



Student Exchange Program

International Student Services

Exchange Final Report

Student Information

Faculty at UVic	Social Sciences
Major/Minor	Anthropology
Host University	Utrecht University
Host Country	Netherlands
Dates of Exchange	August 27 th 2021 -February 1 st 2022

Overall Exchange Experience

Please Rate your Overall Exchange Experience

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

What was the most rewarding part of your exchange experience? Please outline any highlights.

The most rewarding part of my exchange was being able to live in a country that was different from my own, I have travelled around before but I have never lived somewhere else, where I became accustomed to the different local shops and restaurants, and knew all the bike paths and would see people I know while on my way to the city centre. It was a very nice experience to make somewhere so foreign to me my temporary home.

What was the greatest challenge during your exchange?

The greatest challenge during this exchange was trying to stay on top of school and focus on studying when all I would want to do is go and explore and see museums and go for bike rides rather than try to focus in the library. However, I found that I managed to find a nice medium between the two.

Travel

Cost of air travel	\$1000 (approximately)
Cost of ground transportation (ex. monthly bus pass)	50 euros for bus pass total (didn't bus too much) 19 euros per month for bike rental (this is what I mostly use) about 12 euros for every train ride (ex: from Utrecht to Amsterdam)

Did host university representatives meet you at the airport?

No

Is there easy transportation between the airport and university?

Yes, very easy, half an hour train ride then half an hour bus (there is no airport in Utrecht)

Orientation

Is there an organized orientation session upon arrival?

Yes, there was, a week of orientation activities for new students and then two days of faculty orientation

How easy was it to find the info you needed to know upon arrival?

It was relatively easy, I still got a bit lost trying to find my way to my classes but that could also be just getting used to something that is new.

What assistance did you receive from your host institution upon arrival?

The orientation was helpful, there were a lot of resources to meet new students, when I sought out help I usually had success in receiving it from my host university.

Accommodation

Is on-campus accommodation available?

No but there is off campus student housing that is available to students.

If yes, did you live on campus?

I did live in one of the student housing buildings

Would you recommend this to future students?

Yes, it is very hard to get a place in Utrecht and this gives students reasonable priced housing that is close to campus, but they fill up quickly so to apply for them fast

If you lived off-campus, how did you find housing?

I found housing through the SSH program, which is housing for students in Utrecht. I had to apply for a reservation request around April which was then granted within a few days, and then I was able to view the houses earlier but the actual reserving of a place was in June at 9:00 am CET, which means that at midnight PST I had to apply for housing and it was very stressful. The site crashed three times and the hundreds of houses were gone in 7 minutes but I managed to reserve a place. I would recommend this option for future students however because when I arrived here I met many students who were staying in hostels and booking air bnb's all the way into November because they were unable to find accommodation, despite the desperation and checking every day. Students might get lucky and find something but for the most part, finding your own place seems much more stressful and it is not guaranteed, therefore I would recommend SSH.

Approximately how much money would you budget per month for living, including accommodation and meals?

Accommodation was €517 (approximately \$750 CAD), as a whole about €700 a month for rent, bike, food, etc.

Language Programs

Is there a language program available either before or during the semester?

There were a few language programs here.

Is there an additional cost for the language training?

Some by the school were free but maybe programs for language by other services would not be free

Academics

Was it possible for you to get all the courses that you wanted?

Yes and no, I was registered for all the courses I applied for, but there were some courses that were in another faculty I would like to have taken but was unable to because of the university's rules on taking only courses from 2 faculties.

Please describe the course registration process

I had to apply for courses before a certain date after cruising the course catalogue, but my application went through the international exchange people in Utrecht who registered me for them, so I was only telling them the courses that I wanted and they registered me for them.

Describe the manner and quality of instruction at your host university

This school definitely is very different from UVic in terms of their block system and structure of their courses, each course is only about 2.5 months long. There is a lot more of group projects and presentations (usually one in every course) and it feels as though because the courses are so short there isn't a lot of time to actually teach all the material, so there is about 4 hours of reading per course per week and many assignments that aren't for marks they are just mandatory, and it is a lot more learning on your own and the lectures are just for guidance. However, I do feel that I have learned a lot from this university and it has been very nice to have a different method of University implemented in my overall experience of university.

What do you feel is the greatest academic benefit you have gained personally from your exchange?

I think doing so many presentations has made me a lot more comfortable with presenting and I think that even though most students really don't enjoy presentations, it is a good practice and I feel I have taken a lot away from that in terms of comfort and being able to put on a good presentation in front of my peers.

Personal and Cultural Connections

How easy was it to adjust to the local culture? What (if any) cultural differences did you find particularly challenging? What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?

It was actually very easy to adapt to the local culture. I found the people here are very nice and everyone speaks English very well, which made getting around and connecting with people very simple. I found the one thing that was so different for me was biking everywhere, and without a helmet. I know cycling is a very big part of Victoria culture but everything is so flat here and easily accessible by bikes it made it so easy to just bike around everywhere, it'll be weird to wear a helmet again when I am back home as the laws are very different on that.

What kinds of cultural, athletic and social activities were available for students at your host institution?

There was an orientation week the first week of school with workshops and pub crawls to get to know more people, to understand the culture a bit better and see the city. There is a “buddy go Dutch” program that I didn’t do but one of my roommates did where you meet with a local Dutch student who will show you around the city and do some fun activities with you. There are lots of athletic options such as nearby gyms, swimming pools, and kayaking that is very fun and inexpensive. There are most likely more put on by the school but I didn’t look into them myself. Utrecht itself has many museums and cultural things to do, and it is very quick and easy to take a bike ride to some small other towns like Houten, or take a train (usually only half an hour) to Amsterdam, Den Haag or another city if it is safe within covid regulations! 😊