

Study program: International Business Administration (IBA)  
Exchange semester: Fall  
Academic year: 2018-2019  
Host University: Victoria University of Wellington  
Country: New Zealand

## I GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

### The school and its surroundings

The university has 3 campuses. The main one (Kelburn), the business school (Pipitea) and the school for architecture and design (Te Aro). Since I only followed business courses, I had all of my classes at Pipitea. This campus is located in the city centre, right across from the national parliament building. The campus is pretty small, but very modern. Kelburn campus is much bigger, although a bit less modern.

- Please describe the city you lived in

As the name implies, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) is located in Wellington, New Zealand. For a capital city, it's incredibly small. I saw this as a very positive thing though, it is easy to get around without a car or bike, and you quickly know your way around. The city consists of a few shopping streets, a beautiful waterfront and a lot of suburbs. The atmosphere in the city is very warm and friendly, and because the city is so small, you very easily run into people you know. Even though the city is small, there are a lot of fun things to do! Some of my favourite thing to do in Wellington were going to the fruit and veggie market on Sunday, walk around the waterfront, go shopping, walk/drive up to a beautiful lookout, etc.

- What is the best place to go to eat/drink/dance/do sports/etc.?

A good place to eat for pretty cheap is 'capital market'. It's a food court in the centre of the city where they have more than 20 different food stalls that sell food for not so much money. For drinks we would usually go to J.J. Murphy's (an Irish pub) and for dancing we would go to Courtenay Place, which is the street where all of the bars are. Good bars are 'The Residence', 'Danger Danger' and 'The Establishment'. However, the best parties were usually the ones being thrown by the other students in University Hall.

For sports, I know some people bought a membership at the university gym or at Club Kelburn. However, I only went to yoga on Monday and Thursday, which was a lot of fun! It was taught in the student union building on the Kelburn campus. For \$3 you could join the yoga class and get a free vegan dinner. I definitely recommend doing that for cheap dinner and a fun workout.

Also, we would go to kayak practice on Thursdays, which was also organized by the university, and I was part of the tramping club, which organizes hikes throughout the semester.

- What are interesting things to see and do in your host city?

Some fun ideas to do in Wellington are to:

- go to 'Weta Cave', which is the studio that filmed Lord Of The Rings
- walk up mount Victoria and look at the beautiful view
- jump from the diving board into the harbour
- visit the national museum Te Papa
- go to as many lookouts as you can (there are so many!)

- What was different than in Tilburg?

Classes are much smaller. The most people I ever had a lecture with was about 60 students. Also, tutorials are taught by master students or just very young students in general. This makes them a lot more fun, and way more interesting. There is also no such thing as student associations or sororities. The only clubs are sports clubs, and there are a lot of different ones to choose from.

- Study structure

Per subject I had one 2-hour lecture plus one tutorial. For each class I had to do at least 2 big assignments and a final exam at the end of the year. The level of education is very high in New Zealand, and so I found the workload noticeably higher than in Tilburg. However, the final exams were way easier, as the lecturer would mention what questions would be asked in the exam during the last lecture. You could then prepare these questions and score a high mark very easily.

## II PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- When did you receive the pre-arrival information from the host university?

I received them on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, and I flew to Wellington on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

I received my invitation to enrol online on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June.

- Any difficulties?

None at all, just make sure to apply for everything at least a few weeks before the deadline, just to be safe.

- How long did it take you to arrange your student visa?

About two weeks. It took a few days of work to get all of the details (bank statements, etc.), and then I had to wait for about two weeks to receive the visa.

- How much did you pay for the visa if relevant?

165 euro

- How was your arrival organized?

A few weeks before my arrival I could apply for a pick-up service that would take me from the airport to my accommodation in Wellington (for free!). This was only possible if you lived in University Hall though. When I got to the accommodation, there was a kiwi waiting for me with a house and room key.

- What problems, if any did you encounter?

I had no problems at all, most 'difficult' things, such as paperwork and details about prerequisites were already settled via email and online. Once I got to the airport, everything was already settled.

### Orientation/Introduction activities

- Was an orientation or introduction activity organized?

Yes, although it was nothing like the TOP week in Tilburg. The introduction lasted for 3 days and included a lot of games where you had to introduce yourself and meet new people, lectures on safety, the city and New Zealand in general. There were also tours around campus and around the city.

Even though the introduction was pretty boring, it is very wise to go as it is a great way to meet other exchange students and get to know the campus and the city.

- Did the school's students participate in the reception of the exchange students?

A few of the people that were volunteering for the exchange students' program were, but it was mainly lecturers.

- Did you have a student mentor/buddy?

I joined the buddy program, which assigned me a kiwi buddy. I could ask her questions before getting to New Zealand, which was nice. She was also in one of my classes, so it was nice to be able to ask questions about the class or the ways the exams work. We entered a contest in which we had to make a video about why other people should join the buddy program, and we actually won \$150 in dinner vouchers, so we went out for dinner together a lot! I would definitely recommend signing up for the buddy program, because there are a lot of fun events organised for people that join (movie nights, pub quizzes, etc.)

- Housing

There are a few options in terms of accommodation. You can choose to find your own room / apartment, which I would NOT recommend. Some exchange students lived in a hostel for a full month before finding a room somewhere. It is very expensive to live in Wellington, and you will not save much money trying to find your own accommodation.

Via the university you get a list of possible accommodation options. I lived in University Hall, which is where almost all of the exchange students live, and I would 100% recommend this. You get to know so many people by living in Uni Hall, even before going to the introduction week. I lived in a house with 11 people, which was the biggest house there was. However, there were also houses with 3 or 4 people. After you have been accepted to Uni Hall, you get sent a questionnaire that asks you what kind of house you want to be in, and usually they keep this preference into account.

University Hall consists of about 20-30 student houses that are located around Kelburn campus. I lived on 39 Salamanca Road, which was a 5-minute walk from Kelburn campus.

- What support did you receive from the school in locating housing?

You get the list of options for housing, after which you can indicate your top 3. After you've been selected for your preferred housing, you pay all of the fees and deposits, and then you're set. Make sure to apply well on time, as there are a lot of exchange students applying for accommodation, and they don't have the place to accept all of these students.

- Were you satisfied with your accommodation?

Absolutely! The house was fine, and when something was broken you could let maintenance know and it would be fixed within a few days. You also get a tv with Chromecast in every house, and in your room you get all of the things you need to live comfortably.

- Any special issues or good ideas/useful websites for prospective students?

Just make sure you apply in time and fill out the application questions seriously, they accept / deny students based on those.

### Living Costs

- How did you finance your exchange period, apart from the grant you received from Tilburg University?

I didn't get a grant from Tilburg University, but I financed my exchange period with the money I had saved, together with a loan from DUO.

- What were your living expenses abroad like compared to Tilburg?

An exchange is always going to be more expensive than living in Tilburg, because you do a lot more fun things. Mainly the housing was very very expensive. I don't remember exactly how much I paid to live at Uni Hall, but I guess it was around \$220 per week. This is a relatively cheap price for living in central Wellington. Some food was also more expensive, such as dairy products and imported goods. However, I didn't spend any money on books or school supplies, and because everything is within walking distance, I barely spent any money on public transport.

- What did you spend most of your money on?

Travelling! There are so many cool things to do in New Zealand, you definitely shouldn't save money on those kinds of things. Some of the most expensive things were skydiving, kayaking and wild water rafting.

Housing is also very expensive, but you pay the whole sum of money in advance and don't have to think about that afterwards.

- What would you advice future students to spend their money on?

Definitely skydiving and just travelling in general. In terms of groceries, make sure you go to the fruit and vegetable market on Sundays (it's behind Te Papa), you can get fresh produce for really cheap. Also don't save too much money on fun activities, you will regret it. However, if you do want to save some money, make sure you do some hikes around the Wellington area, it might sound dumb but everything is just so beautiful that hiking is very fun.

- Please outline your approximate monthly budget whilst on exchange:

To be honest I just paid for everything with my creditcard and didn't look at how much I spent. Sometimes you just have to enjoy life and not worry too much about the money.

A rough monthly estimate would be:

Housing	\$880
Food	\$450
Transport	\$15
Books	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$300 (shopping, weekend trips, sports, going out)

### Academic Calendar

I can't promise that these dates are 100% accurate, but they are at least very close to the real dates.

- Arrival date & introductory week

I arrived on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July & the introduction week was 11-15<sup>th</sup> of July

- First day of the semester?

The 16<sup>th</sup> of July

- Last day of classes?

October 21<sup>st</sup>

- Mid-term break?

23<sup>rd</sup> of August until 10<sup>th</sup> of September

- Examination period?

November 1<sup>st</sup> until November 19<sup>th</sup>

### The International Office

- Does the host university have an International Office?

Yes, although I don't remember ever being in contact with them.

### Exchange promotion

- What kind of activity did you take part in to promote exchange to Tilburg University at your exchange university?

There was an evening where students from VUW could meet students from other universities around the world. I visited that event so that others could ask questions about Tilburg University.

### Social Activities

- Which social activities are organized by the university/students for exchange students?

All events are organized by the accommodation that you are in. University Hall organized a bowling night twice and also organized a movie night in the movie theatre.

- Is there a student organization for international student?

No, there is not.

- Did you have contact with local students?

Yes, I had contact with my buddy and with a few kiwis from my classes. However, not nearly as much as I had expected. I mainly had contact with other exchange students.

- Did you travel to other places/countries during your exchange?

During the midterm break I travelled through the North Island with some friends. After the semester I travelled through the South Island. Almost every weekend we would go to a city / beach / hiking spot nearby. There are so many travel opportunities within New Zealand itself, that it's not necessary to go to another country. However, some people did visit Fiji and Samoa.

## Culture and Language

- Did you experience culture shock while on exchange?

No, the culture in New Zealand is very Western. The only difference I had trouble adjusting to is the fact that they drive and walk on the left instead of the right.

- What did you learn about your own culture while on exchange?

Dutch people are very direct, and that can be seen as rude, especially by kiwis. Also, Dutch people are not very friendly, compared to kiwis. They will go out of their way to help you, even if they have never met you before. That would never happen in the Netherlands.

- How would you describe your host country's culture?

So there is two different cultures. You have the kiwi culture, which is very European and almost the same as in the Netherlands. Then you also have the Maori culture, which is the culture of the people that first came to New Zealand. It's a mix of cultures from Fiji, Samoa and even Hawaii. I think the Maori culture is very interesting to learn more about, and there are a lot of events organised to do this. If you have the chance, definitely go to these events! Also, the Maori culture is known for the Haka, very cool to witness!

- Did you have any language problems with the faculty or other students?

They speak English in New Zealand, so that was not a problem, but the accent could sometimes be very difficult to understand, which I didn't expect.

## Personal Development

- How do you think the exchange experience will affect you from a cultural and social point of view?

Since you go on exchange by yourself and (usually) don't know anyone other than yourself, you learn to just walk up to people and introduce yourself. I found this a little difficult at first, but after a whole day of playing introduction games in the introduction week, I knew at least a quarter of the exchange students. Now I find it much easier to just walk up to people and say hi.

- What did you learn from the people you met during your exchange?

I learned so much about different cultures, and that some things that I think are normal, are not at all in different countries/cultures.

- Would you do things differently if you had the chance and what would you do differently?

The only thing I would do differently is to stay even longer to travel and explore after the semester ended. I stayed for a month but would have loved to add another month or two, especially since summer is finally starting around that time.

- What was your best experience, and what was your worst experience?

My best experience was walking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, which is an 8-hour trail that goes straight across an active volcano. Lord of The Rings' Mordor is filmed on top of this volcano!

I really can't think of a worst experience, expect for maybe having to write all of the assignments for my classes. I spent a whole week in the library.

- What will you never forget about your exchange period?

The people that I met and the incredible adventures we went on together.

- What was the most important lesson you learned about yourself during your exchange period?

That no matter what happens, you'll eventually be fine. After going on exchange, I feel like I can handle any problem that comes my way. I came to Wellington all by myself, and I managed just fine.

### III ACADEMIC INFORMATION

#### Academic level at a host university

- Description of Courses

☒ Comments: Relevance, Difficult/easy, Practical/theoretical, Enrolment problems

Course	Prerequisites	Exam	ECTS	Comments
MARK202 – Consumer Behaviour	None	Midterm and Final exam (4 open questions)	7,5	
MARK316 – Social Marketing	None	Final exam (2 open questions)	7,5	
MARK317 – Marketing Analytics	None	Take home test	7,5	
MARK319 – Brand Management	None	Final exam (2 open questions)	7,5	

- Which courses did you take and why?

I wanted to follow marketing courses at VUW, and these four courses were the only ones I was allowed to take. I would recommend:

- MARK202, the lecturer Janine is very good in teaching the curriculum without making it boring, and the lectures are only 50 minutes.
- MARK316, this was my favourite course I have ever taken. I found it very interesting to learn about social campaigns such as the anti-smoking or anti-drinking and driving campaigns, and how they come to be. Definitely recommend this.
- MARK319, this course was okay, but it was the first time it was being taught, so it lacked a bit of clear structure. However, it is an interesting topic to learn more about

I would not recommend taking MARK317, unless you REALLY like statistics. The lecturer talks about nonsense for the entire class and then assigns an assignment that has nothing to do with what he taught at all. I personally hated this class, and I don't mind statistics.

- How would compare the academic level at your host university to the academic level at Tilburg University (e.g.: level of the courses, use of extra material, level of English, workload, etc.)?

In terms of workload I found VUW way more demanding. If you decide to study here, be prepared to spend a lot of time making assignments. In total I wrote about 7 reports that were all more than 30 pages. However, you do learn a lot from the classes you take, both practical and theoretical. The exams are in comparison very easy. The lecturer basically tells you exactly what will be on the exam, so you only need to study a few very specific topics.

- What teaching method is practiced by the host university: case studies, group work, seminars or lectures (or a mix)?

Both lectures and tutorials.

- How would you describe the relationship between the students and the teaching staff?

Very personal. One of my classes (MARK317) had only 20 people in it, so before each lecture the lecturer would come up to me and make some small talk. It is very easy to get into contact with your lecturers, and they will probably know who you are. The tutorials are even more informal, as they are taught by students one or two years older than yourself.

- In general, were you happy with your academic achievements during your exchange?

Very! Even though it was a lot of hard work, I actually feel like I learned from the courses I took, and could use that knowledge in real life.

### Exams

- What types of exams did you have to sit?

I had to make one midterm, which was both open questions and multiple choice. I also sat four final exams, which all consisted of open questions only. This scared me a little bit, but as I mentioned before, you know exactly what will be on the exam, and they're actually very easy.

### Other

- Can students easily access the library and its resources?

Yes! There are always computers available on every campus. Only in deadline week you might have to bring your own laptop. Also, you can't make a reservation for a computer in the library like in Tilburg, so you will just have to come early or be lucky to get a computer.

### Tips for future students:

- Would you recommend an exchange period?

YES!!! This exchange has been the best experience of my life, and I don't think I will ever experience anything like it again.

- Would you recommend your host university?

Definitely! The university itself is nice and the quality of education is very high, but I would mainly recommend VUW for its location. You will be able to live and study in the centre of Wellington, which is truly the most beautiful little capital of the world. The atmosphere, the people and the surrounding nature are all incredible.

- What should prospective students absolutely not forget before going on exchange?

I read this in a previous experience report already, but definitely don't forget a wind/rain jacket. I brought my old ski jacket and wore it every single day. In general, people walk around in very outdoorsy clothing, so you will not stand out with an ugly wind jacket.

Also, very important, bring some good hiking boots. I didn't have any, so I bought some right before I left on exchange, and it is the best purchase I have ever made. Even if you think you don't like hiking (like me), trust me you will use them.

- How can they better prepare before going on exchange to this destination?

Just make sure you apply for accommodation on time and that you bring clothing for being sporty and outdoors. For some reason I didn't bring any sports shirts, leggings or even a sports bra, but they will come in very handy.

Also get a credit card.

- Was there anything you should have arranged before departure, but did not?

No

**A very small selection of my favourite pictures from my time in New Zealand:**



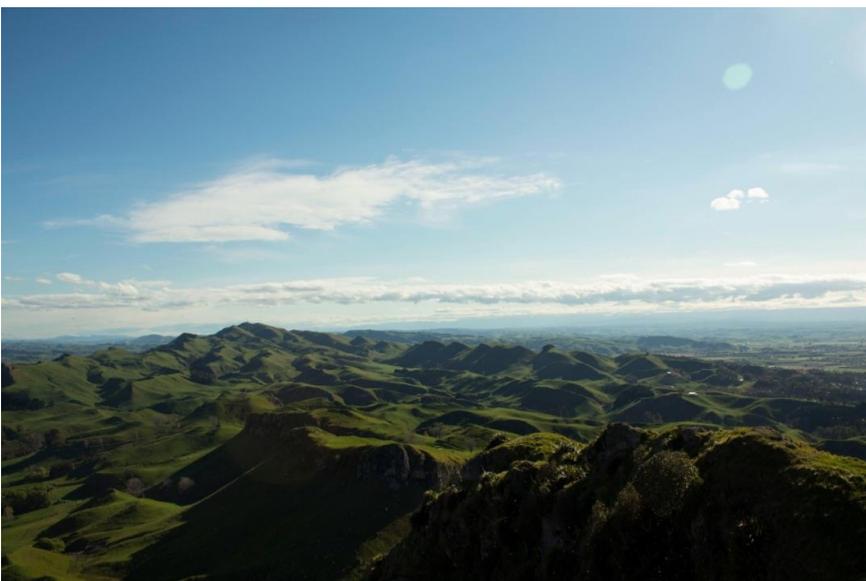
Lake Hawea



Roy's peak



Milford Sound



Te Mata Peak, Napier