

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)	HRIR
Exchange Institution	University of Hawaii at Hilo
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 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	\$200
Accommodation	\$8500 (dorm and meal plan)
Return Airfare	\$1200
Local Transportation	\$100
Meals	\$400
Visa	\$500
Health & Insurance	\$700
Personal Spending	\$1000
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$280
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	My Visa was very expensive, as I had to travel to Auckland. Paying for my phone use while on exchange was also more expensive than I expected, as their phone plans are a lot more expensive than NZ.

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

I ended up spending more than I expected, mainly because the exchange rate was not favourable while I was on my exchange and this meant accommodation and other costs were very high.

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

I used my NZ debit card. I would probably recommend getting a travel card as the ATM fees for using my NZ card were high. Once you load money on to this card it doesn't change with the exchange rate so this would definitely be other benefits of this. I don't think you would need to open a bank account while over there unless you get an on campus job.

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

Save as much as you can before you go! Remember to have spare money as there are always extra things that you don't expect to have to pay for. Also apply for all the scholarships and grants that you can, as these helped me a lot.

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

Drip coffee was cheap at around US\$2 per cup however espresso is around US\$4.50.

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?

Yes I had to apply for a US visa at the Auckland consulate. It was quite a long process with a lot of forms to fill out and also very expensive. It ended up costing me around \$500 altogether. It is necessary to go to Auckland as you are unable to obtain this in Wellington.

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

I would definitely recommend applying early as it takes a while to apply and then appointment times are limited.

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 were insurance options available through the university however, it was also possible to just use travel insurance. If you choose this option make sure your insurance covers all the mandatory requirements of the university, as this needs to be approved by the university.

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

I used State insurance and yes I would recommend them.

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 2/YEAR 2015					
MKT313		MARK301	15	3	
MKT315		MARK202	15	4	
MGT333		IBUS212	15	4	

SPAN101		SPAN111	15	3	
DNCE160		Elective	0	2	
DNCE110		Elective	0	1	

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

It was necessary to apply online a few months before your arrival. The university emailed me with the dates for this process. I just read the course catalogue for course information and I had to email some of the professors to be able to take their course due to prerequisites.

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?

The main problem was that most of the courses I originally wanted to take were not offered the semester while I was there. Because of this I had to choose some different courses that were not originally on my exchange contract.

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

Apply as soon as the courses become available and if the courses require prerequisites email the professor to get permission for this class before the online class application opens.

Academic Experience

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

It was a lot different from Victoria as the classes were smaller so the professor paid more individual attention to each student. In general I would say my classes that I took were a bit easier than my classes at VUW and more help from the professor is available if you require it.

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 classes were a lot smaller with only around 30 people per class. I found it to be more of a classroom style than a university lecture. It is definitely easier to talk to your professors which I liked. There was more regular work than my courses at VUW, most classes required preparation however, the actual work was easier than VUW assignments.

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 courses is normal and it is no extra cost to do extra courses. I took advantage of this and did Ballet and Pilates courses which I thoroughly enjoyed as they were so different than university courses in NZ.

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

Make sure you keep up with the work and go to all your classes! The professors take attendance each class and you lose points if you are not there.

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

The library was very good with ample computers and the campus had free internet access throughout the campus.

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?

N/A.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

I stayed in the Dorms.

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

I really enjoyed the close proximity to campus and not having to cook for myself. It was also a great way to meet people. The negative aspects were that it was very expensive and the rooms were very tiny. Also the dorm that I stayed in was quite far from the dining hall so it took me a long time to walk to dinner each day.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

I would recommend the new dorms called Hale Alahonua which is where I stayed as some of the others were older and not as nice. I would also recommend Hale Haumana an off campus housing complex but still close to the uni.

How early can you move into accommodation?

About a week before the semester starts. As an international student I had the option of moving in a day earlier than everyone else.

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

There were a few different meal plan options depending on how many meals you want at the dining hall per week. I was very satisfied with the dining hall food as it was a kind of buffet style where you could choose what you want and it was all-you-can-eat. There were always a lot of healthy options, which I really enjoyed. My dorm was about a 7min walk from the dining hall, which wasn't ideal especially when it rained. The other dorms were a lot closer to the dining hall. My dorm had a small communal kitchen with limited cooking utensils available for use.

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

know about living off-campus?

N/A.

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

Make sure you apply by the deadline if you want to live on campus. Otherwise find a place off-campus quickly as there are limited places close to the uni.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

I made some great local friends however, the majority of my friends on my exchange were other international students.

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

This was very easy as the Hawaiian culture is very welcoming!

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

The atmosphere is very relaxed and people do not usually tend to be on time. This is nicknamed 'aloha time'. Apart from this a lot of the culture was very similar to NZ.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

I really enjoyed the Hawaiian atmosphere and the welcoming nature of this.

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

I was treated very well by everyone. Professors were always really excited to have international students in their class.

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 think this wouldn't be a problem.

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

No I didn't.

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 lot of clubs and events at the university. I would recommend the Outdoor EdVenture program that organised trips around the island every weekend to really great places. I saw a lot of the island from these trips.

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

Travel around the island as much as possible! All the regions are really different and it is definitely worth seeing them all. There are great hikes and snorkeling spots in close proximity to the university.

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

Only on-campus jobs were available to international students. There were some jobs available but I think it was quite competitive to get these jobs.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There were some great volunteer opportunities to help the island environment and nature. I didn't hear of any internships while I was there.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Swimming Togs!
2	Umbrella!
3	Jandals!
4	Pics Peanut Butter (USA peanut butter isn't vey nice)
5	Money!

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

1	Embrace the opportunities
2	Lots of small natural disasters (flash floods, hurricane, volcano)- don't panic!
3	Do as many Outdoor EdVenture trips as you can
4	The gym and sports facilities are amazing
5	Take a course that you wouldn't be able to take at VUW

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Snorkelling
2	Visit Kona
3	Volcano at Night
4	Hilo Farmers markets
5	Go to South Point

H: Personal Experience

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

My exchange was a fabulous, challenging and stimulating opportunity to meet new people and enjoy university for a semester in another culture. I made amazing lifelong friends from all over the world. These people became like my family on my exchange and I cant wait to visit them in their home countries one day! Hilo was a very easy place to live and a really nice place to go to university for a semester. The weather can sometimes not be very nice and it definitely rains a lot but this is something you get used to and if you feel like sunshine the other side of the island is only 1.5 hours away and its always sunny there! Get involved in as much as you can because you look back and realize how amazing everything was. I would definitely recommend Hilo, Hawaii as a fantastic exchange location.