



## Universität Konstanz

2018-2019

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

The application process exists out of everything that has to do with filling out forms that are needed for your study abroad. In my opinion there are three important institutions that show up in this phase: the 'home' university (so for me and you Utrecht University), the university where you want to stay during your exchange (so for me Universität Konstanz) and Erasmus.

In the beginning is the 'home' university by far the most important institution you have to deal with. That's logical, because before you can stay abroad, you first have to be qualified suited for studying abroad by Utrecht University. Concretely this means you will have to write a motivational letter. It is good to take this serious, because it is a good exercise and gives you a better idea about why you want to study abroad, but since I know no-one who has been rejected by Utrecht University, you don't have to worry. On the other hand can the motivational letter be important for the assignment of a University. So if you really want to get to a specific University, it is wise to give your best in this motivational letter.

After this important first deadline there's a period in which you have to fill in forms in order to get assigned to a university and upload some documents on Osiris. From the moment you get assigned to a university abroad, the exchange university gets more important. Instead of uploading information for Utrecht University, I had to upload all kinds of information for Universität Konstanz. Of course the exchange university needs a lot of information of you to get you enrolled, it is not the best part of the exchange. Although you're given much time to take care of everything, there's always a deadline for something that's pressing on you. Now, these things have to be done, but if you want a university that guides you very well, you should choose for the Universität Konstanz. I, and with me many internationals that I met here, find that we have been guided very well through the process of uploading and signing documents. The website of the Universität Konstanz is clear and the employees responsible for Erasmus students are very helpful and send quick reactions on all kinds of questions.

At the end, also the Erasmus institution gets important. You have to upload (again) some documents to Osiris to be able to get a purse and do a language test in the language you are going to study. Although the last named test is obligatory, it is of no importance for your possibilities to go abroad. Therefore, I liked making this test. It gave me a good insight in which level of language competence I have. The interesting part of this test is that you also have to take the test once you come back from your exchange. I am very excited about the improvements I will have made!

If you've taken care of all this, you can finally start to enjoy your stay abroad. And that's where the good part starts :)

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

The International Office has always been contactable and in almost every case responded very quickly. It was very useful for me, since I sometimes needed information on a short term.

#### academic preparation

Academically I didn't prepare that much in advance. Although I had to look up courses I wanted to follow during my stay abroad and I had to find out which courses would fit into my law study at home, I didn't spend too much time on it. It took a little bit of effort to get known with the course system of Konstanz, but in the end it appeared to be very structured, so it was easy to get a good overview of the course book. This of course is not a necessary feature, but it helped me when selecting the courses I intended to take. Most difficult was it to get the courses fit in my (still fictional) time schedule.



### language preparation

Language preparations might be a bit different for me than for most of you, for I wanted to study in German and I think most of you are going to study in English. For studying in German at Universität Konstanz you need a language competence of level B2. Dutch students usually take exams at B1 level when they finish high school. Luckily, at my school there was the opportunity to follow an extra German course, which would give you a certificate – Goethe-Zertifikat – that proves you have B2 level. I followed this program and therefore I could already say I mastered the required German level to get access to Universität Konstanz. I don't know which route should be followed when you are not yet in the possession of the Goethe-Zertifikat or a similar document, but I am happy I did not have to find this out.

To conclude, for me there was not much language preparation needed, even though I wanted to study in German instead of English.

### finances

One of the things you have to upload on Osiris before going abroad, is a financial plan. For the creation of the financial plan, I had to guess a bit in the beginning. That's why the financial plan I handed in at Utrecht University is not very accurate. During time I got more information and therefore was able to get more precise on my financial plan. Although I did not have to hand it in on Osiris anymore, my parents (and me with them) wanted to have a good overview of what the expected costs and incomes are. For example, I've decided not to work while staying abroad and I want to travel back home at Christmas. These things affect my normal pattern in a negative way and it is therefore good to know how to deal with them. In the end I think I got a good financial plan, but it's still a 'plan' and I don't know how things will work out in the end. I've just arrived now and see already that there are some unexpected costs like excursion that I want to join.

So I liked to have some insight in the incomings and costs of staying abroad. The format that is given to me by Utrecht University was a good starting point, because many things that have to be taken into account, were already given and only needed to be filled in by me.

## STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

### study programme (content and organisational issues)

The way study programmes are shaped in Konstanz is very different from the way they are shaped at the Universiteit Utrecht. First of all, most courses take place for the duration of the whole semester, opposed to the Universiteit Utrecht, where courses only take place for halve a semester. This automatically also brings changes with it concerning the exams. Whereas at the UU there are in a semester more exam periods, at the Universität Konstanz there is only one. During the rest of the semester, the courses at the UK have one to no grading assignments, and when they have one, it's mostly in the form of a presentation and not a written exam.

Secondly, the courses I followed in Konstanz had a totally different setup than my law courses in the Netherlands. Until my exchange, I was used to this set schedule of one lecture and one seminar per subject a week. In Konstanz, there is no working group at all. Moreover, the lectures differ from course to course. At one course, there were even only six attendants! This made the education almost private. Three other courses I followed (a German and Italian language course and a law course given in English) had around 8-12 participants. The preparations of the courses exists always at reading some literature, except for the language courses, for which you have to make some exercises as well. This setup is different for me as law student, for I always had to prepare exercises for my seminars.

Then there's one last point that can be useful. In Konstanz there are two types of courses, lectures (Vorlesungen), and seminars (Seminare). Lectures are finished with an exam. Seminars are finished with a paper.



academic quality of education activities

The quality of the German educational system is good. It is comparable to the Dutch educational system.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The counselling and support at the Universität Konstanz is really great. During the first weeks there are plenty of meetings which make you aware of the things you have to do on arrival to get settled at the university and the city in general. Also, there are some meetings at which you have the opportunity to get to know other exchange students. I met a lot of my best friends at those meetings, so they were very helpful to me.

Furthermore, the support isn't limited to the first weeks. In the Facebook group of the exchange students, the International Office posts a message whenever it organizes a meeting on a certain topic. This can be about everything, from how to get a job in Konstanz to signing up for exams. Visiting these meetings has been very useful to me.

Except for the international office, my study mentor also was available at any time I needed his help.

transfer of credits

My credits have still to be transferred. I am home now, but I still have to finish a seminar paper and hand it in. Before I get my last notes some time will elapse. This is why I leave this box open. My experiences tell me that it will not deliver many administrative problems to get them transferred. The most important question might be in what way they will be transferred, since the German grading system is totally different from the Dutch.

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

The orientation programme took 1,5 weeks and offered great possibilities to get to know other people. Especially the 'Stammtisch' organised by the International Office was a success in this perspective. These so called Stammtisch are meetings in a restaurant where the complete floor is hired for all new exchange students. During the first 1,5 week, there are also a lot of compulsory meetings where you will meet others, as well as excursions. Since the orientation programme starts at the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, but study starts only at the end of October, this means that there's a gap between the orientation programme and the beginning of the semester. Although it might not be asked to fill the time between with the welcome & orientation programme, it was for me difficult to fill my time in between. It was weird to be there on my own with almost nothing to do and only people around me that I barely know. As I said, I don't know how this can be improved, but I want to mention it.

accommodation

Accommodation is taken care of by Seezeit. If you are in time to apply for a dorm or other student room, you will 99% sure get one. Thereby the costs are way lower than in Utrecht. For example I paid only €257 a month for my student dorm, where I lived with three other German flatmates. The interior was very simple and a bit old (as is it in most accommodations of Seezeit), but it served its goal, so I saw no problem in living with it for half a year. There are accommodations located near the university (e.g. Sonnenbühl) and locations located near the city center (e.g. livings in the quarter Paradies (Rheingutstraße)). They both have their own advantages and disadvantages, but since the city is not so big, everything is easily within reach.

Accommodation is taken care of very well.

leisure & culture

Where I suspected to have some German friends when returning to the Netherlands, this didn't happen. In the first weeks I met mostly international students and I got befriended with them. Thereby most German students already have their own circle of friends in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester, so they are not so open to new friendships



anymore. I think this is a natural thing and the same in every city. My expectations were wrong, but this hasn't occurred as a problem to me. On the contrary, I think it is cool that I met so many people of different cultures - mostly within Europa still. I got to know the German culture better, which is something you have to experience yourself I think and I also got to know a little bit of many other cultures, by the habits and uses my international friends from other countries brought with them.

In my spare time I mostly met with people in the evenings to simply go for a drink in the city or at someones homes. We also went to clubs together and we did bowling and billiard together. Lunching at the university with my friends also belonged to a common way to see my friends. Since everyone eats his lunch at the mensa, I mostly arranged to go there with someone. Since I like cooking, I also spent many evenings having dinner together. As for sports, in the winter semester there are not so many possibilities to build up contacts in this way. When sporting this was for me more a personal thing, whereas it is here in Utrecht a means to see friends. Last but not least: trips, organised by the university or by ourselves, were of course the nicest way to meet my friends.

Except for meeting friends and doing sport, there are many possibilities to do volunteering work. Applying for a job is more difficult, because it is required to have a German health insurance to be allowed to have a job in Germany. But, this health insurance costs €90 a month, which means that working is almost not cost-effective. For this reason and because I also saw my time abroad as a possibility to experience beautiful moments instead of working all the time, I decided not to work.

suggestions/tips

I have no suggestions or tips anymore. Insofar I had them, I already mentioned them above.

## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

The city is beautiful, with an old city center and idyllic roads alongside the Bodensee. Everything is within reach, from the University to the city center to the lake sides. It is a small city with 81.000 inhabitants, so it's easy to get to know the city very well. For me the size was good and there was enough to explore. After this half year I think I know everything though. The city has all the facilities that a huge city has, from bowling to playing billiard, a industrial place with clubs, pubs in the city center and a big amount of restaurants.

Concerning the university I can see that it has nice architecture. It has opened in 1966, so the university is very young. The mensa offers a big variety off foods, although mostly meat dishes. The university can be reached easily by bus and by bike (although it is located on the top of a hill) and as the rest of the city not so big. All in all very recommendable.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I would recommend to do trips in the beginning of your stay. Everyone has still time at the beginning of the semester and it is a good way to build better contacts. I did a lot of trips, but almost all in the last weeks of my stay. I loved the trips, but it was also stressfull, because me and my friends were busy studying for our exams. I realised that I had much more time in the beginning, but didn't use it that effectively.



## 2016-2017

<b>PREPARATION</b>
exchange application process
I had to put quite some time in the application process, making a study plan, writing a motivation letter etc. However, the instructions were very clear and it went smoothly.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
The International Office is very helpful and always there to answer your questions. They helped me a lot during my application process.
academic preparation
Other than planning the rest of my studies, there was no academic preparation necessary.
language preparation
I orientated myself in the German language, but this was out of interest and not because it was necessary. The International Office provided me with proof of my English language skills.
finances
I made a financial plan. This was not too complicated.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>
study programme (content and organisational issues)
The Universität Konstanz was extremely helpful during the organizing period. I did the orientation course GoKonstanz. There, they will help you organizing everything. They were able to answer all my questions during very frequent visiting hours. The progress of choosing courses is somewhat unclear and vague but I managed it very well with the help of the International Office here. I choose courses of different faculties. This was no problem for the Universität here and also not for the UU. The courses are all stated in an online Syllabus. I took quite a lot of German courses. There is a lot of German courses for foreign students available.
academic quality of education activities
Most of the classes were of good academic quality. There is classes provided just for international students and you can participate in the regular academic courses. The language courses are very helpful.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
Especially during the first month the Universität is extremely helpful. They will always answers your questions very fast and you can drop by everyday. They help you not just with academic issues, but also with bureaucratic or personal difficulties.
transfer of credits
For most courses you will receive 6 ECTS and for most of the language courses 4. As there are only 2 semesters instead of 4 periods, this means you have to take a lot of classes at the same time. However, this is very doable and the workload is in accordance with this.

<b>STUDENT LIFE</b>
welcome & orientation programme
I took part in the GoKonstanz program and I highly recommend it! The language course is interesting and helpful and also the help they provide you with organizational issues is extremely useful. However, the part I appreciated most about it, is the opportunity it gives you to meet so many other international students from all



over the world. A lot of activities are organized, mostly during weekend days. This keeps you busy during the first month in Konstanz and you get to know a lot of new people.

accommodation

Seezeit provided me with accommodation. It is not too expensive and the rooms are furnished and very decent. You do not get to choose your roommates. You will be mixed with both German and other international students, male and female. All the residences are in a good location.

leisure & culture

Konstanz is a beautiful city. Especially during summer there is a lot to do. For a small city like this they have a very big and entertaining night life. There is something to do almost every day of the week. There is a lot of jobs available in the city, mostly in gastronomy. Perfect knowledge of the German language is not required and finding a job, even for a couple of months, is very doable.

suggestions/tips

I highly recommend you to take part in the GoKonstanz program.

**CONCLUSIONS**

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I would highly recommend this university. I was supposed to only stay for one semester, but because I was having such an amazing time I decided to stay for the summer semester as well. If you only come for one semester I would recommend the summer semester, because Konstanz is beautiful in the summer and a lot of activities, such as festivals and barbecues, are organized. But also in winter it is a great place. If you want to learn German the university will offer you a lot of courses so your German will definitely improve.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

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