

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin**2022-2023****Report 1**

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: s.b.a.jansen@students.uu.nl my weblog <input type="checkbox"/> yes: my Facebook account <input type="checkbox"/> yes: other (social) media <input type="checkbox"/> yes: or <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	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	History

destination city & country	Berlijn, Duitsland
how did you travel to your destination?	By train
name university abroad	FU Berlin
start date	06/03/2023
end date	21/07/2023

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The process of applying for an exchange is pretty self explanatory and is a process of the UU. The steps are clearly described on the website. The only thing that was difficult was that the course catalogue of the FU Berlin was a bit unclear, so making the study plan was the most challenging.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

If you have questions, there's different people you can email and in my experience, contactpersons reply to your email fast and are really helpful.

academic preparation

I did not do any academic preparation, but this was not necessary.

language preparation

To study at a German university you need a German level of B1 to get accepted, so I made sure I got the right certificate. For this I took German classes and did a Goethe test. To really feel comfortable however, it is recommended you get level B2, so that's why I took a german course at the UU (a course from the first course of German studies).

finances

I did not save money beforehand.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
	study programme (content and organisational issues)
	The FU Berlin makes you choose a sort of 'minor' that is not the same as your major. I chose political sciences. You were still free to pick other courses, in my case history courses (my major) or courses for internationals. I picked mostly courses from political sciences however. I think all the courses were pretty interesting, but the way courses are taught are a bit different than at the UU. Seminars are mostly filled with student presentations and class discussions and lectures are just lectures, the two are not connected as at the UU. For me the seminars could sometimes seem a bit unstructured and not super academic. The lectures were better, in my opinion. The organisation and application of the courses is pretty chaotic. The application is really last minute and students apply to more courses they will eventually follow and will pick the ones they like after the first week of classes. Also, none of the courses I followed had a good course catalogue with deadlines and credits in them.
	academic quality of education activities
	In my opinion the quality of the lectures were good, but the seminars could be pretty bad. It depended a lot on the professor. Some were leading discussions with the help of specific questions, but others were just letting everybody voice their opinion, making it really hard to understand the main lesson to take away from the seminar.
	counselling & support at receiving university abroad
	I followed just normal courses for regular German students, and professors did not really seem to be aware of the fact that international students took their courses. I would say it's your own responsibility to email professors and inform them about your needs as an international student.
	transfer of credits
	It is sometimes difficult to know how many credits you will receive for certain courses, also because you can write optional essays, for which you receive more credits.

STUDENT LIFE	
	welcome & orientation programme
	There was an orientation day and also a campus tour. There were optional activities you could participate in to meet more Erasmus students, such as boat tours, but I would say these activities were sometimes not the most helpful to meet people and I personally met most of my friends during the German course before the start of the semester and in my dorm.
	accommodation
	You have some advantages for getting into students dorms through the university, as an international student you sort of skip the waitinglist. But applying for a dorm is not a guarantee you will get in, as places are limited. The dorm is pretty cheap, but also far from the city centre. The rooms are big though, and it is easy to meet other international students.
	leisure & culture
	I had a lot of free time, just like other Erasmus students, which meant we did a lot of activities together. There is a lot to do in Berlin, and I feel like there's always new stuff to discover, which really motivated me to get out and do fun things. There's a lot of culture in Berlin, a lot of museums, clubs and other entertainment, and just a lot of history.

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suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I would recommend going to Berlin, because it's a really interesting city, but I wouldn't necessarily recommend the university. There are really interesting courses at the university, but the whole system can be pretty chaotic which can take some extra energy and time. But I would say it's worth it.
do you have any additional advice or comments?

Report 2

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 type="checkbox"/> yes: r.r.verbaarschott@students.uu.nl my weblog <input type="checkbox"/> yes: my Facebook account <input type="checkbox"/> yes: other (social) media <input type="checkbox"/> yes: or <input checked="" 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	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Duitse taal en cultuur

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	By car
name university abroad	Freie Universität
start date	01 / 04 / 2023 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	22 / 07 / 2023 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION
exchange application process
The application process wasn't that difficult. Although it was a lot of paperwork that had to be done, so it does take some time, but it is very clear what to do.
counselling & support at Utrecht University

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

I am really happy about the support that i got from the International Office, I always got a very quick reaction to my emails. I have also heard about the experiences from some students from other dutch university's and I do have to say, that I am very glad about my experiences with University Utrecht. Not only whilst being in Germany but mostly about support in the the preparation process.
academic preparation
I didn't do anything different that just following the studyprogram and I think that that was definitely enough.
language preparation
For me as a german student, i didn't had to do any preparation in terms of the language. But if your German isn't that great they do offer language courses.
finances
My parents supported me with paying my rent. I also received my Erasmus grant, so i could use that form my groceries etc. I had also save some money in advance for activities etc.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD
study programme (content and organisational issues)
I have done courses regarding to german language and literature and some specific courses for international students, that were more about germany it self and the german culture. I had no problems with following the courses, the registration is different to the way I am used to do it, but overall it was very clear and they explained anything to you.
academic quality of education activities
To me the quality of the courses was very good. What I did found surprising and not that great, was that the level of german from most of the other students was not that good. Most of the courses i visited were in german, so it wasn't always that easy to comminucate or to work together with my fellow students when the work had to be done in german.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
At the Freie Universität they are very focussed on international students, so the support was very good. You could always ask your questions and they have always send overall emails regarding to generall topics and deadlines, so the support was very good. They always send their information both in English and in German, so that anybody could understand it.
transfer of credits
The instructions were very clear, I only have to wait now until they will sent my Transcript of records.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
I could not attend the orientation days, since I came later to Berlin because of familiar circumstances.
accommodation
The university offers studentrooms, but they are very limited. It is difficult to find a place in Berlin, but not more difficult than any other city nowadays. I ended up renting a privat apartment by a german organisation
leisure & culture

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Berlin is such a wonderful city, which offers so many different aspects. For me the main reason to go to Berlin was partly because of the history. At one hand you can still find the history of the city and at the other hand Berlin is so modern. To me the balance between both of them was something I really enjoyed.

suggestions/tips

Of course you should visit the Highlights but I would invite you to look at some places that are not that touristic. My tip is to follow the Instagram account: @berlin.explores which gives you a lot of insider tips.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes I would definitely recommend this University and Berlin itself. They offer a great variety of courses. In Berlin itself you can find both more traditional German culture and more international oriented culture. To me this mix is what makes Berlin so great.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Report 3

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

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	by train
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	05 / 09 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	17 / 02 / 2023 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The exchange application was fairly easy for me, as I had done an exchange before during my BA and was familiar with the process.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The UU offers

academic preparation

I did not do any academic preparation.

language preparation

It is advised to have at least a B2 in German in order to follow courses at the FU, since there are very few English language courses. As I did not take German as an exam in high school, my level was around A1-2 and I had to take a course at the Babel Institute to get it up to around B1. Before my semester started, I attended the

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six week pre-semester language course (Vorkurs) offered by the FU Berlin, which consisted of 4 hours teaching every day. This was very helpful and brought my level up to B2 before I started my courses. Even though I did not take any courses taught in German, I would still advise learning the language, as it definitely helps to get around the university and around Berlin in general.

finances

I applied for the Erasmus Grant, and had some savings. As I was travelling by train, I was also eligible for the Travel Green Grant and the Green TopUP for the Erasmus Grant, which covered a good deal of the travel expenses. I also stopped my free public transport on DUO, which meant I would receive about 90 euros a month instead. Germany is not that much more expensive than the Netherlands, so in combination with my DUO loans this was enough to finance my exchange.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I took courses from the Comparative Literature department (AVL), the English department, and the department for North American Studies. The courses at FU are more classic in their approach to literary studies, and by far not as interdisciplinary or engaged in current debates as those at the UU. On the other hand, there is a bigger focus on poetry, translation, and creative writing, which are areas that do not receive much explicit attention in the CLS programme. Organisation is a big hassle, as the digital registration system is quite outdated and only works when you register for courses under your programme agreement. However, if you want to take other courses you can simply show up in the first weeks and ask to be registered, and you will get a document signed by the professor at the end.

academic quality of education activities

I found that the academic quality at the FU was not up to par with that at Utrecht University. The courses are more seminar and discussion based than at UU, and the professors mostly act as moderators for the discussion. I never really had to read much in the way of theory, which was nice in terms of workload but I did not feel inspired or challenged by many of the courses.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I did not seek any counselling or support at the university.

transfer of credits

At the moment of writing, this has not happened yet.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The welcome and orientation programme were fine, but nothing special. I would advise taking the Vorkurs, as it also comes with a free programme of cultural activities to get to know the city and helped me get acquainted with the university and other exchange students before classes actually started.

accommodation

Finding accommodation (for longer than a few weeks) in Berlin is hard. The FU does offer student housing, but I chose to find a room for myself, as it is quite far from the nice parts of the city and I wanted to avoid getting caught up in a bubble of international students. I ended up finding a sublet for a month in Friedrichshain, and luckily found something more permanent in that neighborhood for the rest of my stay via friends I made there. I really enjoyed the neighborhood ('Kiez') that I stayed in. I did have to travel an hour to university every day,

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but for me it was worth it to be in a more lively and fun part of the city! I do recommend starting your search early, and maybe coming to Berlin a bit earlier than the semester starts to give you some time to find something. If you don't want to stay in the student accommodation, you might have to be okay with moving from sublet to sublet, or you might get lucky!

leisure & culture

You will find anything you want in Berlin! Every 'Kiez' has its own clubs, bars, museums, cafes, restaurants, galleries, and event spaces, so you don't really have to leave your neighborhood. You should, though, because there is so much to explore and public transport will get you anywhere within an hour. You can also explore other cities in Germany quite easily, and Prague is only a few hours away.

suggestions/tips

Berlin is big, so be prepared to travel a lot. I recommend getting a bike (you can get a Swapfiets there) for shorter distances. In Germany, cash is still the main mode of payment in most places, so make sure you always have some on hand and mind where you withdraw money (commercial ATMs will rip you off).
As for the University, make sure you're very careful in your course selection with regards to the ECTS. The amount of credits you get is not clear at all in many cases, and differs depending on if you take a final exam or not. As the end of the FU semester overlaps with the start of the third block at UU, and deadlines can run until the start of April, you might end up still having to write essays after starting at the UU again.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Berlin is an amazing city, but I would not particularly recommend the university. When you are used to the UU, the content of the courses and the mode of teaching can feel slightly dated, the organisation is messy, and the FU just did not really do much to make (international) students feel at home. That being said, if you're like me and think this is a trade-off you're willing to make in order to experience this city, then definitely go!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you are really having trouble with finding housing, ask the International Office for my e-mail address and shoot me a message :)

2021-2022**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	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	Train
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	06 / 09 / 2021 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	19 / 02 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)

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PREPARATION	
exchange application process	Registering at the host university was not always easy. This was partly due to the fact that at the FU the courses are not announced until relatively late, but also to the fact that you often have to send the same data that you already sent but in a different document. Because of this, I occasionally lost the overview. I therefore recommend that you keep all documents and important emails together. The FU was always very quick to respond and very helpful when I had questions. This helped me a lot with the registration.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	At the start of my exchange I had problems with my e-mail address, which is why I had not received the Erasmus language test and could therefore not take it. Utrecht University was very helpful with this and responded quickly, so that the problem was solved quickly. They also offered several options to prepare you as best as possible for the whole exchange process. For example, there were multiple meetings and I also got a clear manual.
academic preparation	I have not made any academic preparations.
language preparation	I wanted to become fluent in German and therefore only wanted to take courses in German. For this I followed a course in Utrecht at the Goethe Institut (online) and I registered for the Vorkurs. The Vorkurs starts six weeks before the actual semester. I can absolutely recommend this. Learning a language is mainly speaking a lot and I noticed that my German improved so much during that period. This is also a very good way to get to know people before the semester starts.
finances	Unfortunately I can't give much advice on this. I made an overview in advance of the expected costs, but in practice this was of little use to me. I underestimated how much money I would spend.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	Registering for courses is quite unclear at the FU. This is because the school system is very different from what you are used to in Utrecht. For example, you can register for modules, but that can be complicated if you only stay for half a year. You can also coordinate the number of credits for many courses yourself (not Erasmus courses, by the way) with your teacher. I was lucky enough to live with eight Germans who could explain this system to me, but I still found it complicated. I have therefore chosen to only take Erasmus courses. I found this more manageable in connection with ECTS and also because I only studied at the university for six months. The Erasmus courses mainly deal with German history, politics and culture. I personally find this very interesting so I was very happy with the course offer.
academic quality of education activities	I find it difficult to say anything about this. The Erasmus courses are accessible to everyone, regardless of your actual study. Many courses are about history and politics in Germany. I study history, so the content of the courses was not too difficult for me. On the one hand I would have liked and expected a little more depth. On the other hand, the courses were still very interesting and it improved my (academic) German enormously. There are by the way also a lot of courses in English.

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counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The FU is extremely helpful. Every time I had a question, they responded quickly and thought along. At the end of the semester, for example, I had the problem that the second semester in Utrecht had already started while the first semester in Berlin had not yet ended. Teachers all thought along about this and came up with different solutions. The semester overlap was therefore not a problem at all.
transfer of credits
Once I received my grades, I also got a signed certificate with both attendance and final grade on it. I can't say more about this right now because this process has not yet been completed.

STUDENT LIFE	
welcome & orientation programme	Because I had already taken the Vorkurs at the university for six weeks, I did not also needed to fully participate in the other orientation. After all, I already knew where everything was and had an orientation during Vorkurs. During the Vorkurs a lot of trips were planned which were a lot of fun and the teachers gave you a warm welcome to the university and explained where everything was et cetera.
accommodation	I was lucky enough to find a room almost immediately. This was not in a university student complex, but in the WG of a private landlord. I lived there with eight other students. I was lucky that I found something quickly because Berlin is a difficult city to find a home, I can tell from the experience of friends. That is why I would try to find a living space in advance (be careful that it is not a scam).
leisure & culture	All I can say about this is that Berlin is simply an amazing city for your free time. Literally everything is possible, there is always something to do and it's fantastic for going out as well as restaurants, cafés, museums, parks, christmas markets (when you're there during the winter semester), street art et cetera. Especially also the places that are less known are definitely worth a visit.
suggestions/tips	In Berlin itself there are too many nice things to list here, but you could also consider, for example, that from Berlin you can easily reach cities/countries where you might otherwise come less quickly because it is relatively far. For example, I went to Poland for four days with five friends on the Flixbus. We had a great time there, so weekend away to other places during your exchange, would I definitely recommend. It doesn't have to be expensive if you go with a Flixbus for example.

CONCLUSIONS	
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain	100%. I had the time of my life in Berlin, making countless great memories and building strong friendships with people I still see as much as possible. You can do so many different fun things and everyone was very welcoming and accepting to everyone, which I loved. I also had a really good time at the FU. I have already mentioned it, but there is a positive atmosphere there and teachers are very helpful when something is unclear or when there are problems.
do you have any additional advice or comments?	Half a year sounds long, but it goes very very fast, so just enjoy the time as much as you can.

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin**Report 2**

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	By train
name university abroad	Freie Universität
start date	01 / 10 / 2021 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	01 / 03 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process
I applied via Osiris, and after a while they accepted my first choice.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
There were a few meetings for outgoing students, which was quite helpful. Otherwise the emails from the international office were clear and they answered questions easily.
academic preparation
Lots of checking the course catalogue at FU. Courses in Germany do not get uploaded until October, so there were a lot of changes in my learning agreement. This did not bring about any problems, though.
language preparation
My course was in English, which is the same language of instruction as my current master. So, this was no problem. I did, however, take a German language course at Babel with a discount from UU
finances
Erasmus scholarship and my student loans covered my stay abroad.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
The Global History program is a joint program by HU and FU in Berlin. As an exchange student, I was part of the first year cohort and felt very welcome. The Berlin universities can, however, be a bit tricky when it comes down to course registration etc. My advice would be not to get stressed out if things take a long time, because there is no point in speeding things up.
academic quality of education activities
The quality of the courses was very high, with very intelligent lecturers. There is no uniform manner in which the courses are conducted, though. This is very different from the programs at UU, where every course seems to have its place within the wider program
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
My Erasmus coordinator for academic counseling at FU, prof. Klaus Geus, was extremely helpful, and replied swiftly when I sent him an email. The international office is also open to questions - so I have no complaints in that area.
transfer of credits

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This can be a bit tricky because I took courses at HU and FU. Also German universities are very reliant on paper etc. This means there can be a lot of back and forth. Again, I advice not to rush things or get too worried!

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The international committee organised many events for incoming students. Also, the international office organised tours and other events. I received a lot of information at the start, and did not feel lost in any way. Also, before the semester started, the FU introduced all students to a social app, which enabled us to meet each other before the semester start.

accommodation

There are cheap dormitories, but I opted to subrent an apartment in the city. The Berlin housing market is very hard at the moment, so if this worries you, the dormitory is probably the best option.

leisure & culture

The world is your oyster in Berlin! There are so many museums, bars, clubs galleries; no need to get bored.

suggestions/tips

One of my favourite areas is Tempelhofer Feld. It used to be an airport, but now you can cycle over the disused runways in the middle of Neukölln!

CONCLUSIONS

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

Not entirely, because the city is so big, there is not such an active student life in comparison to UU. As I am later in my studies and already knew people in Berlin, this was no problem for me. But something to keep in mind before you choose FU or HU!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Report 3

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

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	By train
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	05 / 04 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	22 / 07 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	
It is clearly explained what the documents needed are, the meeting was also very helpful	
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
Good, I did not need special counselling or support	
academic preparation	
I did not need to prepare academically, especially in hinsight. For me the levels of both universities were equal	
language preparation	
I had a good preparation because I already studied German for 2,5 years, so I did not need more time to prepare for the level of language	
finances	
The information is easy to find, but I would have liked more reminders before the deadline for the summer semester. I checked, and it was only said once, now I applied really late because my overview of everything I had to organize before my department was already really chaotic, It would have helped me to have had reminders so I could prioritize the Erasmus Grant	

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
It was easy to enroll in courses from the bachelor I was enrolled in, but it was not easy to enroll in extra courses within the faculty. The system did not let you choose from other bachelors within the faculty, so you had to contact the teacher. It was not possible to register anywhere for the other courses	
academic quality of education activities	
I really enjoyed the different environment and different topics. I feel like I really learned new things within my subject of interest, especially from the topics that the UU does not cover (like a Dutch literature course on the female perspective in coming of age literature or the history of women in Berlin)	
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	
The Erasmus bureau was easy to contact and they were very helpful	
transfer of credits	
The system really was organized well, I did not have any troubles with the transcript of records	

STUDENT LIFE	
welcome & orientation programme	
They really made sure you knew everything and otherwise where to find the information or who to ask. I met a few people with whom I became friends with, and soon I knew the university better, so the orientation days were very helpful	
accommodation	

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Berlin is a popular city, and I did not want to live in a student dorm, so I found a room in an apartment via a housing site. It was okay for half a year. They had student dorms for internationals, but really not enough space for the most part of the group international students, and the locations were not great
leisure & culture
I loved the freedom in Berlin, it was really easy to participate everywhere and meet new people
suggestions/tips
-

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I really would, the university has an international reputation that it really deserves, the environment was super and overall the city and culture was great. I have, and many people in my Erasmus time, really enjoyed the stay, and I really felt at home in Berlin
do you have any additional advice or comments?
You get a lot of information and things to organize. Most of them are sent in the beginning of the year, so both the winter/summer semester going people get it at the same time. It would be great if the international office would split the times of sending up for both semesters, because now I got the information in a time that was not relevant for me, and I did not have a good overview when I really needed the information

Report 4

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

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	Train
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	05 / 04 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	27 / 07 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process
The application process was quite long and time consuming, but not necessarily very difficult, as the International Office provided clear instructions.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
Utrecht University is very helpful when it comes to preparation for a stay abroad. They offered various resources such as meetings, emails and manuals. The International Office can help you with most questions you have and usually answers their emails relatively fast.

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academic preparation
I did not make any academic preparations, because I expected my academic skills to be sufficient to successfully participate in courses at my host university.
language preparation
Since I study German Language and Culture at UU, it was not necessary for me to do any language preparation before the start of my stay abroad.
finances
In advance, I estimated the expected monthly costs, which turned out to be similar to those in the Netherlands. Therefore, I felt like it wasn't necessary to set aside a lot of money in advance, especially because there are also some other ways to finance your exchange: I applied for the Erasmus+-grant and through DUO I applied for financial compensation for public transport, because I would not use my 'studentenreisproduct' in the Netherlands during my stay abroad. On top of that, my parents were sponsoring me, so that in the end I barely had to use my personal savings to finance my life abroad.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
Registering for courses at FU is quite complicated and confusing. Many departments work with modules of two courses, which are spread over two semesters and which both need to be taken in order to get credits for them. Since most Erasmus students are only at FU for one semester and therefore cannot take part in the full module, an exception is made for them, but this was not communicated well at all. Moreover, the course catalogue only lists German credits (Leistungspunkte, LP), which are not the same as ECTS. Another problem for me was that you can only register for courses that are part of the department you are enrolled in. I was enrolled in Allgemeine & vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, but I also had to/wanted to take courses in other departments and since I couldn't register for those myself, I had to send an email to every lecturer to request permission to participate in the course. One thing that I really liked about FU, however, was that it offers special courses for foreign students, which mainly discuss topics as German/Berlin history, culture and language and which I found really interesting.
academic quality of education activities
Although academic quality is obviously different for each course, I was generally very satisfied with the quality of education. The lecturers clearly had a lot of knowledge of the topics discussed and were able to present it in an interesting and understandable way. Especially the courses for foreign students were very accessible to all students, regardless of their German language skills or prior knowledge.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The FU International Office and teachers are very helpful when it comes to supporting foreign students. As an Erasmus student, you are also assigned a coordinator from your department, who can also give you academic counselling and who signs your Learning Agreement. Unfortunately, I was a bit unlucky with my coordinator, as she was not too helpful and only replied to my emails after several days.
transfer of credits
I am still in the process of receiving my Transcript of Records, so that I can not really say anything about the transfer of credits yet.

STUDENT LIFE

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

welcome & orientation programme
The FU offers a useful orientation programme. The summer semester and thus my classes started mid-April and the Orientation Days were at the beginning of April. The programme was spread over the course of two days: on tuesday, there were several online (because of COVID) meetings which provided important information about the university, registration for courses, sports courses, etc. and on Friday there was a physical Campus Tour, which was very helpful. During the semester, the Erasmus Committee and the International Club also organized several social activities to get to know fellow students.
accommodation
It is quite difficult to find accommodation in Berlin, but luckily the university offers a number of possible accommodations specially for foreign students. I applied for a student dormitory in Lankwitz (Studentenwohnheim Halbauer Weg) and fortunately, I was assigned a room there. Most students living there are foreign students, but there are also some German students. The rent is relatively low and there are many services offered, such as a gym, a laundry room, a bar and regular social activities. From the dormitory, it is about 30 minutes to both the university and the city centre, which is not that bad for a city as big as Berlin.
leisure & culture
Berlin is a very diverse city that offers many different leisure and cultural activities, so that there is something to do or see for everyone: beautiful parks, museums, nightlife, sports, shops and much more. Even after four months, I am far from having seen everything, so I would love to go back again and I would definitely recommend going to Berlin
suggestions/tips
Start looking for a room in time, as this can be very difficult in Berlin. And use the options that the FU offers for activities such as excursions and UniSport, because that way you'll see even more of the city and get to know lots of people!

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Definitely! Berlin is historically and culturally a very interesting and beautiful city, where there is a nice atmosphere and where you feel very welcome. The same applied to the Freie Universität.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
Berlin is a very big city that can be quite overwhelming at first, but you will soon feel at home there.

Report 5

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	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	By Flixbus, though that was only my second choice. Originally, I intended on going by train, but due to strikes this wasn't possible.
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	06 / 09 / 2021 (dd/mm/yyyy)

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

end date	01 / 08 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
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PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process may be a bit confusing at first, especially by the way German institutions are organised, but, after some investigating everyone can manage. Just know you cannot handle everything in a single day, you'll have several deadlines throughout the months. Most of them are already known beforehand, so I had written them down in my agenda and on a piece of paper on my wall. In this way you prevent a lot of unnecessary stress and mistakes.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

For me personally it wasn't that great. My original stay had a duration of one semester and once I had experienced how much I enjoyed it, I asked my exchange coordinator in an extensive E-mail if it was possible to extend it with another semester. I received a short answer from two sentences, which said that this was 'certainly not possible' and that I should enjoy my remaining time as much as possible. After contacting the Freie Universität Berlin, I was told by their Exchange Office that the extension of my stay was possible and I just had to get approval from my FU mentor and some other smaller requirements. After a lot of e-mailing and questions, I finally managed to extend my stay, but that had nothing to do with the help of the UU, in contrary, my exchange coordinator was rather discouraging. So if you want to do two semesters, better make a decision in advance, it will save you many problems!

For the remaining things, the UU was actually very useful and fast to respond, so maybe I just had a stroke of bad luck with my exchange coordinator.

academic preparation

I wouldn't say any supplementary academic would be necessary.

language preparation

Highly advisable to do a German language course in the Netherlands. I did two courses at the Goethe Institut, because I noticed the 5 years of German at high school wasn't sufficient. This really enabled me to participate with the German taught courses at the FU and enabled me to make German friends.

finances

With the Erasmus grant and the Public Transport grant, you'll manage pretty well. Berlin is not an expensive city if you keep in mind it's a capital. The most tricky thing is your housing: the first semester my rent was 260 euros per month (at the outskirts of the city in a FU dorm) and the second it was 620 euros (close to the city centre in a normal WG with Germans). If you are not in one of the FU dorms, you should get something around 500 euros per month.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I predominantly followed language courses (German and French) and did a lot of 'Erasmus courses', courses specifically tailored for Erasmus students. They were a lot of fun, because a lot of them are taught in German, but for a B1/B2 level, so it is rather easy to understand and participate. Making language mistakes doesn't really matter in these courses, your language skills benefit from it and you will meet a lot of other Erasmus students.

academic quality of education activities

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

The language courses were the most challenging and the 'Erasmus courses' were rather easy and not really demanding, but as I said before, they were really helpful for practicing your German skills (especially if you're not too advanced). If you're not doing anything weird, you will definitely pass the courses.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
It was pretty well explained. You have to get used to the fact that everything is organised a bit more loosely as oppose to the University Utrecht. For example: you can still switch courses up to two weeks in the the semester.
transfer of credits
It was a pretty self-explanatory process.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme
We had an open day of the faculty, but that wasn't too spectacular. The Vorkurse (the pre-semester language course, duration: 6 weeks) felt like my introduction to the student life in the city. I cannot emphasise how helpful this is to befriend fellow students, who are all in the same situation. Simultaneously, you'll improve your German a lot and gain confidence in speaking German.
accommodation
The student dorms offered by the FU aren't too fancy or located in the centre of the city, but they are the cheapest you can get (260-280 euros per moth) and I had the time of my life at the Halbauer Weg. I made friends for life with my neighbours and we all had a holiday together after the exchange. Finding a room outside these dorms is incredibly difficult and more expensive (starts form 450/500 onwards) and doesn't guarantee you any fun neighbours.
leisure & culture
Well, it's Berlin, so I think by now you should now how much the city has to offer. Every weekend there are new bars, clubs and museums to discover. The techno scene is the best in the world (tips: try Sisyphus, Tresor, Kater Blau or Club Ost; don't go: Matrix!!!!)
suggestions/tips
The most important stuff: The Vorkurse and a FU dorm! I made my best friends because of these two things and they provide you some structure/safe place in the big city.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Definitely! I wasn't looking for a super challenging academic environment, but I did want to improve my German. This is the perfect place for this, since they have a lot of language courses and the Erasmus courses in 'easy' German. After Utrecht, I was looking for something bigger, and I definitely found it here. There is no city like Berlin and the FU is a really relaxed place.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
If you think you will have a great time abroad, it will even be better! Just be open, try to engage in as much activities (especially in the beginning) and you'll quickly find your way :)

Report 6

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
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Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

how did you travel to your destination?	By train
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	01 / 04 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	30 / 07 / 2022 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The exchange application process went well since every step that needed to be taken was elaborated on by the university. It did feel like a lot at a certain point because there is so much you have to take into consideration and it feels like a mountain of things to figure out.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The University had a lot of support and I felt comfortable asking questions during the whole process when something wasn't as clear. We also received a lot of information like brochures and in form of a presentations that most questions were answered.

academic preparation

There wasn't much academic preparation required in my case. Everything was clear when I got there. In Berlin, and I think in the rest of Germany, it is not the same as in The Netherlands where everything has to be arranged months before. We got more information and an introduction by the university itself and also a tour of the campus and how everything works. So in the end, everything became clear once there so there was no need to stress.

language preparation

I didn't have many courses in German so my main language of instruction was English. I did a language course before I went so I could get around and also meet local people, but this didn't happen a lot in the end. Only in the course that I took in German. So I would recommend to have a basic level of German. Also if you want to see other places than Berlin because not everyone speaks English outside of the city, or even in.

finances

I saved up some money for living costs and activities during the exchange periode and the Erasmus grant also helped out a lot.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

Everything became clear once there like I said before. It felt a bit last minute since I am used to having everything figured out some time before. I enjoyed the

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality of education activities varied in my opinion. In some courses I found the quality to be high and in others it might have had a lower academic level. But I liked the way my professors taught a lot. All of them inspired me in some way. Especially a course I took by guest lecturer Lina Meruane. I appreciated that the university made it possible to enroll in courses that were of interest, simply by e-mailing the professor and asking to be part of it. This way of approach really spoke to me. it was casual, yet professional.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

The support by the receiving institution was great. I felt welcome, well informed and at place. The university made asking for help easy and everyone was approachable in my experience. Some aspects could be a bit unclear since their system for managing the courses was outdated in my opinion or made way too complicated. But this is probably because their system is different than I am used to.

transfer of credits

I have not completed the transfer of my credits yet, but it is easy if you have followed the courses from the University itself and in the same faculty. I took a course at a different university and also a masters course which means that I have to make sure my grades get transferred correctly myself and e-mail around. So this takes a bit more effort from myself.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The university did make an effort for students to meet each other and planned activities. we had a tour and presentations in the beginning of the semester so you could meet people in the faculty. So if you want to, it is easy to meet new people.

accommodation

I found accommodation myself and the university is not part of this process. They do have suggestions where you can look. I would recommend for Berlin to look at "wg gesucht", ebay kleinanzeigen and facebook pages for housing in Berlin. There are plenty more options but it depends on budget, location, roommates etc. It is difficult to find something in Berlin so if you want to be safe it's better to start on time. I know that there are dorms but I don't know what the experiences there are. I found an apartment twice but I heard from fellow students that some did not manage to find housing so prepare for a full time job looking for a place.

leisure & culture

The leisure and culture during my stay in Berlin were amazing. There is a lot to do and a lot of cultural places to visit. There are plenty of places that have to do with the history of Berlin, but also a lot of art places, outside events and of course the nightlife and the clubscene which are great.

suggestions/tips

I would say join the tour of the campus (that's where I met my closest friends from exchange), I did not join the organised activities by the university but I think it is also a good place to make friends. The courses are also good for meeting people since you'll have some interests in common. I did a course at the Hochschulsport where I also met a friend. Don't stress too much before going, it'll all fall into place.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes. The city is great - hectic, but great. The university is casual and had interesting courses in my opinion. If you like a bit more of a classic traditional university, then maybe Humboldt might be better. But I like the FU a lot and would recommend studying here.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Relax, everything will be fine when you are there. Also enjoy the exchange and the people around you and take the city in. You (probably) won't do an exchange there again so try to find a balance between studying and student life. The friends and experience will stay with you, not the grades.

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

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

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
how did you travel to your destination?	By car
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	19 / 04 / 22 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	22 / 07 / 22 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The 'latest' exchange application process went smoothly, as I had to do the beginning part of the application two times due to corona. I must say that I had some troubles with the course registration for the study plan at the beginning, as I discovered the good 'Vorlesungsverzeichnis' page later on.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Counselling & support at UU was great to be honest. The staff answers fast and they are really kind. They helped me well with all of my questions even though some of them were a little unnecessary!

academic preparation

I did courses in German Philology and in Dutch Philology. As I study German, I didn't do any 'further' academic preparation and as Dutch is my mother tongue and as I do believe that with some knowledge of linguistics and literature you can do very much in this field, I didn't do any preparation for that either.

language preparation

As I study German Language and Culture, I didn't do any language preparation. It turned out I didn't really need it, too. For those whose German isn't the best, I highly recommend already learning as much as possible!

finances

I've been saving money for this experience in the last two years so that I could do some 'fun stuff'. Furthermore, my grand parents sponsored me amazingly and the Grant was of great help with the finances too. As I am not a big spender and as my room was not that expensive, it was really doable.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I did some courses in German Philology and in Dutch Philology. Both fields contained courses in both linguistics and literature. Each course took place once a week and took 90 minutes.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality was good. Not too hard; not too easy. I must say that classes that only take place once a week are still a little bit strange to me, as I think one does not engage with the matter very intensively, but as the semester takes longer here (14 weeks instead of 10), it also seems like you did a lot too, but in a shorter amount of time.

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

counselling & support at receiving university abroad
Sometimes counselling & support at FU was great and sometimes I felt like I was left to my own devices. Finding out the amount of ECTS for courses was one of the hardest things I had to do in my 'academic career'. I think all universities that are affiliated with Erasmus should put the ECTS in their systems like they do with the study points for their 'own' students. That would make the international students feel more welcome and it would save a lot of slightly angry emails.
transfer of credits
I am still waiting for the transfer of credits and that's why I think that I can already say that passing your tests is easier than getting your credits transferred!

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
I didn't attend such a programme, as I was doing stuff for Utrecht University at home. (There could be some overlap in study periods between dutch and german universities.) After all, I was at an online talk in which International Students were welcomed. It wasn't a problem that I didn't attend a welcome or orientation programme, as you can find out much yourself and as most students at FU are willing to help you.
accommodation
I applied for a room from StudierendenWERK Berlin, as I wanted to save myself from finding a room in the city of Berlin. FU mentioned this option somewhere and I was lucky enough to get such an accommodation!
leisure & culture
I played badminton with a friend. This was facilitated by FU. I went swimming a lot. The entrance fee is not that high in Berlin and you can get a discount with your student card on top of that. It's by the way always clever to bring your student card, as you can get discounts a lot. The card provided for example a lower entrance fee at the Fernsehturm and it could be used as '9-Euro-Ticket' too.
suggestions/tips
Freiluftkinos, picknicking in parks and on fields, flea markets (at Mauerpark and on Boxhagener Platz) and when the weather is good: EVERYTHING that is affiliated with the Berliner Bäder-Betriebe. (When it's raining you could go to indoor swimmingpools too by the way!)

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I would definitely recommend! Berlin is a great city to 'find yourself'. However, you should be prepared for some serious (german) bureaucracy and some people not willing to help you even though it is their job. However, you learn a lot from having to do a lot by yourself!
do you have any additional advice or comments?
Studying abroad is a great experience and you will not regret it when you do! However, you should be prepared for a lot of administrative work and things not working out immediately. It will however be worth it in the end!

2018-2019**Report 1**

faculty/college	Humanities
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Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Liberal Arts and Sciences

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	01 / 09 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	15 / 02 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process	The process of applying is easy but takes some time. Plan a day or a couple of hours to do this.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The counselling at Utrecht University is very nice. With any question you can go to the International Office.
academic preparation	I did not have to do any academic preparation since there were no academic requirements for the Freie Universität Berlin.
language preparation	I took a German class at the Volksuniversiteit Utrecht, and in Berlin I did the Vorkurs.
finances	I made some calculations in advance of my departure, but I did not have to save a lot of money since Berlin is not really expensive and I already had my normal savings for back up.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)	This was very difficult to understand. At the Freie they do not publish the courses that will be given that semester, only prior to the semester. This gave me a lot of stress since I did not know which courses there were going to be.
academic quality of education activities	I enjoyed the education of the receiving university very much. It surprised me how much the education system differed from that in Utrecht. It was way more encouraging and open for discussion than in Utrecht.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	I send a lot of emails in relation to my stress. The receiving university had a great international office that helped me and always sent an email back.
transfer of credits	That is still going on. There is not really such thing as a deadline for grading in Berlin, which is quite inconvenient when you're an exchange student.

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

STUDENT LIFE	
welcome & orientation programme	
The welcoming programme was very nice. I already did the Vorkurs before the semester started, which I can advice to everyone. You will meet a lot of nice people and your German improves a lot.	
accommodation	
The Freie Universität gave the option for accomodation which I did not take. I wanted to find my own house in Berlin, which worked out really well.	
leisure & culture	
At the Vorkurs we did cultural activities almost everyday. This was very nice since you could get to know people, the city and the language.	
suggestions/tips	
Do the Vorkurs (the language course before the semester starts). And find your own house via WG. The accommodation of the university is very far out of the city centre of Berlin (takes around an hour).	

CONCLUSIONS	
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain	
Yes very much. The Freie Universität is a really nice university and the different approach in education has brought me a lot.	
do you have any additional advice or comments?	
Also take courses at other universities in Berlin. You can take up to 40% of your courses at different universities. I took two really nice courses at the Humboldt Universität which I enjoyed very much.	

2017-2018**Report 1**

e-mail address	e.bijl@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	German language and culture

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	04 / 10 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	16 / 02 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	
The application process for Erasmus was quite complicated and involved quite a lot of administrative tasks. I could apply for three universities, of which Freie Universität Berlin was my first choice. After having heard I was	

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

accepted, I had to start preparing documents for both universities; luckily the FU has Distributed Campus, a system which explained the application process step-by-step.
counselling & support at Utrecht University
The International Office of Utrecht University was always ready to answer any questions I had, concerning my stay abroad and were very helpful.
academic preparation
I did not really prepare for my study abroad; after three years of studying German language and culture, I felt ready to go study in Germany.
language preparation
At home I study German language and culture, so for me it was not necessary to do any language course before coming to Berlin.
finances
I had been setting aside money some months in advance, because I did not want to have to worry about it in Berlin. Then I made some preparations to have a bit of extra money: I applied for the DAAD-scholarship (which unfortunately I did not get), the Erasmus-scholarship and through DUO I arranged that - since I would not use public transportation anymore in the Netherlands - I would receive financial compensation for that.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
I chose six courses in total (for 30 ECTS): half of them were part of "Deutsche Philologie", these were quite difficult and I studied among regular students; half of them were part of a module offered especially to foreign students, these courses were easier and were a great way to meet other international students. My courses were mostly related to German literature, linguistics and history/culture.
academic quality of education activities
Though I thought the courses offered only to exchange students were a bit too easy, they did offer a great introduction to several aspects of German culture and history. I was very pleased with the academic quality of the courses I followed with Deutsche Philologie.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
It was quite hard sometimes to figure out who I had to turn when I needed help with something. However, with the help of my teachers and the International Office at FU, I always managed to handle everything in the end.
transfer of credits
The transfer of credits was very easy: if I successfully completed all my courses here, I would receive 5 ECTS for each, totalling up to 30. This is the same amount of ECTS I would normally have to acquire in a semester at Utrecht.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme
The courses at FU started somewhere mid-October; for foreign students there was an orientation programme at the start of October. This was spread over a couple of days and mostly included meetings, which explained how everything at the university worked. There was also a possibility to participate in a boat trip, where you could meet other students and which turned out to be very fun. Overall, I was a bit disappointed as there was little organised concerning social activities.

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

accommodation
Through the university I applied for a room in a student dormitory. I ended up in one in Lankwitz: there were both German and foreign students there, which made a nice mix; there were many services such as a gym, washing room, common room and even a student bar. It was located quite far from what you could call Berlin's city centre (about 30-60 minutes by public transportation), but the rent was relatively low and I had a great time there.
leisure & culture
Berlin is brilliant city with lots of different things to offer for everyone: nightlife, culture, nice parks, interesting cities relatively close (Leipzig, Dresden, Hamburg, Budapest, Prague, etc.). I have enjoyed my time in Berlin very much.
suggestions/tips
Read up on time on things that need to be done in Germany specifically. For instance, how to register as a resident in the city, read up on how to get wifi in your accomodation (this turned out to be quite hard) and similar things.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
I certainly would: the academic standards at FU were good, they offered interesting courses and Berlin as a city is a great place to stay, and for a large city not that expensive (especially in comparison to places like Paris, London or Vienna).
do you have any additional advice or comments?
-

Report 2

e-mail address	h.m.brokking@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	German language & culture (Duitse taal en cultuur)

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	01 / 04 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	20 / 07 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process
First you had to attend a meeting with all students interested in a period of exchange. Then the application came around. You first had to apply online (through "Osiris") and then you had to write down a 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd choice where you would like to go. Then, you had to write a time-schedule of all the courses you thought you were going to take during the course of your studies (for me it was during my Bachelors). Also, you had to make a

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

financial estimation for during your exchange (income and outcomes). Finally, you also had to write a letter of motivation to the university you would like to attend. Then, months later (for some even half a year later) the application process started. You follow up all the instructions given by the International Office from the home university and also from the guest university abroad. With that it kind of speaks for itself what you have to do in order to properly start your period of exchange.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Utrecht University has a few counselling "points". The biggest one I would say is the International Office. They organise the whole exchange and they are mediating between you and the university abroad when necessary. They provide you with all the information needed and will answer all the additional questions that come up along the process. Also your counselor/tutor from your own studies will help you. They mostly coordinate the content of the courses abroad and tell you what courses would be smart to take. Obviously also for additional question on this content they will help you.

academic preparation

There are certain seminars that will prepare you for your time abroad. It is wise to attend these, especially when you have never done anything like this before. Also, in the country of stay there perhaps are options to take language courses and in my opinion it is always wise to at least attend the basic classes, also in order to make contact with other students.

If talking about other academic preparations I am not sure there were any in my case. It was wise to read up on the guest university and find out rather sooner than later how they approach academic problems and/or how they teach at that university. There might be an option to get in contact with attending students at the receiving university by sending an email to the coordinator of the exchange programme abroad.

language preparation

There are certain courses you can take at home to prepare for the language spoken in the country you will be visiting for your exchange. But if I remember correctly there are no specific courses offered by the home university. There are on the other hand courses you can take abroad, at least at the university I attended. With visiting a big metropolitan city (Berlin in my case) comes that it is very easy to take language classes. In my case it was German. Since I already speak German fluently, I did not attend these courses, but I did hear from many people that it has been a great way to start their exchange. The courses helped them to build up their confidence within the language, but also to meet people that are also about to start their exchange.

finances

As explained, you have to set up a financial plan beforehand. This will give you a good insight into the ways of living in the city and country abroad. In my case the German expenses are similar to the Dutch ones. But especially when you go further abroad, it will be necessary to be prepared for all the kinds of expenses that you might or definitely will have. My tip is to write down exactly what you think you might want to spend and look up online where you can buy certain products and how much they cost. Also with other activities you have to remember that you are maybe spending more than you are used to, because you are visiting a new place and you might want to participate in more activities than you regularly do. In my case I want to add that Germany is mostly cheaper to live in than the Netherlands. Especially the groceries cost a lot less than back home.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD**study programme (content and organisational issues)**

I mostly attended courses from the German philology. I was enrolled in the Dutch philology because of the contract, but for my studies it was mandatory for me to get at least 15 ECTS points within the department of German. I ended up taking 30 ECTS points (which is common if you are going away for a semester) and I additionally took a class about the German way of living, just because I thought it would be very interesting. This

Germany - Berlin - Freie Universität Berlin

was a special course just for exchange students. I would encourage anybody to try and attend these courses, because they are very interesting and also a good way to meet other people who are foreign.

When it comes to the courses within the department of German philology I really enjoyed those too. They were very interesting and it also neat to see that these courses sometimes have a totally different set up than at my home university, even though it was within the same studies.

academic quality of education activities

When it comes to the quality of education activities I have to say that this is very hard to explain. One thing I can say for sure is that the approaches of the universities (as far as I could tell) are not always similar. I would say that the way the German students work is very different from the Dutch way, in the sense that there is more time for a course, because they have a semester instead of a quarter, like we have at Utrecht University, which gives them more time to be working with the content of the courses. I would say that this sometimes gives a more relaxed atmosphere within the classes, which was good to embrace. On the other hand I think that Dutch students sometimes get more done than German students. The workload is generally higher and it makes them a bit more focused at times. All in all I would say that the outcome is the same. German students in the end do learn the same amount as Dutch students, I would just say that there is a different approach on how they achieve that.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The receiving university and its staff were very polite, kind and helpful. With any kind of question that I had I was able to come during their office hours or write them an E-Mail. It was a very nice environment to be welcomed in. Also a lot of students tend to want to help you, when you ask them to. And also the teachers are very welcoming for any kind of question. They will provide you with all the information needed.

For all the forms (signed e.d.) you will need your coordinator from Erasmus at your home, but also at the receiving university. They will make sure the forms are official.

transfer of credits

By the end of the semester (your time abroad) you will have to record everything very well (especially at German Universities you are lucky that they like to organise everything well). Before going abroad you will have to make an estimation as to what courses you will attend abroad. Not for all universities this will be possible, because certain universities (for example most German ones) don't show the courses offered in a particular semester until a few weeks beforehand. In that case you will have to look at the courses offered in earlier semesters to make an estimation. Then when you actually are abroad and you know for sure what courses you are attending, you will have to revise your learning agreement. This is important in order to still be able to get the Grant awarded to you from Erasmus+. But you also have to make sure that the courses are being accepted at your home university. In my case I could fill out a form that is being sent to the committee for education. This committee will make a decision if all courses can be brought back to the home university in order to achieve your degree. This means that by the end you will need to have a so called transcript of records. This form will make it able to transfer the credits achieved abroad to your home university.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

As partially explained before, the receiving university was very welcoming. The incoming department of the international office organised a lot of trips to all sorts of places in and around Berlin. Unfortunately I could not attend the earlier ones, because I still had to finish my 3rd quarter at the University of Utrecht. But also later on there were a lot of activities that you could participate in and meet new people. All these people were also exchange students from all over the world. It was not until about three weeks later that I met the actual German students.

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<p>On top of that there was an international club. You could join them for 10 Euros per semester or 15 Euros per two semesters and it gave you a lot of percent off on several kinds of trips and activities they organised. It was very fun, because this way I for example took a day trip to Stettin, a city in Poland.</p> <p>Also, there was a language programme, but I was not able to attend, also because the courses at University Utrecht were still going.</p>
accommodation
<p>This is not true for all of Germany, but because I moved to a bigger city it is always harder to find proper and affordable accomodation. The university does provide the opportunity to sign up for student housing. You can apply and it is the principle of first come first serve. You have to pay a certain amount (if I am not mistaking the first month of rent) and that way you are able to find a proper living space. The only down side about that to me was the distance to the center of the city. The FU Berlin is already quite far away from downtown Berlin, but the student dorms are even further away. That is why I decided to try and search for a student dorm not provided through the university. There are several websites to find these WG's (Wohngemeinschaften = student dorms), the most known one is written in the part "suggestions/tips" underneath.</p>
leisure & culture
<p>As maybe already expected there are so many things you can do within Berlin. The city is very laid-back, especially during the summer. There are a lot of different sides to the city, which makes it very welcoming to all sorts of people with all sorts of interests. I would defintely say it is a wonderful experience living in this city! Through the university there are a lot of options to sign up for sports or other activities. But also apart from that you just have to google any sorts of activities and many suggestions will come up.</p>
suggestions/tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website to find student dorm: www.wg-gesucht.de - Google anything and the wished information will come up. So I would say that you use it to your advantage and so this way you can find anything you would like to see or do! - Use social media to find nice places to eat, hang out, shop etc. Also, through Facebook (or the app: facebook local) you can find all sorts of activities you might want to participate in - the website meetup.com maybe has some interesting activities or gatherings you want to participate in. This website is open to everyone, so not just students. - Try and go out as much as you can, even when you are alone. You only get to know a city by exploring yourself. Also, this way you maybe meet new people. - Participate in every activity offered by the university. At first you might not be good at meeting new people from all over the world, but it will make your exchange to a success.

CONCLUSIONS

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

There is no doubt: this exchange was one of the best things I have done so far. I would recommend going on exchange in general to everyone. On top of that I would for sure recommend the university I attended and the city I lived in. Berlin has so many great things to offer, I think that everyone would feel welcome here, even if you are not used to or don't like the big city.

The university has a very good feeling to it; it makes everyone feel welcome, accepted an enthusiastic to academically learn more!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Be prepared for bigger changes during your exchange, but don't be afraid to see that as a positive thing. You will learn a lot from it and not just academically! It will maybe even help you figure better what sort of studies you want to follow later on or what sort of career you want to have in life!

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Also, try and just follow the rules of exchanges. If there is a deadline: Make it easier on everyone and hand it in on time. Mostly it are easy things to do and you will feel better then and you can check it off of your to-do list!

Report 3

e-mail address	lauren.stoevenbeld@gmail.com
faculty/college	Languages, literature and communication
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Comparative Literary Studies

destination city & country	Berlin, Germany
name university abroad	Freie Universität Berlin
start date	04 / 09 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	01 / 02 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION**exchange application process**

The application process was not that difficult, but a lot of work and rather bureaucratic. At times, it made me feel quite stressed, hoping that the exchange would be worth all the trouble. I heard quite quickly that I had been accepted, both from the UU and the FU. Luckily, I got into the programme of my first choice.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The International Office at the UU seems to have very good intentions and do their best to help you, but because there are so many exchange options they know little about specific universities and could therefore not always be of help. In the end, I could not really base my choice for the FU on much more than a course catalogue of which no one knew whether it would still be the same during my exchange (spoiler: it was not) and the city of Berlin. With any questions about general procedures, however, they were helpful.

academic preparation

I did not prepare in any special way because I expected the level of the courses at the FU to be about the same as at the UU. This turned out to be indeed the case.

language preparation

I studied very hard to get my German to the level I needed to take courses at the FU. With only two years of highschool German, I started studying about a year before my exchange. I took online courses, did exercises from a grammar book, read novels in German and watched German films. After this, my level of German was about B2. I then took an amazing intensive language course at the FU during the six weeks before the start of the semester. This brought my level up to C1, which was sufficient to follow lectures in German and prepare German readings for seminars. Participating in discussions and writing were still quite challenging. Luckily I was allowed to write papers and hold solo presentations in English. I really enjoyed learning a new language and I think it is actually the most valuable thing I have learnt during my exchange. However, I would not recommend applying for an exchange at the FU without a good command of German to everyone. It takes a lot of time and discipline to prepare sufficiently and your exchange experience will probably not be very fun nor educational if you don't succeed at acquiring at least a B2 level in German.

finances

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I financed my exchange through a combination of an Erasmus+ grant, student loans and personal savings. For me it was not actually very expensive because my room in Berlin was a lot cheaper than my room in Utrecht.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

The study programme of the FU is not well organized compared to the UU. The upside of this is that the university is quite flexible, the downside is that it can leave you clueless. The courses that were available when I applied for my exchange were all gone when I went on exchange. I had to pick all new courses. I found this out four weeks before the start of the semester; only then was the course catalogue updated. Luckily I still found some interesting courses. The course catalogue does not say how many EC you can get for a course, which is very inconvenient. If you want to know this you have to email the teacher, but they can change their mind, as happened to me. For one course I was told I could get 10 EC, but in the end I got only 6. The amount of EC also varies in accordance with the amount and length of assignments you do for a course. I would say that, to get 30 EC, you would have to take about 4 courses per semester, with courses ranging from about 5 to 10 EC. Another good thing to know is that master students will usually not get credits from the UU if they take any of the courses that are especially for exchange students, because those courses are at bachelor level.

academic quality of education activities

The academic level of the FU is about the same as that of the UU, but the tempo is much lower. What I would normally learn during one block at the UU was now spread out over an entire semester at the FU. During the semester I never had to work very hard. However, all exams and papers build up at the end of the semester and by then the third block in Utrecht will already have begun. So during the final weeks I did have to work hard.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The teachers were helpful and accommodating to international students. Due to personal circumstances, I had to leave Berlin a few weeks before the intended end of my exchange and the international office at the FU was very supportive and helped me arrange all necessary things.

transfer of credits

I cannot tell yet. Because my last deadline at the FU was at the end of March, the whole process is taking quite long.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The international office organizes a lot of activities. I did not participate in these because I had already been at the university for 6 weeks to do a language course and during that course I already made friends and explored the university and the city.

accommodation

I lived in a student dorm, arranged via the university. I was a nice room and very cheap, but the location wasn't great: on the very edge of Berlin in a quiet residential area. But the public transport in Berlin is good and it was only half an hour away from the university. Because Berlin is so big, there is always something that is far away, no matter where you live.

leisure & culture

Berlin is an amazing city. There is always something to do and every neighbourhood has its own character. No matter your preferences, you will find something to enjoy: museums, clubs, big parks, shops, demonstrations,

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sports. Even after half a year, I still had the feeling I hadn't seen everything yet, so I would love to come back some time.

suggestions/tips

If you don't already study German, take the Vorkurs Deutsch before the semester. You will improve your German vastly, get to know lots of international people and go on interesting excursions during the afternoons.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would not especially recommend the university. The course were alright, but I feel I could have learnt more at the UU. Moreover, finding the right courses, with enough EC, was very chaotic. I would, however, recommend the city. Berlin fully made up for its university and I really enjoyed learning a new language.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Try to get some extra credits during your first (and for bachelor students second) year, so that if at the FU you can't do the courses you had planned to do or do not get as many credits as you initially thought, you can still graduate on time. This really saved me.