

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	GradDipSci
Major(s)	Environmental Studies
Exchange Institution	University of Montana
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Year 2015 both semesters

## 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	500
Accommodation	2500
Return Airfare	2200
Local Transportation	Free
Meals	2500
Visa	250
Health & Insurance	1200
Personal Spending	2000
Communications (phone, etc.)	400
Other fees (specify)	Holiday breaks (Spring Break + Thanksgiving) 1000
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Unexpected cost was mainly just travelling around the States. While at Uni the costs were minimal depending on going out for dinner and coffees. Things were as I expected them to be.

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

It was as I planned.

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

Credit card, Travel Card and an American account. I worked as an RA over there so had to have an American account. Also Travel Card is good for withdrawing money out of ATM's (saves the conversion fee) and the Credit Card works the best for purchases. Though some online places will not accept a foreign card.

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

Look into work while over there. It gives you extra cash while also letting you meet people.

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

Coke was about a NZ\$1 (US\$.75) and a coffee off campus was about NZ\$5-6 (US\$4-5)

**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?

Visa process is relatively straight forward. Go to the US Consulate page and file for a J1 Visa. However, the difficult part is needing to have already registered for a SEVIS – a international ID – it’s an additional cost and you can’t get the VISA without it. Also need proof of payment for both SEVIS and VISA. VISA appointment has to be in Auckland (so additional costs) and is best to get the earliest appointment because of wait times. Costs for a visa is approx. \$250 and I can’t remember the SEVIS fee. It took about 3-4 weeks for the VISA to arrive.

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

Print out every confirmation they send you. This includes proof of payment, appointment times and all your foreign schools paperwork. You cannot take any electronic devices and only your paper work in so is best to have too much documents rather than miss one. Also make sure you have spare US size passport photos.

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?

University of Montana did have a mandatory insurance policy, either through the school or you need proof of your insurance. I used STA comprehensive insurance, which covered a lot more than the schools insurance, and it also cost less. Travel insurance is a better option and cheaper (1200) whereas UM was about 2000 for just on campus cover.

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

STA Comprehensive Plan. It was good and covered additional travel.

**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>					
ENST 430	English		15	4	Culture and Agriculture
ENST 480	English		15	5	Food, Ag, Environment
ENST 492	English		5	3	Independent Study
FORS 330	English		15	5	Forest Ecology
GPHY 338	English		15	4	Mountains and Society
GPHY 391	English		5	5	Field Study

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
ACT 150	English			5	Yoga for Credit
ENST 494	English		15	4	Conservation without Borders – Field Class
ENST 494	English		15	5	Sustainable Conservation
ENST 580	English		15	4	Politics of Food
GPHY 466	English		15	3	Environmental Planning

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Mostly the same as Vic, however you have an assigned course advisor who signs off your classes especially when you are doing a full year study. Need to get them to sign off your classes. Basically you make an appointment show them the classes you want and they give you a code you enter online. As an exchange student you are enrolled as a no major, so trying to register for some classes is harder and need to contact the teacher to get access.

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 got into most classes I want. The problem with trying to register was the confusion over what classes were actually available that particular year.

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

Have back up classes pre signed off through Victoria in case your classes are not available when registering comes around. That way you can send an email to take a few off your list.

### Academic Experience

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

Academic was different in the way they teach. It's a lot more inclusive and discussion based. Also attendance is mandatory and is a part of your final grade.

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?

Workload was about the same, with possibly more readings for each lesson. Their teaching style was more discussions of the readings and opinions about them.

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?

Always try take a field studies course. You get to see the country and area. Also give an activities class a go. They are 1 credit classes but they give you a break from your usual class load. I took yoga and it was awesome. Also class wise take the bare minimum. That gives you a chance to still have time to go out and do stuff without an intense work load. As well as finals week gives you more a break with taking less classes.

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

Use the library and given study spaces around. Also ask for study sessions with people in your class.

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

It was awesome. The library structure was similar to Vic so quiet floors and talking floors. There is also the University Center (equivalent to the Hub) and that has a food court and areas for study. Also free gym.

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?

Halls of Residence

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

Pro: meet other internationals and Americans. Your on campus so convenience and food prepped for you.

Con: Quiet hours/rules. Can't cook your own food.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Halls of Residence.

How early can you move into accommodation?

A week before school starts.

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

There was an all campus plan or Lomasson plan. All campus gave you more money and could use any food stall around campus whereas Lomasson was just that building. Also you got flex dollars on top of meal plans in case you need more money or in case of Lomasson gave you money to spend like all campus. The Halls had kitchens that you can get keys for, but they are limiting. There was a convenience store that you could use with either plan that gave you more options including snacks. I was pretty happy with the options. The Food Zoo was the main dining hall on campus and it was basically a food court.

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?

Apply for Halls and make friends with the people on your floor.

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

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

First semester it was a lot harder. I made friends with the people that I had multiple classes with, but it was hard outside of class. Second semester I became an RA so had the whole student staff as friends (all American) and that was really easy.

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

Not much to adjust to, just accents.

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

N/A

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Openness. Missoula has a very easy going culture that's very inclusive.

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

Really well. Everyone was really inclusive and was happy to integrate my culture into life, and teach me theirs.

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?

They would fit in really well. The school is very open and encouraging with disabilities. They would need to see disability services to sort out the details. As for the LGBT they have a campus group which is well supported and encouraged.

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

N/A

## **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 was a very large list of activities available to students depending on their interest. The list is so large but includes sports, socials, books, arts etc. I would recommend joining whatever you are interested in. With UM having an interest in the outdoors is a definite bonus.

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

Missoula is big on the outdoors. So most weekend and holidays would be spent climbing mountains, hiking and camping and adventuring. Glacier National Park is close to Missoula and so can explore that.

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

On-campus there was heaps of opportunities. Mostly dining, but there are internships as FSSS and International House. They also have RA positions depending on your length of stay. Off-campus is more limiting and depending on the job depends if FSSS will sign off on the employment.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

Can work for Foreign Student Scholar Services, not sure about others.

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Adaptors for US</b>
<b>2</b>	Kiwiana Stuff
<b>3</b>	NZ ingredients you like – candy, biscuits etc
<b>4</b>	Hiking Boots
<b>5</b>	Outdoor gear

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

<b>1</b>	<b>Join Missoula International Friendship Programme</b>
<b>2</b>	Join the school partnership exchange thing
<b>3</b>	Go climb the M
<b>4</b>	Live in the Halls
<b>5</b>	Record your first few lectures

## 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 Glacier National Park
2	See homecoming (football)
3	Go Hike the area
4	Join a club
5	Plan a trip for the holidays

## H: Personal Experience

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

The University of Montana is amazing. The scenic images it has on the homepage match the atmosphere I experienced. The school is relatively small and Missoula itself is most definitely a College town but everyone is big on the outdoors, including my classes. Having a year at UM meant I got to experience all the holidays and seasons, including the different sports. Missoula has a very open community and has a great support system for international students, where they make you feel included, either through an on-campus partner or a host family that can help assimilate you. I absolutely loved studying there and still maintain the friendships with both the other internationals and my American friends.