



## ERASMUS+ STUDIES - UU Report

Every student receiving an Erasmus+ STUDIES grant has to submit a UU report as well. Writing the UU report is one of the university's conditions to receive and keep the grant. Only after submitting this report your Erasmus+ grant will be awarded definitively.

Your report will be **published** (anonymously!) on the [UU study abroad destinations webpage](#) to inform UU students preparing an exchange or research period abroad. Not all of them are Dutch-speaking, therefore we prefer to receive reports **written in English**.

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

family name*	
first name*	
student number*	
permission to publish contact details**	<i>optional; only if you allow students preparing for study abroad to contact you (directly)</i>
	my e-mail address <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: jeskadejong@xs4all.nl my weblog <input type="checkbox"/> yes: my Facebook account <input type="checkbox"/> yes: other (social) media <input type="checkbox"/> yes: <b>or</b> <input type="checkbox"/> my contact details cannot be published on the UU webpage, but I do give the International Office permission to forward my e-mail address to individual students interested in my host university abroad:      @
<i>See end note for * and **</i>	
faculty/college	Faculty of Geosciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	BSc Global Sustainability Science

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	Train
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	05 / 09 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	15 / 02 / 2023 (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 was quite tough in my opinion. Although the UU Study Abroad webpage provides all the necessary information, I found the process to be a little confusing at times, perhaps due to the fact that I went on exchange after already having completed my programme in Utrecht, as this entailed a few extra steps, such as requesting my graduation to be postponed. I definitely recommend that you start your exchange application process on time, as it might take some time to hear back from the International Office or your study advisor during this time. Make sure to prepare all the necessary documents well ahead of the



deadline so that you do not experience unnecessary stress shortly before the deadline.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
I found support at Utrecht University very helpful. I have emailed with various offices such as the International Office and my study advisors, and they have always been keen and (relatively) quick to help me. I also highly recommend joining the information sessions that are organised for both UU-wide and faculty destinations, as you can ask any questions you have and get in touch with fellow students going through the same process!
academic preparation
I went on exchange after finishing my programme at UU, and so there was no requirement for me to take specific courses abroad that would fit in my curriculum in Utrecht. In my case, I took a few introductory courses at my exchange university that did not require much academic preparation on my side. I can imagine that this would be different if you go on exchange as part of your major at UU.
language preparation
I went to study in Berlin, where still many courses are only offered in German. I myself have a background in German which meant that I had little to no difficulty preparing for studying in German. However, the FU Berlin offers a preparatory language course before the start of every semester, which you can take at any level ranging from A1 to C1. I took the course as well, however due to a limited number of participants at C1, I was placed in the B2 class, which in hindsight did not help my language skills advance all too much. Nonetheless, I found it to be a great opportunity to get acquainted with the university, the city, and most of all to make some friends before the semester starts, so I would highly recommend taking part in the course if you can!
finances
The Erasmus+ grant for Germany is a great help in covering costs while abroad, though it definitely did not cover everything. I have found that rent in Berlin generally tends to be quite high if you want to live close to the city centre (in contrast to in city dorms which are located on the outskirts of Berlin, where rent is relatively cheap). Therefore, taking out a loan from DUO during this time was necessary for me to cover my costs. Generally, I have found that life in Germany is a little cheaper than it is in the Netherlands, which obviously is a great thing for students :)

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>
study programme (content and organisational issues)
As mentioned previously, I went on exchange after finishing my programme in Utrecht, which meant that I had free choice concerning my courses (as long as there was no definitive overlap). As such, I took courses from different departments and study programmes, which is why I cannot say anything specifically about the Geosciences study programme for instance. What I can say is that within the department of Geosciences, they offer little to (I think) no courses in English on the Bachelor's level. I think this is something to consider when applying for a semester abroad at this university. The university offers courses specifically designed for exchange students where there are plenty of English options, though these courses are mostly concerned with the German history and culture. You can also, like I did, choose to follow courses at other departments. I have found, however, that this is not easy at all and requires a lot of arranging on the exchange student's side. It is possible, but note that it takes time before, during, and after the courses.
academic quality of education activities
I would say that the academic level at the FU Berlin is a little lower compared to that at UU. For the same number of credits, I feel that you are required to do less assignments/exams/etc. at FU. That is not to say that the academic quality is less. On the contrary, I have taken courses with teachers that are very renowned in their fields and I have learned a great deal.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad



Support at the FU Berlin was good. They have a separate office for incoming students, which you can e-mail or make an appointment with whenever you like. They also organise information sessions and exchanges between students, which was a great help for me in designing my study programme.

transfer of credits

The FU Berlin works with ECTS credits as well, which made the transfer of credits relatively easy. However, it is important to be aware that different departments award different numbers of credits per course. This means that it is not like at UU where all courses are 7,5 ECTS which means you can easily take courses from other departments. At FU Berlin you need to consult the websites of the separate departments to find out the number of ECTS credits you get for a lecture or a seminar (these are separate courses at FU Berlin). I found this process to be quite time-intensive, especially as we had deadlines for the Learning Agreement, and sometimes the information I found online did not correspond with the actual number of credits I would get for a course. So, again, start looking for this on time and stay on top of this during the start of your exchange, as UU will need to know the number of credits for your Erasmus+ Grant.

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

There was a short orientation programme before the start of the semester, which consisted of an information session and a campus tour. This was a fun way of getting to know the university and some other students, though in my opinion it was too large-scale which made it less interactive and more difficult to ask questions. The Department of Geosciences has its own campus in Berlin, which meant that there was a separate tour organised for us. This was nice and much more low-key, making it easier to ask the Erasmus coordinator any (personal) questions we had.

accommodation

There is a possibility to rent a room in one of the student dorms. However, I opted to look for my own room as these dorms were located very far away from the city centre, in a neighbourhood where there is not much going on. Nonetheless, the rent for these rooms is as I said quite cheap, and I know many people who have lived there and had a great time. There is a limited number of rooms available in these dorms, so make sure to be at your laptop to register when registration opens (you will receive an e-mail about this). For me, I found my room through WG-Gesucht, which is a website (and app) similar to Kamernet, where people post rooms and you can send a message if you are interested. It took me about a month to find my room, and I think I was very lucky in this regard, as I have heard other people looking for at least three months and then only finding something for sublet. Again, I strongly recommend to start looking very early if you know that you are going to Berlin, as this might increase your chances! And being German-speaking is a pre in many houses, though Berlin is also very international in general, so it is definitely not a must like in Utrecht :(

leisure & culture

Berlin is a great city to live in when you are young. There is so much to do every single day and you will always find new areas that you have never visited before. I stayed in Berlin during the winter semester, which meant that life outside was definitely more quiet compared to the summer semester, but nonetheless you will not be bored for a day. Cafes, restaurants, bars in Berlin are great and there is something for everyone. Obviously, the clubbing scene is very famous and popular, but in my opinion at times a bit overrated... I also want to mention that Berlin is a great place to live for vegetarians and vegans, as there are so many options concerning restaurants, cafes, but also in supermarkets! Furthermore, Berlin is a very green city, so it will not be difficult to find nice parks or woods for a stroll when you feel like it. One thing you should not forget is that Berlin is huge, so even when you live somewhere close to the city centre, it can take you a long time to get anywhere due to a bad public transport connection or just a huge distance. For instance, I lived in Prenzlauer Berg, which is 15 minutes away from Alexanderplatz, but it took me up to one hour to get to university... So be aware of this and don't be shocked!



suggestions/tips

Just a few suggestions on living in Berlin:

- If you don't want to live in one of the student dorms, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, Mitte, Kreuzberg, Nord-Neukölln, Schöneberg and Charlottenburg (more in the eastern part of this neighbourhood) are cool places to live. If you start looking early, or ask people that you may already know in Berlin, you can really find some gems!
- Tempelhofer Feld is a great place to hang out, especially when the weather is great. It is a deserted airport right in the middle of the city.
- The lakes by the university campus are also amazing places to go for a walk or to go swimming in summer! Krumme Lanke and Wannsee are good choices.
- Get the Berlin Classic Card if you are into opera, ballet, theatre, concerts, etc. It is available for people under 30 years old and costs as much as your age for one year (so for me, I paid 22 euros for one year). You can get huge discounts on tickets in all opera houses, theatres, etc. in Berlin. You can book tickets in advance for around 15 euros, or buy tickets from two hours before the shows starts for 10 euros (the best seats!!). You can also invite one other person to come with you (who is also under 30) for an extra 5 euro for their ticket.
- If you are into sports, I would say two types of memberships are great options for you: you can join university sports, which are very cheap and are organised during the semester (so not during the holidays). You can choose almost any sport, and prices range (depending on the sport) perhaps around 20-40 euros per semester!! The only disadvantage (I found) is, that the classes are organised somewhere close to the university campus, so if you do not live close, this might not be very ideal for you. The other membership, which I took, is called Urban Sports Club. You can choose an S, M, L or XL membership. In my case, I took the M membership which costs 66 euros per month (which, I know, is not cheap), but you can work out at nearly all gyms, yoga studios, swimming pools, boulder halls and what not throughout the entire city. This means you can do all sorts of different sports, try out new things, or build up a routine. I would highly recommend this, also to do with friends!

**CONCLUSIONS**

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

Yes, I most definitely would. Berlin is a great place to live and the university is very good. Like I said, just make sure that you stay on top of administrative things, as they require a little more effort in Berlin than they do in Utrecht. But that should not keep you from applying to this university! If you are looking for a lively, (relatively) safe and very diverse city, then definitely apply to Berlin!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (I provided my e-mail address above). I remember struggling quite a bit during the process, especially with the Learning Agreement and the ECTS credits, and I wished someone could have helped me during that time, so I hope to be able to help you if you decide to apply!

Save this UU report for your own records and upload the report in your Erasmus+ file/application in Osiris within 30 days after finishing your study abroad period and in ANY case before the final deadline!

**NOTE: Please upload in Word (.docx) so we can delete your \*personal details between processing for grant purposes and publication on the website for future UU exchange students. \*\*Contact details will only be included if and where permission has been given.**