'd definitely recommend the Politics department, there's a particular large amount of English-taught courses (there's comparatively hardly any for Sociology)

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

The same advice as would be given to succeeding at VUW

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

Pretty good. Every different building has all of those three.

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?

Yes, but you had to arrive much earlier before the Trimester and I wasn't able to. I wished there was

an intensive course closer to the arrival date. The course I took during the semester was pretty good, but it didn't result in much knowledge beyond the very basic level.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

University apartment shares

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

Pros – much cheaper than finding your own place.

Cons – further away from town. Also a less comfortable and personal vibe to having your own place.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Depends which they prefer over those pros and cons.

How early can you move into accommodation?

One month before Trimester starts – unfortunately you have to pay for this month non-negotiably, even if you won't be there.

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

Shared kitchen.

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

It was quite easy to get, even though the application warns you there's no guarantee you'll get it, right up until moving in!

The locations is also very difficult to physically find when you first arrive to the city.

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

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F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Pretty easy, although I personally thought German students tended to keep to themselves more than NZ or UK.

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

Easy – there are lots of connections between the cultures

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

I personally didn't find any cultural differences challenging.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Connections to nature

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

Pretty well. Some people were pretty negative towards non-German speakers, but not most

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?

This is a pretty broad question for those very distinct issues. But the student-majority city was pretty progressive, and I also noticed more students with physical disabilities than I saw in my NZ or UK university. Did you face any issues regarding discrimination in your host country? What were they, and what advice would you give to future students?

I encountered two separate occasions of German professional men who were very discriminatory towards non-Germans. I experienced this as an English-speaker, and I'm sure the discrimination would be much worse for non-white, non-English speakers. Although the majority of people I met weren't like this, I would still recommend to be prepared for this, and trying to have a good support base around you, to people who may be at risk of such 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?

Many – Germans seem to particularly love clubs and activities!

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

Make the most of being very close to the border of Switzerland, Austria, France, etc

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

Opportunities are pretty hard to find, especially for non-German speakers

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

The careers service has some information about some internship opportunities – but again not many for non-German speakers.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm clothes
2	Study equipment like laptops
3	A few nice things to remind you of home
4	Walking shoes
5	I'd recommend packing as little as possible – anything you end up needing can be easily and cheaply!

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

1	Be prepared for how small the town is
2	It can get very cold – but the sun and snow in Winter is still very beautiful!

3	It's much easier to organize things once you're there
4	University accommodation will save you some money
5	Most importantly, find out everything you can before you sign up, so you choose somewhere you like

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Walk/bike to surrounding cute small towns
2	Get a bike!
3	Visit further away cities
4	Hop over the borders of France, Switzerland, Austria
5	And make the most of using the country as a springboard the rest of the continent!

H: Personal Experience

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

I really loved Tübingen overall. It's such a cute town, and the Winter was beautiful with sun and snow most of the time (it hardly ever rained!). And I loved being able to visit other countries so easily. The organization before arriving in the exchange destination is really quite a nightmare – but once I arrived things fell into place over about a month. So it's worth it, but I suppose being able to arrive as soon as possible would remove some stress! Tübingen is in one of Germany's wealthiest regions, so the bubble of privilege is a bit weird. But overall, Tübingen is lovely. As a vegan, it was also amazing for that! And I will definitely be going back to visit one day.