

Germany – Berlin - Humboldt Universität zu Berlin**2018-2019**

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faculty/college	Filosofie en Religiewetenschappen (and Gender Studies)
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Research Master Religious Studies

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
start date	15 / 10 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	15 / 02 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The application process was clear. The international office was very helpful in answering all my questions.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	I have had very clear and helpful contact with the International office. This made the application process quite easy, although it costs some time.
academic preparation	I wanted to study Gender Studies in Berlin but was not enrolled in the Gender Studies program in Utrecht. Therefore, I had to proof that I had enough knowledge in Gender Studies by emailing the contact person at the Humboldt. For some extra preparation, I took courses at the Gender Studies program in Utrecht.
language preparation	I started with improving my German language skills the semester before I went on exchange. The requirement was level C1. In the end I managed, but it took a lot of time and dedication. First, I did a lot of self study, after which I enrolled in a course at the Goethe Institut in Amsterdam. The month prior to my exchange semester, I took an intense language course of at the university
finances	It is much cheaper to live in Berlin than in Amsterdam or Utrecht, so I did not spend that much money.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	I studied at the Gender Studies department of the Humboldt University. It was difficult to find my way through the courses at the website. I still find the website very confusing, you just need a lot of time and patience to find all the courses. The credit system works quite differently from the system at UU. To receive around 30 credits you would need 5-6 courses. The courses are structured in modules. Each module is about 12 credits ECT, and consists of two courses and an "abschlussprüfung", usually a big term paper or an oral exam.
academic quality of education activities	The academic quality at the gender studies department is high and challenging. I found the academic environment very stimulating and inspiring. The students are motivated and independent. Unlike at UU, the

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<p>teachers treat the master students like adults, which means that it is completely your own responsibility to show up to classes and to do your work. I really liked this atmosphere, and most students worked hard from an intrinsic motivation and their own interests. Moreover, the class discussions were interesting and respectful and the department is generally very inclusive. All in all, I could say that I learned a lot during the semester and I felt very at home at the department.</p>
<p>counselling & support at receiving university abroad</p>
<p>Both before the semester started and after the semester ended, the gender studies erasmus students were invited for a meeting to discuss all practical issues. This was very helpful, since the credit point system and the bureaucracy at HU is incredibly confusing and old-fashioned. The coordinator was very helpful and patient, and she helped us with all our questions.</p>
<p>transfer of credits</p>
<p></p>

STUDENT LIFE	
<p>welcome & orientation programme</p>	<p>There was an organisational meeting for erasmus students at the gender studies department. This meeting was very helpful for practical information, but it also granted the opportunity to meet the other exchange student. This was very welcome, all of us stayed in contact during the semester and some of us became close friends.</p>
<p>accommodation</p>	<p>I was very lucky and found a beautiful room through friends. However, Berlin is quite difficult in terms of accommodation and housing is becoming more expensive and scarce. If you want to avoid the Erasmus bubble, I would definitely recommend to find housing on your own, and not settle for university accommodation. You can find flatshares through facebook or websites like wg-gesucht.de.</p>
<p>leisure & culture</p>	<p>Berlin is absolutely full of exciting things. There are so many nice bars, cheap food places, activities and parties. Especially in the summer, everybody is sitting outside on the streets, along the canal, or in one of the many beautiful parks. The winter months are a lot harder, when the days are short and grey and cold and people tend to stay inside much more. I tried to keep myself busy during these cold winter months by signing up for yoga lessons and dance sessions and I found a football team in my neighbourhood.</p>
<p>suggestions/tips</p>	<p>I think that everybody finds what they want to find in Berlin. For me, it was the perfect mix of night time strolls and flea markets and falafel. I can definitely recommend to leave the crowded city sometimes, and visit the surrounding lakes and the forest. These are only a short metro ride away!</p>

CONCLUSIONS	
<p>would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain</p>	<p>I would definitely recommend Berlin as an exchange destination, and the Humboldt University in particular. Berlin is a great city to explore for a couple of months, and the university offers structure, social contacts and an inspiring academic environment.</p>
<p>do you have any additional advice or comments?</p>	<p></p>

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e-mail address	<i>optional; only if you don't mind students preparing for study abroad contacting you directly</i> f.a.m.f.gomaa@students.uu.nl
faculty/college	Department of History
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	History

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Humboldt University
start date	01 / 04 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	31 / 07 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The application was rather easy. After being selected by Utrecht's International Office, I received an email when and where I could apply. This was just a matter of filling out a couple of forms and taking a simple language test. This language test was to indicate whether or not one needed an extra language course that takes place one month before the start of the semester. After filling out the forms, I received an email telling me I would get a confirmation of my application within a couple of weeks. I received the confirmation in January, after which I got an email with my 'matriculation date' and more forms to fill out. The matriculation is very important. This is when you officially register at the HU, but you will only do so once you arrive in Berlin, and they help you with the process. The matriculation itself is mainly just filling out forms and gathering the necessary paperwork.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	At Utrecht University I didn't have a lot of counseling and support, but I didn't ask for it either. I think, if I had needed it, I could have just dropped by the International Office and they would have helped me. I only went to the Exchange orientation event organised by the International Office.
academic preparation	I prepared for my exchange with some German language courses. I met the requirements (German at B2-level) but I still needed to adapt to the language a lot in the first few weeks. Because of course, in a language course you don't learn how to debate academically in German. So this required some getting used to in the first few weeks, but I learned a lot with just listening and participating in class, so everything worked out. I did not do any other academic preparation.
language preparation	See the question above.
finances	I got an Erasmus scholarship, and I also got a DIA-Stipendium. I can highly recommend both! The Erasmus scholarship was easy to apply for, since there is a lot of guidance from the UU. (But still, it's a lot of paperwork!) The DIA-Stipendium was also very easy. I just gathered all of the necessary paperwork, and filled the forms out

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online. Apart from the scholarships, I had saved money for my time in Berlin. If you don't have these luxuries, I think there are also possibilities to get a studentjob in Berlin, I however don't have any experience with this, so I cannot advise you on this matter.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

The organisational issues of the study programme were quite intense. It all started with the fact that it is not usual at the HU (or maybe in Berlin/Germany in general) to give the same courses each year. In preparation for my exchange, I had my whole timetable figured out. But eventually, none of these courses were taking place (because I had based my timetable on the previous semesters).

In January or so (for Winter Semester probably around July) the new Course Catalogue is published on AGNES. (This is kind of like OSIRIS at the UU). Here you can find all of your personal information, your grades, your courses et cetera.

In the Course Catalogue, you have a lot of different types of courses. You have Vorlesungen (these are just lectures), Übungen (Exercises, these are relatively simple seminars, where you discuss one topic with a lot of primary resources), Seminars (Pro and Bachelor: Bachelor being the most difficult) in the Seminars you usually discuss one era or one very specific topic. I took an Übung and three Seminars. If you want to know more about the exact differences between all of the courses, feel free to contact me or look it up in the Course Catalogue. If you have found which courses you want to take this Semester, you can apply for the courses during a given time (usually a couple of weeks before the Semester starts - note: you have to be matriculated before you can register for courses!) A lot of the time, you won't get into the courses, because there are more students who want to take the course than there are spots available. It's important to go to the first seminar, (even if you did not get in!) because usually there are possibilities to take the course anyway. For example, in my case, I initially didn't get in in three of the four courses that I wanted to take! But eventually I was able to take all of the courses I wanted.

Content wise, the study programme was quite diverse. The main topic (in my case) is of course German history, but they also have a lot about East-European and Russian History. If this is not your cup of tea, they also usually have a couple of courses on American History, the nineteenth century and Ancient Rome and Greece. But it should be noted that the focus is on modern German and East-European/Russian History.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality of all of the courses was pretty high. Similar to Utrecht's standards. It was especially difficult in the beginning, because I still had to adapt to the German language in class (I took all courses in German, since they only have a handful of courses in English, and all the spots are usually almost immediately filled). But the teachers really relate to the international students, so usually they go easy on you. But an active mindset and attitude is expected during class, the teachers expect you to participate in the discussion.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

There is not a lot of counseling. My official Erasmus-coordinator had a very busy schedule, and had no time whatsoever to assist students with their timetables. However, her assistant was very kind to help everyone who needed it. Other than that, you have the basic support services that are also available at the UU, for example the 'Studenten Service' and you could always contact the International Office in Berlin if you need help with anything.

transfer of credits

While I am writing this, I have not yet handed in my Berlin Transcript of Records to the UU, so I do not know how they will transfer my credits. However, I can say something about the manner in which I obtained my Transcript of Records. In Berlin, they work with 'Modulbogen'. This is a piece of paper which has the courses

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you took and the grades you got written on them. The teachers are supposed to sign this and give you a stamp at the end of the Semester. Once you have all of your modulbogen, you can go to your Erasmus-coordinator (in my case, her assistant) and they will create your Transcript of Records. As an international student, it's very important to get all of your grades back before the Vorlesungszeit (the period in which you actually have classes) ends! Most of the teachers go on holiday during the summer and you won't be able to reach them before the next semester starts! (Usually end of September/October) So make sure you have everything you need (grades/signatures/stamps/modulbogen) BEFORE you leave Berlin.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

There is an International Club called 'Orbis' at the Humboldt University in Berlin (similar to ESN in other cities). They had an extensive programme full of activities. They were especially active early in the Semester, so you could go to their events and meet new friends. They also organised drinks (borrels) at their local bar, which was also a nice and informal way to meet new people. Some of the activities they organised were: an Orientation Event (to welcome you to Berlin) and a Campus Tour (to get to know your way around the university), a University Library Tour (so you know where to get your literature and how to find sources), trips to museums, a trip to Dresden, a boattrip on the Spree river etc. So there are a lot of activities to choose from!

accommodation

For a lot of people, it's very hard to find accommodation in Berlin. The university has a few campuses (Adlershof, Allee der Kosmonauten, Sonnenallee) with studenthousing, but this is very limited. It is fairly cheap (I think around 300€ a month), but it is also VERY far away (ca. one hour with public transportation) from the city centre, where you will most likely have all of your classes (if you study History like me, or a different Humanities programme). I can recommend HousingAnywhere.com, this is where I found my room. It's a very easy way to find accommodation. You also have wg-gesucht.de (it's like the Dutch kamernet.nl) where you can also find a lot of rooms available! Thirdly, you have private renting options, like medici-living.de - I have no experience with them myself, but I have heard positive stories about them as well. But bear in mind that with private renting rooms you will have to pay a bit more money for a room than most students can afford. Overall, prices in Berlin are way higher than Utrecht. Don't expect to get a nice room in Prenzlauer Berg for €350,- ;) I think the average for a room in Berlin is around €450/500 a month.

leisure & culture

There is A LOT to do in Berlin in your leisure time! Apart from the activities from Orbis, you have several other clubs and organisations where you can participate, but you can also discover Berlin with some friends or on your own. There are countless museums, parks, bars, and a lot of other fun activities to do! Berlin has a rich culture, so you will never be bored!

suggestions/tips

I suggest to go to the first couple of Orbis activities, because it's a great way to meet friends! Some of their activities may sound a bit geeky (like an Ampelmann cup) but trust me, you will have a blast! I can also recommend to take trips outside of Berlin, for example a trip to the Ostsee, Potsdam or Leipzig!

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes! Berlin is a great city! It has such a relaxed vibe, everyone is very kind and easygoing. University wise, I would also recommend the HU. They have a very welcoming environment and the education is of very high quality. However, it is a university where you have to do a lot on your own. Nothing will happen automatically,

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you really have to do everything yourself if you want to get things done. So arrive with that mindset, otherwise you will be taken over by events.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you have to write papers in order for the UU to recognize your courses: start early! As soon as possible! I heard about this in May, so I did not have a lot of time. But I strongly suggest you start very early. Because if you take three or four Seminars, you have to write three or four papers. All of the German students write their papers during the Summer holiday, and hand it in before the new Semester starts, but this is not an option for Erasmus students (as far as I know). If you hand in the papers after the Vorlesungszeit (the duration of the semester, when you actually have classes, in my case at the end of July) you will not receive a grade until October! The teachers are not available during the Summer holidays, so make sure you hand in your papers at least a month before the semester ends, because the teachers need a lot of time to grade it (and you have to keep annoying them asking them for your grades, otherwise they will just forget to grade them.) When you get your grades back before the end of the Vorlesungszeit, you can contact the Erasmuscoordinator to get your Transcript of Records. You also should not expect a lot of counseling from your teachers concerning your paper. You should discuss your topic and ideas with them, but eventually you're on your own to write it. It's your responsibility to hand everything in on time.

Also: Don't forget to enjoy your time in Berlin! And if you have any questions: please contact me! I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Especially in the beginning, I did not understand anything about the education system, AGNES, Moodle, Matriculation, et cetera, so if you're a bit lost, don't worry, everything will become clear in the end! :-)

2016 – 2017**Report 1**

faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	RMA Musicology

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
start date	29 / 09 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	28 / 02 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION

exchange application process

My first preparations started with looking at which Universities abroad the UU had contacts with and then take a looking at which countries I wanted like to visit, which city and which university. I was looking for a receiving university that would offer me something that the UU did not, as this would make the exchange more usefull and legitimate. My choice fell on the Humboldt University in Berlin and I contacted a professor there with whom I wanted to study to introduce myself and ask whether it would be possible to come, what they had to offer and which things I should take into account. Fortunately I was very welcome and got a lot of advice regarding my stury programme there. After approval of my mentor I applied for the spot. During the preparation process it was very usefull for me to prepare a document where I could keep track of all requirements and deadlines.

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counselling & support at Utrecht University
All information and documents were very clearly provided by the UU. The preparation meeting was usefull, though mostly focussed on Bachelors going abroad for the first time. The International Office was very helpful and quick in answering questions and requests.
academic preparation
After my acceptance for the spot I started workin on a research proposal, as a large part of my stay in Berlin would lead up to writing my masters thesis upon coming back. I chose the courses that were offered so that they would fit my schedule, fill gaps in my education and be a usefull addition to my independent research.
language preparation
As I was raised billingual Dutch-German, I did not need much preparation for being able to speak German on an acceptable level.
finances
As I had to give up my job and was not longer entitled to 'studiefinanciering' when going abroad, it was very convenient to be able to apply for the Erasmus+ grant. Additionaly I applied for a scholarship from the Duitsland Instituut Amsterdam and I counted on using some of my savings to finance this semester in Berlin. The housing market is very difficult and expensice, but fortunately I found an affordable place to stay. The living costs in Berlin are comparable to the Netherlands, but there were quite some extra expenses connected to the move and finding my way in this new city.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
When arriving at the Humboldt University it became clear that I had to revise my study plan somewhat. The ECTS-system works different here and not all things were clearly defined before the semester started. But the Erasmus team was very helpful and I was able to do the largest part of what I had planned. The courses were very interesting and offered me a lot of new and interesting perspectives on music and musicology. I was counselled very well in my own research and got a lot of interest and advice from many staffmembers and fellow students, which was very helpful.
academic quality of education activities
The courses I took where quite challenging and did certainly live up to the level I was used to in Utrecht. The lecturers expect a lot of personal engagment and input from you - certainly in the seminars.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
Both the Erasmus team as all lecturers were very friendly and willing to help and advise.
transfer of credits
Not applicable yet.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme
There were some introduction meetings and activities in which more information about practical matters was provided and you could get to know the other Erasmus students. This was very usefull and well organised.
accommodation

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he housing market is very difficult and expensive, but fortunately I found an affordable place to stay. The living costs in Berlin are comparable to the Netherlands, but there were quite some extra expenses connected to the move and finding my way in this new city.

leisure & culture

Berlin is a city with endless possibilities - almost too much to comprehend. I had made a list of what things I wanted to do, see and experience, this helped to relieve the overwhelming pressure to want to do everything. I also joined the orchestra of the university which whom I gave concerts in Berlin and Prague, a very nice experience.

suggestions/tips

When living in Berlin it is very nice to have a bike. Though the distances can be long, it is a great way to explore and to get to know the city.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Absolutely. It is a great city and a very good university with lots of possibilities and very friendly and open people.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

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