

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BCom
Major(s)	International Business, Economics
Exchange Institution	Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 1 2016

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	\$800 per month
Return Airfare	\$2500
Local Transportation	\$30 per month
Meals	\$150 per month
Visa	-
Health & Insurance	\$30 per month
Personal Spending	\$150 per month
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$15 per month
Other fees (specify)	Travel around Europe \$150 per month
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Agency fees and deposit when finding a place to live were at least two months' rent for most places. Groceries relatively cheap to New Zealand.

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

Relatively similar to what I had expected. The price of living in a shared flat is similar to that of in Wellington. Spent more on travel than I had expected but also managed to see many places I had not planned on seeing.

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

Travel card from Kiwibank, would fully recommend as I was able to use it pretty much everywhere I went at both ATMs and shops.

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

Have money saved for travel around Europe as it is normal for exchange students in Madrid to travel a lot

during the weekends and breaks.

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?

No as I hold a European Passport.

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

-

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?

It was mandatory for all exchange students to have travel insurance however the student was free to chose the cover of their choice.

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

1 cover. I would recommend as it was very easy to apply and relatively cheap.

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		15	3	Rather straight forward course that uses a marketing computer software where students have to develop and sell their own products.
Monetary and financial	english	Monetary Economics	15	4	I found this course rather difficult but the content is

economics					rather interesting if you enjoy economic theories. Both lecturers for this course were extremely helpful.
Mathematics for economics	english	Mathematics for economics and finance.	15	5	Probably my least favorite course I have taken during my time at university. All calculus based and given I have no background knowledge of this I found it very difficult. Content was very numbers based and dull, would not recommend.
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Students are required to attend the orientation day to sign the form of enrollment. All course registration is done online and some subjects are very competitive so can be hard to get into. However after a week of classes there is another chance to change classes and most students are able to be accommodated into the subjects they need/want.

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?

I was able to enroll at the first try for all of my courses however they were less competitive than many others. Students should become familiar with the enrollment software before enrollment opens to give them the best chance to get in first. Don't think you can leave enrollment to the days after it opens as all

spots will be taken.

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

If it is at all possible leave elective courses for exchange as it means you can choose subjects with far lower workload and give you more time to enjoy Madrid.

Academic Experience

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

Spanish University is far less set in stone than in New Zealand so deadlines may change, teachers may be away, marks can be changed but this is all part of the Spanish culture.

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?

Some teachers may not speak great English but generally they are very keen to help students when needed. I found the workload very similar to VUW but this was due to the courses I took as some courses my friends were enrolled in had a much lower workload.

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 courses is probably ideal depending on their difficulty. If they are slightly more difficult 3 is enough. Out of the course I took I would recommend Marketing Management as it was an interesting course with a high rate of passing.

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

Get to know your lecturers. Spanish people value personal relationships so make sure they can put a face to your name.

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

Internet everywhere on campus, two libraries, both very well equipped.

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 had intermediate level Spanish when I arrived. This definitely helped me when settling in but it is not a necessity as many of my friends could not speak a word of Spanish and survived. Madrid is a city where it is easy to get by only using English. UC3M offered intensive language courses and I would fully recommend to help your transition in Madrid.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Shared Flat in the city center.

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

More expensive than living near campus, higher level of competition for rooms

Easy to make friends, closer to all sorts of activities, easy to get to anywhere in Madrid from the center.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Definitely a shared flat in the center as I knew of people who missed out on doing many things because they lived far away near the university campus.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Rooms in Madrid are available all year round.

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

Cooked all of my own food, however so many restaurants and cafes in central Madrid.

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find? What should future VUW exchange students know about living off-campus?

Many useful websites such as Idealista, Easypiso, Help Madrid. However these websites usually require larger deposits and agency fees. It is a good idea to join all the Facebook groups for flatting in Madrid as they have many people looking to rent out their rooms.

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

Look at places early but don't panic and sign a place before you have seen it. I went to Madrid a few days early without a room and just went flat hunting once I was there.

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 is incredibly easy to make friends with international students as everyone is in the same boat and keen to get to know new people. Spanish people are much harder to get to know. They are very friendly people but they also have very tight friendship circles so try your best to learn some Spanish as they will always appreciate you trying.

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

I had lived in Spain previously so I knew somewhat to expect but it still takes a while to adjust. Spanish life is not all that different to NZ just at a slower pace much of the time.

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

Spanish people are hardly ever in a rush so you must be prepared to be patient. A kiss on each cheek of a female is expected even if it's the first time you meet them. Also people don't usually eat dinner until 10-11 at night and it is normal to sit around at bars and restaurants until midnight almost every night.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The kindness the Spanish people showed, especially when they saw you were a bit lost or confused. The

Spanish peoples love for food and drink was also a highlight.

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

Generally very well, the Spanish are very friendly helpful people from my experiences.

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?

The university campus is reasonable new and it seemed to be well equipped for students with disabilities. Madrid is a very accepting city, minorities and the LGBT communities were not only accepted but celebrated but the Madrid community.

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

Not anything serious, just the occasional laugh at my poor Spanish. Exchange students do have the reputation of simply coming to Madrid to party but this is a view only held by a select few locals.

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 sports teams that students could join or organize. The campus had a brilliant set of sports facilities. There was also an Olympics day run by the exchange network which was extremely fun.

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

There are many small villages just outside of Madrid which are beautiful and easy to visit such as Toledo and Segovia. Also many exchange students choose to travel during their weekends as Europe is so easy to get around and Madrid has a brilliantly connected airport.

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

I did not look into working during my time in Madrid but English tutors are always highly sort after in Madrid.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

The Exchange network has a volunteer organization that helps out at many activities in Madrid.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	A Camera/phone as you will always be seeing new things.
2	A back pack for all the spontaneous day/weekend trips
3	Pictures from NZ, lots of people have no idea what it is like.
4	Football boots, it is a religion in Spain.
5	An open mind, everyone on exchange is different and that's what makes it work.

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

1	Try to learn/speak Spanish. It becomes far too easy to speak English the whole time.
2	Walk around Madrid. It is a relatively small capital city distance wise and there are so many cool areas to explore.
3	Don't be shy, everyone is probably just as nervous and keen to make friends as you are.
4	Travel, Europe is so far so make the most of your time there.
5	Use the youth travel card, all the travel you want on Madrid's public transport for only 20 euros.

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 football match, either of Atletico or Real Madrid. Football is like a religion for the Spanish and the atmosphere is insane.
2	Watch the sun set on the hills called Las Siete Tetas.
3	Chill in Retiro park with a few beers and good company.
4	Do a day trip to Toledo, a village an hour outside of Madrid. (free bus)
5	Go for tapas and a drink in the Malasana area of Madrid.

H: Personal Experience

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

My six months in Madrid were literally the best of my life. I got to live in an amazing city, made some great friends and saw so many amazing things. I was very hesitant about committing to exchange but I am so happy I did. Madrid is an amazing place where there is always something to do and people to do it with. UC3M is a very well recognized University with a high number of exchange students. My semester there was very enjoyable and ran very smoothly. The university campus is in a town called Getafe about 25 minutes out of Madrid but very easy to get to on the local train. I would fully recommend living in the city center as most exchange students do as it is much easier to experience Madrid's culture that way. I would recommend trying your best to see other parts of Spain as it is a country that has so much to offer. I met people from all over the

world and honestly consider them some of my best friends now. While as students we are on exchange to study it is also a cultural exchange so always be ready to say yes to anything that might come up. If by any chance you are sitting on the fence about going on exchange please just go for it, I did and by the time I had finished in Madrid I did not want to come back.