

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: **Madeline Compston**

Degree: **Bachelor of Science**

Name of Exchange University: **University of Vermont**

Country: **United States of America**

Year of exchange: **2018** Language of instruction: **English**

List courses taken abroad: **MMG 225 Eukaryotic Virology**
ENGs 119 Advanced Writing: Poetry
ENGs 117 Advanced Creative Nonfiction
ASL 001 American Sign Language I
PEAC 030 Stand-up Paddleboarding

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: I would give a 10/10 but for one terrible roommate experience. The residence hall I changed into was superb.

3. FINANCES

Total cost: **a devastatingly high amount** Room: **\$9200 including meal plan**

Airfare to host institution: **\$2600.00 return** Holidays/travel expenses: **more than I'm willing to admit**

Other:

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

The main thing that made the trip expensive was the exchange rate from AUD to USD - ouch.

Mobile phone expenses were significantly higher than expected.

I spent more money than I expected to on campus living, because UVM accommodation is more expensive than UWA's.

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

Via ATMs using international bank card, or opening a U.S. bank account

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

Have enough money to go exploring - don't let money be the factor that holds you back. If you're worried, look for a job while you're away. If you're someone who spends a lot, consider planning in advance what you want to spend money on so that you know your limitations. Buses are generally the cheapest option for traveling if you can't carpool with anybody. Try to make friends with people with cars! Uber can get you a long way too if you have the money - I took a 2 hour Uber to Montreal out of sheer desperation.

4. ARRIVAL

Was there an airport pickup/ buddy service available?

I took an Uber from the airport.

There was a buddy system available for when you arrived to campus, you needed to sign up via email.

5. ORIENTATION

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

There were plenty of tours available, plus activities and opportunities to meet other students. It's best to sign up early for activities because they can fill up fast (aspecially the Outdoors Club)

6. ACADEMICS

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

Contact hours: **depends on department and professor. Easy to email to schedule appointments or drop-in times.**

Homework: **depends on course. Some are less, some the same, some more. English units tend to have continuous assignments.**

Course (lectures, tests, etc.): **Not all lectures are recorded. Finals occur the week directly following semester - no study break.**

Workload (heavier/ lighter) and assessment (harder or easier): **workload varies, assessment difficulty varies. Professors are highly approachable for assistance.**

7. FACILITIES

What were the library/ Wi-Fi/ email facilities like at your host institution?
The library became available 24/7 later on in the semester. It had a tutoring centre for writing aid, help desk for referencing, printers and computers, quiet areas, private rooms, a huge assortment of books - and sometimes hired international students. Ask the library early on in semester if you are looking for a job.
The Wifi is decent, you can download at >800kB/sec. Walking around campus, you'll find dead zones where the Wifi drops out, but on the whole it's good!

8. SOCIAL

What kinds of social events were there? Was it easy to meet people?
There were so many social events, all of the time. If you go, it's easy to meet people. During orientation week, there are additional events that promote mingling, and there are so many clubs and groups that you're bound to find at least one that interests you. Classes are a good opportunity to meet people, too - especially domestic students. Honestly, just strike up a conversation with someone - it'll get easier the more you do it. Chances are, people will love your accent!
Also check the UVMBored webpage, because that's always full of upcoming activities.

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.
Campus housing was available, with room styles as traditional dorms or suites (single, double, triple). Dorm rooms generally consisted of 2-3 beds, windows, desks, wardrobes. They were very minimal. The traditional dorms have a shared, single-gender bathroom area on each floor; laundry rooms and a kitchen are shared for the whole building. All of the international students were housed in traditional dorms.
The suites were like 4 bedrooms with a shared common room and 2 bathrooms, with up to 6 people. At UVM, some of the suites are "programmed living" e.g. Sci-Fi/ Fantasy, where people with shared interests have the opportunity to be like a club and live together. However, this information was not available to incoming exchange students.
Most residents highly personalize their living space with blankets, posters, fridges, fans, trinkets, etc.
The resident halls were all close to university (<10 minutes walk from central campus).
I would recommend getting a meal plan that is a combination of "swipes" and "points", though exchange students were told to get the "swipes" plan. "Swipes" are used at dining halls, "points" are like money and can be used at dining areas where "swipes" are not accepted (they can also be used at the dining halls). "Points" allow for more flexibility for cooking your own food.

10. PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

What was the most difficult aspect of planning your exchange?
Units. Contact your host university if you need to, and talk closely with your home university to ensure credit transfer. Check your vaccinations are up to date. Check your passport won't expire. If you plan on traveling, ensure you have the necessary Visas.

What advice do you have for future exchange students?
Travel with an open mind and a positive outlook - there will be some challenges, especially in the first few weeks, when everyone is making friends and finding their feet. Bring what you need to have peace of mind, e.g. documents, special things from home, spares of whatever. Leave room in your suitcase though. Make friends with the domestic students just as much as the other international students, because they'll be able to show you around and immerse you in their culture and lifestyle. Know your support network - meet the people who work in the exchange office, talk to your professors, utilize a buddy program if you're feeling uncertain. Be open to trying new things but don't get into situations that make you uncomfortable with no way out - i.e. use common sense. TRAVEL while you're away! Take courses that give you some breathing space so that you don't have to spend the whole semester studying. Above, just get on that airplane and GO.

What are the 5 most important things to take with you when you go to your host university?
1. important documents: passport, bank card, travel forms, + photocopies of each

2. **POSITIVITY, OPENMINDED-NESS, ADAPTABILITY.**

3. an unlocked phone for new SIM card insertion, with plenty of storage room for photos

4. spending money for exploring new things and treating yo'self!

5. Vegemite.

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.

Good experiences: too many to count. Let's just say that I'm moving back to Burlington pronto after graduation.

Bad experiences: one terrible roommate, but that worked out in the end.

Thank you for your time.