

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 Art & Bachelor of Science
Major(s)	Japanese & Physics
Exchange Institution	Waseda University (Japan)
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri 2 2015 & 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	\$50, \$30 for other stationary (pens, notebooks etc..)
Accommodation	\$7200 (around \$650 a month for a Double room)
Return Airfare	\$1700 (Qantas special)
Local Transportation	\$20 / week
Meals	(Eating out) \$60-70/week
Visa	\$0
Health & Insurance	\$600~
Personal Spending	A LOT OF \$\$ Save as much as you can for spending.
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$35/ week for 10GB Data (no calling or texting)
Other fees (specify)	\$200 (sending boxes of stuff home)
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?

The thing is, was that I originally planned to stay for 6months in Japan, but I later extended my study abroad to a full year. So I obviously spent more than I originally planned, but even during the first 6months I spent more than I thought I would due to activities and travels and I wasn't budgeting properly.

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

I was taking money out of my New Zealand Bank account every so often, usually large amounts because the Exchange fee, therefore I always had cash on me. I also had a Japanese Bank account for my Japanese scholarship money and from my Job, which I would also take out of more regularly due to no fee.

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

Apply for the JASSO scholarship if you can, it gives you about \$1000NZD and gives you a lot more

freedom to spend and do more activities. You will most likely spend quite a lot on food and other random merch because everything is so different there and you feel like you want it because you need it, which sometimes you don't, so just in case that happens, save as much as you can and budget so you can keep track and don't over spend.

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

You can get a can or bottle-type-thing of coffee from a convenience store for about \$1-2, a tall 500mL can of coke was about \$1, cheaper than a smaller bottle.

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?

Well first you had to apply for the University and then they send some papers to Vic, so Vic takes care of all that. Once Vic had received some papers back from the University that allows you to apply for a student visa, you can go to the Japanese Embassy and they take care of it for no price.

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

Apply for the student visa as soon as you get the forms back from the University. The Japanese for some reason take their time sending the forms back, you might have literally a month to go before you leave for the trip and you will just get your papers. It takes a week for the Embassy to do the Visa so get in the ASAP.

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?

Waseda University did sign us up with some Mandatory Insurance, that we had to pay monthly or all in one payment for our whole stay. So all up, it was about \$100NZD.

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

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 1/YEAR 2016					
Comprehensive Japanese 4	Japanese	JAPA304/305	20	4	Really good general Japanese class, challenging but makes you work and it does

					help better you in Japanese. I learnt a lot and can use stuff outside the classroom. Above the 300 level at Vic.
Reading and Listening 3-4	Japanese	JAPA300	4	2	Really chill, reading Japanese books and give reports on them through speaking and writing.
Classical Poetry	Japanese/ English	JAPA Culture Paper	16	3	Interesting course, learn about the history of Haiku, only have to write 2 essays.
Calculus 51 II	Japanese/English	MATH243	16	5	Don't take it, too much work involved for an OE (Did not pass, gave up after the midterm)
Film & Mass Media	Japanese/ English	JAPA Culture Paper	16	3	Get to study old Japanese directors and watch a wide range of old and new films. One Multi-choice test and a group presentation.

VUW Trimester 2/YEAR 2015

Comprehensive Japanese 3	Japanese	JAPA304/305	20	3	If at 300level Japanese, this course definitely strengthens all those skills helping you become more confident in the way you use your Japanese outside the classroom.
Kanji 3	Japanese	JAPA300	4	3	Literally just working out of the textbook,

					weekly tests and two big tests. Lots and lots of practice makes perfect with Kanji, so quite a bit of time is needed .for this course, but it is pretty chill. Also turns out you can sleep through the midterm and still pass... if that ever happens... (Don't recommend)
Let's Enjoy Speaking 3-4	Japanese	JAPA300	4	3	Basically get out into different groups every week, given a topic and talk to everyone in Japanese. You eventually go off on tangents and get into casual conversations, whatever gets you speaking the most Japanese. One group research presentation, other than that, turn up every week and do your thing.
Literature and Art	Japanese/ English	JAPA Culture Paper	16	2	Easy pass, get readings every week, and the lecturer will read from the papers he handed out to you word for word. So if you want to do other class' work during this class, make sure you go over the readings later and keep up with the Assignment deadlines.
Creative	English	CREW 254	16	4	THE BEST COURSE I

Writing					<p>TOOK AT WASEDA! Everything was so much fun, the teacher, David, is a really chilled back, great guy and wants to bring out the best in you. Usually get quite a few readings and assignments after every class so quite a lot of time is needed, also you are constantly working on your own short stories (one for each half of the semester) of around 2500words, with workshops with other students who read your story and gives you feedback.</p>
Biological Psychology	Japanese/ English	BSci 200 Paper	16	4	<p>Interesting course, learnt a lot. But takes up 3hours of your Saturday, which could be spent doing activities and trips etc... Skipped a lot of that class, only showed up for the group presentations every 2 weeks. Probably not worth taking on your OE.</p>

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Honestly, it was really stupid. They explain really well how to sign up so just wait for that. They also

give you big detailed books on every course and they give you a list on what courses you are allowed to apply for, depending on what department you are studying in. But the way they put you into classes is a lottery system. So everyone applies for whatever courses, and then they fill the class with as many students as they can through random selection, and the people who didn't make it, go through another round of applying for courses and another round of lottery. So you might not even get into the class you want if it's really popular, like Creative Writing, or the Comprehensive Japanese Classes.

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?

Lucky for me I got into every class I applied for. But it literally is all based on luck, so good luck!

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

Go for elective courses, might as well take it chill on your OE. Plan your timetable so that you have plenty of time to chill and go for adventures and explore the place you're visiting.

Academic Experience

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

It was definitely a lot easier at Waseda than at Vic. Based on the fact that the Japanese take it easy in University wasn't a shock to me, so I guess in that retrospect it met my expectations.

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 depended on the course, obviously the more points you are taking, the more work they expect. For Example the Comprehensive Japanese Course are worth 5 Waseda Points/ 20 VUW Points and you spend 7 ½ hours of classes a week, not including the homework. But other courses worth 1 Waseda/4 VUW points, you just do work in class one day a week. The teachers are super helpful though, they will make sure that you understand what is going on in class until you understand, which I found really cool about Waseda.

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?

For the SILS program at Waseda University, the minimum amount of Points per semester is 14, and the max is 21. If Vic wants you to do 60VUW points a semester, just settling for 15 Waseda Points a semester is a nice workload. This will give you plenty of time away from University, and still be able to take decent courses too.

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

They are quite strict on attendance, it usually contributes quite a lot to your overall grade, so make sure you don't skip too many classes, they usually let you miss up to 1/3 of the total number of classes for that course. Otherwise just do the work, and then you'll definitely pass at least.

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

They had quite a lot of large study areas, and if it's a nice day they have chairs and tables outside and a beautiful garden where people hang out and study or sleep, people literally sleep everywhere and anywhere they can. Internet access is alright, plays up a bit sometimes. But the computers are pretty good, similar to Vic's.

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?

Waseda University does offer intensive Japanese courses, and also beginner, easy-paced Japanese courses. In the SILS program, you are required to take at least 6 Waseda Credits in the CJL Department (Japanese Course), that vary in difficulty depending on your prior level of Japanese. At the very beginning everyone sits a JCAT (Japanese Computerized Adaptive Test) to determine which level courses they should sign up for, this is pretty helpful. But if you have no prior knowledge, you will most definitely end up in Level 1, the lowest, with level 7-8 being the highest.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

The Nishi-Waseda University Student House, in a double room.

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

Some Waseda dorms are pretty strict on rules, the only rules we had was no visitors from outside the dorm and no noise outside the dorm, because we lived in a residential area. I lived in a double room, so not much privacy but you get to know your roommate pretty well, and it's also cheaper than a single room, end up saving about \$150NZD a month. The rooms were pretty small but that's Japan for you, really efficient with the space they got.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

The Dorm experience was pretty awesome, you got to meet a bunch of new people from everywhere around the world and get to explore new places with them. The student house I stay in had around 170 Waseda Exchange Students who I got to meet most of them. The Managers and RAs are very helpful and are capable of taking care of you if you have any problems inside or outside the dorm. There were a few people who moved to Home-Stays for cheaper and better their Japanese, or apartments for more privacy and less-craziness and also more freedom.

How early can you move into accommodation?

They have set days that you should move in, just give them you arrival date, they may have shuttles to bring you to the Dorm if it's during the first few opening days too. I was the first person to arrive at my dorm, at 8:00am on the first opening day and they let me move into my room, and orientation was a couple days later. So in between opening and orientation day would be the best to move in.

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

We had a kitchen on each floor, with cooking utensils for cooking. We had to buy our own food and other supplies to cook our own meals, which was the cheaper option. Otherwise we could eat out which was also pretty cheap and the food was amazing!

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?

Waseda gets you to fill out a survey, asking what kind of person you are (eg. Messy? Nocturnal?), and hopefully match you up with a roommate that also suits you if you applied for a double room, or just put you in a single room if you applied for one.

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

Making friends at the Dorm was pretty easy. Everyone is out looking to make friends so all you got to do is get out of your room and go out and meet other people. Then the locals are also pretty keen to talk to you, it helped knowing Japanese because they feel more comfortable speaking their own language. They like knowing about where you come from and the differences, in places like bathhouses, quite communal places. Also convenience store and restaurant people after a while recognize you as regulars and you get more friendlier and free sides on your dishes sometimes, which is great, free food!!

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

The fact that I had other friends who were also going through the same process was pretty helpful with the whole culture shock, because we had each other if we needed help with something completely new. The University was quite a big shock because it was a massive campus and so many classrooms, but was orientation had happened and after a couple weeks to explore and get your bearings, the university life kind of comes back to you and it's all the same.

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

I didn't have a lot of difficulty with the culture shock, just some basic mannerisms that you will just learn and find out as you go. But just keep an open mind, and just go with the flow.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

Food, temples, gardens, festivals, festival food, I'm probably missing tons but there's literally so much to fall in love with!

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

Everyone was great and very helpful. Even strangers will go out of your way to walk you to a shop or a classroom you are looking for, they are really nice people. However, you might get a couple weird looks

from some of the students, being an exchange student and all. But if you get them talking, they are usually pretty friendly and enjoy joking around with foreigners., kind of a good way to make friends with other Japanese students, just go out of your way to talk to them, because they are pretty shy and might not approach you first.

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 get by fine, with my friends and the people I knew of, they all studied at Waseda University perfectly fine.

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

I didn't really come across a lot of discrimination, not that I could remember.

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?

For us coming into Waseda at their second semester, there weren't a whole lot of opportunities for us to join clubs or circles. This was because the students do all the recruiting for the whole year in the first semester. IN that case they hold a massive clubs-advertising weekend where you go around the university gathering A LOT of fliers, and eventually pick a club or circle (more casual) that you would want to join. They literally had a club for everything; it would be hard to find a club they didn't have, so recommend trying something new, like Darts, Flower Arranging or even Fishing.

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

Travel; see as much of the place as you can. Japan is such a beautiful place and so different from New Zealand. Even just in Tokyo, I didn't have a whole lot of money during the holidays, but there was so much to do just in Tokyo and so many unique places to see that I had my holiday sorted. Also day trips by train out of Tokyo, there are many places that you can go. All around Japan, I have heard, is also amazing and so different from Tokyo go explore the whole place!

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

On-campus: not that I knew of. But off-campus, the student visa allows 28hours a week maximum. So if you hand in your CV to a place, they will review and maybe give you an interview if they have room, it is definitely possible to get work in Japan. Even for non-Japanese speakers, there are jobs like English teaching, some English cafes and restaurants are around and would be willing to hire. I worked at a café for 2 months and it bettered my Japanese and gave me an insight to Japanese working life-style.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

There were some clubs at the University that offered volunteer work. There was also some jobs and

internship opportunities that were emailed to us over the Winter break (Jan-March), so a CV is also needed for those but are easy to apply for overall.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Camera, plenty of beautiful and unique sights to see
2	Notebook: to keep track of good places to eat or visit, it's a big place and you'll want to remember where you did whatever.
3	Souvenirs from New Zealand: people love stuff from NZ, especially the Japanese, makes them so happy!
4	An Multi box, to have multi NZ plugs at once
5	A strong alcohol tolerance, if you like to drink, the Japanese do as well, and they go hard!

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

1	Join a circle and learn something new and meet lots of different people
2	Get into the school spirit, learn the school song, you will quickly realise there's a lot more hype than New Zealand does.
3	Take courses you wouldn't usually take, have fun with it.
4	A club called Niji-no-kai, they are a great group to meet Japanese and other exchange students.
5	If you ever need a place to chill out after class during a break, on a sunny day, Okuma garden.

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Tokyo Disneyland and Disney Sea (not on the same day)
2	Asakusa: Sensouji Temple, Sanja Matsuri
3	See as many Temples and Gardens as you can
4	Climb Mt. Fuji, Fuji-Q Highland Rollercoaster Park
5	Eat everything!!