

2017-2018

Report 1

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

destination city & country	Ghent, Belgium
name university abroad	Ghent University
start date	08 / 02 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	06 / 07 / 1995 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The exchange application process went smooth. The Humanities International Office provided the necessary information to fulfil my application. It was clear which documents I had to deliver and how to do this. When I got accepted as an exchange student in Ghent, they communicated clearly how I was supposed to proceed to complete my application.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The information evening they organised was very helpful in preparation for the exchange. After this evening they communicated which documents were expected. The International Office helped me out whenever there was a problem. For example, when my deadline was running close, they were able to help me out to sign the necessary documents. They always responded quickly, also during my time abroad.
academic preparation	Even though I enrolled in courses from different faculties than my own, I did not have any academic preparation. Most of my courses were introductory courses, so this was not really necessary. In my experience, it is quite easy to enroll in any course you want.
language preparation	Since Dutch is my mother tongue, I did not need any language preparation.
finances	My expenses were a bit higher in Ghent than in Utrecht, mostly because of my higher rent. To cover my expenses I worked in Ghent's University restaurants, which are always looking for job students. These jobs are very flexible and can be combined perfectly with a study programme.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	

Matters were a little bit less organised in Ghent compared to Utrecht. For example, there were generally no syllabi with the content of the courses. Also the structure of the courses was sometimes a bit chaotic, the quality of the content was great.
academic quality of education activities
The education system is different than in Utrecht. During a semester students follow education during the first 12-14 weeks. followed by a month in which all the exams are to be taken. Because students follow many courses at the same time, it is difficult to keep track of them all. Another big difference with Utrecht University, is the intensity of the education. If you are used to being asked to actively participate during seminars, Ghent is completely different. Most of the courses only have lectures, in which students can just sit back and pay attention instead of participate in discussion.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
After acceptance, the contact person of Ghent University emailed further instructions in a timely manner. It was clear what was asked of me. Whenever I needed documents to be signed or any other help, I could always count on a quick response.
transfer of credits
The grading system is different in Belgium, they grade on a scale from 1-20, in which a 10 equals a Dutch 6. The credits are easily transferred.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
The orientation programme in Ghent consisted of a two days and included a welcoming evening from the university, where we got food and drinks and met with fellow exchange students. The second day students could choose an activity to participate in, such as climbing a tower, or a walking tour guided by ESN. These were great ways to get to know the city and other students.
accommodation
Ghent University offers accommodation for their exchange students. Here, I lived with 30 other students from all over the world. For 420 euro's you have your own room and bathroom, and a shared kitchen. Although the price is a bit high, it is an easy way to get a room and a perfect way to make friends and meet other people. We often organised activities with our flat.
leisure & culture
The majority of the population in Ghent is student, therefore the city has a lot to offer. Not only good bars and clubs, but also lots of great cultural events and performances in different theaters and places. The Vooruit is such a place. People meet here to eat and to see theater acts. There are also great museums, such as the Museum voor Schone Kunsten. And do not forget to drink one of the thousands craft beers Belgium has to offer.
suggestions/tips
-During summer one of the largest festivals of Europe takes place in Ghent: de Gentse Feesten. During these two weeks, the city transforms into a stage full of music and cultural activities. It is definitely worth it to take a look. -Go for a stroll in the city center and climb the Bell Tower. Also blend in with the locals by sitting at the canal on the Korenlei.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Although Ghent is close to the Netherlands, I would definitely recommend going here on exchange. The city has an amazingly vivid atmosphere and the educational qualities are great. People are friendly, and there is an active Erasmus community in which it is easy to blend in.
do you have any additional advice or comments?

Report 2

e-mail address	iris_weda@hotmail.com
faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Taal- en Cultuurstudies

destination city & country	Ghent, Belgium
name university abroad	University of Ghent
start date	12 / 02 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	7 / 7 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	Applied for Ghent University approximately one year before leaving
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The international office at UU was very helpful. Sometimes I had a hard time figuring out what documents to hand in where, when and to whom; when I emailed with a question i usually got a response within a day. Don't hesitate to email them when you have questions, sometimes the application can be quite complicated!
academic preparation	None
language preparation	There was no need for any language preparation, considering most of my classes were given in Dutch.
finances	I did not save extra money before leaving to Ghent

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)

My study program at Utrecht is quite broad, so was my program in Ghent. I took history, art history, ethics and English communication courses.
academic quality of education activities
I thought the quality of most of the courses was good, similar to Utrecht. However, the way of teaching is very different. I took 4 bachelor and 2 master courses, and the bachelor courses basically existed out of lectures and no seminars. The master courses had more interaction and were similar to the 'werkgroepen' I used to have in Utrecht. I felt like I had to do much more studying here than in Utrecht. A semester is from February until July, 30 credits are about 6 or 7 courses and all the exams and deadlines are in June (in my case). I was really not used to this way of studying, they literally save all the work for the end. I did not really like this method, because the whole month June is taken over by studying. Everyone is in the same boat though, so you can share your suffering with your friends :)
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
My contact person was Carine Focquart. She was really helpful, always replies to emails very quick!
transfer of credits
While writing this report I have not yet received my grades, I assume transfer of credits will be no problem.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
Unfortunately I was sick during the orientation programme so I could not attend. I heard from my friends it was okay, not very special but worth to attend if you would be already in Ghent anyway.
accommodation
I lived in one of the homes provided by the University. I am really happy I made this choice because I think about 80% of the erasmus students lived there, so it is really easy and fun to meet everyone and to hang out. It is not far from the center, 15 minutes walking, but actually while walking there you are already walking in the center so it's a nice walk. However, I did think the rent was really expensive in comparison to what you get (424 per month). The room is not very big, with minimal furniture but you do have your own bathroom. I think it is possible to get a nicer room for less on the private market, BUT personally I think it's worth paying a bit more for a boring room when this means being close to all the erasmus students. Also, coming from the Netherlands you can probably come with a car and bring lots of stuff to dress up your room a little. It may be expensive, but it's only for 5 months:)
leisure & culture
Ghent really is such a beautiful city. Coming from Utrecht I thought I wouldn't be impressed that much but I really was. The center is so cute but quite large and there is a lot to do. I recommend going to the jazzclubs like Hot Club and MissySippy. Also going out at Charlatan and Sioux is very nice. The housing of the University is located next to a street with clubs for students called 'Overpoort'. I didn't like it that much but if you like a LOT of beer and drunk students it would be your place to be.
suggestions/tips
I would suggest living at the University housing when you want to make friends easily and be in contact with other erasmus students. Also it is very easy to travel around Belgium, and the rest of Europe, quite cheap. At the trainstation you can buy a go pass 10, which means you have 10 travels for 5 euros each, doesn't matter if you travel through whole Belgium. Also with flibus it is easy to travel through Europe and it is not hard to find discounts:)

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I would definitely recommend studying at University of Ghent. At first I was afraid I wouldn't have the 'full erasmus experience', considering its only 2.5 hours away from Utrecht and with people speaking Dutch and everything. I really felt like I was in a totally different place though, just because you are surrounded with so many new friends and you are living a completely different life. I ended up not speaking Dutch that much after all, because obviously no erasmus student speaks Dutch.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
I think I've said everything :)

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	History

destination city & country	Ghent, Belgium
name university abroad	UGent
start date	15 / 02 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	15 / 07 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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

PREPARATION
exchange application process
There are a lot of papers you need to fill in but I never had problems with it. Although I would recommend to start really on time because you need a lot of signatures.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
Very good. They were always helpful and I always got a response in 1/2 days.
academic preparation
I didn't had to prepare anything. Im already in my third year of my bachelor and I took this courses to replace my minor.
language preparation
Nothing. Since most of my courses were in dutch or English I didn't had to prepare anything for my language.
finances
I didn't knew beforehand it would cost me that much money but it does takes a lot of money. My rent here in Belgium is higher than it was in Utrecht because I'm renting a studio here. Also the supermarket is more expensive in Belgium than in Holland. Albert Heyn is the cheapest supermarket here. Also you want to do fun

stuff with other Erasmus people so that also takes a lot of money. I made some trips in Europe and from Brussel you can fly really cheap.

I'm happy I saved some money and also got some tax refund back otherwise I could not have had such an amazing time as I had now. You need to have saving money.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I took 6 different courses in Ghent. All of them were of a different content. I took some first year courses and some second of third year courses. I followed some course about Chinese History which was really nice because Utrecht is not offering Chinese history. I also took a course about African History because Ghent has an African Studies department. Ghent university has a lot to offer if you want to expand your horizon.

academic quality of education activities

I really had to get used to the way of teaching in Ghent. Im used to small classes with a lot of interaction between the teachers and the students. This was also my biggest disappointment here. You are just listening to the teacher and writing for 3 hours. You only get 1 break of 10 minutes if you're lucky. In the beginning I was really struggling with staying focused because listening for 3 hours is impossible in my opinion. Also the students are really passive. I'm not used to that kind of attitude in Utrecht. In my opinion Belgian students are very shy. Nobody is ever raising their hand. Most of the times I was the only one in class that was asking questions. They are really not used to an active way of teaching in Ghent. It's really oldfashioned in my opinion. You are just writing and listening. That's all. Also the distance between teacher and student is big here in my opinion.

The teachers here in Ghent expect you call them by their title, so Professor.... I'm totally not used to it. In Utrecht I'm always calling teachers by their name and not by their full title. They also don't like it when you're giving them feedback. I had to take an oral exam for one of my courses and I had no experience with it whatsoever. Only one time in Utrecht I had an oral exam but that's it and it was more a dialogue between me and the teacher. The teacher told us during the lecture (with 100 people and no interaction) that you would get 30 mins preperation time and after it you had 30 mins to talk about your answers. I expected that during the preperation time I could use my notes to think about possible answers since the stuff we had to read for this course was just too much in my opinion. Important note: In Belgium they really expect from you that you can remember dates, names etcetera like in primary school. Anyway: that wasn't the case. I was not allowed to use my notes to think about possible answers for my 3 questions and I had no idea what to answer because I just couldn't remember all of the names and dates and periodes even though I studied for a week. Then I had to bring my notes to the professor and the professor asked me what the answers were to the questions without asking me anything. He was just sitting behind his desk and writing on his computer what I was saying. This was really weird in my opinion and stressful. After the exam I send the professor an e-mail about my experience with the test and I gave him the advice to explain the content of the exam to next year students better, especially for the Erasmus students who are not familiar with these kind of exams. He didn't't like it that I send him some feedback and told me basically it was my own fault. In my opinion it's really strange you give a teacher some feedback and he gives you an arrogant answer back. Teachers in Utrecht are way more open and they always want feedback I think. The distance between students and teachers are overall bigger than in Utrecht although I also met nice teachers here who were not like this.

It's also really strange in my opinion that you almost have no assignments and you're doing basically nothing for 3/4 months and the last month you're really stressed. The exams took 1 month. I just finished them and I almost had a mental breakdown or something. Its really bad they don't have midterms like in Utrecht. I couldn't live for one month.

It was good for a 5 month experience but I could not study here a full year. It's really like you're studying in the

sixties again. Also I had to take 6 courses at the same time otherwise I would not have 30 ECTS. It was a lot to take and I had 6 exams spread over 1 month. In Utrecht I'm used to have only 2 courses at the same time so this was really different for me. You're also more in class here than in Utrecht. My classes were spread over 3 days but I think it's better if it's spread over 4 days because I had 6 hours of class every day and it's very exhausting to listen for 6 hours in a day.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
Very good. Carine was very helpful and she responded me always in 1/2 days.
transfer of credits
They work with ECTS like in Utrecht. All of my courses were 5 ECTS. The only difference here is that they work with a system from 1 to 20 and 10 is a 5,5 if you compare it to the dutch system.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
In the beginning of the semester there was an welcome and orientation programme. Here they gave you information about your accomodation and the university etcerea. Also there was an information day of the faculty but it was a bit useless in my opinion. They showed you the library but I could have figured that out by myself too I think.
accommodation
I stayed in a students plus room of the UGent. It's really nice. You have your own bathroom and you're sharing the kitchen with other flatmates. Everyday (except during the weekends) some cleaner is cleaning the kitchen so it's never dirty. All of your flatmates are Erasmus students which is really nice because you're meeting a lot of people from different nationalities. I would recommend to stay here. I also have a dutch friend I met here and she's staying in a dorm with Belgian students. She also likes it but Belgian students are more distanced and in their room than in Holland. Belgian students are not choosing who's coming to live in their house like in Holland so they don't know each other. Some people she never met in her house she told me. The only negative thing about the Ugent dorm is that there is no Wifi connection in my room. I really wished I knew this before because I payed a lot of money to my provider because of this. Maybe next year there is but I don't know. I can only use an internet cable in my room and it's not very fast and there is also a download limit on it. When I need Wifi to talk with my friends/family, I'm going to the common room. The Wifi was really a big issue for me because I'm so used to it.
leisure & culture
Ghent has a lot to offer. It's an amazing city with lots of beautiful canals and churches. The shops are amazing too and there is always something to do here. Ghent has great bars and a great nightlife. It's really a nice students city. You can also make really easily trips from Ghent to other places. I went to Paris for example and it's just 3 hours with bus. You can also fly very cheap from Brussel airport. If you're lucky you can find 2 ways ticket for 30 euro's. I also went to Madrid from Brussel for 100 euro's. The only thing about Ghent is that it's very quiet in the weekends because all of the Belgian students are going back to their parents (really all of them!). That's why during the week I stayed in Ghent and during the weekends I made trips to other cities/places.
suggestions/tips
You can rent a bicycle her for just 30 euro's for a semester (with 60 euro deposit). Also you can eat in the students restaurant for just 3/4 euro for a meal and the meals are good and healthy so if you're not a great cooker like me, it's really a good alternative. The services for students are really good here in Ghent, better than

in Utrecht in my opinion. If you want to make trips to other places or if you want to go back to Holland to visit your parents, you should use blabla car. It's very easy and cheap.
 Also you should have cash money with you all the time in Ghent. In a lot of places you can still not pay with your debit card. Also if you want to rent the bicycle, you need to pay it in cash.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes. Ghent is an amazing city and the services for students are really good here. However: keep in mind that the education system oldfashioned in my opinion but if you don't mind that it's oke. But except the education system, I had an amazing time here! I would recommend it to everybody.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

No. Enjoy your time here because before you know it, it's over. It may sound like a cliché but it really is.

2015-2016

Report 1

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

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process takes quite some time. After choosing Ghent as my favourite destination, I had to fill in all the paperwork and write a motivation letter. I recommend to start this process early, because there are also some signatures from the International Office needed. Although there are a lot of papers to get together, I thought it was really clear what I needed to do before the deadline.

After I got the news that I was accepted, I also needed to fill in some forms for the University of Ghent. So this took some time as well and some forms were quite similar to the ones from UU.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The International Office was really supportive and responded quickly to all questions or requests. I did not have any trouble with this.

academic preparation

The courses I had already taken at UU were enough to be able to take all the courses I wanted to in Ghent.

language preparation

None, since I am a native speaker of Dutch.

finances

I applied for the Erasmus+ grant and I received the first part of the grant at the beginning of my stay. I also paused my student public transport card (studentenreisproduct). By doing this I was able to receive a compensation for not being able to use it. To be sure I would not have to worry about money, I had saved some

more during the summer.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I took 6 courses at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (total of 28 ECTS). They covered a lot of different subject, but I found that all of them fit into my programme so far. The topics taught at the University of Ghent differed a lot from those at UU, so this was really interesting. I also followed two method courses (qualitative and quantitative research methods) which were very useful for my further studies.

It was really easy to register for the courses after I arrived. I was even able to 'test' the chosen courses for a week and then make some changes to my learning agreement. I had to do this, since two of my courses overlapped.

academic quality of education activities

The courses I had chosen differed a lot in difficulty. Some were Bach3 courses, but I also had Bach2 and Bach1 courses. So of course, there were some differences there. The quality of the courses was really good, but I had to get used to the teaching style. The role of the student is much more passive compared to Utrecht (or The Netherlands). I just had to listen, there was not much discussion during the lectures. Also, I had only one big group work and one presentation. The exams were the most important part for my grades. I did not have to write any essays or papers, which was quite strange to me.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The staff of the UGhent was really helpful and the responsible person for the international students from the faculty made sure we had all the information that we needed.

transfer of credits

They have the same system of ECTS. The courses I followed were worth 5 or 3 ECTS.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The week before the courses started there was an extensive introduction programme. The first day was for all international students and we got a lot of information. There you could also get an ESN card or register for other student societies. The next day there was an introduction from the faculty.

accommodation

I stayed in one of the university's residences for exchange students at Site Kantienberg. I really enjoyed being close to other international students and the residence is really new and spacious. I would recommend to apply for a room there.

leisure & culture

There is a lot to do in Ghent. There are many museums, churches, etc. Also, the student night life is very active. I think there is something for everyone and you really never have to be bored in Ghent. If you are under the age of 26 you get big discounts on cultural attractions as well. The city center is also so beautiful with the canals and old buildings.

suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS	
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain	
Yes, definitely. It might not be as exotic as other destinations, but I really felt like I was abroad. Compared to other destinations, I think everything to do with university life is well organized, I never had any problems. Also, the student life is great in Ghent, there are so many things you can do and it is just a beautiful city.	
do you have any additional advice or comments?	
-	

Report 2

level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Research Master Medieval Studies

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	
I started preparing documents in October 2014, and made my application in December 2014. I was rejected for the university of my first choice, which did not receive Erasmus students unfortunately, and had the possibility to choose the university of Gent as a second choice.	
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
All of my questions were answered by the International Office: the International Office was fast and helpful!	
academic preparation	
None.	
language preparation	
None (most classes are taught in Dutch, which is my mother tongue).	
finances	
None (I went back to my home country and could stay with my parents - no extra costs).	

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
Historische taal- en letterkunde (only in Dutch!). I took only those classes in which i was interested, since I could choose what I wanted to do: in Utrecht, i would have had only electives!	
academic quality of education activities	
Very good!	
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	
Very good! Each students receives a student advisor, who, in my case, reacted very quickly and was willing to help me at all time!	
transfer of credits	

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
I did not participate on the orientation programme.
accommodation
I had no accomodation, but I heard of a lot of students that finding a room was difficult! Start preparing well in advance!
leisure & culture
The university and the international student organisations organise a lot of things to do in the city.
suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I certainly do! Universiteit Gent is a nice university. All professors were very helpful to me, and the exchange coordinator was always there if i needed help!
do you have any additional advice or comments?
No.

2014-2015

PREPARATION
exchange application process
The application process was quite overwhelming, especially because there were seemingly so many universities to choose from, but when you zoom in closer it turns out there are only very specific regions of study which these universities accept students from. This is not very transparent. There is also a lot of paperwork involved, not all of which is clearly elaborated on the website. In my memory, despite having recieved many overviews of what is to be done and what deadlines apply, the process was overwhelming.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
It must be said that Monique and Julie at the Utrecht International Office are truly great at their jobs- I have never in my six years at the university met any members of staff either as well-informed, helpful or patient. I was distracted and behind on the paperwork a lot, and they kept helping me, and explaining, really tirelessly. They offered really great support, responding to emails extremely quickly, not tiring of my endless questions, always helpful. I cannot emphasize enough how impressed I am with the quality of their work, even at times just before Erasmus deadlines when I imagine they are flooded in work, they still manage to respond to emails very quickly, friendly and patiently. Very impressive!
academic preparation
These courses did not require any academic preparation on my part.

language preparation
As I am a native Dutch speaker, the exchange did not require any language preparation.
finances
I did not significantly prepare for this exchange financially, although I had set aside some money to be able to pay for the deposit on whatever apartment I would find, and the move in general.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	The MA programme I chose involves a multitude of courses on different subjects in the arts, so I was able to formulate an eclectic programme based on my preferences and interests. The courses were quite easy to register for, I did not have any organisational issues with the Ugent during my stay there.
academic quality of education activities	The courses are definitely very packed. During the semester, students take 5 or 6 courses of an average of 5 ECTS each, and run them at the same time. This takes some great planning and scheduling; get ready for four or five days of class per week. The contact-hours are 3,5 hours at a time, and the lectures are usually packed. I found that compared to the courses I have taken at the UU, the workload was heavier. But most of the professors were well-organised and passionate about their subject area. Also they were very open to questions and a lot of the lectures had an interactive quality. It's a different type of lecturing, one that requires students to be very involved with the course, visit galleries and talks on their own, many courses organise roadtrips to conferences, musea or archives. The work from week to week is a lot, but hard work is recognised. The oral final exam which is used across the board in Ghent is a rewarding way of interacting with the prof, talking about the material and usually the profs also ask for feedback.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	I have not required nor requested any support at the university. The Ghent International Office was certainly very competent and kind, and helped me with any questions I had regarding the exchange.
transfer of credits	The Ugent uses a 1-20 grading scale, which is easily enough transferrable to our 1-10 system. They also work with ECTS.

STUDENT LIFE	
welcome & orientation programme	The Erasmus welcome was a little terrifying, as I found it offered the type of activities which an undergraduate student might terribly enjoy, but an MA-student has already sufficiently explored. I did not feel the urge to visit a dance party themed by a type of licquor, or otherwise themed by the attendant's relationship status (a so-called traffic-light party in which the color of your door-given bracelet indicates your willingness to fornicate). Luckily, I made friends rather quickly and easily through my classes. I found the Belgian students to be open and interested, and I felt accepted into a group of friends rather fast. I compensated for my lack of dancing with a huge amount of foosball, and traded in Jenever for the age-old tradition of beautiful Belgian beer, and had an altogether wonderful time in Ghent.
accommodation	I managed to find a beautiful, top-floor, wooden detail, loft-like studio apartment just behind St. Annaplein

(44m2, 460all-in). I enjoyed it a lot, even though it takes some getting used to not having a washing machine, which truly nobody in Ghent has. Get ready to bag and bike your laundry through the city. However, over time I began to be annoyed with the trash in the streets, and the smell of the sewer, and the ever-present people just standing in the street for no apparent reason at all hours of the day, smoking weed and leaving empty beer-containers on the windowpane at the bottom of my building. By all means, steer clear of Dampoort. The city is beautiful, and inviting to evening walks (even though it is low on parks, it makes up for it in architectural splendor), and there are certainly some very nice burroughs to live in, like Zuid or anything close to the Citadelpark, what a beautiful neighborhood.

leisure & culture

The city lends itself well to the cultural being, with lots of musea and churches open to the public. Do not shy away from taking one of those terribly tourist boat-rides, you will see the city in such a beautiful light. I myself enjoyed very much the screenings of early film all the way up until the sixties, at the KASK-cinema. For just a few euros, you could enjoy some silent films with live piano-music, or some nice Godard from the later decennia. It's also in a beautiful building. The waters which run through Ghent, the locals call "leien", are just fantastic. The city center is very beautiful and romantic.

suggestions/tips

Buy an umbrella and a really great, wind-tight coat. You will need them.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would definitely, I have had such an easy time adjusting and fitting in, making friends and finding things to do, and people to do them with. I could not have anticipated such an organic and comfortable experience. But, as said, the dirt of the city does get to one after a time, so make sure to be careful about which burrough to dig your roots into.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I think I about covered it all.

2013-2014

Report 1

preparation

exchange/placement application process

With the help of my tutor in Utrecht I sought out the place I would want to stay, which turned out to be Ghent. It turned out that the application-deadline was moved a few months, of which the coördinators/and others at my programme did not know. Therefore my fellow-students and I were to late for the first application round. Therefore we applied for the second round, which are basically the left-over places, but luckily Ghent had some places left. Then the normal application-procedure through Oasis was started. Ghent accepted me, Utrecht consented after I had filled in the necessary forms, like the financial plan. Then I looked up the courses that I would like to follow, which Ghent also accepted and which were - a lot later, during my stay - also approved of by the UU.

counselling/support at home university

I talked to my tutor about which places he thought might be nice for me to go to concerning my interests and he contacted someone - one of his colleagues - in Ghent to ask him if he thought it would be worth while for us to come. Apart from that I went to the stay abroad day some months before the summer in which we were told

which preparations we would have to make.
academic preparation
Of course I selected the courses I would want to follow, which took some time. Furthermore, not really any. Not very much was known to me of what I would be required to do during my stay, there were no articles/texts/any other stuff I had to read or do in advance.
language preparation
None. Would have been handy to read some of my old French textbooks again, since in my programme I had to read quite a few French articles. But apart from that most courses were taught in Dutch, my mothertongue, and some in English.
finances
Of course I applied for the Erasmus grant. Apart from that I worked my usual summer job and saved a little extra money so I would not have to worry too much about finances during my stay in Belgium.
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
My tutor from Utrecht knew a professor in Ghent who taught some courses in which I was interested, so I put them on the study programme. I contacted him concerning the courses he would be teaching and also we arranged that under the code of one of the courses, Old Dutch, I could do a small research project concerning one of the manuscripts that is kept in the university-library. The other courses I looked up; I could find them pretty easily on the Ghent-university website. Then I contacted some of the teachers, to make sure I would be able to follow the courses, which was the case for all of the courses. After all that, my work plan was complete.
academic quality of education/placement activities
The quality was very good. The courses were very interesting and in most of them the students could follow their own interest within the coursematerial (for instance by writing essays or papers). However, the classes were sometimes a little bit more 'schoolish' than in Utrecht. Still, individual students can really make something of their courses, the coursecontent is always really interesting and of high quality and the teachers and prof's are always ready to help or listen.
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
There were a lot of Erasmus-people (coördinators and such) introduced to us and there was ample possibility to meet them or to ask questions, so the support was pretty good. I have hardly spoken to any of them (I only got the necessary signatures from them) because I usually could go straight to the professors/teachers if I needed to know anything.
transfer of credits
Ghent University works with the same ECTS-system as Utrecht, so no problems there.
student life
welcome/orientation programme
Was quite good. There are 2 introduction days in which you get a lot - a lot - of information thrown at you, so you will not be able to say that they did not explain something. Because they really cover anything. Then ESN takes over and they organise some nice things as well, so you can get to know new people quite easily early on in your stay.
accommodation
I found accommodation through the private market, which offers lots of possibilities (the university dorms are always full pretty early). I was really lucky with the place I was staying (both location and accommodation) and with my landlord, who was really friendly and always ready to help out. The private market is organised pretty much the same as in Utrecht, only there are much more rooms available. It is therefore not very difficult to find

a nice place, if you start looking in time. Also the prices are very reasonable, the same or lower than in Utrecht.
leisure/culture
Ghent is a perfect city for any student. The old city is beautiful, there are lots of cultural activities (for instance music festivals and the film festival) and some very nice museums. Also there are lots of nice pubs in which you can sit down, talk and have a nice pint of Belgian beer. If you prefer clubs, you can also find them. Moreover Ghent is a city full of students, and is a very lively city. In the weekends most Belgian students go to their hometowns and the tourists take their place in the city center. Also, the ESN people are quite active in Ghent, so if you like meeting other exchange students, join them.
suggestions/tips
Make use of the student discounts for public transport and museums. When you're under 26 you can travel really cheap; ask for the discount-cards at train stations or ask your Erasmus coordinator. With the traincards you can travel through Belgium, so visit places like Brugge, Antwerp, Brussels and Louvain/Leuven.
conclusions
would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain
Certainly. The quality of the education is really good, I have only met helpful teachers/professors/coordinators/etc. and the city is really very beautiful and lively.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
Not really. Just make sure you get all your Erasmus forms filled in on time and have fun.

Report 2

preparation
exchange/placement application process
<p>Before leaving for Belgium I had to fill in some forms and make some personal preparations. I had to calculate and justify the financial resources I would have during my stay abroad. It was important for me to calculate my monthly costs on rent, foodstuffs and other expenses, because I am no longer entitled to receive a monthly study grant.</p> <p>Another element was of course to choose a number of courses I wanted to follow during my stay abroad, and get them to be approved by the Erasmus committee. I choose four courses that complement my studies until now very well (see below).</p> <p>third, I had to write a motivation letter to explain my reasons for wanting to go abroad and why the courses I choose were a good addition to my studies until now.</p> <p>Finally, there are some forms that must be filled in to get the request complete, such as the 'exchange application form', and a 'learning agreement' in which the courses to-be-followed are listed.</p> <p>One of the confusing elements of the complete application is that there are several sites within the faculty site on which you can find forms that must be filled in. One for the international office of the University, one of the faculty, and one for the committee. That's how it is possible that you are told that you handed in all the necessary papers for the international office, while you forgot to fill in the 'Statement of home institution', for example. In short, this is of course what happened to me. Making sure that you filled and handed in all necessary papers for all parties concerned is very important!</p>
counselling/support at home university
Support can be found at the faculty International office (in my case: Humanities). Another source of support was the coordinator of my studies, who of course had to know everything I wanted to do in Belgium, but was also prepared to give advice on which courses would fit my study programme, and which courses were less preferable in my case.

academic preparation
<p>The preparation on an academic level I had to make, was to write a motivation letter in which I had to reflect on why I wanted to go abroad and which courses I wanted to take. For me, the reason to go abroad was to experience life and studies at another university than my own in Utrecht, and to live abroad for a short time. My motivation to choose Belgium is because I wanted to improve my skills in reading and understanding Middle Dutch, which is (probably) only instructed in The Netherlands and Belgium. This was the most important reason to go to Belgium. Another reason to go to Ghent University is because it offers a combination of courses of Middle Dutch language and literature studies and a large variety of courses in the field of Medieval history.</p> <p>Another facet of the academic preparation are the courses I followed until now at the University of Utrecht and Amsterdam. I had a short course on Middle Dutch during my Bachelor History and a few courses in Utrecht that touched the topic of (Medieval) church history, but I wanted to improve my knowledge on both these topics. Ghent University offered the possibility to do exactly those courses I wanted to complement my Master with.</p>
language preparation
Language preparation was not necessary, since all courses my at the University of Ghent were in Dutch.
finances
I used the money from the Erasmus grant to finance my rent in Ghent, and used my savings to support the rest of my expenses (foodstuffs, courses outside university, etc.)
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
<p>The courses I chose to follow were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Middle Dutch Literature - Initiation to the description of Manuscripts and early printing -Old Dutch <p>research seminar: Medieval History</p> <p>Alltogether courses for 25 ECTS. I wanted to follow courses for 5 ECTS less than required for a semester (30), because I acquired 7,5 ECTS on top of the usual 30 ECTS in the first year of my research master.</p>
academic quality of education/placement activities
The courses I followed at Ghent University were Master courses. A lot of self-efficiency and self-motivation was required during the classes in conversation and discussion, and during the process of private studying in reading and interpreting the course matter and during the writing of papers. These are the same skills that are required of me in my home University in Utrecht.
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
The counseling from the Ugent was organised very well. the International student desk was allways open for questions, and my emails were answered quickly. With some help and the occasional reminders to fill in this or that form, Kartien Rau, international services UGent, helped me a lot to obtain some survey on all formalities belonging to an exchange period.
transfer of credits
In Belgium the amount of ECTS granted to courses was 5 or 10. I choose to take courses for a total amount of 25 ECTS, which is comparable with the amount of ECTS granted in Utrecht, and the exact amount of ECTS I needed to complete my 60 ECTS for the whole academic year.
student life
welcome/orientation programme
The orientation program organised by the University of Ghent was extensive. The international students were

provided with an introduction day filled with presentations by Erasmus Students at Gent University of previous periods and presentations with practical information (arrangements, University locations, information desks, etc.) The University had also arranged for a visit to the city museum (STAM) for all international students and a walking tour through the city led by Belgian students.

accommodation

I stayed at a friend's house during my time abroad, so I didn't have to worry about looking for a student room. Other students I spoke to that had to arrange for a place to stay were quite content with the short amount of time they had to spend searching for a room in Ghent. Ugent offers a quite transparent system of student housing in which the circulation is quite large, so that there's always a chance of getting a student room for the period of your stay. However, there is also a market of private student rooms for rent, which is also quite easy to access.

leisure/culture

Student life can be very busy in Ghent. There is a large offer of music, theatre, dance and all kinds of cultural entertainment, which for students can be obtained for a reasonable price. Under 26 (years) most cultural activities are reduced in price, for older students, like myself, CJP offers a chance to go to the theatre or concerts for a reduced price. Apart from that, the city is quite old and a beautiful place to take a walk and just look around.

suggestions/tips

check weekup.be for all cultural offers of the week.

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Yes I would. The University of Ghent is a very welcoming institution, and so are the professors of the courses I took. I always felt that discussion or conversation was possible if I wanted to and I could always ask for help if needed. The city itself is quite small, so it's not difficult to get to know it and to feel at home quickly.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Only for students medieval history, or those interested: to check once in a while the site of the Henri Pirenne Institute for interesting lectures and courses in the field of Medieval Studies. This Institute organises a lot of interesting activities which are mostly held at the University of Ghent (if they are not international): www.henripirenne.ugent.be.