

# 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                            |
| Major(s)                   | Cultural Anthropology and Classical Studies |
| Exchange Institution       | University of East Anglia                   |
| VUW Tri & Year of Exchange | Trimester 2 (2014) and Trimester 1 (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.)

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|----------------------|---|
| Books                | None (The one class with set texts I was able to borrow the required books from the library)  |
| Accommodation        | \$7,600 For a full academic year in Norfolk Terrace (ziggurat), single room. UEA have a range of accommodation, Norfolk and Suffolk Terraces are medium-range. From what I saw of the others, it's good value. The ones with private bathrooms/en-suites in the other building are not worth the extra cost, I wouldn't bother with them. The Ziggurat flats have a private sink, and shared bathroom, but we had no issue with sharing in our flat. Note: I emailed ahead a requested a mature flat. They don't 'formally' have them, as most people in accommodation are first years or international, but they did have one put together and it was really worth asking about.   |
| Return Airfare       | All up \$2,400 through STA at Vic   |
| Local Transportation | Bus into Norwich was £3 "Young Person" (under 19 years) return or £4, though if you get a 5 person ticket its only £8 unlimited travel for the day, so if you can travel together it's much cheaper. Taxi is around £6 one-way.   |
| Meals                | Tesco's a pretty averagely priced, about the equivalent of Countdown her in NZ. I budgeted high for groceries so spent about £40 a week on food, but my flatmates manages just fine with £20 a week. Generally groceries are cheaper than in NZ, and there is more range in options. Also home delivery is very cheap (£1-4), so in Norwich it's more cost effective to do a grocery order either along or with flatmates than traveling into Norwich. There is a small Tesco express about 5 mins walk down the read for small items. The on-campus store is VERY expensive, so reserve that for emergency purchase.<br><br>Eating out in the UK will be around twice the price of NZ. I'm not ever kidding. Avoid eating out if you're on a budget. |
| Visa                 | Teir-4 Visa (full year): \$636  |
| Health & Insurance   | \$620 for 10 months through STA at Vic  |
| Personal Spending    | I budgeted \$50/£25 a week for general life expenses, but when I didn't go into town I didn't use that much. Living on campus meant that I didn't need to buy lunch, just go home for food midday etc. I don't drink much so I didn't spend on alcohol, but the drinking culture is pretty strong and Norwich has a ridiculous number of bars so that can be costly if you go out.  |

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| Communications (phone, etc.)   | UK have a bunch of mobile providers. You can get basic pay as you go packages or monthly packages like here. However, apparently they don't do just data only packages, so if you want data you have to get a larger package (min £6 a month). Internet is included at UEA without extra cost. It's pretty good, just slow after about 5pm. |
| Other fees (specify)   | None other than printing  |
| What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected? | Just the general set-up costs of bedding, kitchen stuff, etc. I'd say budget a good \$200-400 for set up. Keep in mind you won't be bringing most of that stuff back so don't splurge too much! I did have to renew my passport though, so that was \$134   |

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

I actually underspent, but I did over budget quite a bit. I think it was more or less what I expected. I did a lot of research ahead of time.

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

I meant to get a UK bank account but just never got to it. I had around \$2000 cash to begin with and a credit card. I was meant to also have a travel card but a cock-up on BNZ's end meant it never got validated and I was without the whole trip. Which sucked. I ended up paying for the flat's online grocery orders each week and having my flatmates pay me back in cash so I always had cash handy. Only do this if you have mint-as trustworthy flatmates (I was pretty lucky).

I recommend having a travel card and lots of cash, as well as a credit card for emergencies.

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

Have good lunch food at home so you don't have to eat out. Generally don't eat out if you can avoid it, it's so damn expensive! Have a set grocery budget and spending budget for each week and stick to it! That way you'll know you have enough month the whole way through.

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

That I can't help with, I don't drink either xD Sorry.

**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 did have to apply for a visa, as I was staying for a full year. I had to get the Tier-4 Visa. The process was a bit complicated (there was little support for questions) but manageable. Biggest advice, get it sorted WAY in advance. I think you can apply from within 3 months of arrival, so get it done the very second you are able to account for any delays. I left mine way to late and ALMOST didn't get it in time to leave; we're talking a week leeway. Very stressful! Avoid that and you'll be fine. UEA were SUPER helpful in getting it through. You'll need a CAS form from them before you apply. The visa cost \$636 plus \$134 for renewing my passport.

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

See above. In short, get it sorted as soon as you can to avoid any delays and stress. UEA exchange office is

super friendly and helpful and they know the process really well, so email or call them if you need help.

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 can think of. I got travel insurance anyway. There is a built in content insurance for accommodation though, which can be extended to include electronics like laptops. It's all on their website.

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

STA at Vic. No complaints, good price (so much lower than I's thought it might be). Never had to claim on it, but I don't travel without insurance so I would have had it anyway.

### 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 1/2014</b>                             |                         |                                   |                          |              |   |
| History of Norwich                                      | English                 | History: 200 Level                | 20                       | 5/5          | HIGHLY recommended if you enjoy history. It's a great way to learn about Norwich (which is WONDERFUL), and to see more of the city than you would otherwise do on your own. The lecturer are amazing as well, so nice and excited about the subject! Included fieldtrips! |
| The Origins of the English Landscape 4000 BC to 1066 AD | English                 | History: 200 Level                | 20                       | 5/5          | I adored this subject and the second part (optional) in the second semester. A look at English history through the landscape. Very much based in physical history rather than written history. Landscape History  |

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|---------------|---------|--------------------------|----|-----|--|
|               |         |                          |    |     | department is tiny and very friendly, great lecturers! Included fieldtrips!                |
| Teenage Kicks | English | Media Studies: 300 Level | 20 | 4/5 | Super interesting look at the history of Teenage culture in film and subcultures in media. |
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**VUW Trimester 2/2015**

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|--|---------|--|----|-----|---|
| The English Landscape 1066 to 1600: Built and Semi-Natural | English | History: 200 Level                             | 20 | 5/5 | Second part to the Sem 1 Landscape History paper, can be taken independently of each other, but flow into one another well. Loved it! A great look as landscape, urban, and social history of England.          |
| Virgil's Epic  | English | English Literature/Latin Literature: 300 Level | 20 | 4/5 | Very enjoyable, but I struggled A) because I'm not a literature student and this is 300 level literature paper, and B) I'm dyslexic and this is a 300 level literature paper. Worth it if you enjoy the Aeneid! |
| The Archaeology of Ancient Cyprus                          | English |  | 20 | 5/5 | INCLUDES A FIELDTRIP TO CYPRUS! The most amazing week over Easter Break. Class is really interesting and relaxed. If you dig (pun) archaeology and physical history this is so for you!                         |
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## Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Went pretty smoothly, had to change some classed when I was over there but it was pretty straight forward, just had to fill in some paperwork. The Hub for my department was helpful in getting it sorted, plus depending on the lecturer they can be helpful too (some as pretty snobby though, it depends)

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 getting into all my first choices. All the changes I made were preference based or a mistake on my part.

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

Do heaps of research and have some viable back-up choices ready incase you have to drop a class or you cannot get into your first choice. It makes it much less stressful to have an alternative plan worked out ahead of time!

## Academic Experience

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

It's both the same and very different a system compared to Vic. The marking is much steeper! The best description I got was that whatever mark you get (they're out of 100), add 20 to get roughly your equivalent mark at Vic. So a 60 is about the equivalent of an 80 or a B. Don't panic if you get lower looking marks. People also refer to marks as 1sts/1-1's, 2-1s, and 2-2s. This is basically A First degree marks (high 1), a high Second Degree mark, and a low Second Degree mark. Look into the marking system before you go so you know what to expect. 70+ is considered a First Degree mark and they are HARD to get, so anything above a 50 and you should be pretty happy, don't expect much higher than a 65. I maintain a high A average at Vic and I was getting consistent 65s at UEA.

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?

First off, classed are really small! It's a shock after being used to lecture theatres to have a class of maybe 40 people. My smallest class was only 8 people (Archaeology of Cyprus)! It's nice, much more personal, and easier to interact with. Most classes have 1-3 lectures a week and one seminar group (like a tutorial). Most classes have a total of 3 contact hours a week, so class timetables aren't too heavy. There are quite a few readings, but it's manageable. I honestly got through it all without doing many of them (dyslexic) and don't have much trouble. Oh, and not many people seem to use laptops in class, so you much feel like the odd duck if you bring yours along. It's cool, but you feel very unusual. I ended up switching to hand-written notes.

Most of my classes had two essays during semester. They don't jump into them as quickly as at Vic, so there

a are a few weeks of downtime at the beginning of the semester with not actual work. Don't waste them! After that everything comes hard and fast! They don't seem to get the concept of staggering assessments, so make use of those first weeks to get some research in on your assessments!

Exams are held once a year in May/June. So if you're only there for Semester 1 you'll likely do a coursework only option, which is an extra essay. If like me you're there for the full year ALL your exams will be in the period! A full years worth of exams in one exam period. I was lucky to only have three (others were coursework only), but some people can have 6! Might be worth considering when picking classes to avoid too many exams.

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?

I did the usual three classes a semester. That was about right, so I'd recommend that.

If you enjoy history then definitely consider history of Norwich in Semester 1 (Autumn), it's a great way to get to know the city's history and see more than you would otherwise. It has lots of fieldtrips! Also the lecturers are wonderful and enthusiastic!

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

Keep a good balance of travelling/exploring and coursework. Just the usual really. I had an international flatmate who when away every other weekend to travel, but she was flat out all of the time. If you can do it and keep your grades up then go for it, otherwise plan your travelling around holiday breaks if you can or before and after semesters.

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

Didn't interact much with the computers labs, but there were some in the library and they were pretty good. Keyboards threw me off though xD Library is extensive and good. It has lots of good spots to work with really nice views of the campus. WiFi is available throughout the campus, though there are some dead spots out on the walkways. It's all free, so if you live on campus you get that for free, which was nice. Also of note is the Sportspark. It has a book and gym, though they do cost. Heaps of clubs and societies!

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 England was very English.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Norfolk Terrace (Zuggurats)

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

Pros: Reasonable price compared to the other accommodation options I say. Would be my first pick again. Have an amazing view of the lake. Every room has huge windows and gets great sun. The space is pretty reasonable, some accommodations spaces were really small, but this one felt quite comfortable, I think the window helped. Personal sink and mirror, which was good for evening bed prep etc, and avoiding busy

bathrooms. Three toilets and two showers to the floors, which are, really just big flats (12-14 people each). Never any issue with sharing the bathroom. One communal kitchen per floor with two pairs of hobs (four elements), a grill, two microwaves, and two full size fridges. NO OVEN. Alas. Fridges could get a bit crowded, but otherwise the kitchen worked out well. This was the only communal space other than the hallway. Our flat was really sociable and ended up being a huge family, but not all flats were like that, it's the luck of the draw who you're put with. I did request a mature flat so we had a lot of old students (20-22ish) which helped. Soundproofing between rooms was really good, most noise can through the floor/ceiling, door or windows. Generally pretty quiet unless there was a party.

Cons: They're a registered heritage building, but they're a bit run-down. Maintenance could be a bit slow. No oven.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Definitely Norfolk Terrace! (or I guess Suffolk Terrace...if you want)

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in two week early, most internationals did. Domestic students moved in one week before classes started.

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

Self-catered.

Kitchens had good facilities, lockers for food, two fridges (just enough space), tow sets of hobs (needed a bit of planning but manageable), a grill, and two convection microwave ovens. We made cake in those microwave ovens, so they're pretty alright!

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

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

Do you're research, and if you plan to join a club there join their Facebook group and ask about feedback on accommodation. Most people stayed in the in their first year. Also email accommodation with any questions, they're helpful. That's not I go into a good flat, I said I didn't want to be with first years in an email.

## **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 really easy making friends in my flat, but quite hard in classes. Everyone already knew each other for 2-3 years and it was tough getting to know people there. Accommodation was easier because most people were first years or internationals and thus in the same boat looking to meet people are I was. Clubs and

societies are good too, though I didn't have any luck, the clubs I went to weren't really sociable.

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

Pretty easy, England's just like a bigger, British'er NZ

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

The English drinking culture is a bit more intense than ours (hard to believe right!?) it's not bad, but they do it a whole bunch. Doesn't mean you have to though, I never felt pressured to do so.

Generally it was pretty easy and everyone was really nice.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

How friendly everyone was.

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

Really well all around!

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?

They had good facilities for disabilities (physical and mental). No obvious minorities, they seem pretty accepting. Good LGBT support, lots of societies etc. I doubt anyone would have any issues from what I experienced.

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

None.

## **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?

Lots of clubs and societies!

I joined the archery club, something I haven't done for years. It was fun and really easy for beginners. Also tried my hand at Kayaking club. There is a river beside the university. All the usual sports clubs are there too. Also joined the Doctor Who club, they were nice. A list of clubs and societies are on the website, and most have Facebook pages if you have questions.

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

Exploring Norwich is fun, it has an amazingly rich history, and lots of cool old buildings! London is only a 3 hour bustrip away, and if you book a couple of weeks ahead of time will only be \$5-10 on Megabus. You can

make a daytrip without any trouble. The buses stop on campus (both Megabus and National Express), you can get a 5am Megabus in and a 5pm or 11pm back and have a full day in London for really cheap!

Norwich is a reasonable sized transport hub, so you have get buses and trains to a lot of other parts of the country easily enough. Travels pretty easy. Train is faster but more expensive. Megabus is the cheapest option. Me and some flatmates took a bus out to Great Yarmouth one weekend and it was really fun! It's an old holiday town, sort of domestically touristy? Worth a trip out, try and go in summer if you can.

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

On campus: The Shop (little really expensive grocery store) hires regularly, just have to keep an eye on their page. The campus pub and bar also hire students at the beginning of semester. Email before you arrive to enquire. These are pretty comparative as you might imagine.

Off Campus: Norwich is pretty big, so there are lots of job opportunities there.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There are a number of historical and museum places to volunteer in Norwch.

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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | <b>Sheets: if you want a flat sheet that isn't work and arm and a leg then bring one with you!</b>                                       |
| 2 | Pineapple Lumps or other NZ confectionary (for you and for others)   |
| 3 | Power bar! If you have lots of electronics being and NZ power bar and a NZ to UK adaptor for it to, rather than buying lots of adaptors! |
| 4 | Camera, take ALL OF THE PHOTOS!  |
| 5 | Lots of enthusiasm and adventure!  |

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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <b>Explore the campus, it's really cool. The Sainsbury Centre was used in the Avengers AOU!</b> |
| 2 | Explore Norwich and learn about it's history, it's super cool!                                  |
| 3 | Make use of buses to day-trip adventures, they're pretty connected.                             |
| 4 | When in London, try and walk rather than just taking the tube, you see so much more!            |
| 5 | Make use of UK friends to see some more places! I got to spend a week in N. Ireland and hike!   |

### Top 5 Things to do

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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | <b>London (of course!) There is SO MUCH to see and do, make lots of trips!</b> |
| 2 | Southbank, London: A wonderful walk full of great sights.                      |

- 3 Northern Ireland: If you like hiking/exploring the Mourne are AMAZING! So is the northern coast.
- 4 A Christmas Market in Germany. It was magical! Even the domestic Christmas markets are great.
- 5 Get lost in the Broads behind UEA xD We took the wrong path.

## **H: Personal Experience**

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

I had an AMAZING time, I'm so glad I went! I got to visit some places I've dreamt of and others I could never have imagined. I met some of the most amazing people who I now think of as family, and am so eager to see again in years to come! I was pushed by my friends to try new things, and challenge myself and I wouldn't thank them more. I got the opportunity to study subjects not available to me at home, and see some of my interests up close and personal!