

THE BASICS

Your first name: [Kaitlyn](#)
Your email address: kchristi@uvic.ca
Your partner university: [Universiteit Maastricht](#)
Your UVic major during the exchange: [Psychology](#)
UVic session(s) during which you did your exchange: [Fall 2007 – Spring 2008](#)

GENERAL EVALUATION

Please rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: [5](#)
Comments:

ARRIVAL

How satisfied were you with your experience of arriving in your host country or city? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: [2](#)
Comments: [Don't arrive on the weekend, or before the arrival week, because then the Main Guesthouse \(like Uvic Res\) won't come pick you up. My taxi driver also couldn't find my residence, and I couldn't figure out how to get in my room \(darn those tricky dutch doors\)!](#)

What assistance, if any, did you receive when you arrived at your exchange destination? [None, but it is available if you arrive at the right time!](#)

How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)? [No visa required.](#)

ORIENTATION AND ASSISTANCE

How satisfied were you with the orientation and assistance available to students at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: [4](#)
Comments: [The staff in the international office in Maastricht is very helpful, and they also pair you with a buddy at the university to show you around \(they try to pair you with someone who is going to Uvic on exchange that year\).](#)

How easy was it to find information you needed to know right away?

What help did you receive from the international staff or office? [So much, they went out of their way to help the exchange students.](#)

What was your impression of the international staff or office? [Great! They were always concerned about how are stay was going, and organized events for the exchange students, etc.](#)

What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one, and how well did it suit your needs? [The exchange student orientation was very helpful. I also attended another orientation the week](#)

before that was mainly intended for the Dutch students (called INKOM), which was an insane week full of parades, city orientation, parties, sports day etc.

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site and were there people you could talk to about what you were experiencing? It was definitely a culture shock, but it is very easy to adjust to, as the city of Maastricht is very charming. There are also lots of North Americans who go on exchange there (although not as many in psychology), so you quickly meet people who identify with what you are going through.

HOUSING

How satisfied were you with the housing available to students? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 2

Comments: I stayed with the Guesthouse, which organizes all the student housing spread over the city (there isn't one main campus). I stayed in 3 different rooms during my 10 months there, as originally I stayed in a residence really far away from my faculty, and then I had a roommate situation!

How early could students move in to housing at the beginning of term? As early as they want

What options were available for meal plans or cooking facilities? No meal plans, all the residences have either private or communal cooking areas. However there is a cafeteria at the psychology faculty.

How satisfied were you with the food? Cooked my own.

How close are the residences to the university? Depends where you stay. For psychology, I don't recommend Talienruwe, which is where I stayed first. It is quite far away. My second residence (Wardehofplein) was only a 5 minute bike ride from school though.

Could students stay in the residences during major holidays? Yes.

Which residence would you recommend to UVic students? The Main Guesthouse, if you don't mind sharing a kitchen with 15 people, because you get to meet tons of people and it is most similar to residence at UVIC. The rest of the residences are more like living in apartments, and if you prefer that then I recommend Wardehofplein since it is very close to the school.

If you lived in off-campus housing, how easy was it to find? All housing is off campus. My taxi driver got lost trying to find it, but normally the Guesthouse will take you there.

What should future UVic exchange students know about living off-campus? Buy a bicycle to get around!

COURSE REGISTRATION

How satisfied were you with the registration process at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: 3

Comments: I was fairly confused about the system, as it is very different from UVIC, but luckily the international psychology office pretty much does everything for the exchange students, since they anticipate our helplessness. All you do is give them a list of the courses you want to take and then they figure the rest out.

Please describe the registration process at your partner university. As above.

What kind of help was available? [The international office!](#)

How successful were you in registering for classes you wanted? [I only wasn't able to go in one I wanted because they decided to only offer it in dutch.](#)

What advice would you offer to next year's exchange students about registration at your partner university? [If you want to take a Dutch language course, register early as they fill up fast, and it is not done through the psychology department so you have to figure it out on your own.](#)

ACADEMICS

How satisfied were you with the academic program at your partner university? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: [5](#)

Comments: [They use a PBL system, which stands for Problem Based Learning. It means that you attend lecture only about once a week, but that you attend your tutorial group \(with about 10 students\) a few times a week and discuss journal articles for the course, since there are so many readings assigned you divide them up between your group. Most of the courses are based around journal articles, I only had to buy one 40 euro textbook while I was there. But I paid a lot for printing and photocopying!](#)

How did the style of teaching at your partner university compare with that at UVic? [Completely different.](#)

How did the workload compare to what you would expect at UVic? [Less assignments and tests, but more reading.](#)

How many courses did you take in your first term abroad? [A full course load from Sept-december is 4 courses, which is what I did, but you only take 2 at a time.](#)

Your second term? [4 courses again, and this time you only take one course at a time for 3 weeks, since it is the electives period.](#)

What would you recommend as an appropriate course load for other UVic students visiting your partner university? [4 courses per semester was totally manageable, and I did a lot of travelling too! Your entire mark for most courses is based on the final exam, or one essay.](#)

What specific courses would you recommend to visiting UVic students? [Africa and Expertise \(the psychology of board games\)](#)

Why? [Its completely different than anything offered at Uvic, and we had a practical \(lab\) where we learned to play African board games.](#)

If you studied in a non-English speaking country, what was the availability of courses offered in English? [Most of the courses were offered in English. And any time an exchange student signed up for a course they would create an english speaking tutorial group,](#)

What advice would you give UVic students about succeeding academically at your partner university? [Keep on top of your readings!!](#)

What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, and internet access at your partner university? [First class, very modern facilities.](#)

What electronic devices would you recommend a UVic student bring (laptop, PDA, etc.)? [Laptop!! My lifeline for schoolwork and connecting with home. I also bought a pay-as-you-go cell phone there, since mine from Canada didn't work in Europe. Having a phone gave me a greater sense of security when travelling. Ipad is also awesome when travelling lots!](#)

COSTS

Please indicate currency: **euro**

Books - per term: **0 first term, 40 euro second term**

Accommodation - per month: **450**

Meals - per month: **50**

Local transportation - per month: **Bike, 200 euro (I bought a nice one!). The bus is a little expensive if you are taking it every day, twice a day..., 2.10 euro (for a return trip)**

Health insurance - per term: **~200**

Personal spending - per term: **I did a lot of travelling...so ~1500**

Communications (phone, etc.) - per term: **Skype...Free!! Cell phone: I only used for local calls and very scarcely (40 euro for 10months!! I know, good right?)**

Other university related fees - per term: **none. If you join a club or team there are some fees though.**

EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

How satisfied were you with the out-of-class opportunities at your exchange site? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating: **2**

Comments: **I tried to join rowing, but was told I had to join a sorority to join, and that I wouldn't make it through the initiation week since I didn't speak dutch, so they recommended I didn't join. I also made an effort to join les chevaliers (the horsebackriding club), and they were very encouraging. Except the one lesson I went to was ALL IN DUTCH (even though I had been told it would be in english!), and I had no clue what was going on, so it wasn't much fun.**

What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to students? **Lots of sports teams, not as many other clubs.**

What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students? **Anything they are interested! There are lots of clubs, some are more accepting of exchange students than others. You will have to find out for yourself!**

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays? **GO EVERYWHERE! The Netherlands is smack in the middle of europe with so many countries easily accessible. Especially in the winter there are many cheap flights! Some of my highlights were Oktoberfest (end of sept. in munich), Keukenhoff Tulip festival (near amsterdam in april/may), and visiting 14 different european countries!!**

What opportunities were there for students to work on-campus? **Not many.**

Off-campus? **Most exchange students didn't work, but the few I knew that did got paid "under the table"**

What volunteer or internship opportunities were there for students? **Not many that I was aware of.**

SAFETY AND HEALTH

How safe did you feel at your exchange site? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best rating):

Rating:

Comments: **In the city I felt pretty safe, but the neighborhood my first residence was in was pretty sketchy, there were gangs in the area. The female exchange students got harassed a lot, but none of the male**

exchange students had a problem. There was also a lot of vandalism at Talienruwe, as well as bikes being stolen.

What are the biggest safety concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site? Biking accidents. Lots of exchange students had bad biking accidents (and nobody wears helmets), especially biking home from the bar.

What are the biggest health concerns for future exchange students going to your exchange site? Nothing comes to mind.

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends?

How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) students? It was fairly difficult if you weren't part of a Dutch team or club. However in PBL groups if you are in a non-exchange student group then you get to know them much easier!

What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? Not very hard, the Netherlands is an amazing country.

What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? The girls dress very fancy going to school! The North Americans looked like slobs in comparison! The Dutch also may come off a little cold and uncaring at first, but hang in there, most of them are very nice!

What parts of the culture did you most appreciate? The Dutch cheese 😊

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

As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university? Fine, except if they had a physical disability many of the streets are cobblestone, and the city is designed for getting around by bicycle, so if you can't ride a bike it will be more challenging.

For students who are visible minorities in your host country? No problem as far as I could tell.

TAKING STOCK

What are the three most important things for students to take with them when they go to your host country or region?

1. laptop
2. Camera! And a BIG memory card. (and don't break it your 3rd day there like I did 😊)
3. diary (document your year!!)

What are the three most important things you would tell a UVic student who is going to your partner university on exchange?

1. Apply for residence early so you get in a good one!! (and be wary of dealing with the guesthouse, they are not the most organized or discreet about matters)
2. Go to the exchange student orientation activities the first week, you will meet so many amazing people! (a good way to meet those who aren't in your faculty)
3. Travel as much as you can! You will regret it later if you don't, and keep an eye on cheap airline sites.

Is there any other information that you think might prove useful to UVic exchange students attending your host university?

Dealing with the main guesthouse (Student housing), can be very frustrating, as they are not very organized, so be prepared. And some of the staff are much better than others, so if someone isn't helpful hang in there and try again!

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience?

Making friends from all over the world, and travelling everywhere.

What was your greatest challenge on the exchange?

Spending my first Christmas away from home. Also always being 5 steps behind everyone else, since you never know what anyone is saying or what is going on (if you don't speak dutch)

How has your perspective changed as a result of the exchange?

Very much so, it made me much more independent, as well as culturally and globally aware. Living in another country and attending school there gives you a lot more insight than just travelling to a place for vacation ever would.

What else do you want to say about your exchange experience?

Going on an exchange was the scariest and more rewarding experience I have ever had. My education and life skills benefited greatly from my year abroad, and I would recommend it to everyone. The things you get to experience and the friendships formed will last a lifetime!