

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 Engineering
Major(s)	Software
Exchange Institution	University of East Anglia
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	

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 I didn't have purchase any books for the modules I took
Accommodation	£128.38 per week/\$300 – I stayed on Campus in Constable Terrace which is the most expensive on campus accommodation, but the room is really roomy and you get your own en suite bathroom
Return Airfare	\$2500 return It's quite expensive to fly over Christmas, but I left flights quite late so its possible to get the price down if you look into it earlier
Local Transportation	£12/\$28 for a ten trip on the buses from campus to city centre or the train station if you're a young person (19 or under)
Meals	£15 - £20/\$35 for a weekly grocery shop if you go to the cheaper stores like Aldi and Morrisons, eating out is more expensive though
Visa	I didn't need a visa to study for only 6 months
Health & Insurance	\$700
Personal Spending	\$5000 – most of my personal spending money was spent travelling Europe during the breaks
Communications (phone, etc.)	I had a phone plan that was £18/\$40 which gave me unlimited texts, unlimited data and 200 minutes per month with Three. It also had free at home which meant I didn't have to pay roaming charges in lots of overseas countries, which was handy for travelling
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	It's really expensive to eat out, and its easy to think in dollars rather than pounds and you end up spending more money than you expect. I also didn't expect to travel as much as I ended up doing

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

I spent a bit more than I was expecting too, mostly because I made the mistake of thinking in dollars. There's also a lot going on in terms of social events which I spent more money on that anticipated

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

I opened a bank account in Barclays as they had a branch on campus, but they would only let me open a savings account as I was only there for six months which meant that I couldn't do anything except store money and use an atm card – so I would recommend looking at options like a cash passport before leaving

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

Don't rely on opening a bank account here if you're only here for six months. I would also recommend looking into a rail card for travelling around England as it makes it a lot cheaper if you're going often. And plan/book flights and hostels early when travelling around Europe.

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

Around £2.50 for a regular coffee in most coffee chains, although this is usually larger than a regular in new Zealand (not as good though!)

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?

You can get a student visitor visa if you're only going on an exchange for one trimester

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

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?

I don't think UEA had a mandatory insurance; I just went along what I was told from Victoria

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

I never had to claim anything, so I'm not sure if they're any good or not – my insurance was Flight Center

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	VUW points/credits	Rating (1-5)	Comments
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		elective	value		
VUW Trimester 1/YEAR					
CMP-6003B - Systems Engineering	English	ENGR301	20	4	Very theory based, important to actually attend the seminars as attendance is marked
CMP-5005B – Database Systems	English	SWEN304	20	3	Pretty straightforward, there's only one assignment though, so probably not as thorough as SWEN 304 would have been
CMPC3M08 - Software Engineering 2	English	SWEN301	20	4	A good mark is very dependable on getting a good group to work with. Helps if you have knowledge of Android
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The Study Abroad office is very helpful and nice in person, but can be very slow in responding to emails before you get there and required a lot of prodding from me and the victoria abroad office when I needed more information on modules they offered – so start looking early. I got there a day after registration day, and there wasn't a lot of advice given to me as they only set up for one day – I didn't know that I needed to get my visa checked until I read it in a handout a few weeks after 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?

I was enrolled into 2 out of 3 of the modules I wanted – but this was due to there being clashes in the schedule, UEA asks you to have a second and third choice for each module in case of this though, and I was enrolled into one of my second choice module. Letting UEA know if you have any mandatory papers means they try and enroll you into them as best as they can – I don't think there was a lot of completion for computer science modules anyway

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

Academic Experience

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

Computer Science at UEA is not taught as well as it is at Victoria. The facilities are not as nice, and are not open 24 hours, and there is less pastoral care – although that may have just been because I was going into third year modules and not familiar with the lecturers. There is also a lot less assignments and practical work, and I only had 12 contact hours a week, which is much less than I would have experienced.

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 is overall similar, there's just less lecture time. Workload is much less compared to Victoria.

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?

Taking three modules is the recommended workload at UEA so I would recommend sticking to that – especially if you would not rather spend your whole time overseas studying. Although being used to Victoria workload it would be possible to manage with four courses. I wouldn't recommend taking a module that is based heavily on group work, as I got placed with a group who slacked, meaning there was a lot of stress on my part to get the work done.

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

Start the assignments early, so you can ask for guidelines and help if you need them. Don't be afraid to talk to the lecturers, they were very understanding when I told them I was an exchange student, and they really are there to help. Also be aware of the different grading systems in the UK, it is very rare to get above an 85%

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

The regular library was similar to Victoria; I was just disappointed in the facilities given to the Computer Science students

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

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in Constable Terrace on campus

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

It was very handy to be living on campus, I would have spent a lot less time on campus and spent more money on transport if I wasn't. It was also had an ensuite bathroom which I was very grateful for, and a regular cleaner. Although it was one of the more expensive accommodations on campus, it was one of the quieter ones – less party orientated. I didn't have any problem living with first years even though I was a third year myself.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Definitely recommend living on campus, Constable Terrace and University Village are more expensive but quieter and more facilities. There are less students in each flat so you're sharing your kitchen with less people. Norfolk terrace is setup more like a 'dorm' and is more social – but you're sharing your bathroom and kitchen with more people, however is cheaper.

How early can you move into accommodation?

A week before Orientation

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

There was no meal plan, and I was sharing my kitchen with 9 other students living in my flat. There was no oven in the kitchen, which was frustrating but otherwise standard kitchen facilities. There are multiple places on campus to buy food.

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

know about living off-campus?

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?

You have to work harder to get the British to open up to you, I made close friends with the local students who I was living with, and the other local students I got to know were through my group project. I didn't really make local friends from my modules other than the group project.

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

Its very similar to the New Zealand culture – the coffee is not as good, and they have pubs not bars which I wasn't a huge fan of – but otherwise not much adjusting needed.

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

I really didn't find any challenging cultural differences

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

There's a lot of cool history!

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

Everyone treated me really well, the lecturers are really friendly and approachable, and I was able to make some really good friends

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?

I don't think it would be very hard for anyone to fit in at UEA, England is very multicultural and there are societies for LGBTQA students if they want to join. There are also societies for ethnic and religious minorities

Did you face any issues regarding discrimination in your host country? What were they, and what advice

would you give to future students?

I didn't encounter any 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 are lots of societies available to students – lots of them were focused on sports and sports teams. I would definitely recommend joining the ERASMUS and International students society and they organize trips – I went to Edinburgh and Amsterdam with this society

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

UEA's campus is very beautiful, and there is a great lake to walk around, especially during the warmer months. There's lots of events and things to check out in Norwich's city center like the castle and cathedral. During the longer breaks I would recommend travelling Europe and around the UK, and it's very possible to organize day and weekend trips to the closer cities like London and Cambridge and the seaside towns like Cromer. Ryanair and Jetstar are amazing cheap airlines to great cities in Europe, and if you plan ahead and only take hand luggage you can get flights at a really low cost – Stansted airport is so close to Norwich too!

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

I'm not sure you can work unless you get a student visa

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I didn't do either; I don't really think these are options if you're not there for long enough

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm Clothing
2	Money
3	An Open Mind
4	Knowledge about New Zealand Culture!
5	Smartphone

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

1	Live in a Hall – most of my British friends came from my hall and I was lucky enough to make close enough friends that I could stay with them while I was travelling around England
2	Be willing to go out of your comfort zone - the first few weeks are so important in making friends, go to events and say yes if people invite you out
3	Fly with Budget Airlines – make sure you research how to not get charged unexpectedly at the airport, Ryanair are notorious for overcharging for little things if you forget to do them yourself
4	Try not to get caught up with homesickness
5	Don't be afraid to do things by yourself

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Go to London – Its so cheap if you use megabus and only takes only a couple of hours
2	Spend some time in Europe – I highly recommend Barcelona
3	Do a ghost tour in Edinburgh if you visit!
4	Spend time in Norwich and on campus with friends
5	Go to LCR nights!

H: Personal Experience

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

Going on an exchange has probably been the best decision and best six months of my life. I have become a lot more confident in myself, and much more comfortable in my own skin. I've learnt so much about myself and other cultures just by being friends with people from so many different countries. Despite being so far away from home and my family for the first time in my life, I never really got homesick and I feel like this is largely due to the fact that I made some really amazing friends – when they say you make friends for life when you do an exchange they aren't kidding! There were definitely a lot of tears by the end of the six months and I found myself wishing more than anything I could stay for longer. Travelling through Europe gave me insight on so many different cultures and also made me appreciate New Zealand and Wellington a whole bunch more. Over Easter break I travelled to Spain, France, Germany, Czech Republic and Greece and Italy with three amazing friends and experienced travelling as a tourist and being hosted by locals (friends I had made from Europe who had headed home for the break). The only thing I didn't manage to accomplish was getting a lot of study in – but I've made my peace with this!