



UU Study Abroad Report Form

	Contact info available at the IO.
faculty/college	Social sciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Psychology

destination city & country	Penang, Malaysia
name university abroad	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
start date	10 / 10 / 2022
end date	28 / 02 / 2023

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The exchange application of USM is a little bit difficult, because you need a student visa in Malaysia. You have to start quite early with the procedure and it takes a few weeks before everything has been deal with. You get an email from the UU with all the documents you have to send to USM. Then it takes a few weeks before it went through and then you need to fill in new documents. When you reached 80% then you are allowed to go in to the country. At the airport in Malaysia you have to go to the visa department and you get a certain stamp. Then you have to go directly to USM to give your passport. Then they will have your passport for approximately 1 month. In this month you can't leave the country, but you can still travel around in Malaysia. After that month you get your passport back and everything is fixed.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Because of COVID was the procedure of this university a bit different then the years before. Which means that I had to figure some things out by myself, but the support of the international office was very helpful.

academic preparation

I can't tell exactly what the academic requirements are to get in at USM. I was in my 4th year so I basically already had enough ECTS.

language preparation

You have to give a document that you have a certain level of English. If you study at an university in the Netherlands, is your level of English enough for USM. You get a form from the University where you have to fill in a few questions and then you get a signature from UU.

finances

The finances of going to USM is depending what you are doing in Asia. The plane ticket to and from Malaysia is quite expensive and the Visa is 115 euro. For other expenses, Malaysia itself is cheaper as in the Netherlands. Going out for dinner is between 1 or 5 euros. A taxi (grab is uber in Asia) is for an hour 10 euros. And accommodation is 200 euro per month. The supermarket and alcohol is similar as the Netherlands, but street food is so cheap and good that you will not cook here. Furthermore, you have a lot of freedom here which means you have a lot of time to travel around. For me was this the biggest costs, but I also have seen most of south east Asia during my exchange.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD



study programme (content and organisational issues)
I study Psychology in the Netherlands and I wanted to do something with criminology or biology. Only, when I arrived here they told me that that faculty is 6 hours away from the big campus. And there are also not that many exchange students. This is why I choose something completely different what I study. Management. So if you are searching for courses, pay attention that there are three different campuses. The head campus which is on Penang island, engineering's campus which is an hour from the head campus and in Penang mainland and health campus which is 6 hours from head campus. If you have questions about this, you can send me an email.
academic quality of education activities
the quality of this university is different than in UU. I study something completely different and still have high grades. It is sometimes just a lot of work and not very hard. But that also really depends on which courses you have. I also heard that the courses of engineering are quite hard. But for me, it was quite easy. I planned my courses that I only had 2 days of school with in total 5 lectures and 4 tutorials. You have to get 80% attendance and finish all the deadlines. Around the 6 th week we had a lot of deadlines for essays and midterms and at the end of the semester we have a month for all the exams.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
the support of the receiving university surprises me over and over. They have a bunch of buddies who really made the time here in USM. They are super friendly and supportive and they organize very fun activities. The first week we had a week for information and meeting each other. We had a lot of parties, international night and so much more through the year, like graduation night and a real Malay wedding. I would really recommend to join every activity. As for the serious stuff. I had some hassles with my visa that made it take a fairly long time to get my passport back. But by putting some pressure on the migration team, it did get sorted out a little faster.
transfer of credits
1 point here is 1,5 point in the Netherlands. And in USM they have courses of 3 to 4 points. So you need around 6 courses to have around 30 ETCS

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
it was actually perfect. When you come in a new country where you know nobody it is quite stressful, but the buddies of USM made it so easy to meet the new people and get a good introduction of the country and culture. The first two days it was mostly about serious stuff as visa, courses etc. but afterwards we did a lot of fun activities and the buddies prepared a lot of performances.
accommodation
There is a lot to choose from here in Malaysia where you can stay, but most people stay in Arte S. I shared my appartement with two others and per person we paid 200 euros per month. We had an apartment on the 46 th floor which means a beautiful view and there is also a swimming pool and gym included. You can also sleep on campus which is even more cheap, but I have heard that it is very dirty there without warm water. How I got the apartment in Arte S is to just text previous students who lived there.
leisure & culture
Malaysia is a country with a lot of culture. The population here is mostly Malay, Chinese and Indian. Which means so much good food. Furthermore, most of the people are Muslim. So not on every place you can drink alcohol, but when you go out there is no problem. Also in school you have to wear long clothes, but actually you also want that because it is freezing cold in the classes. They always say here that there are two seasons. Summer outside and winter inside. Outside it is always around 30 degrees and in the second semester even



warmer. Inside it is most of the time around 18 degrees. Altogether, the people here in Malaysia are extremely friendly, always too late and very helpful.

For leisure activities. There is a lot to see in Malaysia itself. Penang is beautiful and there is really so much to do here, but there is also the beautiful islands like Langkawi and the perhentians islands. Cameron Highlands, Melaka and Kuala Lumpur and you can even surf in the east of Malaysia. In 12 hours you can go with the bus to Phuket or 1 hour with the plane. In three hours with the plane you are in Bali or the Philippines. All in all Malaysia is in the middle of South East Asia, so you can travel around very easily. Furthermore, the buddies also organized a weekend in the jungle. Actually every week I went to a new place, in Malaysia itself or another country. But to do this you have to spare a bit more money.

suggestions/tips

The semesters start a bit later then in the Netherlands, which means that the third period in the Netherlands already start when you are still in Malaysia. Because this is my fourth year I don't have to be in the Netherlands the third period, but if you have to be there, there is a chance you have a bit study delay. For the second semester you will finish when the rest in the Netherlands already have vacation.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes, I felt really at home here because of the buddies, it is an amazing country with so many different culture and nature. I really had the time of my life here, made friends all over the world and saw so much in Asia.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you like to travel around, this would be a great chance to combine it with university!!



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Social Sciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Interdisciplinary Social Science

destination city & country	Penang, Malaysia
name university abroad	Universiti Sains Malaysia
start date	02 / 09 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	17 / 01 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The steps in the exchange application process were clearly described in a document that was sent by USM and that was the same for the visa application process. You will need a lot of documents for the application and then you will discover that some information in the document with application steps is a little bit outdated. The things written in the document are not always in line with what you have to do at the application website. In the end this was not really a problem as everyone managed to get the application done, but it was just a little annoying sometimes. For the visa application process, this was a lot more problematic. The visa document USM sends is also outdated and not always in line with the application process. Just make sure to check the correct months in your offer letter and fill that on the website. Most people managed to get their visas before they were going to Malaysia or after they handed in some additional documents. Don't worry if you don't get your visa, because you can also stay on a tourist visa, which is what I did. I was also confused about the single entry visa, but we don't need that as Dutch citizens.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The support from UU was fine. All questions that I had were answered really fast.

academic preparation

There was no need to do any academic preparation as the academic level is lower than at UU

language preparation

There was no need to do any academic preparation as the English level is lower than at UU

finances

The visa application is quite expensive. Living costs in Malaysia are lower, but because of all the travelling I did, I still spent a lot of money. I managed to pay everything from DUO and my savings.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

You can choose the courses you want to take during the orientation week. Basically, everyone chooses courses based on the schedule, so they can travel a lot. I took the maximum credit (21, 6 courses) as that is what you need to get 30 ECTS. Almost no one does that, but I think it's doable. I took three courses from social science and three from school of management. All of them were quite easy. If you want an easy course without tutorials take Malaysian studies and Economic Transformation in Southeast Asia. I managed to have all my courses in 2,5 days.



academic quality of education activities
The academic quality of the courses and also the English level is a lot lower than what I was used to in Utrecht. I felt like all courses were more on high school level or sometimes even lower than on university level.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
The support at USM was really good. Any questions you could just ask in the group chat or Facebook group that we had with all exchange students and the buddies (local students). The international office (IMCC) at USM was also really helpful and fast with answering questions.
transfer of credits
I'm still in Malaysia, so I don't have experience with this

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme
The orientation programme is a week before all the classes start and it includes a lot of waiting and organising official stuff, like payments, visa, student card, etc. It all takes a lot of time, but in that time you get to know all the other exchange students, so that makes up for all the waiting. It also includes a lot of fun things, like games to get to know each other, information about Malaysia and its culture, and a day trip to end the orientation week with. The introduction week is fun, and it really helps with getting to know people and the university, so I would definitely recommend going.
accommodation
There are options to stay at campus in the hostel, but no one actually stays there. Everyone arranges an apartment with Mama Wendy. You're living in either Sunnyville or E-park. I lived in Sunnyville, which was fine. The apartments are a little outdated, but it's fine to live in for half a year. Both complexes have a swimming pool, E-park has a gym and Sunnyville has a café. You don't have wifi in any of the apartments, so everyone just uses their hotspot at home. Usually the apartments are shared with two other people, but I just shared it with one French girl. Mama Wendy listens to preferences, so I'd recommend asking for a master bedroom as those are usually bigger than the other bedrooms and you have your own bathroom which, I thought, was worth paying a little more for.
leisure & culture
The culture is different than in the Netherlands of course, but it wasn't as big of a difference as I expected. You have to cover your shoulders and knees when you're on the campus, but you will actually need that when you're inside the buildings, because the air conditioning is really cold. The local students, apart from the buddies, are really closed and in their own group, so most exchange students didn't really have contact with local students. For example, with writing assignments I wrote all my assignments with other Western exchange students as the Asian exchange students and the local students tend to stay with their own group. In my spare time I did a lot of travelling, just like the other exchange students. The first months you do just trips within Malaysia as everyone has to hand in their passport to get their visa, but that's all fine because there is a lot to see in Malaysia. After that I also did some trips to the surrounding countries, like Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, etc. Georgetown and Penang itself are really nice too. We went to Georgetown a lot during the semester both during the night and during the day.
suggestions/tips
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CONCLUSIONS



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

Yes definitely! I had the time of my life there. It's not a lot of studying but you do learn a lot about other cultures, you'll make a lot of new friends and also do a lot of travelling. For me, it was a great opportunity to get some experience abroad while not only having to study.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Don't worry too much about your visa, just go and have fun :)



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Utrecht University
level	Bachelor's
name study programme	Human Geography and Planning

destination city & country	Penang, Malaysia
name university abroad	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
start date	02 / 09 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	19 / 01 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

If you are thinking about going abroad for a semester you are required to choose your destination about 8 or 9 months before the actual start of that semester in the host university. This leaves plenty of time to arrange all the documents and approvals needed from both universities. However, the application process involves a lot of forms and paper work so you'll have to put in some effort to get everything done for your time abroad. Of course you will have to think about your objectives when applying for a semester with a host university. Take your time reviewing all possible destinations. You might have a preference for a specific country or continent but not all universities offer the kind of courses you are looking for. I had some trouble finding accurate lists of courses open to exchange students on various university websites. If you want more information I suggest you contact the host university to ask if they can provide you with an up-to-date list of courses for exchange students. You can also always ask the international office in Utrecht University to assist you with these and other matters.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

In my experience the university's guidance through the application processes was helpful and clear, although there were some complications. The international office helped to resolve these quickly. There are several meetings/lectures where you can get information and a pre-departure meeting where former exchange students share their experiences. A clear roadmap of the application process and additional information can also be found on the website of Utrecht University.

academic preparation

To properly prepare academically for your semester abroad can vary depending on your destination. Some universities expect a high skill-level and students have many assignments. Other universities are on a lower academic level than what you are used to here in Utrecht so they might not live up to your expectations if you seek to increase your academic skills. This also goes for Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang. So think about your goal when you choose your destination. But this does not mean that your semester will be useless! On the contrary, it can be valuable to experience another approach to education and the academic discipline of your choice.

language preparation

In terms of language preparation it is helpful that you take or have taken at least one or more courses in English to become acquainted with university-level education in English and to develop your reading, speaking and writing skills in English. Presuming of course that English will be the main language in your host university. Pay attention that this might not be the case for some universities or even entire countries!

finances



Make sure to investigate the costs of living in the country of your destination. Some countries may be cheaper than The Netherlands, others far more expensive. Life in Malaysia is very cheap compared to The Netherlands but you will probably still end up spending very much money on traveling, food, drinks etc.

If you choose a destination in Europe you might be eligible for an Erasmus scholarship. When abroad, you can still receive a student loan from DUO so you don't necessarily need a huge savings account to go abroad. However, take into account that you are not allowed to work as an exchange student in most countries.

I did not have to worry about university fees abroad. Since I paid my regular fees to Utrecht University I was not required to pay extra to USM.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

USM has a very wide choice of courses in various departments that exchange students can enrol in. A list can be found online, however this list needs updating. All of the courses I took in USM were in the Social Sciences department since it does not have a geography department. These were very interesting courses and different from anything I've had before in The Netherlands. All exchange students chose their courses in the first week at USM. Not all courses could be combined due to overlap of lectures or tutorials so we had to fit everything in our timetables.

academic quality of education activities

The overall academic quality at USM is significantly lower than in Utrecht University. However, the quality varies per course. For example, in a course about politics and regionalism in ASEAN students had to write a research paper consisting of around 2000 words. The deadline for this assignment was almost at the end of the semester which made the workload minimal, but the feedback on the paper and the lectures and tutorials were of decent academic quality and really stimulated me and the other students to learn and improve. The grading of this and other assignments on the other hand was again very easy to pass. Other courses were less theoretical and assignments were more practical and not academically challenging. The exams at the end of the semester were pretty easy and did not require a lot of studying or preparation.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

USM has an international office called IMCC which helps out the exchange students a lot. It arranges for the exchanges to obtain their student pass on arrival and assists with a wide range of other matters. A group of local students called 'buddies' organizes an introduction week to get familiar with the campus and Malaysian lifestyle. The host university invests much energy in exchange students. Sometimes, however, you realize the cultural and educational differences between Malaysia and The Netherlands and this can cause confusing or frustrating situations.

transfer of credits

The university has a table that indicates the conversion of credits from receiving universities to Utrecht University. But despite this there was a lot of uncertainty among many exchange students and me too about how many courses to take in order to obtain the same amount of credits in The Netherlands.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

As I wrote before, the welcome and orientation programme at USM is very extensive and a lot of fun. In one week the 'buddies' introduce themselves, the university, the country and even perform traditional and contemporary dances of different cultural groups present in Malaysia. This is a perfect opportunity to get to know your fellow exchange students. It is very exciting to meet people from all over the world and these people will be your friends for the rest of the semester.



accommodation
The university provides on-campus housing in so-called 'student hostels'. This kind of accommodation is very cheap but most exchange students choose to find a room via 'mama Wendy', a very kind local woman who arranges apartments for exchange students in flats near the campus. Rent is cheap and it is only a short walk to the campus. Being in the same building with a lot of the students is perfect for hanging out and partying together.
leisure & culture
Penang is a culture capital of Malaysia. There are many nationalities present, each with its own food and traditions. This makes the main city George Town a very diverse and beautiful place that offers many cultural attractions. Penang is also called 'the food capital' because of the many kitchens from all over the world.
suggestions/tips

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
Yes, I would definitely recommend Universiti Sains Malaysia to others. The academic quality is low, but the experience of being in such an exotic and beautiful country for half a year and meeting people from all around the world is unforgettable.
do you have any additional advice or comments?
Enjoy every minute of your exchange semester! It is something you will never forget and I can guarantee that you will do amazing things and have an amazing time with amazing people.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Geesteswetenschappen
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Geschiedenis

destination city & country	Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia
name university abroad	Universiti Sains Malaysia
start date	07 / 02 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	29 / 06 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION
exchange application process
<p>Let me start by saying that you will not regret choosing USM, it is fantastic. That said, the completion of the application for your student visa can take quite a while, but if you start your application process in time it should be fine before you leave. However, this application for the E-VAL and subsequently your student visa is composed of many different documents which are handled through a variety of different organizations, as well domestic as in Malaysia. This back and forth e-mailing may sometimes take a while and you should take this into consideration when going into the application process. With the eventual E-VAL students pass you can fly in and out the country constantly during your stay so eventually if everything is taken care of it is worth it.</p>
counselling & support at Utrecht University
<p>Again, time is key. If you are in time with informing the concerned teacher or the international office they help you out just fine. Sometimes the amount of paperwork to do can be a bit unclear so they can help you out. However, most of the process is down to your initiative. In my experience, the international office and other counselling is not there to actively remind you of things you need to do so be aware of deadlines and such. Other than that, whenever I contacted them usually the response was quite quickly.</p>
academic preparation
<p>As far as academic preparation goes, you don't really need much more than usual. When you're already following a study at Utrecht university it is most likely that you have already required an academic level that is more than enough for what Malaysia offers. To not be misunderstood, the university still requires a serious amount of work but you shouldn't worry about doing extra preparations than you normally would.</p>
language preparation
<p>People that are related to most international institutions in Malaysia speak English just fine, the university included. For a student from the Netherlands, the level of English we're being taught is sufficient to get around perfectly fine. However, to really connect with local people, so besides academic related issues, it can be fun to try to speak a bit of Malay.</p>
finances
<p>You can really make your stay as expensive or as cheap as you want. In general, daily life in Malaysia is cheaper than in the Netherlands. I continued to take out a study loan during my stay and saved up some money from working in the previous months before departure. What makes the stay slightly expensive is the travelling you probably will and should do. All in all Malaysia and the South East Asian region are perfectly doable with a lot less money. The rent is lower, food costs less etc. But, as said, all the extra stuff such as travelling can make it cost more, depending on how active you are. All in all I'd say I spent around 800 -1000 euros a month and I did a lot with it.</p>



STUDY ABROAD PERIOD	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	There are many different courses you can choose from and during the first weeks they give you time to orientate yourself on which field of study and its particular courses you would like to follow. I choose a variety of different courses related to different academic fields, mostly to see the diversity in the way they were being taught compared to Utrecht. Moreover, there is more freedom for eventual change so don't worry about picking a class you don't end up not taking. You can switch classes up to the first 4 or 5 weeks of the semester so enough time to reconsider.
academic quality of education activities	The academic quality varies depending on the courses and their teachers, but also heavily on the input of students in my experience. I took some courses that were very interesting and fun to do because of good teachers and fun fellow students, but others were slightly less challenging or varied in the way they were being taught. I guess it really depends on the field of study you're in as well because I heard many different stories from different faculties. Still, overall I enjoyed going to class because it is also a very different way of studying than what we are used to.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	The international office at USM is called the IMCC and they have an office on campus that is always open and available for questions about academic related issues. Also you can send them an e-mail but most issues there can be solved better through face-to-face communication in my opinion. Other than that the staff in general is very helpful and kind. Especially the first month there can be issues or things you don't understand so then it is nice to have a central building to go to. Moreover, there is an entire army of buddies that are related to IMCC. They are the best in the world and you can ask them anything and they will help you with it.
transfer of credits	Hasn't been done yet so no feedback on this topic yet.

STUDENT LIFE	
welcome & orientation programme	The orientation programme was absolutely on point. There is an entire army of buddies that make you feel at home so quickly. Especially in the beginning, but actually during the entire year, they organize so much different activities. Ofcourse first as welcome programme but later on also trips to other cities and a gala night etc. Also they become friends in some cases and we would do much more stuff together. Everyone understands that you are on new territory, literally and figuratively, so they really make an effort to let you feel involved and at ease as fast as possible. The buddies organize lots of cultural and study related activities so you won't be bored during orientation. Additionally, it really helps in getting to know everyone as soon as possible.
accommodation	You can opt for two different options provided by the university. The first one is the cheapest, on campus housing. However, practically all of the exchange students live in E-park and Sunnyville, apartment complexes that are hosted by mama Wendy, a lovely and garrulous lady. She will take care of all problems related to housing and pairs students up to live in either 2 or 3 person apartments. Theses apartments are very nice as they are relatively cheap, have a pool and (basic) gym and are guarded 24/7. And as said most students live here so it is also a good place to socialize with the rest. You can also take care of your own accomodation but that is your own responsibility.
leisure & culture	



Penang island and Malaysia in general boast a great cultural variety and experiences. I absolutely loved the people and the fantastic food. The cultural and religious diversity of penang is really something else. I am not exaggerating if I say that during my stay in Malaysia I have felt the safest despite all the cultural and religious differences that one would normally expect. People are super friendly and are genuinely interested. The beautiful thing about living there is that you really get to experience the local daily life instead of just travelling through it. All in all it's just a case of what you give is what you receive. If you are open minded and friendly than that is what you undoubtedly will receive as well. Furthermore, Malaysia has such beautiful places to see. From Penang to the National Jungle or the Perhentian paradise islands.

suggestions/tips

You might feel the need to do everything but remember, you can't do it all. However, that shouldn't stop you from undertaking as much as you can because there are so many beautiful places to visit and people to meet that will enrich your life and personality. Just keep an eye on your stuff such as passports and money and you will be fine. Speaking of money, nothing is as expensive as they say it is. Negotiate everything you see and you might find that most things actually cost way less than you initially thought they would.

CONCLUSIONS

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

I would definitely recommend USM and Malaysia as destination. The people at the university are super helpful and will provide you with the best time ever. Also, I being in such a different environment and surrounded by such a different culture really enriches your experience and personal development.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Just enjoy everything that Malaysia has to offer and be open minded to everything that comes your way so you get to experience things you normally wouldn't. Get out of your comfort zone so to speak.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Sciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Chemistry

destination city & country	Penang , Malaysia
name university abroad	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
start date	12 / 02 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	30 / 06 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	<p>The application process can be quite tedious. You have to apply for UU first, which is rather straight forward, but still requires a bit of work. After UU accepts you, you have to apply for USM, which can be confusing. Also, every step takes a long time, because they review your documents at a very slow pace. Try to do this as soon as the application period is open, so you have enough time to edit rejected documents.</p>
counselling & support at Utrecht University	<p>I went to two meetings organised by the international office. The first one was for all students interested in going to Asia and consisted of general information about studying abroad and more detailed information about the available universities in Asia. Students who went there the previous semester told us about their experiences. The second meeting was a pre-departure meeting, so everyone present already decided their destination. Previous exchange students were there once again to give tips and answer questions. I found these two sessions very helpful, but the most valuable for me were the reports. I recommend reading all the reports available for the universities you're interested in.</p> <p>The support and information distribution from the international office was not always satisfactory. The coordinator forgot to e-mail us some information about the application process and was not always helpful when asked questions through e-mail. This might have been due to the coordinator being new to her function.</p>
academic preparation	<p>I made no academic preparations.</p>
language preparation	<p>No language preparation is required. You'll be talking English with the other exchange students and local students. The lectures will also be given in English. In my experience Dutch people speak better English than students from most other countries, so you should be fine.</p>
finances	<p>Make sure to cancel your student OV to receive around €90 each month. Do this in time and don't forget to deactivate the product at an automat before you leave.</p> <p>Eating out doors is way cheaper in Malaysia than in the Netherlands. The same goes for the rent. I still spent a lot of money, because of all the traveling and because I partook in a lot more events and activities than I would back home. Unlike food, alcoholic drinks are not cheaper in Malaysia. You won't find beer anywhere in Malaysia as cheap as in the Dutch supermarkets.</p> <p>See https://students.uu.nl/universiti-sains-malaysia-penang for estimated living costs.</p>



STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I was able to choose courses completely unrelated to chemistry, because of the free election space (vrije keuze ruimte) in my program. I did this for two reasons: firstly, if there was any overlap in course content, I would receive less ECTS and secondly, the science courses were mostly spread out over the week, while management and social science courses usually only had lectures once a week, which made it possible to only have school weeks of 2 days. Enrolling in courses is more complicated than I was used to. Instead of enrolling online, you had to go to the office buildings of the different schools and ask for signatures. The first two weeks you could walk into any lecture you were interested in, check it out and add it to your course list. During the first three weeks you were able to drop any of your courses. For adding and dropping courses you also had to go to the office of the respective school and get a signature. Lecture attendance is mandatory and most courses have attendance lists.

academic quality of education activities

Don't go to USM expecting the same academic quality as you're used to at UU. Most aspects of the courses are worse and the quality of the teachers varies. The studying is more focussed on learning facts than understanding underlying principles. On the plus side, you'll find that most courses are easier than back home.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I didn't seek support. When I had a question I could always ask one of the local students.

transfer of credits

Most courses at USM are worth 2 or 4 credits. You must take a minimum of 12 credits and not more than 21 credits. The amount of ECTS you get per credit was unclear to me for a long time. I ended up e-mailing my board of examination (chemistry) and they told me the amount of ECTS will be obtained by multiplying your credits by 1.33. This might vary per study. I took 4 courses, each worth 4 credits, so a total of 16 credits. This should net me 21 ECTS, but I can not confirm this, since the transfer hasn't taken place yet.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

One of the best aspects of my stay in Malaysia were the buddies (enthusiastic local students who work for the international office) and the orientation week and other activities they organised. I think you won't be able to find another university with such an elaborate orientation program. This is great, because after the orientation you have already met a lot of the other exchange students and it significantly lowers the barrier to seek contact with the ones you haven't. During the orientation week, there's a few dull mandatory activities, like briefings and a medical check-up. Mostly however, it consists of fun activities like games, a tour around the campus, BBQ and even a trip to a waterpark.

Accommodation

I stayed at E-park, where I shared an apartment with 2 other foreign students. Together we paid RM 1900 (€ 407) per month. Most students either stay at E-park or Sunnyville. Both are condominium complexes with a pool and mostly 3 person apartments. I think the E-park apartments are slightly better. E-park has a gym that you can get access to for the very generous prize of RM 120 (€ 26) for a whole semester for you and your flat mates. Sunnyville on the other hand, has a café with wifi. The apartments don't have wifi, but that's not a problem since you can get unlimited data on your phone for only RM 30 (€ 6,50) per month. To rent a room you can send a whatsapp message to a woman who calls herself Mama Wendy. She will arrange everything for you, but you pay quite a bit for her and after your first arrival she doesn't really do anything for



you. If I would go again I would definitely go back to E-park, because it's great to be close to the other exchange students. I would, however, try to arrange it without Mama Wendy. Online I saw E-park apartments for rent for only RM 1300 (€ 279) instead of RM 1900 (€ 407).

Don't take a hostel room. It's way cheaper but way worse. You're not allowed to cook or host parties and there's no air conditioning. Also, there's no girls allowed in the boys hostel and vice versa.

leisure & culture

I chose my courses carefully and thus had only 2 days of school, giving me time to travel during my 5 day weekends each week. I honestly felt like this semester was one big holiday. I traveled with friends all over Malaysia and neighbouring countries. The buddies also organised some great events throughout the year, like a one day cultural festival, a trip to Kuala Lumpur and Malakka, a homestay at a remote Malaysian village, which I really enjoyed, and a graduation night.

There were always other students willing to hang out by the pool, go to Georgetown or get dinner during my free time. Once or twice a week we would go out in Georgetown. There was this one bar called Anterabangsa, meaning "international", where all the foreign students would go, because it sells the cheapest beers and it's close to Love Lane, the bar/club street.

Malaysia contains a lot of different cultures, which are all really different from our own. Despite this, I really felt at home there after only a few weeks. It has been very enjoyable for me to learn about and experience different cultures. Not just Malaysian cultures but also the cultures of the other exchange students. For example, we celebrated Midsommar, a Scandinavian celebration of the longest day in summer.

suggestions/tips

See conclusions

CONCLUSIONS

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

Yes! I honestly think I couldn't have chosen a better destination for my stay abroad. The three most significant reasons for this are:

1. The orientation week and other events created by the buddies. This immediately puts you in contact with a lot of the other exchange students, making it really easy to make friends.
2. The low study load of USM. My study abroad felt more like a holiday, with a lot of traveling and chilling by the pool.
3. The culture difference. I might have had a good time if I went to a western country, but I would have never learned so much about other cultures and religions.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

I will try to give some advice for those who have decided to go to USM:

1. Don't stay at the on-campus hostels.
2. Bring one or two trousers, for you will need to cover up your knees when going to the university. Also bring at least one sweater. It is always warm in Malaysia and you will never need one outside, but there's some places (certain lecture halls, busses, airplanes) where the air conditioning is running on overdrive.
3. Take Malaysian Studies if you want a really easy course without tutorials (werkcolleges) and with a lot of fellow foreign students. However, don't be surprised if the teacher doesn't show up. Try to form a whatsapp group with the whole class and the teacher during the first lecture, to minimise the barrier for him to notify you of his absence. Another really easy course without tutorials is Introduction to Management. Language courses are widely considered to be some of the hardest courses and the amount of credits you are rewarded for completing them are out of proportion.
4. Before traveling to other countries, always check their visa requirements. If your friends from other European countries can go there without a visa, that doesn't mean you can. I learned this the hard way...



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	xxx
First name:	xxx
Student number:	xxx
Faculty/college:	Geo Science
Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor
Name degree programme:	Science and Innovation management

Destination city & country	Malaysia, Penang
Name host institution	Universiti Sains Malaysia
Purpose of exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> study/courses
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	1 February 2018
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	10 July 2018

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The Exchange department of University Utrecht was really good and well organised. They offered me briefing classes and responded fast on my e-mails. You have to hand in quiet a lot of papers including your study plan, financial plan, your proof of enrolment, Academic Transcript and some other papers. These were all available at UU and it was easy to get those. Most of them are available at Studiepunt.

However, the communication with the exchange department in USM is really really bad. They almost didn't respond on my e-mails and they let me know about my acceptance just one month before the semester started. I already booked my flight based on the academic calendar I found on their website. Unfortunately, those dates were not the correct ones, so I had to change my flight which costed me a lot of money. I had to apply for my visa (which takes 2/3 months while the semester started in one month). I made some mistakes (because of the lack of information they gave me) by filling in the forms for my Visa. I had to call the organisation more 6 times and still nothing changed (those calls to Malaysia from the Netherlands are expensive and it was complicated because of the time difference). So, I went to Malaysia without being sure if I had my Visa. When I arrived, I found out almost all the exchange students had problems with their Visa. Some of them didn't get one during the whole semester; this means that you're not able to leave the country so you're not allowed to travel (travelling is a big part of the way you enjoy your



exchange). I had to hand in my passport during the introduction week, and I got it back one month later. So be sure when you fill in the forms you fill in the right information. Don't stress when you're apply status is not 100% when you leave to Malaysia; it will be managed at USM during the introduction week.

Furthermore, I had to hand in a Medical Health Report they sent me. They need some basic information about your health (injections, allergies, diseases etc) a blood test, urine test and even a chest x-Ray scan. In my eyes, and unfortunately in the UU exchange department as well, this was way too exaggerated. When I went to my doctor to do those tests, he refused to sign. Most doctors in the Netherlands don't want to sign those papers or do those tests when there is not a good reason for it. Doing all those tests in the Netherlands is really expensive. I heard students saying they paid more than 300 euros. So, I went to Malaysia without a signed Health Medical Report but, luckily, I could do it at USM. It was only 200 ringgit which is 50 euros. I will recommend you to do it in Malaysia instead of your home country to save you money. Don't feel to stressed when they tell you it's really important to send them the documents as soon as possible. You have plenty of time during the orientation week to gather all the documents.

Counselling/support at Utrecht University:

The exchange department of UU is very helpful and well organised. They responded fast on my e-mails and helped me a lot.

Academic preparation:

There is not really an 'Academic Preparation'. The courses they offered are less hard than you're used to at UU. In the beginning I had problems with the Asian accent of the teacher, but you'll get used to it after a while.

Language preparation:

I had to hand in a letter from the University of Utrecht to prove that my level of English was sufficient. You can get this paper at Studiepunt. The level of English of the teacher is probably lower than yours.

Finances:

The living costs in Malaysia are way lower than in the Netherlands. However, you probably will spend a lot on travelling so in the end it won't be much cheaper. I spent around 1000 euros each month. You'll spend the most of your money on flight tickets which are still quite cheap.

Study abroad period

Study programme (concerning content and organisational issues):

In the first three weeks, you have the time to decide which courses you want to follow. You still have till the 7th week of the semester the time to change your courses. You have to fill in some forms and the organisation will manage it for you. You choose you're classes during the orientation week.

Academic quality of education:

The academic level of USM is lower than UU. The level of the books and sheets you've the study are comparable with those at UU, but the exams are really really easy. I was not expecting it was that



easy. USM works with a grading system A till F. When you put some effort in your classes the teacher will give you at least a B (7,5). It's really easy to get an A when you show the teacher you're interested in his classes and put effort in it. However, it doesn't mean you're not studying at all. The last month of the semester is 'exam month'. Because most students travel a lot during the semester, everyone is starts studying at the end.

I only did elective courses. USM offers you a wide range of courses which is are mostly very interesting. I chose to follow courses you don't have at UU. I followed Bahasa Malay (language course), Malaysia Studies (about the colonisation history of Malaysia) and some management courses: International Business, International Management, Entrepreneurship. A lot of exchange students follow the management courses. I really liked the courses, the classes were enjoyable and fun. Try to work together with the local students to get to know them better.

Counselling/support at host institution:

Transfer of credits:

I can't say anything about this yet, cause I didn't receive the transfer.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

The first week of the exchange is the orientation week. A group of local students, the buddies, organise activities for the whole week. This week was amazing!! You'll meet all the exchange students and do fun activities with them. The buddies are amazing and it's impressive how they manage everything so well. They offer you food, they perform a lot of dances and give you the information needed for the exchange. Try to become friends with the Buddies to get the full exchange experience in Penang. I was not expecting to become really close with local students, while this is in my eyes not really common in Utrecht (I might be wrong). You get to know more about their culture and about Malaysia when you become friends with the local students. Malaysians people are very polite and kind, maybe even a little bit modest. The students can be a little shy in the beginning so you have to take the first step to interact with them. Malaysian people will never betray you for money, what you can expect when you travel to countries like Vietnam and Thailand.

Accommodation:

Most of the students stay in E-Park or Sunny vile. You have to send 'Mama Wendy' a message and she will manage everything for you. Her phone number is +6017473916. Most exchange students admit that E-park is a little bit better than Sunny Vile. You pay around 150/200 euros rent each month, depending how luxury and big your room is.

Leisure/culture:

Although USM is a Muslim University, you have to wear long trousers and sleeves when entering the campus. This sounds depressing while the temperature outside is 35 degrees and you have to walk to the University every day for 30 minutes. However, the AC inside is -10, so trust me you need that long trousers and sleeves. The lectures and teachers can really differ. Some don't want to have exchange students in their classes, and you will notice that directly. Therefore, it's useful to



choose classes with more exchange students. Those teachers are fun and try to mingle the different cultures. I only had classes on Tuesday and Monday. A lot of exchange students make their schedule by giving themselves as less days of classes as possible, so they can travel as much as possible. The campus is really big and the first week you will feel completely lost. The campus is beautiful with a lot of trees. However, USM is less developed than UU. So the systems for printing, apply for courses and getting your Visa etc is all a bit outdated. You'll get used to it but sometimes it's a bit frustrating.

Penang is a really nice place to live in. You have a bit of everything: beaches, party, culture, which makes it a popular travel destination in Malaysia. George Town, the biggest city on the island, is an amazing place with a lot of good restaurants with tasty food. My favourite restaurant was 'China House', which had more than 30 cakes on the menu. Penang can be seen as the food paradise of Malaysia so prepare to get fat. Most of op exchange students didn't cook that often in their apartment cause street food was just around 5/6 ringgit (1 euros). However, I had a good kitchen in my apartment and after a while I had enough of fried food. There is a small grocery shop in Sonny Point, this building looks a bit abandoned. There is also a bigger grocery shop called Tesco. You have everything here, even chairs, speakers, towels and everything you need to buy to have a comfortable life in Penang. You also have some good shopping malls. Queens Bay was my favourite for doing groceries and Gurney Plaza for buying clothes.

To get around, most exchange students use 'Grab'. This is the Asian Uber. When you need a ride from E-park/Sunny Vile to George Town, this will cost you around 10 ringgit. To the airport is around 10 ringgit as well (2 euro). There are also public transfer busses, I used them once. They are fine, but you'll never know when they arrive and how long it will take to arrive at your destination.

Suggestions/tips:

Conclusions

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

Definitely! My exchange was amazing, and I met so many nice people and made a lot of local and exchange student friends. I'm sure going back once. I think this was the best year of my life and I really hope other students will experience an exchange to Malaysia the same as I did.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	xxx
First name:	xxx
Student number:	xxx
Faculty/college:	Geo Sciences
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Human Geography and Planning

Destination city & country	Penang, Malaysia
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Universiti Sains Malaysia
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)	28-07-2017
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	30-01-2018

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The application date is quite late, but that's just the way it is over there. It is not very difficult, just start early enough as you have to prepare some documents etc. The application for a student visa also started very late, which was kind of stressful but in the end it all worked out for me. For some of my fellow students it did not, so don't be surprised if there are visa problems when you want to finish your visa application during the introduction week. The buddies will help you out, and otherwise you can stay on a tourist visa as some students did (just have to travel somewhere else and re-enter Malaysia at least once).

Counselling/support at home university:

Some things with the application documents for USM were not clear at first, but I was helped by the coordinator at UU very well.

Academic preparation:

Not really anything – not needed either.

Language preparation:

No need – English level from high school/university is good enough. To be sure I handed in a form that stated that I have a certain level of English (available on the UU site).

Finances:



I took a student loan for half a year and was able to pay for everything (including travels).

Study/placement abroad period

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

I took 5 courses: three of the School of Social Sciences (each 4 units) and two of the School of Management (each 3 units). During the introduction the buddies will show the schedule of all available courses to the international students and then you can go start picking your courses. The first official week of school you can go and try out the courses, you don't have to make your schedule official until the week after. I recommend doing this, because I found out that some courses I wanted to take were not really what I wanted after all.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

As I was not sure how many ECTS I could get I took 18 units to hopefully get 30 ECTS. This meant taking 5 courses, and the quality of these courses differed. Compared to Utrecht University the overall quality is definitely lower, but that doesn't mean it's easy or that you don't have to do anything.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

I didn't really need any counselling or support, but if needed, you can always go to the buddies and they will help you. Malaysian immigration is however another story, but the University cannot do anything about their services. Just keep your fingers crossed your application will go smoothly.

Transfer of credits:

There was some delay in the transferring, but in the end I got my credits. Just hand in course descriptions to your board of examiners, and they will transfer it for you. I did 5 courses; for three I got 7.5 ECTS (each 4 units at USM), for the other two 5.6 ECTS (each 3 units at USM).

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

We were welcomed by buddies, they organized a three day welcome program where we got to learn each other for a bit. Also, they helped you with the official stuff like visa, insurance etc.

Accommodation:

Before I left, I received the phone number from a local woman who can get you an apartment (2/3/4 per apartment). Her name is Mama Wendy, her phone number is: 0060174773916. You can choose between apartment blocks (Sunnyville or E-park), most students found E-park the best (both have swimming pools, but many found the one at E-park better). E-park also has a gym. I stayed in Sunnyville, which was fine for me! You just have to get lucky with your apartment, whether you are staying at Sunnyville or E-park.

Leisure/culture:

Penang itself is a really nice island; it has a small city feeling, but still everything you need is there. The food is really good, and people are very nice. I also travelled around a lot, I was away for most weekends. Lots of other people did the same thing, so there were always people you could travel with!

Suggestions/tips:

Buy the insurance beforehand when you apply for the visa, that saves you a lot of hassle. Also, you don't have to do the medical exam beforehand (at home) per se, it costs a lot less if you do it in



Penang.

Conclusions

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

Yes! The place itself was really nice; not a super big city, but it had a really nice atmosphere. People at the university were very nice and if you choose well, the courses are quite ok. I travelled around a lot and would recommend this as well; you learn, see, and do a lot of stuff!

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Just go! I was quite scared, but in the end I can say I had one of the best times of my life!