



ERASMUS+ STUDIES UU Report 2015-2016

Every student receiving an Erasmus+ STUDIES grant has to submit a UU report as well. Writing the UU report is one of the university's conditions to receive and keep the grant. Only after submitting this report your Erasmus+ grant will be awarded definitively.

Your report will be made available (anonymously) to UU students preparing an exchange or research period abroad. Not all of them are Dutch-speaking, therefore we prefer to receive reports **written in English**.

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

family name	
first name	
student number	
e-mail address	<i>optional; only if you don't mind students preparing for study abroad contacting you directly</i> @
faculty/college	GEO
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Energy Science

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	1 / 10 / 2015 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	1 / 10 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	I think this has been the most complicated part of the entire process. For certain steps of the process it was quite unclear to me how to accomplish them. Due to a communicational issue I received a message from the international offices about the selection outcomes a few weeks too late. Furthermore, as a master student it was quite important that the courses I would take are accepted by the board of examiners. It was therefore a hard job finding out whether my candidate universities offer courses that could fit my curriculum.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	Sometimes it was really hard reaching the right people of the international office, but in general the support was good and the officers were friendly.
academic preparation	Before I left I filled out my learning agreement, but it was quite unclear whether these courses would be taught this year (At the end I did just one course that was included in my learning agreement). Therefore I could not really prepare my courses. Furthermore, all of the teachers did not ask for any preparation before the start of the course.
language preparation	



I had 3 years of German during my school period. I had to do a test in advanced and apparently I got the level B1. I think officially there are no requirements for exchange students about what level they should be before studying in German. The FU Berlin offered a 6 weeks German course for international students for €600. I heard good stories about this course so I decided to enroll for it.

finances

I received the Erasmus grant around November. In advance I requested a monthly loan from DUO (Dutch government).

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

There was not something like an energy science study programme in Berlin (However, since the FU is a big university with diverse faculties I had selected it as secondary option). I had to enroll to one of the Geo sciences departments. At the end I was officially studying meteorology in Berlin, but I have not taken any courses of this department. I decided to do energy and environment related courses at other faculties and also at the Technical University.

In general the hardest part was finding proper courses on the internet. The online overview of the FU (Vorlesungsverzeichnis FU Berlin) was quite proper but not always complete and up-to-date. This was way harder for the TU, where finding courses for myself was more or less a lot of searching in Google. At both universities, the first two weeks are officially "shopping weeks" in which you can try out different courses and when necessary switch to another course. I firstly mailed the teacher of the courses I wanted to do beforehand. However, it was always easy to participate. There were no enrollment requirements for the courses and the teachers always managed to let you participate (even after the two shopping weeks!).

Prepare, at both of the uni's receiving certificates still happens by collecting papers and stamps from the departments where you participated in courses. The FU has an online system, but nobody really uses it.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality was comparable to Utrecht. Regarding the organisation of the education, I would say, both the FU and the TU are more chaotic than the UU. However, there are some differences between the faculties, also regarding education activities. At certain faculties you are asked to participate really actively, but there were also courses of other faculties where you could basically do nothing and get a certificate even without appearing. In general I participated especially in lectures where every student has to give his or her presentation as well, but I also had some group project, an essay and some exams.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I got a contact person at the Geo faculty. She organized some information events and was supposed to help us with questions. She was willing to do that, but I had the feeling she was in a lot of situation equally unknown with the university's bureaucracy as the students.

In general I had the feeling that quite some things were chaotically organized, but that they are therefore also more flexible when you don't manage to get a deadline or when there are problems due to bureaucratic failures.

transfer of credits

Still in that process, so I do not really know the results yet. In Germany you get credits from 5 to 1, where a 4 is just enough to pass and a 1,3 or a 1,0 is excellent. Another thing is that they measure the number of credits in SWS, which is the hours of lectures every week. I think that 1 SWS is always 1,5 ECTS. Also in this they are sometimes flexible. Doing an extra effort could lead to more credits in some cases.



STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
<p>I actually experiences two welcomes. The first one was the first day of the language course (last week of august), when quite some Erasmus organizational things were explained. During the last week of the language course (first week of october) there is a general introduction day for all the international students. They will tell you everyting and show you the campus.</p> <p>And there were the information events of the GEO faculty.</p>
accommodation
<p>I did not subscribe for one of the exchange student dorms. I wanted to live more nearby interesting parts of Berlin and these dorms are all in the southwest, approximately one hour to most of the nice areas within the S-Bahn ring. It seemed that this was a good decision.</p> <p>One negative thing was that I moved a lot of times, because I got temporary rooms all the time (I would advice to be oppertunistic and not to tell directly that you are Erasmus student, during a interview for a room. Just say that you moved to Berlin for studying and that you don't know what your plans are ;).). At the other hand, it was a great opportunity to meet a lot of people, get to know a lot of areas and have a lot of experiences. After not too long my navigation trough the city was quite good and from all the placed I lived I traveled a lot by bike, because it was all quite central.</p> <p>During the 2nd semester I lived in Schöneberg, which is between the centre and the university. This was actually the perfect location when you both like studying and going to the city.</p>
leisure & culture
<p>Regarding leisure and culture, there are so many options in Berlin, that it will take you probably 10 years to discover half of it. During the summer, most of the young people go into parks and spend their free time there. There are tenfolds of really nice and creative electro clubs and hunderts of nice bars. Everywhere there are cheap restaurants with good food, probably from every country in the world, since there are so many different nationalities in the city. You can get to suffisticated theaters with great student discouts. The majority of the population is really involved in politics. There are demonstrations, workshops and other policial events every single day. There are a lot of nice lakes and forests in and around Berlin where you can hike and swim. There are two nice professional football clubs, an icehockey club, etc, etc....</p> <p>Just too much to mention, but it would be a pitty forgetting to discover these things.</p>
suggestions/tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not take one of the student dorms around the university, because you will not really experience Berlin. Check the U- and S-Bahn lines before you start searching for a place to live. You will get a free public transport ticket from the uni (zone ABC with bike!) - Use www.wg-gesucht.de for finding a room. - If you are not satisfied with the offered courses at the FU, have a look what the Technische Universität and the Humboldt Universität could offer you. There is a agreement between all the universities of Berlin and the country of Brandenburg. - Get used to biking in Berlin. You will discover much more things than when you only travel by public transport. - Step out of your comfort zone and try to discovery new things. The city offers so much. - Get in touch with Germans and try to speak German, also with other exchange students.. You will discover other things than when you only meet up with english speaking exchange students. You will have fun learning a



new language and feel way more comfortable in the city :).

- Travel out of the city once in a while. It will create some rest. You can search for nature or just do a nice trip to a nearby city in Germany, Poland or Czech.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would recommend the university. The quality of the education is quite good, there is flexibility regarding participating in courses and you can study at other universities in Berlin. I think the destination will be one of the best in the world. I had an unforgettable time in Berlin and beside studying, I learned a lot about the city, myself and the world. Thinking of going back after finishing my studies!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Just go for Berlin :), and just go for one year instead of one semester. Don't be afraid and go for new adventures!

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!