

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Commerce and Arts
Major(s)	Marketing, Political Science and Spanish
Exchange Institution	Carlos III de Madrid
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 & 2 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	NA
Accommodation	Approximately 400 euros a month inc. utilities in the center of Madrid. Cheaper out near campus in Getafe
Return Airfare	\$2200
Local Transportation	20 euros a month for a youth transport card (under 25) that allows use of the metro, train and bus through all zones in Madrid.
Meals	Food and especially alcohol is much cheaper than in NZ. I would spend about 20 euros a week at the supermarket and some meals out. You could have a meal and some alcohol out for under 10 euros.
Visa	\$100
Health & Insurance	\$600
Personal Spending	This very much depends on how long you are here and how much you want to travel. You will always spend more money on travel than anticipated. Also there are more chargers when you go out at night. Often there is club entry and group activities that can add up.
Communications (phone, etc.)	15-20 euros a month. Aim for a deal with the most internet as normal calls and texts are not commonly used. The main form of communication is WhatsApp
Other fees (specify)	Gym membership 120 euros per semester at the university gym. This included general gym, classes and swimming pool and spa.
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Spain was fairly cheap. At the start of the year the exchange rate was very good and I should have transferred more money over when it was good. Flights from Madrid to many places are extremely cheap also.

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

I knew this year would be expensive. I wanted to take as many opportunities as possible. I suggest having more money than you originally think is necessary or have someone who can help you budget what you do have. You are a lot more social here because you're in a situation where you constantly want to make friends and try new things and this has a price.

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

I had an Air New Zealand OneSmart Master Card. I really recommend this form as you can use it as a debit card online, use it as an EFTPOS card and withdraw cash with very few fees. Cash is the main form of payment in Spain so it will be common to carry bulk amounts of cash and I also pay my rent in cash each month to my landlord.

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

Have a back up credit card stored in you house in a safe place in case your wallet gets lost or stolen. Also I think it is a waste of time and a hassle to set up a Spanish bank account.

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

A can of coke at the supermarket is 0.60 euro cents. So \$NZD 1

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 will need a visa if you are in Spain for more than 90 days if you have a NZ passport so for 1 or 2 semesters this is necessary. The process in New Zealand is complicated but not too difficult. You will need to find the Application for National Visa on the Spanish Embassy website or visit their office in Wellington.

You will need to gather a lot of information from different sources so it is best to start the process at least at 4-5 months before you are due to leave. If you are here for 2 semesters you will also need to apply for a residency NIE card in Spain within the first 3 months of being in the country. This process was a lot more difficult because of the language barrier.

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

Do it early! The last thing you want is for your flight to be leaving the next morning and your passport is still with the Spanish Embassy because your visa took too long. Also if applying for a NIE card, ask a local that you know i.e. student buddy or landlord maybe to help you get started. The Spanish have a very relaxed work ethic and it can take very long for the process to happen.

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?

No.

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

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					
Marketing Management	English	Mark 201	15	4	Half of the course was an online group game simulation which was quite fun and I enjoyed the practical participation. The other half was marketing theory. The course had one mid term exam, one final exam and participation points
Gender Equality Policies	English	Elective	15	3	This course sounded very interesting and had the potential to be but the teacher was a Spanish lady who's English was ok but when we wanted to have discussions or ask complicated questions we never quite got in depth answers. Possibly would have been better in Spanish.
Market Research	English	Mark 203	15	2	I wish this class had of been better as it was important for my marketing knowledge, but the teacher this semester was a Spanish lady who was very smart but could not effectively explain ideas and concepts very well. Half of the class was practical SPSS group work, which is a very useful system to know, and the other half

					was market research theory.
Spanish Language course A2	Spanish	Span 112/215?	15	5	This was a very well taught Spanish course. Many different international students and the teacher only ever spoke in Spanish but in a way that people who knew very little could also understand. I had already done 200 level Spanish as Vic and I found A2 very easy but this is the level with most classes so if you get put in this level and are confident I suggest asking to be put up to B1.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Consumer Behaviour	English	Mark 202	15	5	This was my favorite marketing course this year. I had Vladimir from Ukraine teaching me and he was very good. Half the class was lecture style theory and half was split into teams doing presentations about the topic of the week. We had one big group consumer challenge to complete and a final exam.
Linguistics	Spanish	Ling 101	15	4	This course is such a good one to take if you want a course that's taught in Spanish. There was a

					great mix of Spanish and International students in the class, which made it interesting as there were many different languages. The teacher was lovely and was very willing to help out those students to understand the course or assignments better.
Comparative Politics	English	Pols 300	15	5	This was a great course and was the most similar to what you would see at VUW. The teacher was from Turkey and she was very good at teaching in English. A great mix of students and she is really nice and knowledgeable. We had one group presentation, one 4000 word essay and a final exam.
Spanish Politics	English	Elective	15	1	This course sounds very interesting and is even suggested for international students. But the teacher of this course was not the best. He didn't like the idea of teaching Spanish politics in English and assumed that all international students are only there to party. There was very little guidance on assignments and content of the course was very unclear and seemed to change week to week.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The registration process to become a student was fairly simple. It's mostly before you leave New Zealand. There was probably some kind of assistance but I was unaware and figured it out myself.

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?

Enrolling in classes was the main problem at this university. I was lucky and seemed to get most of the courses I wanted. If you are studying International Relations as I am there was a big confusing because on the UC3M website it had many International Studies papers available and when it came time to enroll these classes were only for Spanish students as there were limited teachers.

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

I would suggest to have several back up papers that you are happy with and to look under all of the degrees. Some are in unexpected places.

Academic Experience

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

There seems to be less structure within each class. At Victoria you are presented with a clear course outline and you know in the first week when your tests and essays will be and how much each one was worth. I was only presented with this information in two classes in my whole year and some teachers were very vague as to how the course is to be graded. I put this down to a cultural difference and it doesn't have to be a big deal. I just learnt to be more adaptable and ask the teachers.

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?

Every teacher is different but there are no formal tutorials with compulsory attendance. I think the teaching style is more relaxed.

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? 4 papers each semester which, is a common course load to take at VUW, is also appropriate at UC3M.

What advice would you give VUW students about succeeding academically at your host university? Be proactive and act fast to get the subjects you want. You have to be assertive and sometimes ask things a few times to get an answer.

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

There are less computers available to use in the library but I always has my own laptop and when I needed the school ones I had no problems. The internet at the university campus is also reliable. There are 2 libraries on the Getafe campus, one with business and law books and one with humanities although very limited books in English.

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?

The university offers an intensive Spanish course that goes for about a month before classes start and there are also Spanish language classes throughout the semester. You take a little test for this to see what level you would fit in best. I was in A2 which I found to be a similar level to SPAN215 but this is the most common level so I wish I had asked to be put up one level.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I found an individual room in a flat in Madrid center

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

Con: it takes about 1 hour from flat to classroom when you live in the center of Madrid and also the rent is obviously more here then in Getafe, which is where the uni is located.

Pros: A flat in the center is definitely the best option. Most international people choose this option as there is much more to do, it's more social, there is no problems getting home late at night. The travel to school doesn't become a problem you only have to take one train.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Definitely find a flat in Madrid.

How early can you move into accommodation?

There will be rooms available at any time. But 1st of September and 1st of February are common move in dates as this is the "start" of each semester.

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

There are meal plans available in the halls of residence but I the few people I knew who did this option regretted 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?

It was very easy to find a room. There are many student-targeted companies or you could use a website called Idealista and find a room with an individual landlord which is what I did first semester.

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

I went through Erasmus Rooms for one semester but I maybe wouldn't recommend this company. They often charge a lot for rooms that maybe aren't worth that much. Help Madrid is one of these organisations but this one also comes with a lot of other services so is a nice stepping-stone. Don't be scared to look around and search for one that suits your needs.

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 more difficult to make friends with Spanish students at school if you take all of your classes in English because majority of the people in these classes are international students. There are a lot of international students so you will need to be the one to make an effort to make friends with locals.

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

I didn't have much trouble adjusting to the culture because I expected things to be different and difficult.

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

Maybe the working culture can be difficult to get use to. The Spanish are very relaxed which can be great but if you want something done you will need to learn to be patient. And siesta time is a real thing so don't plan important tasks between around 2.30-5pm

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The relaxed laid back approach to life. The constant socializing over food and drink.

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

Madrid is a big city so they are used to foreign people so you're not that "different" which I enjoyed. I didn't take me long to feel like I became a local and I knew the man at the supermarket and the buskers and people start to ask you for directions. Same with the staff and students, there are many international people so you're just another one.

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 know that the new buildings of the university were 100% wheel chair accessible, as for other disabilities I'm unsure of what facilities are available. Madrid is a very multicultural place and also quite liberal. There is a massive LGBT community in the city and it isn't unusual.

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 face 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 were a few sports clubs available through the school but I didn't look for many other types of clubs. I knew of people who did more activities that weren't related to the school such as dance classes in the city.

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

There are many places around Madrid with the youth transport card you can get to many places on the train without any extra cost. There are great hiking mountains just an hour north of the city and important historical towns just a bus ride away.

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

There are many families looking for fluent English speakers to work with their children for a few hours a week.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

You can volunteer through ESN, with a local church to help provide food to homeless people or through any other international charity organisation. As for internships, I was there to study.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	New Zealand multi box so you only need one adaptor
2	Something to keep you warm in the winter, as Madrid can be deceptively cold
3	Good walking shoes as you will be walking everywhere
4	Some local NZ gifts to share with friends on their birthdays
5	

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

1	Be patient when dealing with the university
2	Anything important such a visa or post do it early
3	Actively try and learn as much Spanish as possible before and during your exchange
4	Take at least one class in Spanish
5	Live with people not from your home country

Top 5 Things to do

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

- 1 Substitute one travel weekend to explore more of Madrid, its' a great city.
- 2 Get a BiciMad card and use the electric bikes to get around
- 3 Travel as much of Spain as possible
- 4 Learn how to make tortilla and paella
- 5 Take classes in Spanish

H: Personal Experience

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

This exchange was such a great experience and even more so because I was there for one year. This gave me time to really feel at home in the city and make it my own. I had me favourite local bakery and fruit shop and man in the restaurant downstairs knew my name. Each semester was very different as the people pretty much completely change but this just give you more opportunities to make friends. An exchange teaches you that people from different countries, cultures and languages all have things in common and it teaches you how to communicate in a way that you may have never tried before. I now have friends from all around the world and I can now speak three languages. It took me out of my comfort zone but now I feel I can cope with anything. An exchange is not one year in your life; it's a life packed into one year.

