



ERASMUS+ STUDIES UU Report 2015-2016

Please use Tab to go to the next (text) box.

e-mail address	<i>optional; only if you don't mind students preparing for study abroad contacting you directly</i> mariska_kuiper6@hotmail.com
faculty/college	Bèta Faculteit
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Wiskunde & Toepassingen

destination city & country	Helsinki, Finland
name university abroad	University of Helsinki
start date	1 / 1 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	31 / 5 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)

You are requested to write on the following topics. Text boxes will expand automatically while typing!

PREPARATION
exchange application process
<p>This part turned out to be surprisingly easy. I remember that it was great to just scroll through all the possible destinations and feel the freedom to be able to choose whatever destination you want. However, it is also hard and time consuming to check the websites of all the universities to see whether they offer suitable courses for my program. Although I didn't need any courses for my bachelor, I wanted to take courses in a certain direction. I also wanted a country with a high level of English speaking people. This prerequisite narrowed down my choices to Scandinavia (and Finland) and North-America. My interest in Nordic countries and the good and wide range of courses it offers made me decide to go for Helsinki. The fact that I could receive an Erasmus grant made it even more attractive. It's easy to search for courses in their online system, weboodi. It's the Finnish counterpart of Osiris. I have had quite some mailcontact with several employees of the University of Helsinki and they were all very willing to help me and reacted very quickly, both of which I really appreciated. Waiting for replies can really slow down the process. The application process is very straight forward. You received a password for a certain website. That site showed step by step which documents you had to submit and other actions you had to take. It also provides housing assistance. It is impossible to forget something if you just follow the instructions.</p>
counselling & support at Utrecht University
academic preparation
<p>I didn't need the courses for my bachelor so I just took courses that seemed nice to me. I didn't do any special academic preparation before going to Helsinki. I checked the course description to make sure I could understand the course and it turned out to be all ok.</p>
language preparation
<p>Everyone at the University of Helsinki and in Finland speaks English perfectly, even elderly people. The University of Helsinki also provides a lot of courses in English. Any language preparation was therefore not</p>



necessary. My level of English was C2 before I left which turned out to be more than enough to survive in Finland and follow all the courses.

finances

Nordic countries are known for being very expensive. However, since Finland has the euro it is not as expensive as for example Norway. Groceries are more expensive, but not extreme. Drinking a beer in the city centre is expensive, around €6/7. However, in the neighbourhood Kallio, not far from the city centre, there are a lot of bars which are way cheaper. Receiving the Erasmus Grant is more than enough to cover for the higher living cost. I had to pay a rent of €550 a month. However, for that price I got a studio with my own bathroom and kitchen in the centre of Helsinki.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I followed courses in Mathematics, Economics, Law and language courses. The mathematic course I took was a course taught in Finnish so I never went to the lectures (there were also a lot of courses in English but I wanted to take this one). However, all the material was also available in English and I met the teacher several times outside class hours to have some private explanation. That's the way everybody is at the university. They don't say that you can't follow the course, but try to find a solution if you like that course. The exam was also available in English and I passed with a 5 (highest possible grade in Finland). The economics courses were in English at master level only. You can choose all the master level courses and also courses from the Hanken School of Economics (which is also in the city centre). That increased the number of available courses.

academic quality of education activities

The quality of the courses is comparable to that of the University of Utrecht. In general, the teachers speak English very good and clearly. The Finnish accent is easy to understand (not like for example Chinese or Russian). Law courses are thought very differently than I was used to in Utrecht. There were no exercises and seminars; just lectures. They told us the law but they didn't focus on the source and you didn't have to know any articles by heart. They also didn't work with case law or law sources. The language courses offered by the University are great. They offer language courses at all levels and in a lot of languages, for example Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, French, German, English, Dutch etc. During my French courses we did a lot of activities.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The support at the University was good. There was a student desk in the city centre and there you could ask all the questions you had regarding the courses, organizational matters etc. They helped good and fast. You could just go there without making an appointment. Also via email, all the teachers and staff were easy to reach and reacted quickly.

transfer of credits

This part was also very well organized, like everything in Finland. Once all the credits you obtained were put into weboodi (done by the teachers, like in Osiris) you could order your transcript of studies online. So it didn't matter if not all your courses were in weboodi yet when leaving the country. Then they just send it to your homeaddress and in my case it arrived within 4 days after ordering the transcript.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

There was an introduction organized by the University of two days. It started with an introduction at your own faculty. We were divided into groups and each group was assigned a tutor which was a student at the University of Helsinki. They showed us the campus. Later we moved to the city centre (science faculty is outside the city



centre) for a general introduction. In the main building all students were guided from one room to another and in each room they could arrange certain technical matters, such as activating your university account, sign up for language courses en student organizations and get your travel card etc. It took a while but in the end you have already organized everything you need within one day of arrival. Cannot imagine a better start. In the evening there was ofcourse a big ESN party. The next day was up to the faculties. We got some more explanation about certain technical topics and had the day off in which we went for a drink in the city, ate together etc. The introduction was a great was to meet new people and to explore the new city.

accommodation

There are two main housing organisations in Helsinki. However, they cooperate so you don't have to sign up for them seperately. After your application, you can sign up for housing via the same application website I mentioned above. I went to Helsinki in the second semester and got a housing offer in the end of November. The organisations states that they cannot guarantee that you get an offer. However, in the second semester you can be sure of an offer since it is less busy in Helsinki in that semester. As I already told you, I had a studio in the city centre. The studios looked neat and clean. The basic kitchen gears are there, but I bought some extra stuff myself. Fortunately, there are quite some second hand stores in Helsinki in which you can cheaply buy that kind of stuff. There was also a sauna (ofcourse in Finland) and a lot of washing machines. Both could be used for free. The building was around 500m from the supermarket and the same distance to the sea. An amazing place to live for five months. Downstairs was also a common room.

The rent had to be paid in the main building in the beginning of each month. If you had any questions you could always contact them and they were always very quick in their replies. They were very helpful.

leisure & culture

I always thought that there are a lot of activities you can do in Utrecht, but in Helsinki it is way more. Or I was looking for more it. Anyway, you can do many things. Finnish people are active people. They organise a lot and if it is winter they still try to meet up and do as much as possible. Eating and cooking together, art galleries, good musea, cross country skiing in a park closeby, wintergames for students, saunaparties etc. You don't have to be bored at all and during everything people are open-minded and willing to meet new people. Once spring is coming, everyone moves outside. The parcs are full of people, just like the beaches.

ESN provides some good trips. Personally I did the trip to Lapland in the beginning of February. It was an amazing experience! Such a different world and a week full of activities with great people. It is also easy to organize a trip to Lapland yourself. I've been to Lapland again in the end of March with two good friends. I also did the trip to St. Petersburg. I can also recommend that city.

suggestions/tips

ESN provides some good trips. Personally I did the trip to Lapland in the beginning of February. It was an amazing experience! Such a different world and a week full of activities with great people. It is also easy to organize a trip to Lapland yourself. I've been to Lapland again in the end of March with two good friends. I also did the trip to St. Petersburg. I can also recommend that city. You definitely have to go to Tallinn. It's a beautiful city and ofcourse you need to buy lots of alcohol there for storage. I have also traveled around Estonia, but that was not extremely impressive in my opinion. In Finland, I can recommend Porvoo. Turku is also nice, but just a small part of it. If you have time go to Naantali, a small village just East/North of Turku. It's a beautiful cute old fishing village. A trip to the island Åland is also worthwhile. A ferry leaves from Turku and takes 5 hours. It's a beautiful trip through the archipelago of Turku.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Definitely. The people are great, the University is great, the city is great and the country is great. Helsinki is not a city for a citytrip but a city to live in. Nature and water is everywhere. In winter you can walk on ice and go



cross-country skiing. Finnish people don't hide in their homes during the winter. In summer you can swim, canoe and sit on the beaches. There are forests and parks everywhere. The city is clean and everything, for example public transport, is well organised. I have never seen so many beautiful sunsets in my life. Apart from nature, the city offers nice bars and clubs, art galleries and museums. There are thousands of nice and funny coffee bars. Please go explore this. There are coffee places with all kinds of hidden places in which you can just sit down with your laptop for ages. Finnish bars often offer refills for a lower rate or at Regatta you even get 5 cents back for every refill. Finland is a coffee nation.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Maybe Finland isn't the first country you think of but it's amazing and has a lot to offer. Don't be scared by the weather (-20 during my first two weeks, but that's exceptional). It only makes the experience better.

Save this UU report for your own records and send it as attachment to verslagen.internationaloffice@uu.nl within 30 days after finishing your study abroad period and in ANY case before the final deadline!