

Student Guide

PLACE OF STUDY

Erasmus University Rotterdam.

CURRENCY

What is the currency?

Euro – EUR.

TRAVEL PLANS

How did you travel to your exchange University?

By air.

How much was your air fare?

£115

FIRST WEEK

Can you describe your first week?

The first week was hectic when I first arrived. I was tired and confused when getting my way round Rotterdam and especially on the first night looking for the accommodation. It was not difficult to socialise with people who were in the same situation that I was in. It is really easy to make friends here. It was confusing at first getting to the University because of the many transport lines/tracks. The ESN (student association) gave out free Dutch SIM cards.

The Pancake boat trip was really fun. We had pancakes on a boat on Rotterdam River (Nieuwe Maas). Then we visited Delfshaven and I saw my first ever windmill in the Netherlands. I met Master students and exchange students from around the world: international and including Dutch students. The courses that you take will be at Masters Level because it is only at Masters Level that the University teaches in English language. I settled in by the end of the second week.

CONTACT

Who is the main contact at your University for any questions such as module choices?

Eddie van Roon is the first point of contact.

For module choices, it is best to consult the secretaries of the module leaders or the module leaders themselves.

Are you allocated a personal tutor?

No.

LECTURES AND SEMINARS

How many hours are you expected to study?

The hours are similar to Warwick. A good policy would be to study from 9 am to 5 pm. And maybe do more reading during the evening.

The lectures are usually for 1 hour and 45 minutes. You get a 15 minutes break about 45 minutes into the lecture. So, the lecture itself is 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The hours of lectures and seminars for 3 modules (usual number of modules to take for 1 block) are roughly 8-10 hours per week.

Are there many differences compared to Warwick University?

BLOCK SYSTEM: The academic year is split into 4 blocks of about 9 weeks each. So, it is like having 4 Warwick terms but fewer weeks (8/9 weeks) compared to 10 weeks at Warwick. As a result, you get only 2 weeks of Christmas break compared to 4/5 weeks that we get at Warwick.

EXAMS

When are the exams?

As outlined above, because of the block system, exams are scheduled at the end of every block (the 9th week). Then the next block starts immediately after the exams. Therefore, I had my exams on the first week of November and mid January already.

Are the exams in June or are some of the assessment methods different?

The exams are final exams for the courses that you have taken in that block. Hence, you would only take 2 or 3 exams in June for the courses you have taken in block 4 (last block). Unless, you need to take a re-sit, in that case, the re-sit exams will be in June/July.

Some modules may require you to write a paper (100%), or to write a paper and take a final exam (could be 30/70%, 40/60% or 70/30% split). The paper/essay is usually due in end of block at same time of exam.

The exams are very different from Warwick style. The questions ask for specific answers. Therefore, there are many questions dealing with specific issues rather than open ended questions allowing you the option to choose your questions in the exam.

ACCOMMODATION

Did your exchange University provide your accommodation?

The accommodation I am living in now is provided by Stadwonen. It provides student accommodation but is not part of the University. However, the university refers you to Stadwonen. The rent is very expensive, so I recommend you to look around for private accommodation too (from 350 euros). I am still staying where I am living now because I have settled down quite nicely, get along well with my flatmate and am only about 5-10 minutes walk away from campus. There is a tram stop practically in front of the building which makes it easier when grocery shopping and travelling around etc.

If you want to cancel a contract with Stadwonen, you have to pay some extra money e.g. 1 month's worth of rent i.e. 560 euros.

CLIMATE

What is the climate like compared to England?

The weather here is similar to the UK but slightly better than the UK.

CLOTHING

What type of clothing do you need?

Coat, gloves, scarf and woolly hat for autumn and winter.

SOCIALISING

What type of entertainment is available?

There are too many to name all of them here!!! Personally, I have been to the Rotterdam Zoo which is great experience (I went last year in November). I may go again when the weather is warmer.

What about clubs and bars? Yes, there are quite a few clubs and bars in Rotterdam. There is this bar called B.E.D. which is situated in the city centre. The ESN organises student night every Tuesday which is free admission.

Travel: make the most of living in Rotterdam! It is relatively cheap to travel across the Netherlands and across Europe as well. I have already travelled to Belgium (see photos below). It was a great experience! Living in the Netherlands gives you every reason to travel as much as possible. It would be costly to travel e.g. to Paris, Rome or Berlin from the UK because of the flight and time associated with flying.

Is there an orientation week, such as the one at Warwick where you are introduced to other students from other overseas Universities?

Apart from the Pancake boat trip, the introductory presentations allow the students to get to know each other.

TRANSPORT

What modes of transport are commonly used?

Trams and bicycles are the most common mode of transport for students.

BIKES: Personally, I did not buy a bike when I first came here because although bikes are easily available, it would be difficult to resell it. I know quite a few of my friends (exchange students) who have bought bikes but found it difficult to get rid of them. Second hand bikes would cost between 30 to 60 euros. Anything less than that, you should think twice before buying because either the bike itself is defective or it is a stolen bike. For a new bike, it would cost you roughly 100 euros. Be very careful not to leave your bike lying around unlocked even for a few minutes! So buy a good lock!

TRAINS: You will also need a Dutch bank card (student account) to pay at the ticket machines when travelling by train. The ticket machines do not accept visas. Very easy to get a discount card – 40% off when travelling by train. Called a 'korting' card, which means discount card. You could use the service desks but they charge you a small fee for the service.

TRAMS: As of this year (2010), you have to use an OV-chipkaart to check-in and check-out of trams. It works like the Oyster Card (London). Tram stops are situated every 1 minute or less, away from each other in Rotterdam. You can buy the OV-Chipkaart at the Rotterdam Centraal station and most metro stops. You can use the OV-chipkaart for trams and the metro for the whole of Rotterdam. You can use the card in the Hague as well. The OV-chipkaart costs 7.50 euros and is valid for 3 years. You have to add credit on it like a top up card. If you do not have an OV-chipkaart then you have to buy a temporary OV-chipkaart that is valid for 1 hour, you can travel wherever you like, get on or off the trams, but within 1 hour. This temporary (paper as opposed to plastic) costs 2.50 euros.

HEALTH CARE

Is health insurance required?

Yes, health insurance is needed in the Netherlands. If you are a British citizen then you have to apply for a 'European Health Insurance Card' (EHIC) which is free, provided by the NHS. Not only do you need the EHIC, you will have to apply for further health insurance cover since the EHIC is only a basic cover. I am using AON – a student insurance company. The link to AON is provided by the Erasmus University website (non-degree section).

For AON, you will have to pay one month in advance for the first month and can pay by instalments or all in lump sum thereafter. It is very easy to set up a Dutch bank account. I am using ING. ING is everywhere in the Netherlands. I use my ING card to pay my insurance and other things (most places in

the Netherlands do not accept visas except for Stadwonen) and take it with me where ever I go instead of my visa card.

If you do go to the doctors, my experience is that you have to pay and then claim the costs through your insurance (in my case AON). You can find the claim forms on the AON website; the link is provided by the Erasmus University website.

Did you join a dental practice or doctor's surgery?

No, I did not join a dental practice, I recommend that you should see your dentist before you leave for the Netherlands.

WHAT DID YOU GAIN FROM THE EXPERIENCE?

I chose to study abroad because I thought and still think that the insight and experience that I will gain will only be gained while studying abroad. Living away from home in another country, as apposed your own country; makes a great deal of difference. It is this difference that makes the experience so valuable.

When I saw that Warwick University offered a year abroad programme in English, I jumped to the opportunity to apply for the course. It was ideal for me because it meant that I did not need to learn a new language while at the same to live and learn in an environment absolutely new to me. I chose the Netherlands because it is such a beautiful country and culture that one must visit and with many things to do! I can tell you that I do not regret my choice of Erasmus University Rotterdam. I was drawn by the many modules available that are not available at Warwick.

Personally, I have learnt to be more independent and in many ways more self confident. The friendships that I have made here will surely not be forgotten. To tell you the truth, this year has been great. It will be the most memorable years of my university life. I have met people from around the world and have learnt so many perspectives of seeing things from other cultural and traditional points of view especially a European perspective.

I would recommend this to anyone who is considering a year abroad. I am half way through the year and nothing can express how it feels to study and live in the Netherlands. It is simply magnificent, you have to experience it yourself!



Conference on Shareholders Democracy
at University Maastricht, in Maastricht.

Photo: Maastricht University.

Maastricht was such a pleasant visit!



Leiden, The Netherlands.



Peace Palace, The Hague.

I often go to the Peace Palace
Library to study which is to the
left of the International Court of
Justice (ICJ) in the photo.

The library is only open to
students, so you will have the
privilege to study inside the Peace
Palace Library being a student of
Erasmus University Rotterdam.



Behind us is a statue of Erasmus himself on Erasmus University campus.



Ghent, Belgium.



Photo Outing to the European Patent Office.

It was such a great experience listening to the patent officers and having a look around the office.