

Student Guide

Place of Study : Utrecht University

CAN YOU BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHY YOU CHOSE THIS PARTICULAR UNIVERSITY?

I chose Utrecht because it had an excellent reputation in the Netherlands and I liked the way the course was organised. I chose the Netherlands because it is very central which was perfect as I planned to do some travelling during my time abroad. The standard of English here is also very good which I think makes it easier to settle in. Finally, it is close to the UK so it is always possible to go home if you need to.

CURRENCY

Euro

TRAVEL PLANS

Plane-£120 return to Cardiff. (Flights from London, Bristol, Birmingham can be as low as £30)

FIRST WEEK

The first week was spent struggling to get furniture from Ikea to the 14th floor bridge where my flat is, meeting all my housemates and neighbours and generally exploring the city. ESN, which is an organisation for exchange students, set up an introduction week which had an event every evening in town. You are given two guides (who are either Dutch or have already spent a semester in Utrecht,) to show you around and answer your questions. An example of the activities set up during the first week is "beercantus" a typical Dutch event where everyone sings classic songs and gets completely soaked by the unlimited beer provided by people walking around with watering cans. Overall the first week was a lot of fun and a great way to meet your classmates before term starts.

CONTACT

In the main law building there are advisers for international students every Tuesday and Thursday, they help you with Learning Agreements, module changes, timetable clashes etc.

Are you allocated a personal tutor? No, you do not get a personal tutor but the classes are relatively small so the seminar leader or lecturer is available to help with academic problems.

LECTURES AND SEMINARS

You do not have many contact hours at Utrecht, depending on the courses you decide to take. Many students find themselves with two or three days off during the week. However, the classes are intense because they are condensed into eight week slots. This means that the exams come around very quickly so it is important to keep up with the reading on your days off.

Are there many differences compared to Warwick University? It is a very different system to Warwick, the classes are much smaller and they are pretty diverse in content (economics, history and philosophy modules are available.) There are four periods (two per semester) and at the end of each one you sit two exams. The examination style is also very different; there are a variety of different techniques used such as group essays, open book exams and group presentations. You do not get a designated holiday for Easter and the Christmas holidays is quite short but throughout the semester I have found myself with full weeks off, usually after each period ends. This is ideal if you want to do some travelling while you are in mainland Europe and cheap flights are readily available!

EXAMS

At the end of every period (eight weeks.)

ACCOMMODATION

The university does not provide you with accommodation, but they reserve a certain number of rooms with a company called Short Stay. It is important to reserve accommodation as soon as it becomes available. I have met other students however, who came to Utrecht during the summer to find accommodation which is usually cheaper and more central. Law classes are held in town while ShortStay accommodation is in De Uithof (20 minute bike ride from town). Despite this, you will find most students tend to live on campus.

CLIMATE AND CLOTHING

What is the climate like compared to England? It is pretty similar; however I am finding the Winter to be colder than I anticipated!

What type of clothing do you need?

I would recommend all girls invest in some kind of flat waterproof boots as you will be cycling everywhere, even to and from the nightclubs. Other than that, just general winter clothing.

SOCIALISING

Is the entertainment similar to England? Utrecht is just over 30 minutes away from Amsterdam by train so there are plenty of clubs and concerts very close. Utrecht also has it's share of clubs but there is more of a bar culture here apart from student nights and the ESN organised events (every Tuesday at Poema.)

DOCTORS AND DENTISTS

I am registered with a surgery in the city, it is free to book an appointment if you have an EU health card or other insurance. There is also a Dentist available for internationals.

WHAT DID YOU GAIN FROM THE EXPERIENCE?

Living abroad gives you a sense of independence I don't think I would have gained without experiencing it. It is amazing to live with and meet so many students from overseas and learn about their different cultures and backgrounds. You also get the opportunity to travel to places you might not otherwise visit, for example I have been to Brugge, Paris, Budapest, Krakow, Copenhagen and various Dutch cities so far. Furthermore, it is great to feel a part of the Dutch culture, for example we will soon be celebrating Queens day.

