



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Media and Performance Studies

Destination city & country	Lawrence, Kansas, United States of America
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	The University of Kansas
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)	15/07/2014
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	28/01/2015

### Preparation

#### Exchange/placement application process:

This exchange took place through the MAUI-Utrecht exchange program, which is open to all Utrecht University students. Before getting selected for The University of Kansas (KU), I thus first had to get selected for the MAUI-Utrecht program. Within the MAUI-Utrecht program I had to choose three universities and KU was my first choice. I'm the first student ever from Utrecht University that went on an exchange to KU. Because an exchange is part of my research master's program, and because KU unfortunately is not a popular choice, I was pretty positive that I would be selected. Though I also think it is very important to include a good letter of recommendation in your application.

#### Counselling/support at home university:

Ingrid Dijkstra is the coordinator for North America. She will answer all your questions and is very helpful and kind.

#### Academic preparation:

This exchange was part of my two-year research master's program and fulfills my elective semester. I did not require any specific academic preparation for this exchange.

#### Language preparation:

There are two options regarding language preparation: either the TOEFL test, which is rather expensive, or an English language test to be taken upon arrival at KU, which is free. Everybody without a valid TOEFL score has to take the other English language proficiency test during orientation. There is, unfortunately, no waiver for this test. Even after I showed them my high, but



unfortunately expired, TOEFL scores and told them that my entire master's program is taught in English, I still had to take it. I passed the test without any problems whatsoever.

Finances:

With my application I had to submit proof of finances. I financed everything myself. The only waiver I received, is a tuition waiver from KU. Expect to spend a lot of money, especially if you also want to travel.

### **Study/placement abroad period**

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

Do not expect to take the classes you initially chose during your application process. It's possible that some classes are not offered the next semester or academic year. Also, some classes might look interesting on paper, but when you're actually in the classroom, it might be different. My advice is to keep an open mind and to try to be very flexible about this. It does, however, depend on your major if you are actually allowed to be flexible. For me this posed no problems.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The classes are either undergraduate level, which was a little bit too easy for me, or graduate level, which was pretty hard since these classes were mostly for PhD students. I took two PhD classes and one upper level undergraduate class (with extra assignments) and I did pretty well on all of them. Some classes require prerequisites, so it might be smart to bring an Osiris printout. In case a class is full, it's always possible to ask the professor if you can still join their class.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Everybody is very helpful. The Office of Study Abroad has walk in hours and the people that work there are very quick to respond to emails. Kate Gerken was my contact person and she's super nice!

Transfer of credits:

American credits are different from ECTS. I took three classes in one semester, which was a fulltime workload at KU. However, I only received 22.5 ECTS at UU. My grades were transferred from A, A, and A- into 9, 9, and 8 respectively.

### **Student life**

Welcome/orientation programme:

The orientation program is set up perfectly! The Office of International Student Services (ISS) organizes the "You at KU" orientation week. There was a separate orientation program for international grad students, which meant that my group consisted of people my own age. The orientation program does have a lot of rather boring lectures, but also a lot of fun stuff. Definitely go to everything and make friends! It started quite early, August 6th, but for me this was no issue, because I really wanted to be there as early as possible. During this international orientation I



quickly became part of the International Student Association as well.

Definitely sign up early for the free airport pickup for international students, because there are no regular buses or trains between the airport and Lawrence and taxis are really expensive. Also attend Union Fest and Hawk Fest at the beginning of the year to sign up for clubs and get all sorts of free goodies!

#### Accommodation:

There are a lot of different types of housing available in Lawrence. There is KU on campus housing, which has dorms, shared apartments, and private apartments. The private apartments are only for grad students and professors though. On campus housing usually means that the rooms are shared, which is common in the US. If you choose on campus housing, you also need to buy a meal plan. Meal plans are very expensive and the food is not that good. There are also a lot of housing options off campus, which are a lot cheaper.

At first I stayed in the off campus dorm Naismith Hall, but I soon decided that a dorm was not the place for me. After orientation, I decided to move and I found a new place within three days through the official housing Facebook group. Off campus rent is relatively cheap compared to Utrecht. I ended up subleasing a private room in an apartment I shared with three American girls close to campus for just \$350 a month.

When I arrived, there were also still plenty of rooms available in student complexes like The Connection and The Reserve. However, these places are a bit further away from campus, so I would not recommend living there if you do not have a car. Be aware that most contracts are year contracts! In case you do arrive early, note that on campus dorms will not let you move in early, but most off campus apartments will let you move in August 1st.

#### Leisure/culture:

KU is known for its basketball team and KU had the first college basketball team ever, established by basketball inventor James Naismith. Basketball therefore is a big part of the KU and Lawrence culture. The Kansas City Royals baseball team is also really popular in Lawrence, especially when I was there, because they were playing in the World Series.

Lawrence is a lot smaller than Utrecht, but the downtown area is really awesome! There are plenty of nice coffee houses, bars, and other places to go out. I really liked Henry's upstairs or Merchants for drinks, Java Break for coffee and tea, The Burger Stand for the best burgers ever, The Granada for concerts, Liberty Hall for concerts and movies, WheatFields Bakery for delicious bread, The Dusty Bookshelf for a wide selection of used books, Au Marché for all the Dutch or other European food I was missing, and Love Garden Sounds for an awesome selection of music. These are just a couple of examples, but there are seriously so many cool places to eat, shop, and hang out. Especially on Massachusetts street or, as the locals call it, Mass. If you have the chance, check out the view and enjoy a beautiful sunset from the top of the Oread Hotel.

Kansas City is also not far away and has a lot to offer! I haven't been there that much, because I had to rely on other people for transportation, but definitely check out the World War I museum and its tower with a great view of the city, the Power and Light district for clubbing and concerts,



the Country Club Plaza for shopping, and all the fountains! Kansas City has the second most fountains in the world.

Suggestions/tips:

Since the busses don't run as often as in the Netherlands, I would suggest buying a bicycle at for example The Re-Cyclery. Lawrence is very bike friendly. I also took my bike down to Clinton Lake. However, I would also suggest befriending people with a car or, if you're staying for the whole year, to consider buying a car. It's also possible to rent a car, but this can be rather expensive if you're under the age of twenty-five.

This is not specific to KU, but my advice is to please not only hang out with other international students. Mingle, go to events, and join clubs, because there's something for everybody. Meet American people to fully experience living in the US.

If you have the time and the money, apply for the full year, because I guarantee you that time will fly. Bring boots and a waterproof jacket for winter, but definitely bring shorts and tank tops for summer since it can get really hot.

**Conclusions**

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

"You're going to Kansas?!" was what most people asked me when I told them about my study abroad plans. But please don't be scared off by the word Kansas, because I promise you that this place is very different from the image it has. It's not just Wizard of Oz, tornados, and Superman, but so much more. Kansas is a red state, but Lawrence is a very liberal college town. Yes, it is quite small compared to Utrecht, but that makes it easy to get around and allows you to really get to know the city in the few months that you spend there. The people are super friendly and KU is a great community in which you'll feel welcome instantly. If your major is journalism or aerospace engineering, then KU is definitely the place for you, but they accept incoming exchange students for most majors. Rock Chalk Jayhawk!

Do you have any additional advice or comments?: