



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Universiteit van Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam)
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1, 2023
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Arts and Science
Major(s)	Psychology and Politics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Speech and Language Disorders	English	N/A
Power and Politics	English (option to submit work in Dutch)	N/A
Brain and Cognition: Memory, Language and Emotion	English (However, examples are provided in Dutch and you will be an understanding of Dutch sentence structure for the exam which they don't tell you)	N/A
The EU and Politics of Central and Eastern Europe	English	N/A

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

Any comments about these papers?

I really enjoyed each of these classes and found the way they were delivered very effective. For the most part lecturers focus on understanding material as opposed to rote learning which is different to Otago. The exception to this however is Brain and Cognition which had far too much content for an 8 week course. Also, you will need an understanding of Dutch language rules and sentence structure for the language model which you are not told about prior to the course; this was particularly hard

for the final exam which required you to rearrange Dutch sentences. Smaller classes such as Speech and Language Disorders and Politics of CEE gave me the opportunity to make friends in class who were not exchange students which allowed me to better understand the culture of Amsterdam and see more of the city.

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

The in-class work load is significantly less than that of Otago however there is a significantly higher out of class workload in regard to readings/analysing documentaries. Some classes follow the same lecture style of teaching as Otago however some have small classes of ~20 people which focus less on learning content for an exam with more of a focus on implicit learning through weekly assignments and in-class case studies. The exams are often delivered in an exam hall however completed online; they are typically a mix of MCQ's and Essay Questions. I found the exam questions to be more general than Otago's, with less focus on specific processes and details. It is also nice that they have an option to re-take exams if you do not pass. Classes are marked on a 10 point scale, with a 5.5 being a pass.

Accommodation

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

I stayed at Fraijlemaborg, through the housing provider Lieven De Key. The building hosts 170 single semester exchange students. You apply for housing through the University who contact the provider. Housing is guaranteed for exchange students (which is great given the housing crisis in Amsterdam). My building was very social; the common room and rooftop often hosted many hall parties and were central meeting points for many people. Although the building is outside the ring (central Amsterdam) it is a 4 minute walk from Amsterdamse Poort which hosts many shops including supermarkets and clothing stores. My campus was a 30 minute bike ride from the building or a 15 minute metro ride. Station Bijlmer ArenA is a 7 minute walk from the building which has train, metro, and bus connections to the whole city, airport and most of the Netherlands. The building is also very close to many parks which are lovely hang out spots in the warmer months.

Money matters

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

- Housing:
 - o Option 1: Private studio room = €598 month (option I chose)
 - o Option 2: Shared room and facilities (with 1 other) = €527 month
 - o Option 3: Shared room and facilities (with 2 others) = €450 month
- Food:
 - o Groceries = €150-€200 month
 - o Eating out = €60 month
- Transport:
 - o ~€100 month using the personal OV ChipKaart and subscription (costs €5 per month and gives you 40% off peak travel for trains and metro)
 - o Swapfiets (bike) subscription = €25 month
- Visa : residence permit application fee = €350
- Insurance: \$1294nz (\$910.50nz with discount)

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

I used a Wise travel card as this offered the best conversion rate, however many places in The Netherlands don't accept Visa or Mastercard so you have to have a Dutch bank account. I set mine up with ING which was quick and easy to do and means you have euros loaded for travel all around Europe. I also used cash at a lot of places around Europe but be aware many places in The Netherlands are pin only. I also kept an AirNZ travel card as a backup incase I lost my Wise card. Be aware that with ANZ even if you let them know you are going on exchange they may still block your card for larger purchases like rent so using a third party like Wise or Revolute or a Dutch bank account is necessary.

Visas & Insurance

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

I had to apply for a Residence Permit to allow me to stay beyond the three months that your NZ passport gives you. It was a relatively easy process that you complete through the University. You complete your biometrics when you get to Amsterdam. You must also register your address with the municipality and deregister to receive your housing refund. The housing provider and university provide you with all of this information.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

No, however, health insurance is mandatory in the Netherlands. I used the ALIANZ insurance through Otago

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

ESN Amsterdam organised an introduction week to orientate you to the city and meet new friends. I would highly recommend doing this as everyone in my building took part and you'll get mad FOMO if you don't partake. There are also groups on offer through the university however I did not join any. Amsterdam is such a young and vibrant city so you won't have trouble trying to find any extra curriculums. I decided to partake in a 10 week Dutch language and culture class through Slim Radio which was central to my enjoyment and understanding of the Netherlands; it allowed me to understand the culture and language and to make new friends.

What was the university/ city like?

One word. INCREDIBLE. The facilities on offer at the University are world class and there is so much to get involved with. The city itself is relaxed but vibrant with Dutch culture bursting at the seams. In the warmer months it is very vibrant with 'terraces' full of people having after work catch ups and drinks. The party culture is very inclusive and attracts a diverse range of people. You can find anything that suits your vibe. The city is incredibly safe (aside from the risk of being hit by a bike) and the locals are more than happy to strike up conversation and help you out. Learning Dutch in Amsterdam is really hard as Nederlander's have a really good grasp on English and will often default to English to help you out.

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

- Markets:
 - o Albert Cuypmarkt
 - o IJHallen (largest flea market in Europe)
 - o Bloemenmarkt (flower market)
- Parks
 - o Vondel Park (a must, one of my favourite escapes in the city)
 - o Oosterpark
 - o Westerpark
 - o Gaasperplas (there is a lake here good for warmer months)
- Parts of Town to check out:
 - o Jordaan
 - o De Pijp
 - o Noord
 - o Dam Square
 - o De Wallen
- Museums/Galleries:
 - o Anne Frank House
 - o Van Gogh Museum
 - o Rijks Museum
 - o EYE film Museum
- Other cities worth a day trip to:
 - o Utrecht
 - o Den Haag (The Hague)
 - Royal Palace and Gardens
 - Parliament Buildings
 - Location of the NZ embassy if you ever need
 - o Zaanse Schans for traditional windmills and Dutch crafts
 - o Kinderijk Windmills
 - o Rotterdam
 - o Maastricht
 - o Giethorn
 - o Delfshaven
- Clubs and Bars:
 - o Waterhole
 - o Koopstoot Bar
 - o Melkweg
 - o Chicago
 - o NYX
 - o Panama
 - o Paradiso
 - o Air Amsterdam
 - o De School
 - o Shelter
- Also check out some festivals. The Netherlands is host to nearly 1100 festivals a year!!

Any tips for future students?

Take the opportunity and go for it. Embrace the nerves, the uncertainty, and the unknown and grow within it. You can only come out of this experience a better, more resilient person. You will never regret an experience like this.

Overall Experience

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

Going on exchange to Amsterdam has been the most challenging and rewarding journey of my life. If I thought in February that saying goodbye to my family and everything I know would be hard, I had no idea how much harder it would be to say goodbye to Amsterdam and my new friends. 6 months has given me the opportunity to explore the world and get to know myself. But, by far the most valuable takeaway is the friendships I have made with people all over the world. It's crazy to think that in such a short amount of time I formed some of my closest friendships and now have second homes away from home. Exchange is about so much more than university and education: it's about exploring the world, gaining an appreciation of culture, meeting new people and making new memories. I have been fortunate enough to visit 11 countries on my exchange and still plan on doing 10 more whilst in Europe! Exchange will forever be one of my fondest memories.



Amsterdam Canals at Night!!



Pomme Frites met mayonaisse (Fries with mayonaisse) – a very Dutch snack!



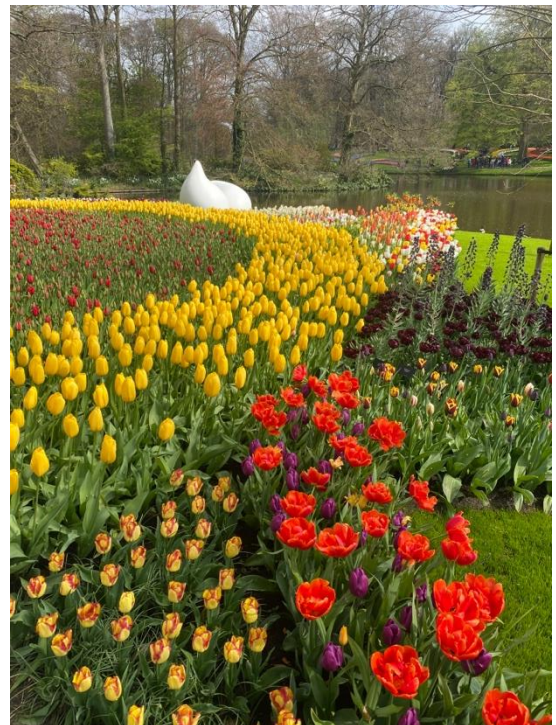
Atop of Eze in Nice, France!



Outside Coco's where ESN hosted intro week parties



Bikes in the park at sunset!



Tulip field at Keukenhof!



Koningsdag (King's Day) – The biggest day of Celebration in NL



Graduation from Dutch language class!



At PinkPop – Biggest music festival in the Netherlands