



UU Study Abroad Report Form

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| Every UU student going abroad is expected to submit a report, as stated in the conditions of the UU Study Abroad faculty/college | Humanities |
| level | x <input type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| name degree programme | Theater, Film & Television |

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| destination city & country | Waco, Texas, USA |
| name host institution and/or company/organization | Baylor University |
| purpose of exchange | x <input type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| departure date (dd/mm/yyyy) | 12 / 08 / 2011 |
| return date (dd/mm/yyyy) | 17/ 12 / 2011 |

preparation

exchange/placement application process

I won't lie, the application process was a very tedious one and made me doubt if this was worth it on numerous occasions. I found it very difficult to choose a university in the first place and the paperwork was just an awful lot! I believe one of the things that make it such an unpleasant process is that it stretches over a rather long period of time –without knowing if you will be placed at all. I would advise anyone to pay special attention to your motivation letter and -if you know that you want to go abroad far in advance- getting those good grades (something that should be your goal anyway right?;)

But I guess the whole process is just something one has to stick through and it will work out fine in the end!

Here's something positive: The visit at the Consulate was not as scary as expected after all. Everyone was telling me how careful you have to be or they will refuse to give you a visa in the first place. But when I was there everyone was incredibly nice and it took me about 20 minutes to get in and walk out knowing I will receive a visa in just a few days. Still, I recommend to pay special attention to the guidelines on their website, be on time (the lines get very long very quickly!) and to make sure you have all of the required documents on you.

counselling/support at home university

I believe that during my preparation process I was in need of a lot of help in order to understand all of the paperwork and make myself feel fully prepared to leave the country. Luckily, the International Office at Utrecht University was very understanding and was able to help me at all times. The pre-departure meetings were very helpful, just like the discussions I had with fellow exchange students. Also, all of my emails were always answered in full length no matter how obvious the answers might have been to others.

academic preparation

Academically, I did not prepare much. But I did make sure that I had figured out which mandatory courses I had already taken and which I would have to take after my return so that I can take any classes I wanted to in Texas. Ideally, this will let me graduate on time.

Choosing the right courses at Baylor University however was rather difficult. I had to change them a lot: Some courses were not offered in the semester I would be there after all, some courses overlapped too much with



others, some courses needed the consent of instructors that I did not have, some courses did not provide me with the right number of credits I needed. Altogether, that was a hard part of the application and I ended up e-mailing a lot of professors at Baylor for guidance. Luckily, they willingly gave it and it all worked out fine and I ended up taking great classes. In the first week at Baylor –before classes started- I also talked to my academic advisor to make sure everything was fine with my classes. If it would have been necessary I could have made changes there.

language preparation

When it came to language I did not prepare much either. I was going to study in English and (partially) having grown up in The United States I’ve never had much trouble with the language. Also, I have taken several classes taught in English at UU so I felt rather prepared.

Some universities do require a document stating your English skills though (e.g. by means of the TOEFL test), so that is something to be aware of.

Further, when I arrived at Baylor I had to take a very short and incredibly easy English test on my second day. The assignment basically was “Write an essay of 200-300 words on a topic of your choice. You have 60 minutes to complete this task.” The university just wanted to make sure that we won’t have any troubles in our classes. If someone had failed the test they wouldn’t have been sent home either, they would just have been expected to take an English class along with their other courses. But none of the exchange students failed anyway, so that wasn’t an issue. And if anyone had any questions, the English department at Baylor University was more than helpful. For instance, it offers free advice on essays and even helps to correct these.

finances

Studying abroad can be very expensive, especially if you want to fully experience the culture and maybe even travel around the country. And you should. If you plan on going abroad you should be willing to spend the money, otherwise you might just be ignoring the possibilities the trip offers you.

I had my parents help me financially and I am very grateful they supported me. I do recommend working over the summer before the big trip or during your studies at UU to have some extra cash.

Working on campus is very difficult or even close to impossible because you will be issued a student visa, not a working visa and job opportunities on campus are very limited and usually already taken by other students.

study/placement abroad period

study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)

It is noteworthy to point out that my major is a very time-consuming one. As a theatre major you are required to spend your mornings in class and your afternoons working on the shows that you then have to attend in the evenings. Often, we even had rehearsals after the performances thus keeping some of us in the theatre building till two in the morning. The other exchange students had much more leisure time than me as I was told rather frequently. :)

However, I did find all the classes I took highly enjoyable and I can honestly say that I learned a lot, more than I had hoped to. I was challenged in numerous ways and was always able to employ my newly gained knowledge in one way or another. Most professors are very observant and know how to further you. In some cases I did find the professors too laid back. They would make it almost too easy for you to get good grades. So generally, although I learned a lot, I did not find the courses as difficult as many classes I took at Utrecht University. Maybe this had to do with the classes I chose. Other exchange students did complain about the level of difficulty of some of their classes. This is mainly to be expected in level 3000 and 4000 classes. (I personally took mainly 1000 and 2000 courses.)

What I especially enjoyed was how closely some of the professors worked together with the students, how supportive and understanding they were and the positive atmosphere created in the classrooms. The students



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| were very friendly to one another as well. |
| academic quality of education/placement activities |
| I believe that you can learn very much at Baylor University just like I did. However, I also believe that if you want to continue on the high academic level that you have obtained at UU then you should probably consider taking 2000 level courses and up. |
| counselling/support at host institution/organisation |
| <p>The International Office at Baylor University was very helpful during my application process as well. When trying to decide which university to go to I emailed the International Coordinator numerous times and always received helpful responses. Also, when I was at Baylor I could always pay the International office a visit and they would help me out in any way needed.</p> <p>Unfortunately, after I was there for about a month this changed slightly because the Exchange Coordinator left for another university and they had not yet found a replacement for her. At this point I luckily did not have as many questions anymore and did not have this affect me negatively.</p> <p>Besides, the new Exchange Coordinator is supposed to be a very handsome young man, so that might be something to look forward to :)</p> |
| transfer of credits |
| <p>Getting my credits transferred was a rather annoying undertaking. It took what felt like forever. Because I changed my courses so many times I could not get the consent to take these courses from the Examencommissie before I left for Texas.</p> <p>When I came back it took a very long time until my official transcript with my grades arrived in the Netherlands. It took another 5 weeks until I got an answer from the committee. Luckily, I got credits for all my courses. However, I did not get 7.5 ECTS for all of the classes like we would at UU. Therefore, I now know that I need to take an additional class in the next block in order to finish my studies on time.</p> <p>My tip would be to take an additional class at some point in your studies before you leave for your abroad trip. That way, you have a class to fall back on if the committee should decide to not give you credits for all of your classes abroad.</p> |
| student life |
| welcome/orientation programme |
| <p>Since I arrived in Waco rather early (a few days before the actual Welcome Week) one of the girls from the International Office took me on some trips along with another exchange student. We got to know Waco and Baylor University very well during these couple of days and had loads of fun.</p> <p>Even though I had that privilege, the welcome week at Baylor University was a crucial experience. The sense of community, togetherness and support that connects everyone on Baylor campus quickly became something to be admired and I could fully give in to the Baylor Spirit. And it was within the first week that I was equipped with a Baylor jersey and taught all the Baylor chants, hymns and phrases from SIC'EM BEARS to the song "Good Old Baylor Line". I was declared a real Baylor Bear. And It was from that point onward that I had all the knowledge I needed to fully support our sports teams, join all the events I desired and represent my university as best as I could.</p> <p>Furthermore, during the welcome week program I got a better insight into the activities the university offered and where my classes would take place. I had a chat with my academic advisor to make sure I was taking courses that were right for me and I took an easy English test as mentioned before. We were also taken on several trips to Wal-Mart to get all of our shopping done. We opened a bank account (if desired), had several meals together and most importantly got to know one another. This last aspect was probably the most interesting and important. We learned about each other's cultures and soon discovered which exchange students liked to hang out together and</p> |



started planning events together.

accommodation

There are two housing opportunities at Baylor University: On-campus and off. I opted for the first and soon figured out that that was indeed the better choice.

The campus offers a variety of living opportunities. However, it is very unlikely for exchange students to be placed in dorms because those are usually reserved for freshmen (first-year students). The other options are usually little apartments. Though residence halls can be co-ed, all apartments strictly keep girls and boys apart. I lived in a rather big apartment with 2 floors, 2 bathrooms, a large room to myself and a big living room. I shared the space with one other girl. We got along very well, although we both kind of did our own thing.

When living on campus however, I would expect to have to share a room rather than having a room to one's self. In my case, this was a very rare exception.

What I did enjoy about living on campus so much was that I could get anywhere I wanted within minutes- either by foot or by bus. Though I did miss having a car very much, at least I was independent on campus. This is something others had trouble with when living off campus. They were very dependent on their roommates, but that did not always work out well.

Moreover, I liked having a kitchen in my apartment. That way I could either cook there (the bus took me right to the grocery store) or walk to a dining hall on campus. And on Tuesdays a free dinner was organized for all students by the Spiritual Centre which was also in walking distance.

All in all I liked living in my apartment and having everything on campus accessible within minutes. I believe one can say that Baylor does care for its students. The campus is incredible and offers everything one could possibly ask for from libraries to cafés and restaurants and the bear cages where the Baylor mascots Lady and Joy live (two real North-American black bears!).

Also, no matter where you live on campus community leaders take care of you, answer all of your housing questions and organize events like "Lady's Nights" and Barbeques. Most of these leaders are students themselves which makes it easy to bond with most of them.

leisure/culture

At Baylor University I spend as much time as possible at events organized by the university itself: Football Games, Homecoming Parade, Haunted Houses, Thanksgiving Dinners, Christmas on 5th Street. The one thing I never really supported, or maybe even understood, were the sororities and fraternities: Social organizations that require you to make them your absolute priority once you join. I did not have the time or energy to do so.

Truthfully, I did not have much time at all next to my scholarly responsibilities. The classes I took were very time consuming and I had to work many hours after class. Of course I did manage to leave campus every now and then. Waco itself is not a big city, but it does offer a few entertainments: Tortilla Tossing -a Baylor student tradition-, a shopping mall, a zoo, the Dr. Pepper Museum (a popular American soft drink that was invented in Waco). I really liked going to Wild West, a bar where everyone could throw on their cowboy boots and join in on some traditional Texan line dancing. And something I enjoyed very much was learning about the Texan culture and doing little things like learning the two-step (that's a traditional Texan dance) with a real Texan -born and raised- at a concert with Country Music organized on campus.

And if I had the time I rented a zipcar (check the website, these cars can be very handy, much cheaper than regular rentals) and headed to Dallas, San Antonio, Austin or Houston with some friends. Austin is a must-see when in Texas. It is one of the most popular cities and the biggest capital of live music in the US!

Over Thanksgiving break I was really lucky and actually had the time to travel even further and spend a few days at some relatives in Las Vegas. This was definitely one of the highlights during my trip and something I would advise anyone who planned to go to the US. I find it wise to go to a university where one can really feel at home



and take all the classes one is interested in and use your spare time to visit all the places one has always wanted to see, like Las Vegas, NYC and Los Angeles.

suggestions/tips

Something to be aware of is that Baylor is a wealthy and very religious university. Accordingly, the majority of students attending Baylor come from wealthy families and it is not unusual for them to say something along the lines of “You still don’t have the newest iPhone?”. Also, Texas is probably one of the most conservative states in the USA. And Baylor –as a private, Christian school- represents this. Everywhere on campus I found spiritual student groups, prayers, biblical readings. I was invited to events entitled “Prayer and Worship” and listened to the Christmas story of Jesus’ birth at all Christmas parties. Cursing is definitely not something you want to do in public and the message of no premarital sex is spread widely. Even facebook is fludded with quotes from the bible. So if you consider yourself a religious person I believe you will feel very at home. I myself am not a religious person and did not attend any of the spiritual events or go to church on Sundays. And that did not affect me negatively at all! Interestingly, hardly any exchange student considered themselves to be religious and no one was given a hard time because of it (To be fair I do need to make one exception: A housemate of one of the exchange students was not very understanding, but this never lead to any major disputes! So as long as you didn’t provoke an argument you were fine.). All of my friends were more than understanding. Occasionally, I was asked which church I attended and when I told them that I didn’t go to church at all, they answered “That’s ok. We don’t judge.” and that was that. So from my experience I can say that no matter if you are religious or not you can feel very at home at Baylor and have a good time. Baylor’s religious mission is just something to be aware of and that can be overwhelming at first.

Interesting was also the students’ perspective on marriage. This and family life is something that should be valued more than anything and it is not unusual for students to be engaged by their junior (3rd) and married by their senior (4th) year! When I was perusing websites about Baylor prior to my arrival it was not uncommon to find statements such as “Guys, be aware of the husband hunters!”, meaning girls going to college with the sole purpose to find their future husbands. I found this rather amusing because it was not something I was used to. Now that I had the pleasure of spending a semester at Baylor I must say that yes, I did come across the one or other husband hunter, but those did certainly not make up of the majority of the female student body!

conclusions

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

I had a truly enjoyable four months and would have loved to stay longer. (Many of the exchange students did extend their stay or even transferred to Baylor.) I also know that this was an amazing opportunity that I am glad and proud to have taken in the first place! I learned so much academically, personally and culturally. I made numerous new friends and I know that I will cherish my time at Baylor forever.

I believe that everyone should go abroad; it is a life-changing experience, always to the better! Baylor is an amazing university with competent professors and loveable students. It offers everything one could possibly want when studying abroad. So unless the religious part of Baylor is not for you, I would recommend studying there without any doubts. Oh, and: GO BEARS! :)

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Be open-minded and have a positive perspective on life and the trip in particular. Don’t be judgemental or prejudiced. Just go with it and be willing to learn something new every day and there is no way you will regret going abroad! Remember that you are going abroad to experience new things and not to live life as you do at home! For your own sake and the sake of everyone else –including the other exchange students’- do not bring a negative attitude to the trip!