

2018-2019

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Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Italiaanse taal en cultuur

Destination city & country	Siena, Italy
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Università degli studi di Siena
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	17/09/2018
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	07/02/2019

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The application process went smoothly. If you follow the given deadlines, the application is quite easy to complete.

Counselling/support at home university:

The support from Utrecht University was very good. There were multiple meetings, one for each stage of the application process, from orientation meeting to predeparture meeting.

Academic preparation:

My academic preparation was the regular two years of university, and no specific preparation for my stay abroad.

Language preparation:

My language preparation were the 4 courses of Italian language acquisition I followed in the first year of my Bachelors degree.

Finances:

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I worked through the summer holiday to save up some extra money and next to that I had the student loan and Erasmus grant to support myself financially.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

The organisation of my study programme in Siena was not very useful once I arrived. I needed to change my courses according to the new schedules of the courses for that year (which weren't yet published at the moment that I was filling in my Learning Agreement).

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The quality of education was quite good. The way of teaching is quite different compared to the way of teaching at Utrecht University. Lectures are the primary form of teaching and the exams are primarily oral exams.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The counselling support at host institution is good when available. They are only available 2 hours a day, and the mailing correspondence before my arrival was quite bad. It took long to get an answer if I got an answer at all about my online registration for example. My advice would be to call the international office of the university when they are opened.

Transfer of credits:

The transfer of credits happened flawlessly. The international office in Siena sends it within two weeks of your departure to UU, and my credits were transferred quite quickly after.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

The week before the university starts the Erasmus Student Network organisation in Siena organised a Welcome Week to get to know all the students.

Accommodation:

I found my accommodation through housing anywhere, since I didn't really trust the advertisements on facebook pages without being able to see the rooms myself. I would recommend to sign up for university housing, and look for a new room (if desirable) from there, considering that you can cancel that contract every month without problems.

Leisure/culture:

There are plenty little (and cheap) restaurants to visit in Siena. Apart from that there are also many bars, in which the ESN organises their activities. However, there are not a lot of big clubs. Especially in the city centre they are missing. If you want to go out to a club you have to take a bus to a club outside of town.

Suggestions/tips:

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I would suggest not to get to attached to your original Learning Agreement, which you'll probably have to change. Apart from that I would recommend the housing strategy which I already outlined. Also I would recommend using your ESN Card discount (flixbus, Ryanair, pizzeria's etc.) well.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

I would recommend this host organisation to others who are looking for a easy going city to experience a relaxed but great Erasmus period. If you are looking for a big-city experience, I wouldn't recommend Siena at all, considering it is in fact quite a small city.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

No.

2016-2017**Report 1**

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

destination city & country	Siena, Italy
name university abroad	Università degli Studi di Siena
start date	01 / 09 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	01 / 02 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)

You are requested to write on the following topics. Text boxes will expand automatically while typing!

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	The application at the University of Siena is really clear and easy. There is an online platform, and you will receive e-mails with explanations about this process. The only thing is that you need to keep an eye on the deadlines, which are in June /July. Also, if something is not clear, the Welcome Office of Siena is really quick and friendly in answering their e-mails.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The international office offers really good help, not only with documents with deadlines and the tips and tricks, but also if there are specific problems or uncertainties. Don't hesitate to ask questions, it really makes the whole paperwork situation clearer.
academic preparation	The courses are online on the official site of the university, also in English. It is not possible to find the timetables there, and it is not always complete, but you can at least find all the names of the offered courses

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there and if they are in the 1 st or 2 nd semester. Once you are registered on the online platform of the university you can find more information about courses.
language preparation
It is really necessary to speak Italian, since the daily life is solely in Italian and most of the courses are as well. There are some English courses, but only on the economy and politics faculty. If your level is not sufficient you can take the language course offered by the university. I took the intensive course, one month before the start of the semester and it really helped me. I recommend taking this course instead of the extensive course, because this extensive course is in the evenings while you are as well taking your courses. Also, it is a great way to meet people. Even though the language course is good, it isn't magical, so it is necessary to have some knowledge of the language. You will be placed in a class based on an entrance test.
finances
For me, it was more expensive than I counted on. The supermarkets are not cheap, and also the rents are high (but same as in Utrecht). I went on a lot of trips during the weekends, which was really worth it, but travelling costs money. Of course you can live cheap, but once there everyone wants to see everything.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
I didn't have troubles finding courses online, and also the registration went well. I only took courses in Italian, which made it more difficult to receive the information about books, exams etc. In the end it worked out fine, but you really need to organise it for yourself, because the professors are just giving their lectures (most of the courses only have lectures, no seminars).
academic quality of education activities
For me there was a difference in the way of studying, since it is more focussed on knowing a lot of facts instead of understanding. Also, almost all the exams are oral and officially only held in the end of the semester. Sometimes there is the possibility to take an exam immediately after the end of the course, but not always, which forces you to plan the studying well because it can be all in one week.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The support from the receiving university was before my arrival excellent, but when I arrived there they had so much to do at the same time that they were not that helpful anymore. They have a buddy-system though. An Italian student can help you with your problems and in my experience that was more effective than waiting for the welcome office.
transfer of credits
No problems, the receiving university works with ECTS as well, which makes the transfer easy.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme
The ESN group of Siena is really great and enthusiastic. They organised a welcome week with a lot of activities and they are really open to everyone. In the same week the university organises welcome and registration meetings per faculty. This week is the week before the official start of the semester.
accommodation
I lived in one of the university residences. You can apply for a room there online, and you will hear in July if you will have a room there. I was lucky with my residence, which consisted of apartments, but most of the residences are less nice. There are strict rules and you have to share the kitchen and sometimes the bathroom

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with a lot of people. It is a better option if you can succeed in finding an apartment by yourself. The problem is most of the times that landlords are only giving contracts for one year at least.

leisure & culture

Siena is a small medieval town, but there is a lot to do around Siena. It is the center of Tuscany, so going on trips is perfect. Also, the city is a real student city. Every week the ESN group is organising a party and other activities, but also the other bars are really crowded in the evenings. Clubs are more difficult to find, but around the city, they are there. If you want to do sports you have to take in account that you have to pay a lot and need a doctors recipe, which makes it more difficult, but there are gyms/swimming pools etc. As an international student, you have to look for it yourself, there is nothing especially for internationals.

suggestions/tips

Go on trips (rent a car), because Tuscany is beautiful! Also, the city is small, but you can still discover new things, so be a tourist in you own town as well.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Definitely. The university of Siena is really open for international students, which was a big advantage for me, since my level of the Italian language was not sufficient at the beginning. Also, they offer a lot of different courses. Not everything is well organised, but that is also 'italian', and there is no better way to discover the culture than living there for a while. The student life is rich and the people are kind. It is a really safe city as well, there is a really good ambiance.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Don't go to Siena if you are not that interested in the culture. It is a great small student town, but you have to embrace the Italian life.
Also, go to the professor to ask about the study programm. Sometimes they make an exception and give the internation students other assignments.

Report 2

faculty/college	Humanities
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's <input type="checkbox"/> PhD
name study programme	Italian language and culture

destination city & country	Siena, Italy
name university abroad	Università degli Studi Siena
start date	26 / 9 / 2016 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	20 / 7 / 2017 (dd/mm/yyyy)

You are requested to write on the following topics. Text boxes will expand automatically while typing!

PREPARATION

exchange application process

A lot of forms and signs needed, but it's usually logical what you have to do and why you have to do it.

counselling & support at Utrecht University
The International Office and Erasmus Desk in Utrecht were always available to answer my questions and to give me further explanation when I needed it.
academic preparation
Since I study Italian language and culture in Utrecht, I didn't need any academic preparation before going to Siena.
language preparation
Since I study Italian language and culture in Utrecht, I already spoke the language before going to Siena.
finances
The university asks you to make a financial plan before leaving, so you should have this sorted out. The Erasmus grant gives students an amazing opportunity to study abroad whilst not losing a lot of money.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)
I decided to follow 6 literature courses in Siena this year, 3 in the first semester and 3 in the second (courses were either 9 or 12 ECTS). For each course we had 6 hours of class a week (3 times 2 hours), and the number of weeks of class you have before the exams, depends on the credits of the course.
academic quality of education activities
My literature professors in Siena were all very qualified, professional and passionate about the topic they're teaching. Whereas they didn't treat Erasmus students that differently from Italian students, they were usually happy with the fact foreigners were interested in learning something about their language and culture.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The Welcome Office in Siena is open every day except for weekends, and the people working there will always try to help you out. They, however, don't seem to answer their emails.
transfer of credits
Since I don't have my transcript of records yet, I don't know how my grades and credits will be transferred.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme
In the welcome week we had the chance to see the university during the day, and in the night the ESN group organised some activities (aperitivo, parties, barbecues and so on). It was an amazing week in which I got to know a lot of new people from all over the world while getting to know Siena.
accommodation
It was hard to find a room in Siena. People there usually search for Italian roommates, or in any case want somebody to stay for the whole year instead of only a semester. However, it is possible to find a room, even though I found them more expensive than in Utrecht.
leisure & culture
In Siena the piazza del campo (the square in the middle of the city) attracts a lot of people during the day and night. In the evening people come together to have a beer or to sing or play the guitar. For me this was a really nice experience, since we usually don't do this in the Netherlands. There are also several beautiful museums

and parks in and around the city. Siena is a one and a half hour bus ride away from Florence, and some Tuscan small towns such as San Gimignano and Montalcino are closeby.
 You may find the Italian culture a bit less organised than the Dutch, but on the other hand it makes you more "free".

suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would definitely recommend the university of Siena. The professors are very qualified, the city is small but beautiful, and you will really get the chance to learn the Italian language and culture.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

2015-2016

Report 1

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

PREPARATION

exchange application process

On time I started with orientation, when Siena was selected I made contact with my supervisor in Siena and exchanged information considering the period to come. With help of my tutor and the international office in Utrecht I was able to get an indication of what had to be done to make my application complete, such as which subjects were suiting for me.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Especially the colleagues of the International Office, with special thanks to Gerdien Ramaker-Zijlstra, were very helpful in my definite proposal for my curriculum.

academic preparation

I prepared mostly for the courses I was going to follow by reading into the subjects I would follow and by studying the Italian language in two courses at the University of Utrecht in the first semester, which helped me a lot in surviving socially in Italy.

language preparation

Two courses of the Italian language at the University of Utrecht and an intense language course the first month of arrival in Siena. With these I managed to gain a B1 level in the Italian language, preparing me for courses in Italian and everyday life.

finances

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Savings of working in the year before the beginning of the Erasmus period and an extra loan added to the financial support of the Dutch government for students.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

In the beginning there was a bit of uncertainty concerning the subjects I was going to follow. Of course I orientated already in The Netherlands for some subjects which were interesting for me, but due to overlap and other issues some changes were needed. Changing the learning agreement was not so much of an issue, but the information spread by the university in Siena was sometimes a bit slow. With some time everything can be settled, but in Italy things do not go as smooth as in The Netherlands.

academic quality of education activities

I must say it is different than from Utrecht, especially in the build-up of the course. Here it is usual to go to lecture and listen to the teacher without that much of discussion in workgroups. Only when I followed a subject that was actually part of a master there was room for discussion and encouraged by the teacher. I will not say that the quality of education lacked in that sense, but for me discussion helps me to get even deeper into the implicit things. What also was different was that the examination takes place mostly in the form of an oral exam. The first time I was quite upset, because I waited for almost 4 hours until it was my turn. By the time that you can finally go in, you can get actually more stressed for your exam.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The University has multiple departments throughout the whole city, with libraries and helpdesks. For the main information you can get help at the international office, but, however I studied some Italian it was not always enough to make myself heard, some Italians are more reluctant than others to speak English. Of course it was good intention to speak Italian, but it led to some miscommunication in first instance. With time, patience and effort, from both sides, there is always a way.

transfer of credits

Here they use a credit system, which should be equal to ECTS, though subjects differ in the amount of credits subscribed to it, but the most usual ones are 6 credits or 9 credits (6 being a subject for multiple weeks and 9 for the whole semester). There is also a difference in the grading system. The maximum is 30 points (equal to a 10 in The Netherlands) and the lowest sufficient is 18 (equal to a 5,5 in The Netherlands).

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

After the first formal introduction at the university, there were also some ESN (Erasmus Student Network) people present who held a presentation of all the benefits of being a member of ESN. I was convinced and joined that same day to make me a member. In the week to come there were events organised everyday to keep one busy, to get to know people and the city and to start a wonderful period of what was to become this half year. In the first week, due to these events, I got to know a lot of people, public places in the city (such as mensa's and bars) and these events would continue, once a week from that week on, for the rest of most of my stay. ESN is also a host for great parties.

accommodation

I myself chose not to go into a student residence offered by the university, because I wanted to really live in the city with my own experience. I think I did well and in the end the majority of students found a place to stay for themselves. It is not very difficult but you have to know what you want of course. There are multiple websites

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where rooms are offered and if that doesn't help, the Erasmus Student Network brings you into contact with a lot of people that all have a network of people around them. It took me one and a half week after my arrival to find a room, after first having stayed in a hostel.

leisure & culture

The city of Siena is actually a very small town but, within the city walls, it is still completely in a medieval atmosphere. Small streets that come together at the Piazza del Campo make the entourage very beautiful and for art history students, such as me, every walk through the city is eyeopening. There are definitely a lot of cultural elements one should see and it is not surprising that the city itself is part of UNESCO world heritage. I used to be on the Piazza del Campo everyday for maybe one or two hours with friends just enjoying the view and the conversations we had. There are more places like these throughout the city, but the Piazza is the most special. Something that is great in this city is the Palio that takes place every year. For that reason every 'contrada' (neighbourhood) has its own parties throughout the year. Especially these made a very big impression on my experience of Siena.

suggestions/tips

If able to experience such a contrada party, you should definitely take the opportunity. The Piazza del Campo is a must see, but the view from the unfinished wall of the 'Duomo' is amazing to see the Piazza laying within the whole city plan.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes, definitely. The university is one of the oldest ones in Italy and Europe which makes it very special to be part of that heritage. The city itself is amazingly fulfilled with the medieval period and culture thrives in abundance. One of the nicest things for me was that the city is not that big and so at almost every streetcorner you meet someone you know, so you can have a coffee together or just smalltalk. The atmosphere, especially in the second semester, is wonderful. You can see all the traditions and progresses towards the thing Siena is the most famous for: 'Il Palio', which is one of the things that makes this city so vibrant.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

It was amazing and I ensure that for everyone that does an Erasmus, whether it is in Siena or not, it will make your perspective of the world a lot wider and that you get to know a lot of people with other visions from all parts of the world and get to know yourself better.