

Tips for a fall exchange to Utrecht University, Faculty of Law

Academically: A Dutch law degree differs from a North American JD in its structure. Notably, no prior undergraduate degree is required for application, there is no LSAT requirement, and admission to law school is almost automatic. Initial impressions of the course syllabus may reveal less content compared to Canadian standards, and the concepts may not seem overly challenging. Furthermore, you may find that you possess greater experience in academic skills such as writing and reading than your classmates.

However, certain aspects that might not be immediately apparent can contribute to academic challenges. In the Netherlands, a significantly higher percentage of law students will not complete their degree, with an average class failure rate ranging between 30 to 40%. Grading is not done anonymously, so consider this, as your professors will take note of frequent absences. Typically, it is acceptable to miss up to two classes per term. The first term in the Netherlands begins in September and concludes in February. Therefore, it's crucial to schedule your timetable to finish exams in December, with the term divided into "Period 1" for the first half and "Period 2" for the second half. In Period 2 you can only take a course with an early exit exam.

Socially: For those interested in connecting with local Dutch students and other exchange students, several organizations facilitate this. Utrecht University and the Erasmus Student Network ("ESN") host separate welcome weeks with ongoing events throughout the term. The ESN also organizes student trips to cities such as Prague and The Hague. Another option is "Buddy Go Dutch," which pairs you with a Dutch student and offers events throughout the term. The university will email you about the "Goin" app, and Sportcentrum Olympos provides information on inexpensive classes for those interested in playing sports during the term.

Visa: Non-EU citizens will likely need to apply for a visa before starting their studies. Utrecht University simplifies this process by facilitating your application. Travel insurance is a requirement, and the university include an option to purchase this during your application.

Housing: Utrecht faces a housing shortage, making finding accommodation challenging. It's advisable to start your search early. A helpful starting point is this student-made site:

<https://linktr.ee/housingutrecht>.

Groceries: The two main grocery stores in Utrecht are called Albert Heijn and Jumbo. Note that Albert Heijn doesn't accept payment with foreign cards, so be prepared to use cash if you choose to shop there.

Phone Plans: You can Purchase a temporary European SIM card that enables phone usage in the Netherlands.

Transportation: Biking is the primary mode of transportation, even in the rain. As the Dutch saying goes, "we are not made of sugar." There are several bike rental companies that offer inexpensive options. The city's bus and tram systems are efficient, and trains provide easy access to other cities in the Netherlands.