

Student Exchange Evaluation

Every student loves to hear of other's exchange experiences. These forms are very useful when selecting your exchange destination.

Please include as much information as possible. Feel free to use additional pages, enclose photos, links to blogs/ videos etc.

1. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: Joseph Laugharne

Degree: Bachelor of Science: Marine biology and Zoology

Name of Exchange University: University of Vermont

Country: USA

Year of exchange: 2018 Language of instruction: English

List courses taken abroad:
BIOL255 Comparative Physiology
BIOL276: Behavioural Ecology
GEOG140: Biogeography
BIOL271: Evolution

2. EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

How would you rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 10?

Poor

Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10

Comments:

Amazing experience that not only enhanced my university experience but helped me make life long friends.

3. FINANCES

Total cost: 17,200 Room: 9000

Airfare to host institution: 1800 Holidays/travel expenses: 6400

Other: _____

Did you spend more than you expected? What was more/ less expensive than you expected?

Yes I did. I found buying extra food and also warm clothes to be more than i had budgeted for due to burlington being a smaller US town meaning the costs were driven up. I also found skiing to be more expensive than planned.

What was the best way of accessing money during your exchange programme?

I used a westpac travel card which I linked directly to my home account and converted to US dollars when favourable.

Do you have any advice about finances, budgeting or the cheapest way of living/travelling?

Plan your expenses carefully and have an easy way to access cash that allows you to transfer from AUS to USD as you go as to avoid losing out on bad exchange rates. When getting cash out always get more than needed as ATM fees can be expensive. Account for tipping when buying food.

4. ARRIVAL

Was there an airport pickup/ buddy service available?

I had a friend pick me up although burlington airport is a short 10 minute uber away from campus.

5. ORIENTATION

What was Orientation like? Was it useful? Were there social activities?

It was useful in the sense of getting to know a few people and learning a bit about the univeristy culture. However most of the stuff were things that I already knew such as plagarism talks and others like combating culture shock that didnt really apply to myself.

6. ACADEMICS

What differences did you find between the UWA system and the system at your host university?

Contact hours: About the same, although most of my lectures were compulsory and none were recorded

Homework: Homework pretty much every day for half an hour to an hour for each lecture

Course (lectures, tests, etc.): A lot more tests throughout the semester which resulted in lower weighted exams

Workload (heavier/ lighter) and assessment (harder or easier): Workload was heavier and assessments more frequent.

I would argue that when you weighted their marking system to our the difficulty was comparable.

7. FACILITIES

What were the library/ Wi-Fi/ email facilities like at your host institution?

Very good I had no problem with any of it and found living on campus and having constant wifi mean i barely used my US sim card plan.

8. SOCIAL

What kinds of social events were there? Was it easy to meet people?

The dorm culture meant you engaged well with those living around you. Their social sports was also a great way to meet others and have fun in the process. The whole experience is what you make of it and if youre willing to get involved you'll make countless friends. The other bit of advice would be to attend the club carnival and sign up to something youre intrested in as thats a great way to get involved.

9. ACCOMMODATION

Was on campus housing available? What were the rooms like? Were you on a meal plan or did you cook your own food? Are the residences close to the university?

Please add any additional information that you think be of interest with regard to housing.

Yes I lived on campus in the MAT building. The room wasnt huge but provided enough space to live comfortably with a roommate. I was on an unlimited meal plan and could attend any of three major dining halls across campus as well as having a few points to use across a number of cafes. My residence was extremely close to class others such as redstone, simpson and trinity are a long way away and can be a bit secluded as well as walking to class in -15 degrees made a struggle.

10. PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

What was the most difficult aspect of planning your exchange?

Finding units that were able to transfer back

What advice do you have for future exchange students?

Start looking through units early and apply early. Best place to look is the unit syllabus of the host University as well as making sure the units are offered that semester and looking to see if they have an attached lab or tute.

What are the 5 most important things to take with you when you go to your host university?

1. Spare bank card

2. Adapters for electronic devices so you're not left shorthanded early
3. Camera
4. Earbuds (incase your roommate snores!)
5. Printed copies of all your visa information as well as scanned copies of documents such as passports.

11. General impressions

What were the most rewarding aspects of biggest disappointments of your exchange experience? How has your perspective changed as a result of your exchange experience?

Remember that students are interested in reading about both good and bad experiences.

I found the university system to be extremely rewarding as well as the teaching methods of constant consolidation to be extremely effective in both learning and retaining knowledge. The classes were diverse and focused on American and South American case studies that added depth to my knowledge which was very Australian focused. UVM as a University also had a lot to offer with social sports running twice a semester at a very low fee of \$15USD a team, as well as having a great array of sports to watch and cheer for including ice hockey and basketball. I don't think much disappointed me the food was rather unhealthy but that was expected and there was able selection to make healthier choices amongst the junk. I also fell sick whilst I was there and was extremely thankful for being able to so easily access a doctor and receive treatment with so much ease and no hassle at all. I found the town to be small but bursting with things to do and everything was easily reached by walking or a short bus ride. I found living in such a cold climate to be a fun new experience and gained a greater appreciation for the cold. With the cold also means snow and with that means skiing. I found skiing to be one of the highlights of my trip and would recommend Sugarbush as well as joining the UVM ski and snowboard club for free buses on weekends. Also make sure to head out for a hike if you're there in fall as the colours of the trees as they turn is breathtaking. In terms of travelling around the US the best option is either a busride on the Greyhounds for nearby states and cities or to cross the border to Montreal airport as it will save you a lot of money rather than flying out of Burlington. All in all I found the entire experience rewarding and would highly recommend UVM as an extremely fun and diverse school that will give you a great taste of America as a place and a even better understanding of the lovely people that call it home.

Thank you for your time.