



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	University of Amsterdam
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	S2, 2023
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	BCom & LLB
<b>Major(s)</b>	Economics

### Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Money and Banking	English	ECON200
Environmental Economics	English	ECON200
International Trade and Investment	English	ECON300
International Money and Finance	English	ECON300

Total Otago credits gained:  54 points  72 points  108 points  \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments about these papers?

All lectures were recorded.

**Enviro:** pretty easy (2x group presentations in tutorial and a final research essay). The other 3 papers were significantly more difficult.

**MB & ITI:** both had a midterm and exam – the midterm comes up very quickly in week 4 so make sure you stay on top of work to pass. MB applied a guessing correction to MCQs – taking 25% from your grade as they assume you have guessed this amount. Don't underestimate the effect this can have on your grade!

**IMF:** the lecturer was really good. 20% of the grade was from continuous exam – every week in the tutorial you had to prepare a presentation (drawing equations/graphs on whiteboard) with your group on 1-2 given topics and be prepared to be randomly selected to present. Be expected to be called 1 or max 2 times.

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

One semester at uva is split into 3 blocks. The first 2 blocks are 2 months long (usually 2 papers in each block), the last block is 1 month (0-2 papers). For economics there were usually 2x 2hr lectures and a 2hr tutorial per paper each week. There was no break in between blocks if you have exams.

The economics papers are heavily quantitative. If this isn't your strong suit, be prepared to put in a huge amount of work, just to pass. I found the work a huge step up compared to Otago. The content was interesting as it's more applicable to real life. You need a 5.5 to pass (out of 10).

All papers had a resit opportunity. The block 1 resits are in early Jan. If you are doing one semester, you won't be in Amsterdam for the block 2 and 3 resits.

## Accommodation

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

I had student accommodation with Lieven de Key at Prins Hendrikkade 189. When booking the room, I saw the email early and was lucky to get a choice. I highly recommend mine due to location (if not central Amsterdam, west is a good area).

### Pros

- Central location – near bars, town, centraal station, supermarkets
- Campus distances:
  - o 5min bike to roeterseiland (economics, business, law)
  - o 5min bike to oudemanhuispoort (BAs)
  - o 20min bike to science park
- Shared bathroom and kitchen with 1 other
- Double bed (also single bed rooms or shared rooms for lower rent)
- Laundry (around \$4 per wash and \$2.50 per dry)
- Separate common area and kitchen with oven
- Close to albert heijn supermarket (4min bike, 10 min walk)

### Cons

- De key is pretty useless when it comes to maintenance and communication
- Quiet time after 11pm on Fri/Sat and 10pm on other days.
- Had to buy pots/pans/plates etc. We were able to donate our stuff to the next residents though so hopefully this isn't as much of a problem for future students.

Other accommodations I had friends at:

- Maassluisstraat: 25min bike from centre/uni but very social and lots of students in West
- Poeldijk: close to Maassluisstraat (west). All studios, really modern. Amazing common spaces (for studying, watching tv, big kitchen you can book out, ping pong etc).
- Science park: studios, 15-25mins east. Modern. Next to uva science campus.
- Diemen: considered outside Amst (east), *at least* 25min bike anywhere & not a lot out here. Would avoid if possible! However, due to the housing crisis, if you get allocated a room here, you're still very lucky. Rooms are nice, ensuites, shared kitchen. I had a lot of friends here!
- Hotel Jansen: not student accom but an option if you don't get it.

## Money matters

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

- Accommodation: \$1,000 per month (€580). If you get student accom, you must pay the full 5 months. Look into the housing benefit here – if your base rent is under a certain amount, you are eligible. I got around \$230 per month back (€133).
- Flights: \$3,000 (June-Feb)
- Resident permit: \$500.
- Insurance for 8 months: \$1,000, with Student Safe as recommended by Otago.
- Bike rental from Swapfiets: \$40 per month (€22).

Cost of living in Amsterdam: generally quite expensive. Eating out (including buying lunch) costs a lot more than NZ, food at the supermarket (especially meat) is more (300g chicken is \$8).

- Coffee at a cafe            around \$6-9    (€3.50-5).
- Sandwich at a cafe        around \$14-18 (€8-10).
- Brunch food                around \$25-35 (€15-20).

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

Wise card to transfer currencies. The debit card works in all countries, however, it doesn't work at a lot of the supermarkets in the Netherlands, tikkies, or the iDEAL system for online payments

Open an ING account when you get here as a solution. Also, with a Dutch IBAN, this is the easiest account for you to get your housing allowance transferred into (a non-Dutch IBAN means you will need to mail them a lot of documents to prove it is your account). You will need to link it to your BSN

## Visas & Insurance

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

No but you need a resident permit. Uva emails you about this process.

You need to register at the municipality of Amsterdam and will get a BSN number. There are specific days set aside for exchange students to do this. I recommend either doing this asap or later as the lines were 8+ hours long in the first few weeks. I did it on the last allocated day and waited 1 hour.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

I think you needed to state that you had health insurance but did not need to provide proof.

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

I recommend going to the ESN intro week, there are lots of activities and social events to encourage you to meet people. I made a lot of friends here and it's a good thing to get you started in a new city.

I also met people through the economics introduction day and my classes.

*What was the university/ city like?*

Uva is huge and there are many campuses mostly around the centre. I was mainly at the Roeterseiland campus which is very modern and pretty incredible. The library has less seating than Otago, but there are many other uva libraries and cafes to study at nearby.

Amsterdam is a beautiful city. It's quite small once you get to know it, you can bike across it in around 30mins, but still big enough that I continued to find new places every week. It's very international with a lot of expats and everyone speaks English so there is no issue if you don't know any Dutch.

There is public transport (tram, metro, train). I rarely used this as I biked everywhere.

Be prepared for it to rain every day in Oct/Nov. You get used to it (kind of) and Amsterdam more than makes up for it in so many other ways so I wouldn't be discouraged. There's nice weather in Aug/Sep, a couple of pretty cold weeks but mostly 5-8 degree highs during winter so not too bad!

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

Cafes (good to study at):

- Bakhuys
- Cafe de jaren
- Coffee and cakes
- Buno coffee hoofddorpplein

Food

- Foodhallen (indoor food court)
- Caldi e freddi
- Box sociaal (brunch)
- Alberto pozzetto

Bars (fri/sat night)

- Soundgarden
- Checkpoint charlie
- Karavaan
- Skek
- Cafe kuijper

*Any tips for future students?*

Get a bike straight away from Swapfiets! Biking is a must when living here – it's the easiest and fastest way to get around. Biking everywhere (including to bars, clubs and even festivals) feels funny or scary at the start but it quickly becomes so normal I wouldn't consider doing anything else! The city is designed for bikes, it's so convenient.

I also recommend spending new year's here. It is such a surreal experience, the Netherlands does it like no other country. You can see for yourself when here! I went to museumplein for midnight with friends – there was a big screen setup, music, a huge crowd.

## Overall Experience

*Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!*  
Amsterdam is by far my favourite city, the canals and houses are so picturesque and I was in awe of my surroundings every single day. I've made so many lifelong friends from different countries who I know I'll keep in touch with. I feel so lucky that I was able to call this city home for 6 months! Going on an exchange was the best decision, and travelling for 2 months prior taught me so much!

