

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)	International Relations, Economics and Politics
Exchange Institution	Xiamen University
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Tri2 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
Accommodation	\$250 (one semester)
Return Airfare	\$2000 (flexible)
Local Transportation	0.50 for a bus that takes an hour to city center but \$25 taxi
Meals	Canteen costs around \$1-2 per meal
Visa	Over \$100 (most expensive part minus flights)
Health & Insurance	
Personal Spending	\$500
Communications (phone, etc.)	Get a local sim as you arrive - \$50 for a year plan
Other fees (specify)	
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?

Everything at this University was less expensive than I budgeted for as the campus was removed from the city. This had its pros and cons.

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

I just used my NZ bank account withdrawing large sums of money at a time. This worked well, but you must set up a Chinese bank account on arrival so you could wire funds through to this.

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

Nothing is very expensive in comparison to NZ, esp the accommodation but still be wise with your money and keep track of spending.

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

Coffee was more expensive around \$5-7 dollars as is not a usual drink there but coke cost around 50c

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?

Its quite a process to get a visa but as long as you have all the required documents it should be a in and out process. Get there early to get ahead of the queue.

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

Studying visa is not hard so don't stress but do it more than a week in advance incase.

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?

Not for one semester but as part of the residence permit you must.

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

Southern Cross, and luckily never had to test it.

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					
Language Course	Chinese	CHIN111/101	15	3	Great way to learn Mandarin. Highly recommend
VUW Trimester 2/YEAR					

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

Not much help, must be patient. Handbook given but this is not very helpful and if you don't speak Chinese the first few days are tough (like it was for me).

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?

Easy, and done for you. Just have patience and everything should happen behind the scenes. Chinese bureaucracy would very differently.

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

Good for Chinese language, but I did not do anything else so cannot recommend.

Academic Experience

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

Learning a language is different to my degree so incomparable from style, class size to teaching method.

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?

Less work as all graded at final exam, I enjoyed my learning so much and did not seem like work.

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?

The standardized class schedule along with one elective would be fine.

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

If you keep up to date you will be fine.

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

Internet good once set up but not in dorms which I think it should have been.

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?

It was all I did and to go here I think its needed.

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

Dormitory

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

Cheap and convenient location. But lots of stairs.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Dorms

How early can you move into accommodation?

The week prior to starting

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

No cooking in dorms, only eating at canteen and restaurants.

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

Know some Chinese.

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

Its all set up for you my applying to the University, nothing to worry about.

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 with classmates and international students is not hard as you are forced together but there were no meet and greets to start this process. Harder to make Chinese friends, their buddy system is not well organized.

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

Not very hard as it is a new university away from city center helping me adjust to Chinese culture with time.

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

Language, food, interaction.... everything

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The awareness of others and politeness when trying to speak Chinese.

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

Great! University staff not so great or helpful but everyone else was lovely.

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?

No, China does not cater to those with physical disabilities, and I feel mental disabilities are pushed aside there as well. A very big fault in their system, which is yet to develop to our level of awareness.

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

No. It's a diverse university.

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?

None for international

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

Travel

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

Not with a student Visa but many English tutor or modeling jobs available as foreigners.

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students?

English tutor

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Face wash – everything has whitening in it there
2	Clothes suitable for all year (does not go below 5 degree)
3	Cash
4	Pleco – download onto your phone
5	A book

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

1	Have patience
2	Make Chinese friends – they know everything
3	Set up your e-card as soon as possible it will save your life
4	Learn the transportation route
5	Try new food

Top 5 Things to do

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

1	Round houses
2	Gulangyu Island
3	Beijing ofcourse
4	Botanic Gardens
5	The other campus of Xiamen

H: Personal Experience

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

My experience was a definite learning one. It was tough at first but I knew choosing China as my OE destination with knowing NO Chinese this would be the case. I loved the experience and would recommend it to any person wanting to experience China but with less of a culture shock with more favorable weather and pollution. I believe immersion is the only way to properly learn a language. I would love to gain an opportunity to go back and continue learning Chinese. While there I got to travel many new places and meet like-minded people from all around the world. I learnt so much about culture, language and myself. 100% if you are looking for something different and not the typical OE, although all alcohol is free as foreigners so there is a chance to have a great time too. Cheap OE with many scholarships available.