

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

PLEASE TYPE THIS EVALUATION FORM & EMAIL IT TO VICTORIA ABROAD AS A WORD DOCUMENT

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Masters of Landscape Architecture
Major(s)	Landscape Architecture
Exchange Institution	Technical University of Munich
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Year 1 Tri 1

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	20NZD
Accommodation	360NZD (per month)
Return Airfare	2000+ NZD
Local Transportation	215NZD (for the semester unlimited rides)
Meals	62NZD a week for groceries
Visa	77NZD
Health & Insurance	138NZD a month full coverage
Personal Spending	77NZD a week max when indulging
Communications (phone, etc.)	23NZD a month basic package data + calls + texts
Other fees (specify)	Gym 31NZD for the semester
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Rent was cheaper than I thought but it's pretty basic. Travelling by bus in Europe is cheaper than I thought, from city to city.

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

I budgeted more or less correctly, nothing too over the top, just right.

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

I had a onesmart card to start me off with and brought Euros cash with me, everyone mainly handles cash in Europe. Then I got a local bank account which is necessary.

What financial advice would you give students attending the same university as you? Keep a spreadsheet of your expenses, it just helps keep in check of how much you are spending. It is very easy to lose count when you are dealing with cash most days and can't look over it later.

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

2.50-3.50 euros depending where you get it.

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?

NZ passport is pretty easy, you don't have to do anything until you get there. You are allowed to be there up to 3 months before getting a visa. It took about 15minutes but you need the proper documentation before hand which they tell you exactly what they need, then you make an appointment. Walked in walked out.

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

Don't stress out about it, I was weirdly nervous about coming into the country without anything with the intention to stay longer than 3 months. Also if you don't speak great German when you are making the appointment just kindly as any of your new German friends to come with you or help you call, as they mainly don't speak a drop of English at these centres, which is surprising.

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, this was a bit annoying as I already had insurance but because it had a money cap on it, it was not considered a full coverage insurance. Basically all of the insurance companies in Germany have a student one, and it is all very basic, straight forward all of the companies have around the same price. I went with AOK Bayern, and they were fine, all your doctors appointments, dentist etc is covered.

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

Yes AOK Bayern, were completely fine, you get a card and you just hand this card in whenever you go to the doctors etc. Handy quick and fast, no need to write out claims.

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					
Masterprojekt II/ Keller	German/English	Main Design Paper	30pts	3	The Germans have a very systematical way of doing their design projects. It was less stressful than I thought it would be, and practically no lecture

					time, just studio time.
German as a foreign language	German	Elective	15pts	3	Fun to do when in another country.
Public Space and Theory	English	Research Methods and Design	7.5pts	2	Lecture based class with a pretty straight forward assignment.
Drawing for Landscape Architects	German	Elective	7.5pts	3	So much fun to do with an excursion to another European city if you don't have to be back in NZ by Tri 2. Great tips of even how you could incorporate some drawings into your future project work.

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

It was a bit weird. It's a bit of a scramble but you do it on their TUM online website when they become available and you enroll to each class separately, and you basically have to find your courses if you do Landscape Arch otherwise I knew Arch had a whole list available to them.

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?

A handy tip was that even though things are full, it is always worth emailing the lecturer directly to ask if you can participate because they are pretty helpful to exchange students who don't know the procedures before hand and are willing to help out.

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

Try do things you enjoy or interested in, It is your exchange and you do want to be doing things you want to do that you may not be able to do at Vic such as doing another language or something a bit more artsy.

Academic Experience

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

I felt that everything was a lot more rigid, we seem to be more artistically free at Victoria which I found surprising. The school and Germans generalizing have a very systematical way to present and graphically present as well. I somewhat expected this but It was a challenge to compromise and work with them to find a middle ground that we could all be proud of.

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?

It is much more theory based than I thought. It wasn't as rigid as at Vic where we have to learnt certain things, it was a bit more free which I wasn't sure was a bad or good thing. You basically learn whatever your project or you is interested in more than being forced to attain a certain skill. I'm not sure if this I just based on the courses I did but some semesters for them are a bit more rigid, the Summer semester is a bit more free for them.

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?

To be honest the full amount is not that stressful. The courses I took did not have weekly assignments that were graded such as I did at Vic so I felt a lot more free. It doesn't seem to be quite a thing to have many set deadlines and assignments during the semester, it is more due at the end of semester so it was a bit strange compared to Vic where we would get a grade at least a month into the semester.

I totally recommend the hand drawing class, it was amazing and learnt so much even when so frustrated, we just don't have anything like that in NZ and the Germans are a big promoter of hand drawing and hand building, lots of fun.

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

Just turn up to classes and studios, talk with your fellows, they help keep you on track of what needs to be done. Fairly simple really, just like how you would succeed at Vic.

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

A bit outdated to be honest. They don't have a central printing system which was a bit annoying but everybody manages. Also don't have a central computing files where you can share work on a drive which meant we used google drive a lot. Also didn't have computers in studios which means you need a laptop. Library was beautiful, sadly didn't use it as much as I should've. There is a central internet access which is simple as well, ask your classmates about the password because it is a little bit confusing.

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 already knew German before I left although it had been a while since I studied or spoke it, but things picked up pretty quick and I did a German course while I was there which are fun to join just make sure you

get in quick as they fill up pretty quickly. They have German courses at each campus in Munich (Munich Central, Weihenstephan, Garching) so there are plenty to choose from. Otherwise the Germans do speak good English, especially amongst the younger generations.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

The University halls of residences called Studentenwerk who own all the halls.

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

Pros, they are always cheap.

Cons, you don't know what your room or flat will look like before you arrive. Also it was a bit of a mission to get the keys and then find your way to the halls once you got them, terrible system.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

If I would stay longer than 6 months I probably wouldn't stay in the Halls, there are nicer halls but they don't reserve spots for exchange students in them so I would use Facebook groups or the TUM apartment search to find places to stay. I would also consider having lived in Munich instead of Freising.

How early can you move into accommodation?

About 1.5 weeks before University starts with the Halls of Residences.

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

I had a shared kitchen which was fine. There is also the Cafeteria at University for lunches which is cheap and everybody goes so it's a great place to get to know your classmates, the food was good and bad on some days.

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?

Do it as early as you can.

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 a little difficult at first with the language barriers. As they all will speak German with each other of course, but its always fun to try speak even if they laugh at you a little with your grammar errors. Studio definitely helped to create friendships, and now I would say my group project mates are one of the bestest friends I have ever made, I feel sad to leave. I also did the excursion which is always great to make German friends especially if your classmates are going to, you become quite close and I really do feel like one semester is not enough time to spend with the amazing people you meet.

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

It was a little difficult for the first 2 months. You feel a bit helpless at times but you keep working through it and it flies by more quickly than you would like. It was mainly hard with not having people you were close

enough with that you can just text and go hang out, until you actually start making friends to do this with, the first 1-2 months were a bit rough like that, but that changed after spending more time in studio and going to events, I recommend going to any event you possibly can, you never know who you might meet.

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

Not really a challenge but the drinking culture is different in Germany. A lot more laid back, don't expect to get ID'd that much, and don't be alarmed when people drink at Uni, on the train, in public etc. Also little things like not crossing the road when its not green, German's are very particular about that. It's good to just maybe watch a few youtube videos on German/Bavarian typical things etc. just to get a bit of an idea. Otherwise they are pretty much like any other western country.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Definitely the drinking culture, less of the binge drinking culture that we have in NZ, everybody is just a lot more laid back. Beer is life for Bavarians. Also I just love how lederhosen is such a common thing, especially when you go hiking people do it in their lederhosen. I also appreciate that there are festivals pretty much one right after the other. There is just an abundant amount of stuff going on you would be spoiled for choice. Once one festival is over the next is just around the corner, another excuse to put your lederhosen on and drink beer and eat good food.

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

Everybody was polite and for the most part pretty jolly. University staff are all lovely. All the students are absolutely lovely and helpful, they are also very easy to get a long with, everybody is interested to know where you are from, especially if you are from NZ, they froth over it.

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?

German culture doesn't really discriminate. I personally didn't meet many disabled, or LGBT people. But I did notice ramps here and there, and elevators. TUM is just such a diverse multi-cultural university with exchange students from everywhere around the world and Europe that I didn't feel there was any minority exclusion nor any LGBT exclusion. Everyone seemed to get along no matter what age or background.

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

Not at all.

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?

They have a very comprehensive sports program. With the Hochschule, you get all the info with your exchange pack at TUM. It is also very cheap and popular.

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

Go to the festivals, Springfest, Mayfest, Tollwood. SO much. Or take a very inexpensive bus to another European city, Munich is so central with many connections for as less as 7 euros one way. So it is easy to escape for the weekend especially if you don't have Friday or Monday classes!

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

I didn't really seek this out, but I know there are opportunities, mostly though if you speak German. Or else there are many babysitting jobs where they prefer you to speak English with their child.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Not sure

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A good all-weather jacket
2	Laptop
3	Hiking shoes (If you like to hike- Bavarian Alps is spectacular)
4	European Adaptor
5	European Pocket Languages Book

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

1	Enroll to your courses as soon as you can
2	Learn how to use Ikea before you go.
3	Take advantage of goeuro.com for cheap buses to other European cities.
4	Go on the international TUMi excursions, they are cheaper and subsidized and you meet people.
5	Ask your classmates or buddy about facebook groups like vic deals for cheap stuff, GET A BIKE (especially in Freising campus)

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Frulingsfest or Oktoberfest depending which semester you go in
2	Bavarian Alps – Hiking or Neuschwanstein Castle
3	Go to Beergarden or Beercellar
4	Swim in a lake somewhere in Bavaria
5	Eat all the fabulous pretzels and pastries and have no regrets

H: Personal Experience

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

One of the best choices I have ever made. Totally worth it. You really learn what you are capable of as a person/individual and feel just that little bit ready for adulthood. It is such a great opportunity to just really immerse yourself in a different culture, and different way of teaching and doing project work. I wish I could have stayed for a year, I find it a bit sad that the Architecture system doesn't really allow that without missing out on credits. Europe is also such a great place to go for an exchange because you can learn so many different cultures at once, there are also so many more opportunities to travel whilst getting credits that I took advantage of. Definitely something we don't get at Victoria without forking out lots of money. You also just learn how to cease the moment and really just do everything you can do. Loved it, I don't think anyone could really say they didn't have a blast on exchange.