

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	LLB/BA
Major(s)	Media Studies
Exchange Institution	Tilburg University, Netherlands
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	VUW Trimester 2 in 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	\$50
Accommodation	\$2877
Return Airfare	I booked a one way ticket for \$1300
Local Transportation	The Dutch cycle everywhere, you can get a decent bike for \$80
Meals	\$15/day, but this varied A LOT
Visa	\$81 for year long Dutch residency
Health & Insurance	\$500
Personal Spending	\$8000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$16/month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Train tickets within the Netherlands are very expensive (around \$60 for a day trip to Amsterdam from Tilburg) compared to other European countries.

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

I travelled a lot more before and during my exchange than I intended to do so my personal spending completely eclipsed any budget I had set for myself.

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

The master card passport visa was fantastic, you can load it with a number of currencies so as to avoid hefty conversion rates.

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

Tilburg generally is a relatively cheap place to live, once you have a bike you won't need to pay any transport costs and the student accommodation (Verbs) is on campus which saves time and money. It is also fully furnished and all bills are included in the accommodation charge. It worked out to be cheaper to live in Tilburg than Wellington!

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

Coffee is around 4.10 for a latte or flat white, but there were vending machines at the uni with coffee for \$0.33

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, the Dutch residency visa, which allows you to study and work in the Netherlands for 1 year. The process only really begins once you are already in the Netherlands, you have to go to another city and apply at the immigration office. This is all arranged by the university however and is relatively straight forward providing you have all the correct documentation from home. The cost of the visa is approximately \$81

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

The Dutch system is extremely precise so be sure to take exactly what paperwork you need in hard copy form from NZ. Also, be on time to your visa appointment!

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?

To study in the Netherlands you must have proof of comprehensive travel and health insurance. I went with Southern Cross travel insurance and it cost approximately \$500 (but this is dependent on how long you get cover for of course).

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					
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Introduction to Dutch law	English		15	1	Class is created for international students and gives a broad overview of the Dutch legal system.
Theories and perspectives on victimization	English		15	4	This was a masters level course that was taught intensively over 5 weeks.

Human Rights Law	English		15	4	This was a masters course that required a certain level of base knowledge about international and european law. Difficult but interesting - lots of guest speakers and really great professor.
Fundamental Rights Law	English		15	2	Provided an introduction to european fundamental rights law, quite interesting and relatively easy. Weekly assignments though.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

All online. There was no class timetable available prior to enrolling though so we were not able to see if any of our courses clashed until we began studying.

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?

Very limited subject choices for people from outside of Europe (lots of courses have knowledge of European law as a prerequisite) and also for people in their final year who have already done basic electives at home.

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

If you have any issue with your timetable/course entry deal directly with your faculty contact at the university rather than your Tilburg exchange advisor. This results in gaining entry to classes a lot faster (which is very important because courses fill up extremely quickly due to small class sizes). Additionally there is a huge difference in difficulty of bachelors level and masters level courses, masters courses are not impossible but do require a significant level of work whereas the bachelors level law courses are much less taxing.

Academic Experience

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

Really enjoyed the different and globally relevant topics covered in my courses at Tilburg. Particularly the Victimisation course and the Human Rights course.

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?

Very different teaching style, incredibly informal. Small classes (10-30 people total) and more of a discussion based teaching style than our lecture based teaching at Vic. Lots of group assignments for commerce students.

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 students take 5-6 courses a semester in Tilburg, I was lucky enough to only have to take 4 (as I was at the end of my degree). However, there is minimal in class/contact time for the courses and learning is predominantly self-motivated in Tilburg so even if you are taking 5-6 courses you will still likely only have classes three or four days a week.

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

As there is such minimal in-class time required make sure to attend those classes as a LOT of information is given during them.

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

Library was small but technology was up to date and lots of computers available for use, I would recommend booking them in advance though.

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?

There was a Dutch language course available but as it didn't count towards the completion of my degree I didn't take it. Dutch is a fairly difficult language to learn (pronunciation is a nightmare!). However, I did learn a fair amount of the basics through mundane things such as supermarket shopping and also through chatting to Dutch students.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in the on campus international student accommodation called 'Verbs'. I was on a floor (apartment blocks) with 16 other international students (I was the only one who had English as a first-language) and shared bathroom/kitchen facilities. It was fully furnished and had a cleaner every third day.

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

Pros: Verbs was the life of the party, such a fun vibrant place to live and you meet people from all over the world! 10/10 would recommend. Also incredibly secure and on campus.

Cons: None. Just live there.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Verbs. (You can apply through a website called 'your room in Tilburg' which will be emailed to you upon acceptance to the university). Also apply the moment the accommodation comes on line as it fills up in minutes.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in the 20th of August which was the week before orientation week.

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

Self-catered. Although there was a canteen on campus and a supermarket 2 mins away.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Best way to make Dutch friends is to join a club at the university or during classes. Also the international students organisation called *IESN is a great way to meet Dutch students and internationals alike (they throw a good party).

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

Dutch culture is very direct which can be perceived as cold or rude. However, if you accept the bluntness as a cultural difference you'll realise they are not intending to be rude, rather the opposite (although it can be quite shocking at first).

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The accepting and tolerant nature of the Netherlands was great, also the rich history of the country.

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?

Campus was relatively well equipped for students with disabilities and the Dutch culture is extremely forward thinking as far as acceptance of minorities/different sexualities.

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?

Basically every Dutch student will be involved in an extra-curricular club/society. Therefore there is a broad range of sports and cultural clubs to get involved in if you wanted. The international students organisation *IESN organised weekly dinners and parties and trips away for exchange students which was great, definitely get involved in their events.

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

Travel both within and outside of the Netherlands as much as possible. The Netherlands has some beautiful cities and it is also extremely central in Europe so is perfect for travelling. You can even just go to Belgium for lunch.

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

I didn't work whilst studying, but with the Visa we were given we could have.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Most internship opportunities were available for students with a European passport.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Rain coat
2	Warm clothes (merinos are key)
3	Camera
4	Backpack for cycling
5	

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

1	Expect to have to change courses once you've already begun classes
2	Buy a bike, you can't go without one
3	Starbucks is expensive but is the only semi-decent coffee on campus
4	If the library is full use P-block cafe area
5	Join ABN Amro bank as the website is in English

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 A BEER CANTUS!
2	Explore the forest behind the campus
3	Utrecht, Maastricht, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Amsterdam are must visits
4	Eat fresh stroop waffles, they will change your life.
5	Visit the Kinderdijk windmills, they are incredible.

H: Personal Experience

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

I absolutely loved my time abroad, the Netherlands is a fascinating and beautiful country! Tilburg runs a great exchange program, there is always something happening and the university has a HUGE international student base. It sounds cliché but I genuinely had the time of my life and met some absolutely incredible people from all over the world who became my exchange family. I've been places I never dreamed of going and my exchange has completely and utterly broadened my horizons. No regrets, and if you're not sure about it just do it!

