

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)	Development Studies. Minor in Pacific Studies
Exchange Institution	University of South Pacific
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	2 nd Tri, 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	186
Accommodation	700 a month
Return Airfare	603
Local Transportation	70 cents on local bus. 15 fijiian dollars to get to Nadi from Suva (5 hour bus ride)
Meals	5 – 10 Fijian dollars
Visa	??
Health & Insurance	??
Personal Spending	1000 dollars
Communications (phone, etc.)	Wireless Internet 50 dollars a month. Phone credit was very expensive \$20 for a few days.
Other fees (specify)	Medical Fees - \$60.00
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Phone credit was a lot more expensive and anything in the supermarket that was not from Fiji or India was very expensive. For example muesli was \$29 dollars

How did your financial expenses compare to what you originally expected to spend? It balanced out as I learnt how to live cheaply, once that happened I could live very cheaply. This meant I went to the vege market at brought Fijian grown vegetables and learnt how to cook them at home. I used the bus's more as they were a great experience in itself. I had to forget about marmite on good bread or muesli and good coffee and instead eat yummy fruit for breakfast and instant coffee.

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

I got my money out each week from my bank this was not sustainable because it charged me 10 dollars every time I used an ATM. I wished I had opened a Fijian bank account.

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					
Governance and Development in the Pacific -PL200	English	International Politics of Development – 200 Major	20	3	I extremely enjoyed this course. Very informative and well-rounded. The lecturer Gordon Nanau, was a brilliant academic and very supportive.
Social Work - Field Work Practice One. SW200	English	Pacific Studies Minor	20	4	This was a placement in a Women's Centre for 200 hours where I was painting murals with the women as a art theory program. I got great response from my supervisor and the university on my work at the Centre. This course had a lot of hours as well as theory work so was quite difficult.
Contemporary Art of the Pacific	English	Reginal course requirement for 300 level development studies major.	200	3	I loved this course. So much fun.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

The international office at USP was full of wonderful people. You really felt comfortable to go to any of them with any problem big or small and be greeted with a big welcome a hearty laugh and so much time to help even though they were so so busy. I loved all of them but Lillian Fuata was especially great.

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 successful I found it hard to choose as there were so many options. The advice I would give is to go to the

university and look at all the courses so you have time.

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

USP do not give you as long as VUW to decide and so not give you the week long trial period either. The website for USP courses is hard to navigate and everything is easier once you get there and look at the booklet of courses.

Academic Experience

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

I felt bad because I assumed that because I was going to a university in the Pacific that it would not be as good as academically at VUW. I was so wrong and realized my ignorance on how many wonderful academics USP produces.

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?

It seemed about the same.

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?

3 courses would be a good amount. Also anything that is concentrating on the Pacific as a subject matter as you cannot get this anywhere else.

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

Communication is vital and a slow process. Remember to always get to know your lecturers as well as your fellow students, there were a lot of verbal communication, which is parallel to the culture, that you cannot get off the website.

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

Bad! The system of computer facilities is slow and does not work. There is limited amounts of computers around the campus. If you want to print something you have to go on the other side of campus to a little room where there are 6 computers and you line up for a long time sometimes. To get your laptop configured, so you can get internet, you have to go to an office of around 3 staff who are always dealing with around 20 students. This gives for a long frustrating experience, but one that you would expect in a poor country.

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 was and that was great, the language is similar to Te reo Māori so if you know this you are ahead of the game. One thing I wanted to do more is learning the Hindi language, as that is a lot of the population and you learn Fijian but not Hindi.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

A one-bedroom house

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

It was great as I really *lived* in Fiji, I experienced a lot that my fellow international students did not because they lived on campus. I really enjoyed it and as a mature student would not have had it any other way. The cons were that it was lonely, I would have liked to live with other people.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

If they are young the hall of residences was great as they had an instant friend group of people from all over the world. If you are older you can get great options for accommodation and makes you feel like you are living in Fiji that much more,

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in a week before I started university.

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

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

I lived alone so I had a stove and oven and kitchen facilities, also a fridge with freezer. I purchased a cheap blender as soon as I got there which I never regretted as the fruit was brilliant from the market and I had a smoothie every day and then I got to give the blender as a present to my neighbor who would always cook me amazing dinners. So that felt great.

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

I lived off campus and the website that the university provides was not that helpful or very up to date. So I looked at rooms available on in the newspapers that were advertised online. I then was in a lot of contact with my landlords. The mistake I made was agreeing to rent before I went 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 took awhile, everyone is very friendly and you have a lot of people being so friendly, but I had an urgency that the locals did not have, friendships take time, especially in Fiji no one is in a rush, so knowing that I had only 5 months felt like I had an unbalanced need to make friends fast. My real friends took about that long to make and it wasn't till the last month of being there that we all become close and were hanging out nearly everyday. Again I think this would be different for young students as my friends that were my age did not go to university but were all working in Suva.

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

It was hard at the start because it rained all the time, and no one at home believed that I was having a hard time because I lived in *tropical paradise*.

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

Sexual harassment is quite common. Also just because there is not many white people, if you are white you get stared at everywhere you go. Then when you come home you find it hard because everyone is white.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The creativeness everyone's cars, bus's houses are decorated and unique. There is music in every bus, shop. People are singing in their houses and groups of men singing while walking the streets. You just need to leave your house to feel great and happy.

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

Very well

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?

Transgender from M to F is part of the Fijian culture and very accepted, but then everyone is Christian and so it is not mentioned if your gay. It would be extremely hard if you were in a wheelchair also, because the city is not made for it really.

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

Just for being a woman you are quite objectified and it get annoying after a while.

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 many, the country is rugby mad so taking that up would be well received.

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

Get out of Suva as much as possible, I did it much more than my international student friends did and I was so thankful of it. Also though if you are in Suva go to Colo-I-Suva a rainforest with fresh water pools in it. It is so beautiful and way better than going to the pub on a hot day.

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

You were not allowed to do paid work because of the Visa requirements. There were many great places to work doing uni work on campus as the campus is like a stunning rainforest.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Any food that you can take on the plane that you love because it is probably not going to be available in Fiji
2	Rain Jacket

3	Camera
4	vitamins
5	computer

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

1	Even though it is hard at the start, stick it out and it becomes amazing
2	Accept anything like going to a family's house for dinner, those are the best memories
3	Make sure you get out of Suva when you can
4	The missing of friends and loved one's dims
5	And then when it comes time to go home you won't want to leave

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 an outer island off viti levu.
2	Go to Colo-i-Suva
3	Go on a day walk
4	Go to the food markets
5	Go to music shows

H: Personal Experience

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

I had a great time and the more I learnt about the culture and history of Fiji the more I loved it. You really need to learn the culture so you are not offending people and then people respond and welcome you more than other tourists. Especially if you know the language. I meet a man on the bus and I stayed at his family's house in the holidays in the highlands, it was hard work and the most rewarding experience while in Fiji. I will keep in contact with that family forever.