



ERASMUS+ STUDIES UU Report 2015-2016

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 made available (anonymously) to 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	
e-mail address	<i>optional; only if you don't mind students preparing for study abroad contacting you directly</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	Human Geography and Planning

destination city & country	Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom
name university abroad	Newcastle University
start date	28 / 09 / 2015 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	29 / 01 / 2016 (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 not the hardest part for me. After some research about the available partner universities, it appeared to be the case that most Human Geography courses were taught in the home language of the University. One of my erasmus goals was to improve my English proficiency, so it wouldn't be beneficial to study in a country where modules were taught in French, Spanish, German or Swedish. Going on an intercontinental exchange was unfortunately not possible for my budget, so the choice for the United Kingdom was an easy one. This seems like a forced choice now, but the British football, music and pub culture was very appealing to me, so I was happy with my choice. I found the pile of forms a bit demotivating, but at the end it's all worth it.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The international officers at the Geosciences IO were always very kind and supportive. I even missed some deadlines, but that was not a big problem. They will accept you if you have a good reason. Although I won't recommend to anyone going through the stress I went through during my application period.
academic preparation	I didn't prepare my period abroad academically. Because my modules would be (at least that's what I thought)



within the framework of my major program at the UU, I didn't feel the need to do some additional reading.

language preparation

Not that my English is very bad, but I was not extremely confident using it in public. So there were some nerves before my life in the UK took off. Fortunately I had an international flatmate in Utrecht during the two months before I left to Newcastle, so practicing my English with her helped me a lot.

The English Language Proficiency Test from the EU didn't seem hard at all before my period abroad, but I still improved a lot during my stay, resulting in an almost perfect C2 level.

finances

My budget was not very high, but my financial plan seemed solid when I made it in March or April. What I couldn't expect, was that the exchange rate between the Pound Sterling and Euro changed from 1:1.2 in March to 1:1.4 in September. This made my stay a LOT more expensive and I couldn't make it without lending money from my parents.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

The study programme at Newcastle University is quite diverse and they offer a lot of modules that are not available in Utrecht. But if you go in the first semester, the range of modules to choose from is rather limited, so if I had the choice again, I would've gone from February to June. Two additional problems in choosing my modules were the chaotic time schedule (basically the lack of time slots) and the limited places in the modules. This ended up for me having to choose Contemporary Political Philosophy (4th choice), a subject I was at first not rather interested in and also outside the boundaries of my foreknowledge. After all, the module was not as bad as I thought and it's easily the one I learned most from. The other modules, Geographies of Sustainability and Geographies of Money, were both quite interesting.

academic quality of education activities

One of the reasons to study in the UK was the great reputation of university education. I can't say it was disappointing, but general quality of education was not a lot higher than at Utrecht University. Newcastle University is certainly no Oxford or Cambridge, but you can't expect that of course. A big difference in Newcastle from my Human Geography program in Utrecht was the emphasis on individual essays. I've gotten used to group work during my time in Utrecht, but that was not the approach in Newcastle. All my modules had one individual essay and an individual exam, which basically consisted of another two essay questions. This helped me a lot for improving my (English) writing skills and I will definitely need those when I'll write my essay this semester.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I didn't have a lot of contact with my international officers abroad, but when I needed them they would be there for me. So no negative comments here.

transfer of credits

I don't know what to write here, but I guess it'll work out fine.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

The International welcome program was a great start of my study period abroad. I immediately made some friends, did really fun things and started to know the city and the campus. After this programme, Fresher's Week was there. Officially not designed for Erasmus students, but very easy to join. I blended in with the British



Freshers very easily and had another great week.

accommodation

Accommodation was quite easy to get from the University. They try to make it comfortable and not too expensive for you. I lived in St. Mary's College in Fenham, which is pretty far from the University and city centre, but that didn't stop me from having a good social life during my stay (although buying a bike is a must). The only complaint about my accommodation would be that it could get freezing cold in my room because of the position at a corner of the building. But this also meant that I had a nice view and a very bright room. My two flatmates were very friendly and the flat was modern and clean, so overall quite positive.

leisure & culture

Newcastle has a lot to offer, especially if you like football, rock music and beer, like me. I used every opportunity to go to the pub or the football stadium, although money and work on essays and exams restricted me more and more as my period abroad passed. Newcastle also has a fantastic nightlife and shopping facilities, so I guess almost everyone can enjoy the city as much as me.

suggestions/tips

Make sure you get to see a lot of the surroundings too! York, Durham, Edinburgh and the Lake District are all very recommendable day/weekend trips. Also the coast with towns like Whitley Bay and Tynemouth is worth visiting and very close to Newcastle!

Secondly, make sure you make a good financial plan, especially when you go to a country with a different currency. The Euro hasn't proven itself as a really stable currency, so fluctuations can mess with your budget and leave you with an empty wallet at the worst occasions.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would certainly recommend Newcastle to other students. The university is good, the people are very friendly and the local students love to party. The city has a nice atmosphere with enough opportunities to have a great time when you don't have to study. Although it can get very dark in winter, the weather is usually pretty good and not depressing (contrary to what I expected).

do you have any additional advice or comments?

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Save this UU report for your own records and send it as attachment to verslagen.internationaloffice@uu.nl within 30 days after finishing your study abroad period and in ANY case before the final deadline!