

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BA
Major(s)	Spanish and Linguistics
Exchange Institution	Universidad de Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M)
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 1 and 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	\$0
Accommodation	Tri 1 - \$650 p/month including power, internet and water Tri 2 - \$400 p/month including power, internet and water
Return Airfare	\$2800
Local Transportation	\$30 p/month for under 23 year olds. Unlimited travel on buses, trains and metros
Meals	\$40 p/ week at supermarket and then a few meals out
Visa	n/a – I have a UK passport
Health & Insurance	\$610
Personal Spending	Would vary week to week. Depends on how much travelling I was going to do/how much uni work I had/etc.
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$15 p/month
Other fees (specify)	n/a
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	I had no unexpected costs. Most things were relatively cheaper in Spain (food and drinks especially).

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

I did spend a lot more money than expected. Most things and costs in Spain are fairly cheap but once I got to Europe I did a lot of travelling

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

I had a 'Cash Passport' where I could transfer and convert nzd into euros. This was great because you can transfer money when the exchange rate is good/use in stores or withdraw cash. There were no fees for withdrawing money. I also used my ANZ debit card. There was a \$5 fee when using at the atm so best to take large amounts of money out at once. Spain uses a lot of cash and lots of places do not accept cards or

have a minimum spending amount before you can use it.

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

If you are on a tight budget then rent a room in Getafe (the town where uni is). It is much cheaper than in the city, although if you can afford it I would 100% recommend living in the city. I didn't take them, but UC3M also offers Spanish classes. These are around 200 euros.

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

Coke - \$1.50 / Coffee \$2.00

**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?

I didn't have to apply for a visa as I have a UK passport.

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

n/a

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?

There was no mandatory insurance

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

I used Southern Cross and would recommend it

## 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
<b>VUW Trimester 1/YEAR</b>					
Advertising and communication	English	100	15	4	
Journalist communication	English	100	15	2	Teacher wasn't great and was the one teacher that wasn't very

					accommodating to exchange students
Online Journalism	English	200	15	5	Fantastic teacher and class. Probably my favorite
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					
Intro to communication	Spanish	100	15	3	Harder than it sounds. Felt more like a 200 level course
Linguistics	Spanish	200	15	5	Amazing teacher! It was taught in Spanish but most of the class were foreign so had a great vibe
Moving Image History	English	200	15	4	
American Film History	English	300	10	3	
Newspaper Reporting	English	300	15	5	Same teacher as Online Journalism. Loved it

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Enrolling for courses was not that straight forward. Everyone in the university enrolls at the same time online. The site often crashes and classes are small, meaning they get full very quickly (around 30 people per class). Priority is also given to the Spanish students.

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?

Be open minded and accept that you might not get into all of the classes that you wanted. Have back up options and just make the most of them. I did some classes that I never would have been able to do here and loved them.

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

Pick subjects that you are going to enjoy. Also don't expect all of the English classes (many offer classes both in English and Spanish) to be free as a large part of the students are completing their degrees in English. I found I had more luck getting into the Spanish speaking classes than English.

### **Academic Experience**

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

In my opinion the standard of work is a lot higher at Victoria than at UC3M. I was doing a lot of third year papers and at times it felt the standard and expectations of me where lower or equivalent to that of first year papers. I found that many students in my classes were unaware on how to reference/cite their work as most of the time it was not expected of them. There is A LOT of group assignments, which I found rather frustrating as there weren't many times where I could display my own work

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?

The teaching style differed to that of Vic as much of the time the teachers did not expect students to participate. They fed a lot of information to the students and often didn't encourage critical thinking. Assignments were often very vague with their descriptions and students are left to figure out what to do on their own.

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?

Four would be the perfect amount.

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

Just realise that things are different to what you do at home and go for it. I stopped worrying about how the students were doing their work there and just did what I would do at home.

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

The facilities were all pretty good. They had a good range of books, however not so many online resources. Printing wasn't super easy as you had to go to a kiosk within the uni and email/have a usb to get stuff printed.

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?

Learn a bit of the language beforehand and perhaps take the intensive courses offered by UC3M. Although you should be able to do your courses all in English. But don't be that person who doesn't try and learn the language!!

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in apartments in the city center of Madrid. The first had 7 international students in it and the second with 3 Spaniards and a Portuguese girl.

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

The pros is that they are in prime location. You have the whole city right at your front door, you get to meet and live with a so many interesting and diverse people. Rent is pretty cheap for an apartment in the city. However, be careful as there are lots of dodgy landlords who try and take advantage of young foreigners. Often there are no formal contracts about bonds.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would recommend an apartment in the city

How early can you move into accommodation?

I arrived to Spain without having even looked at any apartments online. I had a friend to stay with and within a week of being there I was moved into my new apartment

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

I cooked all of my meals by myself but I do know of others whose flats shared food/cooking and it worked out fine.

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 would 100% recommend living in the city rather than Getafe or Leganes (campuses). It is only a 20 minute train ride from the city which is great or getting to uni but trains don't run very late so its hard to get home if you are in the city later – my friends who lived out there would often end up staying the night at my place until they could get a train/bus back the next morning. Also not much to do in these towns. Rent is much cheaper in these places so I do understand why you could want to live here. If you are going to I would recommend not living in one of the uni's halls of residence. Very very expensive.

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

Don't book anything until you have actually gone to visit it and have met with the landlord/or at least have had a skype interview. Easypiso and Idealista are both great sites to have a look at and offer a range of places to live. Be wary of companies/agencies. They are often more expensive.

## **F: Personal & Cultural Connections**

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

Super easy to make friends with international students however the locals are little harder. Make an effort

to know your classmates and try and live with people from the country. Whilst I had an amazing time living with the 7 international students, I found living with people from Spain gave me a much better understanding of the country.

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

There wasn't a huge culture change to adjust to, just little bits and pieces. The language is obviously the hardest adjustment

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

Prepare for things to take a long time. The Spanish do not rush things so if you are applying for any visas/waiting for your university to contact you/etc. don't stress if it is taking a while. Also make sure you know some basic Spanish before you get there.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The ended up really enjoying the way things weren't rushed. The culture and history in Spain is so rich and I loved learning about it all. Food is 10/10 too.

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

I found the locals to be so friendly and open. They were always happy to help with any questions I had. In my experience the university staff were fantastic. They understood that I was an exchange student and were very lenient in the sense that if I didn't understand the work they were more than happy to help. The Spanish students were good also. In some of my classes they were super chatty/would help me out, and in other classes they were a little more standoffish.

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?

In my opinion pretty much anyone would feel comfortable in my host university. I knew plenty of gay students (both Spanish and foreign) and as far as I know they were no issues. I also had a couple of people who were disabled in some classes.

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

One teacher told me my NZ accent was unprofessional and untasteful and that I should speak with an American accent... but that's about it. No 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?

Europe has a great exchange program (ERASMUS) which we can be a part of. Always lots of activities and events organized by them.

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

Madrid has so much to offer, so many parks to walk around, museums and bars. Heaps of smaller towns/cities around which are easy to get to by bus/train. RyanAir and EasyJet do super cheap flights so its easy to travel overseas for a couple of days.

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

I didn't work and it is hard for young people to get jobs in Spain. But you can try tutoring English.

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Pick subjects you think you would enjoy</b>
<b>2</b>	Be aware your classes might not be available
<b>3</b>	Try and make friends with the locals
<b>4</b>	Go to as many Erasmus activities as possible
<b>5</b>	Try and do a class in Spanish/or at least take Spanish language classes

### **Top 5 Things to do**

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Hire a bike and ride around Parque Retiro</b>
<b>2</b>	Watching the sunset at Templo de Debod
<b>3</b>	Try as much as the food as possible/eat churros at San Gines
<b>4</b>	Go to the rastro market every Sunday
<b>5</b>	Go to Toledo/Segovia/Chinchon/etc

### **H: Personal Experience**

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

I honestly loved and enjoyed every moment of my exchange. Madrid was such a gorgeous city and I met so many amazing people. My Spanish has greatly improved and I am now super

confident in my abilities with the language. There were a few struggles along the way (nothing major) but I am so so happy that I did it. I made the most of my time being in Europe and traveled a lot. Both in Spain and the rest of the continent. I would recommend to everyone that they do a year long exchange if they can. I really don't think 6 months is enough. For me the first 6 were great to get to know the city/language/history but I still felt like a tourist. By the 7<sup>th</sup> month Madrid really felt like my home.