



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	University of Amsterdam
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 2, 2023
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts
Major(s)	Sociology

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Geographies of Inequality	English	18pt SOCI 300-level paper
Migration & Citizenship	English	18pt SOCI 300-level paper
Dutch Problems, Dutch Solutions	English	18pt SOCI 300-level paper
All-time Bestsellers from Amsterdam	English	18pt ENG 300-level paper

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points _____

Any comments about these papers?

I was enrolled in the Exchange Social and Behavioural Sciences Programme, meaning I had access to various papers and subject areas. I chose 3 papers equivalent to Otago 300-level Sociology papers, but I chose the last paper (All-time Bestsellers) out of interest despite it being a Humanities paper.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

In my opinion, the workload was heavier than Otago's. The courses are shorter but just as much information is taught, it is also expected that you'll have done readings for lectures and seminars. I found that there were fewer assignments, but it depends on the course.

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

I stayed in student housing provided by Lieven de Key, a housing provider separate from the University. I was lucky enough to be successful with the UvA Housing lottery, as there is only so much the University can do to help you find accommodation; it is expected that you'll find it through the lottery or on your own (con). A pro of my accommodation, it was in a great location, close to tram and metro stops but also right around the corner from one of the campuses.

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

Flights cost around \$3,300 because I didn't book flights until I had accommodation sorted (this is what UvA recommends because of the housing crisis in Amsterdam). I went with AON's student insurance, it is required by Dutch law that students have health insurance – this policy covered health and travel, and it cost €315 (\$555). Students require a visa or residence permit – I received as residence permit (as a NZ citizen), the application cost €210 (\$370).

Regarding living expenses, I paid €472.83 (\$833) in advance monthly. I put aside around \$200 a week from my Student Living Costs payment, to pay monthly. My weekly food shop cost around \$40-60 weekly, groceries are cheaper than in NZ but eating out is definitely more expensive in Amsterdam.

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

I would recommend opening a Dutch bank account and getting a Dutch eftpos card, numerous businesses (including supermarkets) do not accept foreign cards and some don't accept cash. I transferred money to my Dutch bank account weekly from my NZ bank account, to cover weekly expenses.

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

I applied for a residence permit, you first send the necessary documents to the University and then these are reviewed before the university sends your application to the IND (you also pay an initial fee of €210). You have to wait an average 4-6 weeks to hear whether your application has been approved. You can travel to the Netherlands if your application has been approved and enter with just your passport. Once in the Netherlands, you have to make an appointment to provide your biometrics to the IND. After about 3 weeks, your resident permit card should be ready for collection and you'll have to attend a specific pick-up day. All this information can be found on the UvA website.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

The Netherlands, by law, requires all students to have health insurance. Be sure to check that whatever policy you go for meets the government's requirements.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

There is a student organisation called Erasmus Student Network (ESN), I would highly recommend becoming a member and taking part in their Intro-week. It was the best way to be introduced to the city and you get to meet so many new people. There is also an opportunity to join one of the various ESN committees. At UvA, you will also find many student clubs that you can join. There is even a student cultural centre (CREA) where students can participate in creative courses, but also attend events. If physical activity is more of your thing, USC is the student gym and there are various locations that students can access, although you have to pay a subscription to access these gyms.

What was the university/ city like?

The Roeterseiland UvA campus was busy, there was always a crowd during the day with students rushing to class or having a coffee with friends at a nearby café. Otherwise, there are numerous UvA campuses dotted around the central area with Science Park being the furthest out from the city.

The city was busy but undeniably beautiful, with canals around every corner. As such the UvA campuses were equally beautiful, one of my lectures was in an old church.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

I would highly recommend buying a Netherlands Museum Card, if you expect to visit numerous museums during your time in Amsterdam. It costs €65 (\$114) and you get free access to most major museums in the city and across the country for one year. You save money because ticket prices can cost around €20 (\$35) to enter a museum one time.

Recommendations for places to visit within Amsterdam: IJ Hallen flea market (biggest in Europe), Waterlooplein, Nieuwmarkt, Noordermarkt (Saturday weekly market), Rijksmuseum

Recommendations for places to visit outside Amsterdam: Haarlem, Delft, Hoorn, The Hague (Den Haag), Zaanse Schans, Utrecht, Zandvoort (beach), etc.

These are just a few of the places I could recommend, there is so much to see and do!

Any tips for future students?

Part of the student experience in Amsterdam is having a bike to get around, I would recommend renting a bike from Swapfiets. It's a service where you pay monthly for a bike, any issues you head into the store and they sort them out for you. It was an ideal arrangement.

The biggest recommendation I could give you would be to stay out of the cycle lanes (as a pedestrian), that is one way to irritate a Dutchie!

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

Overall, I had an absolutely amazing experience. It is hard to put into words just how much I enjoyed my time on exchange. You get to live in a wonderful city and study at a fantastic university. You get to meet people from across the globe and make connections for life. In the 6 months I spent in Amsterdam, I did more than I ever did during my 4.5 years in Dunedin.