

Victoria Abroad Evaluation Form

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

A: Student Information

VUW degree(s)	BE (Hons)
Major(s)	Software Engineering
Exchange Institution	University of Surrey
VUW Tri & Year of Exchange	Trimester 2, 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	\$0
Accommodation	\$200 per week
Return Airfare	\$2500
Local Transportation	\$20 a week
Meals	\$40 a week
Visa	\$0 (Short Term Study Visa)
Health & Insurance	\$300
Personal Spending	\$50 a week
Communications (phone, etc.)	\$20 a month
Other fees (specify)	
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were more or less than expected?	Save lots for travel!

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

Pretty much the same as what I budgeted, although I did budget a lot over what I thought I would spend.

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

I had an Air NZ OneSmart card which was good to start with. It allowed me to load on Pounds and Euros before I left NZ. I opened up a Santander Current Account when I moved in and did an International Bank Transfer from my NZ account.

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

Do one big shop at Tesco a week instead of lots of little ones.

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

Can of Coke - \$1.50, Coffee - \$4-6

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?

I didn't apply for a visa because I was there for less than six months (short term study visa). Every time you enter the UK however you need to show proof of enrolment and proof of onwards travel.

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

If you're studying less than six months just use the Short Term Study Visa.

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?

They didn't have mandatory insurance but I think all your belongings are covered in your rent.

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

I went through STA travel. I didn't need to use it though so I'm not sure how helpful they would've been.

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 2/YEAR					
COM2025		NWEN243	15	2	Really useful course, the lecturer was very good.
COM2031		COMP261	15	2	Some new algorithms learnt in this course although some that we learnt in COMP103.
COM2034			15	3	I don't think VUW offers a course like this, although some things taught will help in AI.
COM2038		SWEN222	15	1	Very very basic, similar to first year stuff.

Course Registration/Enrolment

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

It was straight forward, I met with my Exchange Coordinator during Welcome Week and we figured out what courses I needed/could take.

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?

The way Surrey is organised meant I could only take courses in one department because of clashes. Because of this, I couldn't do any of my Part Three courses and instead had to do other courses from the Computer Science department.

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

Make sure you get more courses than you need approved before you leave that way you don't need to get approval when you're overseas.

Academic Experience

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

You spend a lot less time on assignments, we had one assignment per module for the entire semester and they weren't very programming-oriented like at VUW. Also, the labs don't actually count to your final grade so a lot of people don't show up to them. There's one two hour lecture a week at Surrey per module as well.

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 a lot less compared to VUW but the style of teaching is very similar. The lecturers were always available if you had any questions and the lab assistants were all really friendly.

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?

You don't have a choice in what courses you want to do, if you're doing Computer Science there are only two options. I went with all the COM courses as I had never done accounting before but the other option was to switch out of one the Computer Science courses for a Management Accounting one. COM2031 (Information Retrieval) is really interesting and so was COM2025 (Web Applications Development).

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

Make sure you submit your coursework on time and go to all your lectures (by the end of the semester there were only 10 people in some of the lectures).

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

The library's quite new and there are heaps of computers available. Also the internet's really fast there.

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?

E: Accommodation

What form of accommodation did you stay in?

On campus accommodation (Band C, Battersea Court)

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

Being less than a minute's walk away from the library and University shop. Sometimes it would get a bit loud but nothing too much.

What accommodation would you recommend to future students?

Band C, try get a room on Stag Hill (although you don't get a choice where you're allocated)

How early can you move into accommodation?

I moved in a couple of days before the other students (same as all the other Exchange Students)

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

Tesco Supermarket is a ten minute walk away and there's Simply Fresh under the library. There are also a couple of takeaway places on campus. In terms of cooking, our flat only had one oven which was really small – I never had to wait to use it though because everyone ate at different times.

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

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

I think Exchange Students from New Zealand are guaranteed university accommodation (so long as you apply on time).

F: Personal & Cultural Connections

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

At Surrey, exchange students stay in the same accommodation as UK students so you can make friends with the local students easily.

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

The UK has a very similar culture to NZ so it didn't take much to adjust.

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

None, the culture is pretty similar to New Zealand.

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

The food and the people.

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

Everyone I met was friendly, the other students and staff made you feel at home and if you had any questions most lecturers would reply straight away by email or they had office hours. The exchange department at Surrey were nice as well and organised loads of events for us.

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?

Everyone seemed to get on with each other well regardless of any disabilities.

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

No

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?

The Students' Union does lots of weekend trips away to places in the UK which I recommend going on. There's also a Fresher's Fayre where all the clubs try and sign you up during the first week.

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

Go places in Europe, you can pick up cheap flights/train tickets if you book ahead and Gatwick airport is really close.

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

I wasn't allowed to work over here but there's lots of opportunities for students to get jobs.

5 things to take to your host country or region

1	Warm Clothes
2	New Zealand lollies/souvenirs
3	Battery pack

4 A big suitcase

5 Photos from home

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

1 Get on-campus accommodation

2 Lots of backup papers just in case something falls through

3 Budget more than you think it'll cost you

4 Make the most of your weekends, go up to London/places in Europe

5 Meet up with other VUW students going to the same university as you before hand

Top 5 Things to do

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

1 Weekend trip to Disneyland

2 Trips up to London

3 Rubix

4 University organised weekend trips

5 Guildford Markets

H: Personal Experience

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

Going on the exchange was one of the best decisions I've ever made. You make loads of new friends from all over the world and get to go to so many different places all while still studying towards your degree. I was a bit nervous at first but after the first week I was sure I made the right choice. Make the most of being overseas and don't be afraid to try new things.

