

# Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

## A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BA
Major(s)	Media Studies
Exchange Institution	Waseda University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	1 & 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	\$100 (most papers have materials online. Only had to buy one textbook for a Japanese class)
Accommodation	\$1,200/month
Return Airfare	\$2200
Local Transportation	\$60/month for a commuter pass to get from home to uni
Meals	\$10 will get you a decent lunch
Visa	\$50
Health & Insurance	Opted for national health insurance scheme which was around \$10/month
Personal Spending	About \$120/month for days out with friends every weekend. Shopping is relatively cheap as you pay less but get a wider variety.
Communications (phone, etc.)	There are prepaid plans available but I went for an open-ended contract which was around \$120/month. Unlimited texts, minutes, and 5GB of data
Other fees (specify)	NZ driver's licence conversion - \$115
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Clothes and meals were definitely cheaper than I expected. Transportation (train tickets, toll roads, parking) were a lot more than I expected however I don't think most of you are planning on driving in Japan.

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

I think I was able to manage my finances relatively well. Some things cost more and some less but once I was able to get used to my daily budgeting/needs it became easier.

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

Foreign bank account. In Japan 99% of all transactions are done with cash. It was easier to see how much I was spending rather than if it was by eftpos. Also, ATMs have english menus and most will read NZ debit cards.

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

Get a commuter pass, it'll save you a lot in train tickets. As for meals, Waseda has a number of affordable and delicious restaurants around it. *Konbini* (convenient store) meals are pretty good too and cheap.

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

From a *konbini* a can of coke or coffee is around \$1.60

**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, you have to apply for a student visa. The embassy in Wellington were really nice but I did it in a weird and complicated way as I went there early with a tourist visa and then converted that to a student visa. It cost around \$50 but it was a lot of paperwork and visits to the immigration office in Tokyo. However, they were friendly and helpful.

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

Apply before you leave.

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?

No, Waseda didn't have mandatory insurance but recommend I joined the national health insurance. I think it was more a residential requirement.

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

National Health Insurance.

## **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>					
Contemporary Journalism in Asia	English	MDIA200	10	3	
Introduction to World Politics and Journalism	English	MDIA200	20	3	
International Journalism and East Asian Diplomacy	English	MDIA300	10	3	
Democracy Peace and War	English	HIST300	20	2	
War and Japan	English/Japanese	HIST200	10	2	The lecturer kept switching between Japanese and English.
Urban History of Tokyo	English	JAPA200/HIST200	10	3	I recommend this course to everyone. It allows you to see and learn about parts of Tokyo you wouldn't know about.
Sociocultural Studies	English	POLS200	10	3	
<b>VUW Trimester 2/YEAR</b>					
News Writing	English	MDIA300	10	3	
Asian Issues in Media	English/Japanese	MDIA300	10	2	

Contemporary Journalism in Asia	English/Japanese	MDIA200	10	2	
Ethics and World Politics	English	HIST300	10	3	
Trans Pacific perspectives on Race, Ethnicity, and Migration	English	POLS200	10	3	
Inter-Cultural Communication	English	ASIA200	10	3	
How to express feelings in Japanese	Japanese	JAPA100	5	2	

### Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Registration in the first semester is done in person/on paper but they helped you out a lot with the process. In the second semester it's all done online. I had help from friends there who were familiar with the process but it was pretty straightforward.

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?

Most of the courses I had planned on taking from the syllabus had to be changed or I wasn't eligible to enrol so I had to make sudden changes to my courses. So keep an open mind about the courses you want to do and just be ready to make changes.

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

Try and branch out to seeing courses offered by other school in Waseda apart from the one you're enrolled to.

### Academic Experience

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

Yes. Waseda was an amazing experience. They had similar yet different approaches to study there. It really helped broaden my mind and change my way of thinking and seeing things. I guess a lot of my courses were political based but even in other courses there were healthy discussions with students from different backgrounds in almost every class.

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 similar. Yes I had to take more courses in one semester to get the equivalent VUW credits but there's no tutorials so you only have to show up to each course once a week.

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?

It varies from course to course but it's pretty similar to VUW. Try to do Urban History of Tokyo from the School of Social Sciences. You'll love that class and the teacher is awesome. Ask George Nelson, he introduced me to it. And if you do take it, tell sensei George and I said hello.

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

Have an open mind and feel free to express your opinions in discussions.

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

The computers were annoyingly slow but the internet was next level fast. Didn't use the library at all.

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?

I had studied Japanese a bit so I knew some basic words. The uni did offer intensive Japanese courses for those that didn't have any Japanese knowledge.

## **E: Accommodation**

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

An apartment.

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

Pros: You get to choose where you live, you have your own space, you get to live by your own rules

Cons: You're on your own, costs will be higher

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Depends what you prefer. Waseda offer dorms which will have a more social atmosphere but if you prefer to be more independent then an apartment would be the way to go.

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved it a couple of weeks before uni started.

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

Cooking facilities consisted of a gas stove, kettle, toaster, and a microwave. Ovens are hard to come by in Japan.

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

It was pretty easy. There are lots of foreigners living in Tokyo so english websites are plentiful. Off campus living is quite fussy to start up with most agents requiring guarantors, deposits etc.

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

If you're going to live off campus start researching in advanced. Try getting somewhere near a station, ideally close to the Tozai Line (the line that takes you to Waseda Station).

## **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 found I made more local friends outside uni as most of my classmates were international students. I was participated in a few out of school activities so that's where I met them.

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

It wasn't too difficult, you just have to open to learning and trying new things. It's a case by case thing but I didn't think Japan was too difficult to adjust to.

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

Having to address lecturers by 'Professor' or 'Mr Last Name'.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Everyone is so polite. And they have to do everything by the book. Sometimes it was frustrating.

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

All very friendly. Because I look Japanese (I'm a halfie) they immediately started speaking to me in Japanese but I had to explain I only knew the basics at first. But once they found out I spoke English they tried their best to practice their english with me.

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 it wouldn't be too difficult. I'd imagine there'd be lots of facilities and help for students with disabilities. Waseda is quite an open and liberal uni, however most of Japan is quite conservative. That said minorities and LGBT students needn't worry, Japan is a safe place

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

Not so much discrimination but Japan is a monocultural country. Only around 2% of Japan's population are foreigners. You have to remember that and just be open and understanding of their culture.

## **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?

A lot. There's a club for everyone at Waseda. They also have special activities for international/exchange students.

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

Too many to list. The usual sights (Tokyo Tower, Skytree, Akihabara, Shibuya, Shinjuku, Ginza) but you'll have a year there so lots of time to see and do things. Take the Urban History of Tokyo Course (another plug) and you'll be able to see and know more of some of Tokyo's hidden gems.

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

On campus not so much. But off campus there's always demand for english teachers. Unless your Japanese is quite good, getting jobs at say retail or in service is quite difficult.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

I didn't see many.

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

1	Adapters
2	NZ snacks - Japanese ones are quirky but not as yummy
3	An unlocked phone so you don't need to buy one there - just a SIM
4	Summer and winter clothes - the seasons can be very extreme
5	NZ souvenirs to give to your new Japanese friends

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

1	Don't stress, the workload isn't as difficult as you think it'll be
2	They prefer if students wrote down notes rather than typing them
3	It's easy to get lost, save a campus map
4	Don't freak out too much if there's an earthquake - the buildings are super safe
5	There's a few <i>konbinis</i> on campus so snacks are readily available.

## Top 5 Things to do

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

1	<b>Take the Urban History of Tokyo course. Thank me later.</b>
2	Studio Ghibli museum - even if you're not a fan of anime.
3	Go to as many festivals as you can
4	Explore Tokyo in your spare time - it's a fascinating city
5	Tokyo is only one city, there's a whole other country out there.