

# 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 and BA
Major(s)	SPAN and INTP
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	\$35
Accommodation	\$3545
Return Airfare	\$2290
Local Transportation	\$181 (20 euro a month for public transport card)
Meals	\$50 for a week's food shopping
Visa	\$0
Health & Insurance	\$430
Personal Spending	\$5000+
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$22 a month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Generally Spain was very cheap, food shopping, eating out and drinks were very affordable. Shopping was generally a similar price to what we have in NZ. I spent a lot more than I anticipated but that was more down to the kind of lifestyle I was living there. Madrid and the exchange student community were very social. I was often eating out, going to for the night, and going on trips away which all adds up.

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

I spent a lot more than I anticipated but that was more down to the kind of lifestyle I was living there. Madrid and the exchange student community were very social. I was often eating out, going to for the night, and going on trips away which all adds up.

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

I had a Spanish bank account with Santander, UC3M helped me open it on campus at the orientation day. I would then do international money transfers from my NZ account to Spain which worked out cheaper than withdrawing cash directly from NZ or using my Cash passport card.

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

The basic cost of living is very cheap; food, public transport, rent, and cellphone network are all much

cheaper than what we have in NZ. It's the lifestyle you'll be living which will be the expensive part. Madrid has a massive exchange student community so parties, events and trips are often catered for a directed at this group. It's the best way to meet people and so much fun but it does eventually add up.

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

A coffee would generally cost 1.50euro, so about 2.30NZD.

**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 have a British passport so I did not need a Visa.

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?

Not to my knowledge.

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

I took out insurance with One Cover. They were affordable and extremely efficient with the one claim I made during my exchange.

## 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 2016</b>					
Mercantile Contracting	English	Law 300 level elective	12	3	Favourite course on my exchange. Very practical, small class and great lecturer.
Labour Rights: Individual Labour Relations	Spanish	Law 300 level elective	10	5	I found this course particularly challenging as it concerned Spanish law and was also only taught in Spanish.
Transnational	English	Law 300	6	2	Easy course, relatively

Labour Relations		level elective			interesting too. All internally assessed.
Private International Law: Special Section	Spanish	Law 300 level elective	6	3	Course fitted exactly what I'm interested in so I enjoyed it. Good lecturer and fairly assessed.
Human Rights Theory and History	English	Law 300 level elective	6	2	Poorly taught course with a strange structure. Content was interesting.
European Union Law	English	Law 300 level elective	6	2	Poorly taught course with a strange structure. Content was interesting.
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The course registration process was very chaotic and made me appreciate what we have here at Victoria. Enrolment was done only a week before classes started, enrolment for the law courses opened at a particular time which was communicated to students. We then had to rush to choose the courses and particular class we wanted. Many students did not get into the courses they wished too, however there was a chance two weeks following to change the selected courses if free spots had become available. It was similar to the tutorial enrolment process I've experience at Victoria for law.

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?

Make sure you know exactly what courses you want to do and have backups available. Have your ideal timetable all planned out and move very quickly once the enrolment opens.

### Academic Experience

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

At Victoria University Law School I am used to a very high workload and very challenging courses. In

comparison I found UC3M much easier, perhaps in part due to the fact that grades on exchange are pass/fail. The university took care of exchange students very well, however the academic side of things was a little disorganised and inefficient at times.

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 workload was comparable to what I experienced with my BA courses here at VUW, compared to law the workload was much lower. I took two courses in Spanish, as these were in a second language I had to put a significant amount of time towards them. The teaching style varied between lecturer as it does here at VUW, I had courses that I particularly enjoyed such as Mercantile Contracting and others which were poorly taught such as my Human Rights course.

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?

The course load I had was just about right, I would not have wanted to have done much more. Mercantile Contracting and Private International Law were my two favourite courses. I found the content very interesting, they are courses that are not offered at VUW yet are still very relevant. For Mercantile Contracting we did mock negotiations with a university in Nebraska, this was a fantastic experience.

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

Keep up with communications from the lecturers so you know what is going on, have a good idea of the course structure, but otherwise it is not too challenging.

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

Good, essentially the same as what we have at VUW.

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 were intensive language courses offered by the university. I could speak Spanish prior to arriving so I did not have too much difficulty with the language.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Apartment with 6 other international students in the central city.

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

Definitely the best way to do it, location was great, people were even better. No cons.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Find an apartment in the central city, DO NOT LIVE IN GETAFE BY THE UNIVERSITY. There is nothing in

Getafe other than the university, live in the centre and take the train for 20 minutes out to uni.

How early can you move into accommodation?

Whenever, lots of availability but better to get in there earlier. I moved into my flat January 11<sup>th</sup>, the semester started beginning of February.

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

Kitchen in that flat had all the necessities, weekly food shop at the LIDL supermarket. Eating out was cheap so I did this often, really good food and heaps of variety being in such a large city.

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

Relatively easy to find, I used the website easypiso.com, I know that people also used 'idealista'. Definitely live off campus, find an apartment in the centre, rent it very cheap.

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

I locked my place in prior to arriving after having a Skype viewing of the flat. I'd recommend doing that, or staying in a hostel while you find and view flats.

## **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 very easy to make friends, UC3M has an Erasmus Student Network which hosts events and organises trips, this made it really easy to meet new people. I made friends with Spaniards through my classes, unfortunately they did not usually attend to the exchange student events.

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

Not too difficult, the people were lovely and really interested in where you came from and what you were doing in Spain.

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

In Madrid you'll find that the level of English is very low, so if you don't speak Spanish it could be a little challenging. But eventually you'll be able to pick up on the basic phrases to get by.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Very relaxed, social and fun loving culture. People are always out and about eating, drinking and catching up with friends.

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

Treated well by everyone.

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 has elevators and access for those with disabilities. The train to the university also had disabled access and assigned seating. Madrid and Spain in general is very accepting of LGBT, there is a large gay community in Madrid which hosts Europe's biggest gay pride parade.

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

No.

### **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 numerous sports clubs and social groups which students could join. The Erasmus Student Network hosts events every week and organises numerous trips, this was the many group I was associated with and how I made most of my friends. They also collaborate with other universities' ESNs in hosting these events.

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

Take trips to elsewhere in Spain, explore Madrid (there is so much to see/do!), go out and enjoy yourself with friends.

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

On campus I wasn't aware of any job opportunities, however I was able to work off-campus teaching English for a family. There are lots of English teaching opportunities, you won't be able to find much else though considering Spain's unemployment issues.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

N/A

### **5 things to take to your host country or region**

1	Summer clothes, it gets really really hot in the middle of the year.
2	Clothes for the colder months too, believe it or not it can get quite chilly around January/February.
3	Camera
4	Spain Lonely Planet book
5	Money, the social exchange student lifestyle really adds up.

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

1	Don't live by the campus, find an apartment in the centre.
2	At the beginning, attend the Erasmus events and go on the trips so as to find your group of friends.
3	Get a public transport card, just 20euro a month and a very well connected system.
4	Be ready and organised when it comes to the online enrolment, it's rather chaotic.
5	Make the most of it, unfortunately the experience does come to an end.

## Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Experience the amazing Madrid nightlife at places like Kapital and Gabana.
2	On a hot day relax in Retiro Park with friends and the rest of the Madrid people.
3	Explore the city by foot; find your favourite spots in the areas like Malasaña, La Latina and Lavapies.
4	Take a day trip to the historic city of Toledo.
5	Take advantage of the mid-semester break to visit another country or tour around Spain.

## H: Personal Experience

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

Madrid was voted the number one exchange location in Europe by uniplaces.com and it's certainly easy to see why. The combination of the exciting and lively city, the social and fun-loving Spanish culture, and the huge exchange student community made this the best 6 months of my life. I arrived in the city not knowing a single person, and left having made so many incredible friends from all over the world. Not once was I bored during my stay, there was always something going on, whether it was a tapas night organised by the university or a group of friends going for a day trip outside Madrid. The central location of Madrid in Spain made it easy to travel elsewhere in the country, cities like Sevilla and Barcelona were easy to get to and well worth spending a few days exploring. However I was always excited to return to Madrid, it's a city that offers so much; it's large, chaotic and exciting whilst remaining genuine and true to Spanish culture. I feel immense jealousy of anyone who is about to go on exchange to Madrid.

## I: University Support

How did you find the support with....

- your host university?

At UC3M there were many exchange students so the university was well practiced in meeting their needs.

You'll find all the information you need in English online, and many of the courses are directed at exchange students.

- the host lecturers?

The lecturers for my courses in English were very helpful in helping me understand the different ways the university did things. The lecturers for my two courses in Spanish were not so good at this as they were not so used to dealing with exchange students and at times struggled to keep me updated and informed.

- the International Office at the host university?

The exchange office was very helpful, they all spoke good English and responded to any queries you had quickly.

- the Victoria Abroad office?

I did not need to contact the Vic Abroad office during my exchange. However prior to the exchange they had been very helpful in assisting me to organise everything.

- The VUW faculty assistance?

Again, there was no need to contact the Law Faculty whilst overseas but prior to leaving I had no trouble in organising the courses I could do whilst at UC3M and getting these signed off.

Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Ensure the VUW students going to the same university have one another's contact details prior to departing.