

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	International Relations
Exchange Institution	University of Monterrey
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 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	\$20
Accommodation	\$250 a month
Return Airfare	\$2000
Local Transportation	Taxi's are very cheap
Meals	\$5 or less
Visa	6 month student visa is free
Health & Insurance	\$500
Personal Spending	Unknown
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$20 a month for unlimited national calls and 1.5g of data with unlimited social media
Other fees (specify)	Bank fees, around \$8 each time you withdraw cash.
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	

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

Everything was a lot cheaper than expected, but the result of this is that it's a bit easy to go overboard. Little expenses can add up. It is important to maintain a regular check upon your account balance.

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

Student loan money will enter your account weekly as per normal. Check with your bank to see if they have a partnership with any Latin banks, a good way to avowing withdrawal fees which can really add up.

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

Take cash out every 2 weeks and then set this as your budget for that 2 week period. Don't take your card out with you and only take a small amount of cash on a night out, this way you won't get sucked into spending all your money at once. Try the local street food, its cheap and delicious.

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

Coffee was reasonably similar, and a can of coke is roughly \$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?

Mexico does not require a visa for NZ citizens. Upon arrival you will be issued a Multiple Migration form (MMF) allowing you to study for up to 180 days in the country.

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?

They have mandatory insurance, but do not specify as to what it is. Organize your insurance through home, and send them a copy of the policy to show them you are covered.

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

I used Student Travel Agency (STA), because I booked my flights through them and they offer discounted packages and rates for students. Very easy and quick to deal with.

**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>					
World Politics	English	INTP3**	12	4	
International Negotiations	English	INTP3**	12	3	Very fun, hands on
Spanish	Spanish	SPAN 3B	4		

<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					

**Course Registration/Enrolment**

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

Everything for exchange students is extremely well set up. There is a full time office purely for exchange purposes, and lots of students work here as well to help out with whatever you need. Before you go you will be emailed and asked to select your courses from a comprehensive list of courses and a list specifically for exchange students that includes many classes taught in English.

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?

Entirely successful. Any questions you have simply email the office or Andrea directly, she's great and her English is perfect, she's heard all the questions before and will sort it out quickly.

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

Take advantage of the co-curricular course on offer. Just make sure to clear your VUW requirements first with your relevant faculty and then see if you have space left to take on some less academic based courses. A great way to meet people outside of the exchange community and also to practice your Spanish.

**Academic Experience**

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

The academic experience was more like a high school. Smaller classes, and the teachers preferred weekly testing as opposed to long easy and research based tasks.

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?

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?

5-6 courses is quite enough, with 1 or two being co-curricular. I would definitely recommend taking a co-curricular course, it's a big part of what UDEM offers, and an opportunity to try something not so common at VUW. For example you can take Mexican culture papers or salsa classes, really embrace the distinctive Mexican style of life.

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

Get to know your teachers, They are often very accustomed to having exchange students in the class and very accommodating the want to travel and experience lie outside the university. Normally if you ask they can alter hand-ins or test times to allow you to explore Mexico and make the most of your time there.

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

All the buildings and facilities at UDEM are first class. The whole campus is very beautiful and open, with great environments scattered around for work and play.

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?

It is mandatory to sit a Spanish test at UDEM and then highly recommended to enroll in the class you are placed in, based on your test results. I would definitely recommend this as a way to stretch your exchange experience further.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

House hold with a Mexican friend

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

Security, learnt Spanish cooking styles, invites to parties and events of the locals.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

UDEM will help you find accommodation, Most likely it will be a flat in the area right beside campus. Very fun, very social and a great way to meet people. Definitely recommended.

How early can you move into accommodation?

As soon as you arrive. There are ALWAYS rooms going. You rent per month so handy for exchange students.

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

All the flats come with kitchens, and every street has vendors and restaurants. Mexican food is exceptional in general.

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

You will be given a buddy at the university who will take you to a variety of housing options when you arrive, don't stress. You will be helped to find a place you love. Don't rent a place before you arrive, your buddy will literally drive you around to show you all the best places to rent, a whole neighborhood beside campus is essentially set up for exchange students.

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

Make sure you arrange your exit time, so you don't get stuck paying a month's rent when you're not 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?

UDEM has around 180 exchange students at any one time, you will make the best friends of your life. Also all the local students want to get to know exchange students, making friends will not be an issue. Also the university organizes a range of parties, events and mixers to welcome and help the exchange students find their feet.

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

Mexico is very different and a little daunting, but the openness and generosity of the local students will make you feel at home from day 1

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

Be open minded. A lot of Mexicans are socially conservative and very religious. It's not unusual for people to live with their parents right up to their 30's. Try to remember that for them this is normal, and it seems strange to them we are in such a rush to leave home.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The food and the music

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

The local Mexicans are exceptionally friendly, generous and welcoming. If you are lucky enough to stay with a family they will adopt you like a son of their own.

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?

There is a large amount of LGBT students at UDEM.

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?

Co-curricular classes are mandatory at UDEM. These range from music to dance to sport and more.

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

Travel every weekend if you can. Mexico is large and there are a million places you will wish you had seen.

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

Many of my fellow exchange students found internships in Monterrey or Mexico city and stayed once the semester finished.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

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

1	Rugby Ball
2	Jandals
3	Portable speaker
4	Whitakers Chocolate
5	A good Camera

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

1	Try all the food, improve your love of spicy
2	Go to Casa Morellos on Thursday nights, its free entry
3	Learn how to cook tortillas, you'll miss them when you're gone
4	Take a music of performance class and perform in the concert at the end of the semester
5	Never wear grey, its nearly always 35+ degrees

## Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Visit Oaxaca and go surfing
2	Visit Zacatecas
3	Try Mezcal
4	Eat a jalapeño
5	Visit real de catorze

## H: Personal Experience

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

Mexico is a fantastic to spend your semester abroad. More than stereotypical deserts, Mexico is a world away from New Zealand. The culture is amazing, with the music, food and night life you will find yourself constantly filled with energy. Mexicans as a people are generous beyond doubt, if given the opportunity, make sure to spend some time with a family there and you will really feel what it is to be looked after. If you're looking for travel Mexico offers, beautiful Pacific and Caribbean coastline, enormous rainforests and of course miles and miles of Cactus filled desert. I came back with a tan, more friends than I could imagine and a love of spicy food which.

