

**2018-2019**

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

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

destination city & country	Birmingham, United Kingdom
name university abroad	University of Birmingham
start date	24 / 09 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	14 / 12 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	The application process was very good. I heard that I had a place at the university of my first choice very soon, so I had enough time to arrange everything with the receiving institution.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The staff of the International Office of the faculty of Humanities is very helpful, and so was the coordinator from my study programme, who had some very good ideas on the different universities I looked at. I would advise future exchange students to talk with as many people about your different options, so you will get a full image of each university, and not just what they put on their websites. But you should also always keep in mind that in the end, it has to be your choice, and no one can decide for you.
academic preparation	Not a lot of academic preparation was needed. The method of teaching in Birmingham is very similar to what is practiced at Utrecht. And since I did not know which modules I would be able to take until after I arrived at Birmingham, there was not a lot of preparation I could do for those, either.
language preparation	Since English is known by most Dutch people, this was neither a problem for me, nor should it be for any future exchange students. If necessary you can find help with academic writing in English both in Utrecht and in Birmingham.
finances	Finances were no problem for me, thanks to my parents' support and a summer job I had. The Erasmus+ grant, though it could never have covered for example the rent, could still cover the ticket to and from the UK and most of my groceries. You should also remember the OVvergoeding, which will definitely help when you want to go somewhere further than walking distance, for public transport is not free for students in the UK.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	

**United Kingdom – University of Birmingham**

The content of the modules I took was excellent. However, it is worth noting that the autumn semester in Birmingham is not made up of two blocks of ten weeks, with tests in the last week (or two weeks) and reflection week afterwards, but of eleven weeks full of teaching, with reading week in week 6, when you can catch up on your reading and writing papers. This system made that my brain, not used to this schedule, needed a break and was not functioning at its best at the end of term.

The next thing I want to point out, is that, no doubt due to the immense number of students that attend the University of Birmingham each year, I, and everyone I knew, had a lot of trouble registering to modules. I selected the University of Birmingham based mainly on the subjects listed on the website of their History of Art BA. Though I only had to follow three modules, I made sure there were six I liked, just to be on the safe side. After I was accepted and got the email that asked me to register for my preferred modules, I found out that exchange students are not allowed to follow all of the modules given by the College of Arts and Law (their version of Humanities). Only one of the six modules I had found interesting was on the list of modules I was allowed to enter. On top of that, they urged me to register for nine different modules, because the College of Arts and Law is a very popular faculty. So I broadened my horizon, picked some History and History of Art modules and hoped to be selected for the ones I had as my first choice. Unfortunately, during the summer holidays I got an email with a link to a Google form(!) asking me which modules I wanted to follow. The list was shortened yet again, and I had to register three modules for first choice, three for second and three for third. Only after I arrived I found out that I was registered for one of my second choice and two of my third choice modules, none of which were part of the reason why I had chosen Birmingham in the first place. Therefore I want to warn future exchange students not to set too much store by the modules they want to take. I did and I got thoroughly disappointed. Just do something crazy, why not.

**academic quality of education activities**

The academic quality of the modules I took was excellent. All teaching staff was knowledgeable about the subject they taught. Discussion with teachers is encouraged, as is teamwork with other students. Students have to present their own ideas about the material discussed, both in writing and through giving presentations. And teachers all have standard walk-in sessions when papers and essays can be discussed, which is very helpful.

**counselling & support at receiving university abroad**

The international office at the University of Birmingham went through some changes in staff while I went through the application process. This made that it was not always clear who I needed to email for what and that emails took some time to be answered. This has improved since, and the emails I have sent since I have been back, were answered within a reasonable time.

I personally did not need counselling or support while I was in Birmingham, but as I mentioned before there is help for international students who would like to improve their academic writing skills in English. These sessions are held frequently and are free to attend. A friend of mine did need counselling and personal support, and found that the wellbeing of students is well looked after by specialised staff.

**transfer of credits**

I have received my credits after the semester was officially closed, though this was well after I returned home. They have yet to be translated into the Dutch system, for the English system is very different, and not immediately understandable to someone who is not used to look at percentages, where 40% is a pass and no one ever gets higher than 85%.

**STUDENT LIFE****welcome & orientation programme**

The welcome and orientation programme was excellent and there was ample opportunity to meet students both from your own country, from other countries and, of course, from Birmingham. Welcome week, the week

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before term starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, is compulsory, but you would not want to miss it anyway. This is the time when you can enroll in societies and sportclubs, which you can meet on the many markets that are held throughout the week. I strongly advise you to join at least one of these clubs, because it will enable you to meet many interesting people.

NB: Be aware of freshers flu. In the first few weeks everyone will get it in some way, shape or form, and the first classes can be disrupted by teachers who have fallen ill.

**accommodation**

I stayed in an Airbnb, which was expensive, but very convenient, since I did not have to clean the place myself and had access to a very large kitchen and comfortable bathroom. It was at walking distance from the university campus and stood in a nice wooded area, surrounded by sportfields. Friends of mine did stay on campus, where I visited their flats. A flat (one corridor in the building) would usually have around 18 rooms that share a kitchen and several bathrooms and toilets. They are like little communities in and of themselves, where students will organise pub quizzes, movie nights and other nice events. I believe it will stand or fall with the housemates you have, which can be quite an international bunch of different personalities.

**leisure & culture**

The city of Birmingham is a combination of old industrial buildings and modern businesses. Though I did not spend a lot of time exploring the city (most of uni life takes place on campus) there are a few museums that are worth a visit, and if you are in Birmingham around Christmas, the Christmas market is nice to see. Birmingham is also very well connected with the rest of the United Kingdom thanks to its large train station. This way you can easily make day and weekend trips to for example Oxford, London and, as some of my friends did, Stonehenge.

**suggestions/tips**

I would suggest finding yourself a group of friends with whom you can go on trips around the country. This can be flatmates, a society, a group of other international (exchange) students you met during Welcome Week, or people you just met and became friends with. Keep in mind that everyone is looking to make new friends, and even if you make a bad first impression, or find out you don't like this person very much, there is no harm done, since the university of Birmingham is so large, and you could very well never see them again.

**CONCLUSIONS**

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

I would recommend going to Birmingham as an exchange destination, because it is great to experience the full campus life, and the teaching staff is very experienced and helpful. However, you have to keep in mind that you should not base your choice on modules as they are listed on the website. If you have any questions about the study programme, you can email the head of department, or the coordinator of the study programme, though they will not always be up to date with the arrangements made between international offices.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

My advice is to appreciate your exchange as a chance to stand on your own two feet. From the moment you decide you want to go on exchange, you have to arrange everything yourself, keep up with deadlines of application, arrange accommodation, etc.

**2017-2018**

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

destination city & country	Birmingham, United Kingdom
name university abroad	University of Birmingham
start date	18 / 09 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	23 / 03 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	After I applied for an exchange at The University of Birmingham (UoB), the International Office (UU) indicated they were not sure if the Humanities agreement would cover an exchange at the Music Department. I had to send several emails to the Music Department and the International Office at UoB to get their confirmation, but once I had this, the IO at UU were happy to support my exchange.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The staff at the International Office and Erasmus QDesk were very supportive and responded quickly to any inquiries, both prior to my exchange — when it was not certain if I could go to Birmingham — and when I was in Birmingham and requested an extension.
academic preparation	I did not need to complete any specific courses in preparation for my studies at the University of Birmingham.
language preparation	As my master's at UU is taught in English, no additional language preparation was needed. Yet, as part of the Erasmus exchange I had to complete two language assignments: one at the start of my exchange period and one at the end.
finances	I applied for an Erasmus grant, received an 'OV vergoeding', and worked fulltime over the summer holidays to cover the costs of my exchange in Birmingham.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	Erasmus students can choose from a large number of modules offered by their College. Exchange students usually receive a link through which they can register for modules before they arrive in Birmingham. However, something went wrong with my application (I received an unconditional offer letter, accepted this offer and received a confirmation of this, but apparently this was not processed in the system), so I did not receive such link to complete online registering, and had to sort out and register for modules upon arrival. The information in the online Modules & Programmes Handbook is not always up to date, so I had to contact the module

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<p>convenors of each module I was interested in to get more information about the module and to found out about the timetable (the timetables are not published online so contacting the School or the module convenor is the only way to find out about timetabling). The instructors provided the contact details of the administrators I had to send an email to have myself registered on modules. I took one module at the Music department, two interdisciplinary modules at the School of Modern Languages, Art History and Music, and two modules offered by other schools within the College of Arts and Law. (This meant that I had to liaise with many people, but it was worth it.) All modules were assessed with an essay (100%) — but this is different for BA modules, which usually involve exams.</p>
<p>academic quality of education activities</p>
<p>There were major differences between the academic quality of the modules. Some modules finish after one term, but some run the whole year. The latter is the case for most (if not all) modules offered by the Music Department. The classes of these modules are every fortnight instead of every week. In general, the workload is lower than at UU (less reading), and the organisation of the classes is different. At UU my seminars usually involved a presentation about the reading by two students, followed by a discussion chaired by the presenters. At UoB, my seminars often turned into (semi-)lectures, which suited some topics very well. Although students are encouraged to contribute to discussions and ask questions, teachers are generally less occupied with making sure that everyone speaks up.</p>
<p>counselling &amp; support at receiving university abroad</p>
<p>When I first arrived at the University of Birmingham and wanted to collect my student ID at the allocated welcome marquee, I found out that my registration was not processed properly — something I did not know earlier because I had completed all forms I had to complete, accepted the study offer, and received information about the welcome activities. Although everyone I spoke with was very kind, many people and service desks I was advised to contact could not help me. In the end, it took more than a week before I received my log in details, email address, student ID card, and I could register for modules. Even though this was quite stressful, it should not deter anyone from applying for studies at UoB because it was probably just bad luck. Moreover, my request to extend my exchange was processed quickly and smoothly (I stayed two terms: Autumn and Spring).</p>
<p>transfer of credits</p>
<p>I do not know my final marks yet (all MA essays are marked by two internal markers and one extern marker from another UK university), but I expect my Transcript of Records to arrive end of June.</p>

**STUDENT LIFE**

<p>welcome &amp; orientation programme</p>
<p>The Study Abroad Team organised a welcome meeting where they provided information about study, life, and leisure at the University of Birmingham. As my exchange started in September, the beginning of a new academic year, there were several 'markets' where the many societies at UoB presented themselves. Many sports societies also offered taster sessions. During the first weeks there was also ample opportunity to meet other internationals: the Study Abroad Team organised a welcoming party with food and games, Global Buddies a British tea party, and UOBEX (University of Birmingham Exchange Society) a pub crawl in the student neighbourhood next to campus, Selly Oak.</p>
<p>accommodation</p>
<p>As an exchange student from Europe, I was not eligible for university accommodation. The students housing system is different from Utrecht: houses are rented out to groups of students for 12 months rather than to individual students for an undetermined period. Students usually search for a house and sign tenancy agreements in the Autumn term (November/December) of the previous year. This means that it is quite difficult to find accommodation as an individual, especially for one term (and especially if this is the Autumn term). I</p>

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spent a lot of time searching for a room, and planned two viewings on the day I arrived in Birmingham (one of which I found via a facebook group, and one via the student message board at studentpad.co.uk). I spent one week in a hostel before I could move in one of these houses. Finding a room for the Spring term was easier because I was already in Birmingham and there were more rooms available. I ended up in BISH Wesley International House. It is a bit expensive and their website looks somewhat outdated but it is a really nice and quiet place to live, close to campus and with very friendly staff and residents (mainly MA and PhD students, and visiting researchers). Another advantage of this house is that you do not have to pay full months (e.g. if you leave on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, you only pay until the 6<sup>th</sup>, not until the 30<sup>th</sup>).

## leisure &amp; culture

There are many sports, theatre and other societies you could get involved in (have a look at the website of the Guild of Students!). And if you play an instrument, bring it along: there are many auditioned and unauditioned orchestras and ensembles to join, both via the Music Society and the Guild of Students. I played/sang in several ensembles and choirs of the Music Society (£15 for the whole year), and joined some day trips organised by Global Buddies. UOBEX, the exchange society, also regularly plans activities and nights out. During term time there are free lunch concerts at the Barber Institute on campus.

## suggestions/tips

Have a look at the website of the Guild of Students to get an idea of the societies they offer before you arrive in Birmingham. There are so many sports and other societies that it might be hard to decide on the spot and find out about taster sessions in time.

**CONCLUSIONS**

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

Yes, I definitely recommend the University of Birmingham as an exchange destination. As exchange student there is a wealth of modules at many different departments to choose from (all module convenors of non-music modules I was interested in allowed me to get registered on their modules). The university offers many extracurricular activities, and Birmingham is a nice city with good connections to other (prettier) cities in the UK (by train and by coach).

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I would recommend (postgraduate) students in musicology who consider the University of Birmingham as their exchange destination to apply for a full year rather than one term. All postgraduate modules offered by the Music department run the whole year (that is, Autumn and Spring terms) and although most instructors would be happy to create smaller one-term-only modules to facilitate your exchange, this is not possible for all modules, and the School and the College have to give consent and create special codes for these smaller modules, too, which takes a very long time. In my case, this process was completed only three weeks before the end of the Autumn Term, which made me decide to take some non-music modules just to be sure that I would have enough credits. However, if you stay both Autumn and Spring terms (and apply for this from the start), it is much easier and more convenient to take modules in musicology and to find accommodation. NB: if you have exams (BA students), you have to stay for the Summer term too!

**2016-2017**

**Report 1**

faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Communicatie- en Informatiewetenschappen

destination city & country	Birmingham, United Kingdom
name university abroad	University of Birmingham
start date	06 / 01 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	16 / 06 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	It takes time. A lot of time. I started early with looking at different universities, trying to narrow down in what country I would want to study. But even that ended up in deciding last minute because there is just so much. So many universities, so much information about each of them. There are a lot of factors that can play a role in your decision making. Costs, weather, modules, Erasmus grant, language, housing, etc. Then you also need to consider the popular locations, trying to keep in mind that those will be difficult to get.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The university starts mentioning the exchange programme early on. As I'm focussing on intercultural communication, my lecturers were even more enthusiastic about studying abroad. Besides this, there are multiple gatherings long before the deadline where the International Office will explain everything to you, sending the PowerPoint presentations after so you can have a look at it again. International Office has hours that you can walk in or make appointments and respond to emails quickly.
academic preparation	It took a long time for me to realise what I would be able to study as I found the exchange Universities difficult to reach. Often there would not be a lot of information available on the modules, making it hard for me to get a clear picture of what I was getting myself into. Emailing the universities doesn't always result in answers either. But I was given time once I arrived to sort everything out, so that was good.
language preparation	Since I was brought up bilingual with English as my second language, I will skip this one.
finances	Making a financial plan was a very good idea. It gives you an idea of the expenses you're going to make and give you confidence that you will be fine. It can also help you push a little further to gather all the money or it can prove to, for example your parents, that it will be more expensive than they might think. My main unexpected struggle was the amount of money I thought I would spend. In England, transportation works very differently. I spent a lot more money on ubers for example. Money I wouldn't have to spend in The Netherlands. These little things added up and my expenses turned out to be a lot higher than I initially expected.

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<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	As a Communication student, I took some philosophy modules. I was told by the philosophy department in Birmingham which ones I would be able to do, considering my background with philosophy, so that was very helpful. I was able to take different modules with very varied topics, making it even more interesting.
academic quality of education activities	The education activities were simply the lectures and seminars. The lectures were always very good, meaning the lecturer was good, often enthusiastic. The information they would give was helpful and a lot. Most of the times, lectures would be recorded so I could listen to it again after. The seminars were often a little simpler. Three out of four modules had fortnightly seminars and all of them were only an hour long. In most cases we would simply repeat what had already been said in the lectures, instead of debating it and taking the information to a deeper level.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	Before arriving I had already been invited to an Ice Breaker event. This was nice, but took place three or four weeks after arriving, making it a bit pointless. I also received emails before arriving about a buddy system, in which I would fill out a form about my preferences and was assigned a global buddy. This was a student at the University of Birmingham with whom I could meet up or send emails with possible questions. This was a great initiative. At the end there was a send-off celebration organised by the university, but this was two months before most students finished their exams, so it felt a little premature. Besides this, if I had questions, I was always welcome to see my department or contact the exchange people.
transfer of credits	This has not yet taken place in my case, so this is difficult for me to answer.

<b>STUDENT LIFE</b>	
welcome & orientation programme	The day after I arrived and the weekend before university started, there was an orientation day. On this day, the important people introduced themselves and gave us an idea of what the next six months would look like. After that we went to the pub and this is where I met my first friends, so that was great. They told us during the orientation that it was very normal to miss the first week due to modules being switched around and that teachers would consider that. I was glad however that I was able to join my modules sooner, as the lectures did start already and it was difficult to keep up otherwise.
accommodation	I ended up living in a student house off campus, as another Utrecht University student told me about this house where he had lived and he offered me the room once he left. Therefore I never lived on campus or had much to do with the accommodation situation. What I can say about living off campus is that a lot of landlords do not like half year contracts, only one-year contracts or longer. This means it can be difficult for exchange students to find accommodation.
leisure & culture	Culture is a difficult one for me as I am actually half English, so adjusting wasn't that hard. I did however notice more differences than I had expected. The people, the food, the club scene, the pub scene, everything is a little different to what I am used to in The Netherlands, but I enjoyed every bit of it.
suggestions/tips	

**United Kingdom – University of Birmingham**

Mainly for the modules I took, to put more effort into the seminars. These were often poor, I would have loved to have more of them and discussed the topic on a deeper level.

**CONCLUSIONS**

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

I would definitely recommend this university and destination. The university is beautiful, the people are helpful. They have a wide range of modules to take for exchange students, to there's something for everyone. The city itself is lovely with an interesting history. There's always something to do and being the second biggest city in the UK, it has everything. Beautiful nature, nice buildings and architecture, all the shops you can think of and a great club scene.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I loved the fact that I went in the second semester. I feel like I had a longer time to spend abroad and when I got back, I realised I had two full months to adjust back to normal life in The Netherlands.

**Report 2**

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

destination city & country	Birmingham, United Kingdom
name university abroad	University of Birmingham
start date	16 / 09 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	06 / 12 / 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 did not select Birmingham in my initial top three choices. I was selected for my third choice, Gent, but I really wanted to go to an English speaking country. Luckily, there was a list of left over spots. Of these, I chose Birmingham. After this I entered the application process. I took quite long and I also needed a recommendation letter in order to be selected for the University of Birmingham, but in the end I was able to finish everything beforehand except the Learning Agreement that had to be signed in person at the receiving institution.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Utrecht University had to agree on my chosen courses and modules, so I had some contact with the necessary persons. They also gave me some tips when I had a hard time finding accommodation.

academic preparation

I did my Erasmus exchange in my fourth year, as I needed 15 ECTS to finish my 3-year bachelor. I already wrote my thesis and had three years of academic experience, so I did not do any further academic preparation

language preparation

**United Kingdom – University of Birmingham**

My grade from secondary school in English was high enough, so I did not have to do any additional tests or preparation.

finances

I submitted for the Erasmus grant, and together with a student loan from the Netherlands and saved money I was able to finance my stay abroad

**STUDY ABROAD PERIOD**

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I chose to do my modules in the school of Political Science and International Studies, despite my background in History. This was not a problem and I was able to adapt quite good due to some internationally themed education I got during my History BA.

academic quality of education activities

I think the University of Birmingham is of comparable quality with Utrecht University. The amount of mandatory hours are the same, only the amount of work is divided differently. I had to hand in 6 essays in one week, where in Utrecht I only had two or three deadlines at the same time. The content and difficulty of the education is on par I think.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The receiving institution had a very organised counselling and support system, and I was helped properly when needed.

transfer of credits

Still in progress

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

There was a welcome week, including an icebreaker event, to get to know the university, staff, exchange students, societies and handle all administration that needed to be handled. It was a good way to get accustomed!

accommodation

I had difficulty finding accommodation, as I thought I could not stay in one of the university campus accommodations. The website said these were only for year contracts, and I needed a three to four month contract. Even when started searching for a private accommodation somewhere during August, it was quite hard to find something. Eventually I ended up in quite a nice house with English housemates and I was content, but I would have liked some more tips or guidance for 1 semester exchange students on this aspect.

leisure & culture

I participated in one of the many sports societies, namely the kickboxing society. There is a lot of choice in terms of sports and other societies. Other activities and nights out were regularly planned by the exchange committee, and it was easy to go out and do stuff on your own with your new friends too.

suggestions/tips

As said, more guidance and tips in terms of accommodation, a lot of 1 semester exchange students struggled finding something.

**United Kingdom – University of Birmingham**

<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Most definitely! Birmingham is a great student city and the university is very well organised. I had a great time here, met awesome people (both internationals and home students), and did a lot of cool trips into the country!
do you have any additional advice or comments?
Do as much with your new friends as you can, time flies!