

2019-2020

Report 1

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

destination city & country	Helsinki, Finland
how did you travel to your destination?	By plane
name university abroad	University of Helsinki
start date	08 / 01 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	31 / 05 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION
exchange application process
Exchange application was quite long and complicated for what I recall, in addition to all the Erasmus+ grant agreement related matters. University of Helsinki did not require much documents or an complicated application as I recall they only asked for a motivation letter and the latest transcript of records. The most complicated process was within the Utrecht end, which is naturally understandable.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
Throughout the whole exchange process I have felt very supported as all my questions and enquiries have been answered quickly and the International Office has continuously been available to help me. I am very grateful of this, especially during the difficult times caused by the corona virus, which has naturally heavily affected the course of my exchange period.
academic preparation
My exchange destination did not require much of an academic preparation, I only had to make sure that I had completed all my mandatory UU-courses before my departure. I decided to write most of my BA thesis while on exchange so I also had to make all the necessary arrangements for this to be possible.
language preparation
Also any language preparation was not needed since I decided to complete my exchange in my homecountry, thus I obviously am native in Finnish already. Despite this, I decided to complete most of my courses in English in order to efficiently implement them to my UU programme.
finances
I financed my exchange through the Erasmus+ grant and my regular student grant from Finland, which I normally use to finance my studies in UU. Therefore I did not have to worry about finances during my exchange period.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
The content of the study programme for me personally was highly diverse and interesting since I was able to attend courses taught in Finnish as well. I took courses ranging from European history to Middle Eastern history, from German colonialism to the history of freedom of speech. I was lucky to be able to attend all these courses due to my Finnish language capability - if I would have only spoken English, the extent of courses available for me would have been significantly smaller. All organisational matters ran through smoothly and I was constantly well-informed about everything, nothing to complain there.
academic quality of education activities
It is quite difficult for me to fully judge this component since due to the special circumstances caused by the corona virus, all my exchange courses were fully transferred online. Unfortunately did not have the chance to attend any of my courses in person before this transfer. However, I was satisfied with the quality of the online teaching, although only the lectures were online and seminar type of teaching did not occur at least on the courses I attended. Thus, the completion of the courses was totally up to me and I had to use quite a lot of time for independent studying and extra assignments assigned by the lecturers.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
Like the counselling and support in Utrecht, I have been very happy with the quality of the International Office here in Helsinki. All of my questions, concerns, and enquiries have been answered swiftly and adequately. The communication has been smooth considering it has been possible only via email.
transfer of credits
All my credits obtained in Helsinki will be transferred into pass/fail when I return to Utrecht, which is something I am not completely happy with. I feel like it is unfair considering how much time I have spent on successfully completing the courses that the grades I have earned will be simply disregarded by the UU.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
I was lucky enough to attend the welcome and orientation programme before the corona virus situation. To me, as a Finnish native, all of the activities were not as interesting as for the foreign exchange students but it is completely understandable. The quality of the welcome fair was great and all the necessary information needed to successfully start my studies was available there. The spring would have been filled with different activities and events, but unfortunately they all had to be cancelled.
accommodation
As I have completed my exchange period in my homecountry, I did not find it necessary to get a student accommodation but rather I have been staying with my family. This way, I have had the opportunity to combine my exchange studies with relaxation due to not having to stress about getting an accommodation in Helsinki.
leisure & culture
The leisure and culture in Finland is amazing! I might be biased, but it is true. Unfortunately this spring almost everything has been cancelled, closed, or moved up to until further notice so me or other exchange students have not been able to fully enjoy the joys of Helsinki, which is of course a shame.
suggestions/tips
My tips for someone thinking of going for an exchange in Finland would be to get acquainted with the culture beforehand and most definitely take a language course while in Helsinki. Finnish people speak fairly good English, but are always delighted when someone makes the effort to speak their language. Also our culture is

slightly different in comparison to central or southern European countries, thus some research might be a good idea. Don't be afraid of the darkness or winter, it might sound depressing and cold but it is something one should experience at least once in their life.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would most definitely recommend this university and destination to others! Not only is the university of Helsinki a high quality university with great academic staff and topics, Helsinki itself is most definitely worth experiencing. Also, Finnish student life is somewhat different from the one e.g. in the Netherlands, thus it would surely be an educational experience from that aspect as well.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I truly hope that more people would take interest in Nordic countries such as Finland - not only do they possess a great educational prospects, but they also offer a unique cultures for other Europeans to enjoy.

2015-2016

Report 1

faculty/college	Faculty of Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Literary Studies/ Gender Studies

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The exchange application process went pretty smoothly. The University of Helsinki was not my first choice for a semester abroad, but once I knew I was going to Finland, the application process went quite well. I went to an information evening before applying, and after that everything (both at Utrecht University and at the University of Helsinki) was easy to sort out.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The support at Utrecht University was good: whenever I had a question or was unsure about something, International Office was easy to reach and always happy to help.

academic preparation

Because the contract between Utrecht University and the University was based on Gender Studies rather than on Literary Studies (my major at my home university), I was advised by International Office Utrecht to try to take some extra courses in gender studies in order to be as prepared as possible for my stay in Finland, and to make sure my lack of 'official' credits in the field were not a problem. In the end, I applied to the University of Helsinki after having successfully completed 21,5 ECTS in the discipline that would be my major during my stay there. I made sure to include this in my motivation letter, and also to allude to other extracurricular activities that are related to issues gender studies engages with. I also sent an extra e-mail to the International Office at the University of Helsinki to make sure my application would be approved. In the end, I do not think all this extra work and worry was necessary: I was accepted into the exchange program with no difficulties and I had plenty of academic knowledge and preparation to follow the courses I wanted to.

language preparation
Language preparation was not necessary for me, since everyone in Finland speaks English very well. Lessons in Finnish before arriving in Helsinki are definitely not necessary, although it can be fun to study some Finnish while you're there (which is what I have done).
finances
Living and studying in Finland is more expensive than it is in the Netherlands, so finances were important to take care of before leaving for my exchange. I applied for an Erasmus Grant, and raised the amount of my student loans. I also worked a lot during the summer holiday, so I ended up having a nice financial buffer before arriving in Finland. Because of all of this, and because of a good preparation, finances were fortunately not really a problem for me during my stay abroad.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
<p>My study programme changed significantly after I arrived in Helsinki. I took some courses that were offered especially for exchange students (Finnish for Exchange Students and Finnish Literature), which I really enjoyed because it taught me a lot about Finnish life and culture, and got me in touch with fellow exchange students. I took two book exams, which are special forms of examination that we do not have at the UU. For a book exam, every student has to choose three books from a list of five titles. Upon registering for the exam, you have to say which books you've read, and then on the day of the examination you get your own 'personalized' exam. There are no classes involved in this, or any specific contact with a teacher: you have to read the books on your own and prepare for the exam by yourself. What I liked about these 'courses' was that it enlarged the amount of topics you could choose from: because you are not limited to classes or teachers' schedules, there were many subjects to take a book exam in. Because of this, I could do two exams that specifically combined my two main interests -gender and literature. I could not have taken these courses if they were 'regular' courses, so I was very pleased with the book exams. It did require some extra planning and dedication, since preparation for the exams was nothing but self-study.</p> <p>The one thing I was not very pleased about with regards to the courses was that one of the courses I signed up for got cancelled at the very last minute. This was particularly annoying because I had just contacted International Office and the Exam Committee at Utrecht University about my changed Learning Agreement, and I now had to do this again. But it was also a little problematic because the courses I could choose from after that, were quite limited because the registration period had already ended. Fortunately, I was able to register for a very interesting course, but it was still a bit stressful and annoying to think you have everything taken care of, and then having to change your plans at the last minute.</p>
academic quality of education activities
I thought the academic quality of the courses was really good! Having taken two book exams, there are only four classes that I can reflect upon, but what I have experienced was really interesting. I did find the courses that were specifically for exchange students (in my case Finnish for Exchange Students and Finnish Literature) not very challenging at times, but that might also be because those topics were very broad and there were no entry requirements for those courses, which meant they started at the very basics of the topic. One of my courses was particularly interesting and at times demanding because there were both bachelor's and master's students following the course. Therefore, the academic and theoretical level of this course was high, but this led to many lively and interesting discussions.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
All the teachers and international officers are incredibly helpful and nice. The counselling, advice and support - when necessary- were very good.

transfer of credits
The transfer of credits went well, I experienced no problems there.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
The welcome fair was very nice. Every group of exchange students got a Finnish student as their tutor and all the tutors -my own and others that I have spoken to- were very nice, open and helpful. The welcome fair itself was three days, and a lot of it involved official business (registering for courses, getting a university e-mail account etc.). This took a lot of time and was quite boring, but also necessary. The tutors made sure to organize more social and fun events, which was nice. It was a nice way to get to know the university, city and other students (both international and Finnish) a bit better.
accommodation
If you are going to study in Helsinki, I highly recommend registering at HOAS. You get an e-mail from the university about that, and I think it is the easiest way to get a good place to stay. All accommodation in Helsinki is expensive, so be prepared more than you pay in Utrecht. I ended up staying at a HOAS apartment in Domus Academica, which was a building where a lot of exchange students stayed. I had a private room that was nice, spacious and clean, and at a very good location from the city centre, train station and university. Aside from the high rent (€600,- each month), I have no complaints about my accommodation.
leisure & culture
There is an Erasmus Student Network that organizes a lot of fun activities and trips. In the city itself, there are a lot of nice bars and coffee places to go to.
suggestions/tips
I could give a lot of tips for having a wonderful stay in Helsinki, but the truth is that if you decide to go to Helsinki, the wonderful people of the university (tutors, International Office, etc.) and ESN will tell you all about those. The trips from ESN were really great, and I highly recommend going on one of the trips to Lapland. There are a lot of Facebook pages that advertise fun things that are happening in Finland in general and Helsinki in particular. One nice one was 'Free Events in Helsinki': the title is self-explanatory, but it is a nice way of learning about fun events to join and new places to visit. I also really enjoyed the Helsinki Art Walks, which are free tours that take you to several art galleries in Helsinki, where often the artists or an art expert is present to talk about the works that are exhibited. This is done in English, and it is a great way to visit unexpected places in the city and get to know new people. I think the most important thing is to keep your eyes and ears open: there are a lot of fun events happening in the city, and a lot of things are (at least partly) in English.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I would highly recommend this destination and university to other students. The university itself is really good and the teachers and staff at International Office are very friendly and helpful. Everything is well-organized and structured, so I think this is one of the easiest and most relaxed experiences you can get as an exchange student. Helsinki itself is a lovely city, that I think gets better the longer you stay there. It is big enough to be lively, surprising and exciting but it is small enough to travel almost everywhere by foot or bike. (The Finns are a strange but lovely people, and very amusing after they have had a couple of drinks. Finland is very beautiful country, with great nature and an interesting history. Add to that the fact pretty much every house or apartment building has its own sauna, and you are guaranteed a very pleasant stay.

Finland – University of Helsinki

do you have any additional advice or comments?

My only additional advice is to have a wonderful time in Helsinki and enjoy your stay there!