

Vic OE Evaluation Form

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BCA & BTM
Major(s)	Marketing, HRIR
Exchange Institution	Virginia Tech
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 2 2012

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	\$350
Accommodation	\$2500
Return Airfare	\$3000 (I went to the UK after the US on my way home)
Local Transportation	\$2500
Meals	\$3000
Visa	\$600
Health & Insurance	\$1200
Personal Spending	\$6,000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$250
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Travelling around the States is much more expensive than the likes of Europe in terms of transportation costs etc.

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

I spent a little more than I originally thought. It really just depends on where you choose to study and how much you want to travel around. As I wanted to travel, I spent more so than less.

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

I used a travel card from ANZ – basically you load US \$\$ onto the card and then you use it in America – buying things off the card straight away had no transaction cost each time but withdrawing cash charged you like \$5 each time – hence, you withdraw big amounts rather than smaller.

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

Living costs are much cheaper over there than Wellington so that's a bonus but save as much as you can so you can enjoy the college life!

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

\$1.50

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?

Yes – I applied for the J-1 visa which is for exchange students and was about \$300. Remember to pay both the visa fee and the Sevis fee before your interview and take receipts of both – pay the Sevis fee in advance as they send you a proper receipt from the US. You are allowed to enter the country 30 days before the date on your visa and you must leave 30 days after (they call it your ‘grace’ period). Make sure you have all the documentation and be prepared to wait in the line for your interview up in Auckland (all interviews are in Auckland so you have to go there to get it). I also applied for the B1/B2 visa (another \$300) which meant that I could stay longer at the end of my trip to travel however you do have to leave the country and re enter after your 30 days in order to ‘activate/change visa status’ to your B1/B2. Good luck that is all I can say!

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

Make sure you have every single piece of documentation when you arrive at the American border as they can be difficult.

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?

At Virginia Tech they are really strict with health insurance and it was really hard to find a NZ company that covered all clauses – hence I had to purchase two different insurance plans to cover everything.

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

Southern Cross

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 2012					
MGMT 4414	English	HRIR306	15	3	
MKTG 4704	English	MARK 302	15	3	
MKTG 3504	English	200 level elective	15	4	
HTM 3484	English	300 level tourism equivalent	20	2	

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

On the form VT send you, you write down your top 5-10 preferred courses (this you have to research yourself). Then when you arrive you hope that they have enrolled you in the courses you want! You have an academic advisor who you meet after the first few days and she/he then help you make any changes you may need. This is when you can add/drop courses – don't do it online (on HokieSPA), wait until you see them as being an exchange student you have to be exempt from meeting prerequisites (you advisor contacts your lecturers in order for this to work etc).

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?

Make sure you have back up courses that you could do instead, and make sure you get them approved by the Heads of Schools at Victoria first. I had to change a few of my course for various reasons and it would have been a nightmare if I didn't have back up courses that were already signed off. As an exchange student, you don't always get priority and the American students enroll in their course much earlier than we do.

Academic Experience

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

Class sizes at VT are so much smaller than at Victoria. I think on average there were about 25 students in my class so the lecturer gets to know you well. You do a lot of discussion work and some of the stuff we learnt was really interesting. All of my courses used a lot of relevant, recent, up and coming case studies and examples and we had lots of quite high profile guest speakers – such as the guy who created the 'Just Do It' Nike Campaign.

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?

In terms of workload, my courses had lots of mini assignments, homework tasks, quizzes etc that occurred constantly. Unlike Victoria when you only have two or three big assignments, work at Tech is more constant so you can't slack off as much as something is always due. But it wasn't at all harder than 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?

Most American students do 5 courses so I did 4 as I didn't want to be overloaded as I also wanted to travel etc. You don't have tutorials for business course but each lecture is longer than at Vic.

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

Make sure you hand everything in as while it might not be worth that much of your overall grade, you would be surprised at how fast your grade might drop! Oh and a C grade at Tech is actually 75%.

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

Amazing.

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 shared an apartment with some American friends.

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

No cons, only pros – so much fun, got straight into the Greek life (sororities and frats) as they were apart of it themselves and meet some amazing people. It was cheaper too actually.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Apartment – although this is harder to organize if you don't want to sign a lease. I was really lucky and actually knew my roommates beforehand so they organized it all and then I just stayed with them for the semester.

How early can you move into accommodation?

For the dorms I think it was a week before school starts – all international/exchange students have to be there the week before classes start for orientation.

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

Definitely get a dining plan – depending on how much you eat depends on what size to get. I got the Major plan, guys generally got the bigger ones. And the food is THE BEST. Can't even describe it, you can have anything you want. It's not like cafeteria food, it's all chains that operate at Tech. Last year tech was ranked to have the best food on campus out of like 400 schools, many of us ripped out jeans because of it.

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 was lucky and knew people in advance, not sure how to go about it otherwise but try Craigs List. You will want to get it sorted before you arrive at school, can imagine it being quite stressful otherwise.

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

If you are going into a hall, don't stress about being older and being stuck with 18 year olds! All the exchange students were put on the same floor in one of the halls of residence so for a few of my friends that were living on campus, they still had a great time!

G: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

The stereotype of 'arrogant and naive' Americans really isn't true. They are the friendliest and kindest people you can imagine. They are obsessed with the NZ accent so really starting a conversation isn't hard. All of my close friends were Americans but I was really lucky in the fact

that I lived with friends who were seniors already so I got to know all of their mates.

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

I didn't think there would be much of a culture shock going to the States. I couldn't have been more wrong. You might find that things you say, reactions that you get, different meanings behind words and things that you do are interpreted differently than you expect. I found I was explaining myself more often as the Kiwi culture can be very different.

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

It wasn't challenging, you just have to think about what you are going to say and be ready to explain what you mean – sometimes it was like I was speaking another language they just looked at me blankly..quite amusing.

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

Very well – they loved all of us internationals!

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?

No worries at all.

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

Nope – although very few people had heard of NZ or knew where it was so expect to be called Australian!

H: 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?

In the first few weeks of school there is a 'Gobbler Festival' in which all the clubs on campus get together on the Drill Field and you can sign up to whatever you like, there is such a wide range.

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

Do as much travelling as you can on weekends that not much is going on (although there is always something on actually now I think about it!). Tech is in quite a good location. The closest airport is in Roanoke and if you want to catch a bus anywhere the Megabus company that goes from Christiansburg (which is like 10 mins drive from Blacksburg and you can get the Smartway bus to the MegaBus Christiansburg Stop) is the only bus company that goes through/near school. Make sure you walk up McKnaffy's Knob which is on the Appalachian Trail, and also visit the Cascades (these are both like a 20mins drive from campus). But the weekends in which there is a football game on, means there will be a big tailgate and you shouldn't miss these – it is too much fun. Just to give you a perspective – the football stadium on campus that is just for VT college team is bigger than Eden Park in Auckland. It's ridiculous but too much fun!

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

I don't know as on the J-1 visa I don't think you can work?

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I'm not sure but there are heaps of companies that come to Tech (I only experienced the business companies obviously) and they are constantly trying to recruit students from Tech and showcase all their graduate programs – such amazing opportunities.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Pineapple Lumps and Tim Tams
2	America has everything so this question is too hard!
3	
4	
5	

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

1	Go in the Fall Semester if you can – it's more fun with the Football, Halloween etc
2	Make as many American friends as possible – you are there to experience the American culture!
3	Travel when you can and don't stress about school work too much
4	College life is just like the movies, don't worry, you will have the best time
5	Get good at beer pong.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Nights out at Tots, Big Als and Sharkies, followed by Bennys.
2	Tailgates/Football games
3	Travel and see as much as you can
4	Dining halls – you will fall in love.
5	Quite a few good hikes?!

I: Personal Experience

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

Virginia Tech is one of a kind. It has the typical American university life and I had the most amazing trip. The facilities at the school are out of this world and the opportunities you get to become apart of are simply priceless. The football tailgates, the really friendly and nice American friends you make, the sports grounds, the high profile academics that you get involved in, the trips around Blacksburg and around the country...it will truly be the best time of your life. To whoever is reading this and is tossing up whether or not to go to VT...do it. You will absolutely

love it and will have no regrets. I am only jealous. "Once a Hokie, always a Hokie."