



UU Study Abroad Report Form

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

destination city & country	Riverside, California, United States
name university abroad	University of California
start date	12 / 09 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	17 / 12 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process at the UU was very easy and straightforward. Be aware that as the application process progresses, you will need to gather additional information (like a bank statement and a grades list) and prepare for extra expenses (like the Visa application process). You will probably also need to do a TOEFL-test to indicate your English level proficiency. I tried to complete every task as soon as I was able to and this really helped me stay on top of things. It wasn't necessarily difficult, just very time-consuming. I also went to all the pre-departure meetings that were organized by the UU. I would 100% advise to attend these and ask some questions to students who have already been abroad. These meetings are also very helpful to find any other people who are going to the same destination as you, that way you won't have to go through this process all by yourself. This also happened to be the first year that UCR decided to enforce the immunization requirements so make sure you are compliant with their requirements (<https://studenthealth.ucr.edu/immunization-requirements>) and get possible vaccinations as needed at home (in the US they are more expensive). Another thing is that UCR doesn't really plan for students to only stay one quarter so every contract you sign is based on a whole school year. It is possible to arrange housing for only one quarter but this will again take some more emails and phone calls.

counseling & support at Utrecht University

As the application process progressed, I ran into some problems down the line but Cathelijne was extremely helpful and assured me that everything would work out okay, which it did.

academic preparation

The only academic requirement was that one needed a GPA of 2.85 so this destination is something to start working on/for in your first year.

language preparation

Because my major is primarily in Dutch, I had to take a TOEFL-test to prove that my English is sufficient. The test is remarkably easy and nothing to worry about but it is quite costly (payment is in dollars, so make sure you have a credit card available) and it is very difficult to make an appointment (only Fridays and Saturdays, scattered all over the country). Once again, choose a date as soon as you can because it could take up to a month to find a spot.

finances

In order for UC to make sure all the students can actually afford to come there, you need to send them a bank statement stating you have the amount of money they say is needed for the duration of your stay. This information will be sent to you by UC in due time but the information is also available on the website (<https://reciprocity.uceap.universityofcalifornia.edu/after-you-apply/visa-resources/financial-requirements>). It took some time for me to get the bank statement because I live in a small town and the bank had never had to



issue one of those before... I had saved all the money that was required in advance so I did not have to give any additional information about other people who would be paying for me (like my parents or DUO). This is a possibility but it takes a little more time to arrange and a little more paperwork, so again, start this process as soon as possible.

Another thing that I needed to arrange was a credit card. There are multiple different options for getting one (with different monetary limits). Take some time to find the one that best suits your situation.

The Visa application process also comes with extra expenses. I had to pay 60 dollars to get the DS-2019 form sent to me, then 180 dollars for a SEVIS-fee to start the Visa process, then 140 euros to get an appointment at the consulate in Amsterdam. All these amounts are **non-refundable** so make sure you can 100% make it to your appointment!

The amount UC requires from you is only for the duration of your stay there, plane tickets, other traveling costs, immunization shots, fun trips you would like to make, etc., are not included so plan for these costs as well.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study program (content and organizational issues)

Media and Cultural Studies

I followed three courses during my stay and compared to the courses I've taken at the UU, they were remarkably easy. I don't know if that is just this particular major that seems to have a much lower workload, but in hindsight, I could have taken more courses that also seemed very interesting to me.

In order to keep your status as a visiting student, you have to follow the minimum amount worth of credits (for me that was 12 and every course was 4 credits). So even though you could take more courses, you cannot take less.

The signing up for courses was a bit difficult for me (and other EAP students) because for some reason we were supposed to sign up during the summer vacation but we were not informed of this by UCR. Hence, a lot of the courses I wanted to take were already full.

academic quality of education activities

The content of the courses I did take seemed very low-level to me and not very academic. I had not read an academic article for the entire time I was there (even though two of my courses were advanced level and were even attended by some Master's students).

During my time there, some of the fires that were active in the surrounding area made it impossible for teachers and students to get to the campus so that's why some classes were canceled and some assignments were simplified, but even if I would have had the full course workload it still wouldn't compare to the UU.

counseling & support at receiving university abroad

The people that oversaw the EAP students also oversaw all the other international students and considering there were only a few of us, we sometimes slipped through the cracks. Information that wasn't applicable to us, would be sent to us anyway, leading us to then having to find out if this information was actually for us or not... Mostly not... Even though this was rarely the fault of the people in charge of supporting us, it seemed like they weren't really prepared for EAP students and their 'special needs'.

Some of the other EAP students were billed for fees they would be exempted from under the EAP system and it would take weeks to rectify these mistakes. Thankfully, I personally didn't have any mistakes regarding this, but the information supply from UCR left a lot to be desired.

transfer of credits

As of right now, my credits have not been transferred yet, but all of my subjects were accepted when I first submitted them.

STUDENT LIFE



welcome & orientation programme
The orientation week was very helpful for finding other students and making new friends. The EAP students had their own meeting at one point and most of us became friends right away. The general orientation (shared with all the other 'permanent' international students) contained a tour of the university and gave some general information about American standards and ways of communicating. Once again, it felt like EAP students specifically didn't really need to be there (there were sections where they explained when and how to pay tuition fees, for example, which we didn't have to pay).
accommodation
I stayed in student housing in Bannockburn Village which was very close to campus and the bus stop. I was very lucky to get a room on campus (my own room shared with 3 other American flatmates in the apartment) because everything was already gone when I first applied. I didn't hear from my application at all (despite several emails) until I called them at the beginning of August (and asked Cathelijne for help) and was finally given a furnished room. Later I found out that all EAP students didn't hear from their housing application because in the system we were classified as 'visiting students' which was apparently interpreted as staying only for a very limited amount of time, hence we were given no accommodation. I would strongly advise against staying in the apartment complexes off-campus because I've been informed by students that live there that the living quality is terrible.
leisure & culture
I did do a lot of traveling while I was there. Riverside is very close to the other big cities in the area and you can easily travel to LA for a very small amount of money. I ended up going to LA, San Diego, Santa Monica, Disney World and loads of other places.
suggestions/tips
I ended up hanging out with a lot of other international students (mostly EAP) who of course also wanted to explore California. I was very happy with this because most Americans I met, didn't really want to go traveling. Most of them also went home during the weekend, and of course, my international friends couldn't do that so we ended up making a lot of weekend trips. I would advise renting a car with multiple people to go on trips because public transport isn't that great. In California you don't need an international driver's license, most places will also just accept your European one. Most Americans I met didn't cook at all. Fresh veggies and healthy meals are very expensive and I would advise to prep your meals in advance so you don't have to spend a lot of money and time to get to a grocery store or spend a lot of money getting meals on campus. Traveling by bus in Riverside (using the RTA services) is free using your R'card (student card), I took advantage of that for my trips to the grocery store. One final tip is that you should never walk alone on the streets whenever it's dark. Don't wear headphones (in both ears) and don't visibly carry any valuables (like a laptop). UCR will also inform you of this during the orientation.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
In terms of costs, UCR is a better option than UC Berkeley for example. If you want to travel around California, UCR gives you more than enough free time to do so. If you want to focus on specific academic advantages I wouldn't recommend UCR. I don't know what the academic level of the other locations is, but in comparison to UU, the level at UCR was far below what I was used to.
do you have any additional advice or comments?



Universiteit Utrecht

Get everything sorted as soon as possible. If you don't hear from UCR in time (regarding housing, immunizations, courses, fees, health insurance), contact them yourself (preferably by phone).



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	
First name:	
Student number:	
Faculty/college:	REBO
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Economics and Business Economics

Destination city & country	Riverside, United States
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of California, Riverside
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)	26/08/2017
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	04/01/2018

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

I wanted to go abroad since the beginning of my studies, specifically a country which would not be feasible without an exchange program (due to excessive tuition costs). As we all know, the United States has generally very high tuition fees. Doing my undergrad (bachelor) or grad (master) programme solely there would therefore not be possible. I decided early on that the United States would be on top of my list of destination countries, I can't explain why; it was just a gut feeling.

At first UMass Boston was my first choice, but after reading reviews of the school (which were not bad, just not what I expected) and considering the fact that it's pretty cold there in winter, I decided to put University of California (UC) as my number one choice. This was in December 2016. UC gave out like 50 spots for Utrecht University as a whole, but only around 30 people applied for UC, which meant that everyone who applied got admitted, great success!

Next up was choosing one of the UC campuses, they're located all over California. I chose the campuses mainly based on the courses they offered, and also took into account the culture at the campus. For example, at UC Berkeley they have a really "rebellious" culture, which shows in the many protests taking place. I really dislike that kind of culture, and I was not to select a school based on its good name or ranking. In the end, I had UC Riverside as my first choice since they



offered interesting courses, it is located in Southern California so good weather, and it's not a popular choice at all which I liked as well, since it's more of a surprise what I'll experience.

Counselling/support at home university:

I went to my study advisor of Utrecht School of Economics a few times, but it wasn't really necessary nor helpful to be honest since the course manual of the Fall 2017 quarter wasn't released till June or something, so I couldn't select courses anyway. I'll come back to this later.

Academic preparation:

I didn't fail any classes in Utrecht so that wasn't a problem.

Language preparation:

My entire undergrad programme is taught in English so this wasn't a problem. I also didn't have to do a TOEFL or equivalent test.

Finances:

In my second year I just worked a lot at my side jobs and saved money. The most expensive part was rent at \$1000(!) a month, I'll come back to this at the subsection Accommodation.

Study/placement abroad period

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

I had to submit a study programme (a plan showing the courses I intended to follow abroad) before the end of April. However, the course manual of fall 2017 quarter wasn't released then. So I had to pick courses based on the course manual of fall 2016. My (preliminary) study programme was approved. Around June the course manual of fall 2017 was released and I selected the courses I wanted to follow, this study programme was again approved. The registration for classes of UCR was in August, and it was a pain to actually register for classes since they didn't enter the prerequisites in my student account so I was "too novice" to follow any of the classes which, being third/fourth-year courses, had prerequisites of course. Sending an email to the coordinator of the economics faculty solved this and he was of really great help. He advised and registered me for courses. I forgot to communicate this with the board of examiners, and due some miscommunication my actual study plan was accepted half October, even though my quarter had already started for a few weeks. I noticed that as long as it is somewhat related to your major (economics in my case), the courses will be accepted.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The level of the tests was quite low. Most of the tests were just the same as the homework exercises or mock exams, with for example only a little variation in the numbers. During the first exam I thought the teacher made a mistake since it was almost identical to the mock exam, but it turned out that's just the US style of testing. The courses also weren't as in depth as in Utrecht, part of this is due to the fact that the norm there is following four courses, opposed to two in Utrecht. Being an exchange student from Utrecht, as long as you do all the homework exercises and study them thoroughly before the test, you'll be able to get a good grade I reckon.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The communication with UCR was hilariously bad. A few weeks before the start of the quarter I got an invoice of UCR stating that I have to pay around \$12k. They forgot to add that I am an exchange student and thus cleared from any tuition or fees. I mailed like every possible office of



UCR, since the date payable was end of September. If you failed to pay by then you had to pay an extra late-payment fee. A few days before the date payable I received an email back stating that they made a mistake and I wasn't billable for \$12k, so all was well. (Fun fact: half October I got another email back from a different office stating that they couldn't see what I meant, since my student account clearly showed that I was waived from the tuition fees. Talk about timely responses!)

Transfer of credits:

I followed three four-unit courses and one five-unit course. The four-unit courses were transferred to 8 ECTS and the five-unit course to 10 ECTS. I got three A's and one A+, which were transferred to 9 and a 10 respectively. I was very surprised and very glad with this result!

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

UCR hosted an introduction week for the international students at the end of September, which was great. We had a campus tour, other welcome activities and many opportunities to meet fellow (international) students. They also organised trips to Universal Studios and Santa Monica which you should definitely join. There are so called IPAs (international peer advisors) who are students willing to help/hang out with international students. Some IPAs were really chill and ended up being close friends.

Accommodation:

Finding accommodation was a pain. Housing is very expensive, especially if you don't want a roommate. There are several apartment complexes nearby, but monthly rent is mostly north of \$600 if you stay for a full year. Since I only stayed for a quarter rent would be around \$900 monthly, and then you're still sharing an apartment with three others. I ended up finding a room in a house via Airbnb. I met up with the landlord and we wrote our own contract (to avoid Airbnb fees) for \$1000 monthly. This of course is a lot but it was a big house with a great garden to throw parties in. It actually used to be one of the most important houses of the most famous frat of UCR, so many people who came over already had been at the house before for parties. It was also only a three min bike ride away from campus, so all-in-all it was expensive but good.

Leisure/culture:

Downtown Riverside is quite nice to visit a few times. Especially in December there's the festival of lights which attracts visitors from all over California. If you want to do more stuff you have to go to LA (e.g. LA auto show, escape room, beaches). Fortunately almost every American student owns a car so it's easy to hitch a ride if you're friends with them. After thanksgiving we went black Friday shopping overnight (left at 11PM and arrived back home at 5AM) and the shopping centre was still extremely crowded!

Suggestions/tips:

Buy a bike, as a true Dutch you of course want to bike everywhere: it's fast and Americans will be amazed by your bike riding skills (e.g. eating a sandwich and riding at the same time is seen as witchcraft by them). Also make the most of the first week: join every activity and get as many numbers/snapchats/facebook from IPAs (American students) and other international students. Americans are very open and will always be willing to hangout (but beware of the American



superficial attitude).

Conclusions

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

Yes! Since there aren't many other (European) international students you won't meet many other Dutch people so you really have to speak English all the time which is great for your language skills.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Start looking for housing early, but don't be scared if you don't have housing when you arrive, I only found something on the first day of orientation.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	UCR
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Liberal Arts and Sciences

Destination city & country	Riverside, United States
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	University of California, Riverside
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)	21/12/2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	27/06/2017

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The process itself was very clear and not that difficult. The most frustrating part is waiting for the reply about whether or not you've been chosen for the exchange.

Counselling/support at home university:

It was very helpful throughout both the application and preparation processes.

Academic preparation:

I didn't do anything specific to prepare for courses taken in the host university. The course load in the university I went to appeared to be smaller, but it was nonetheless challenging, just in other ways.

Language preparation:

Since UCR is an English-taught program, I also didn't do anything extra as a language preparation.

Finances:

I knew that studying in the US and living there would be more expensive than in the Netherlands, but I didn't know what exactly to expect in terms of accommodation prices, groceries and transportation. California is the second most expensive state in the US, so be ready to pay a little extra just because it is California (though, I went to NYC after my exchange, and believe me living in California is more affordable than living in NY).

Groceries: I spent around \$30-40 a week on groceries and I tried to eat mainly at home since that's what I'm used to and I personally think it is cheaper that way.

Transportation: Since I don't have a licence, it was a little tricky for me to get around at first. However, once you get used to using busses and trains, it gets easier. Students of UC Riverside can ride a bus for free. Trains cost \$10 for a round trip during the weekend and \$19 for a round trip



throughout the week.

Accommodation: I myself paid \$600 for a furnished apartment where I lived with one more person. There were cheaper options, however, those apartments were coming unfurnished and that was not an option for me.

Study/placement abroad period

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

I was able to get into the majority of courses I wanted even though they were in high demand. Our academic advisor in the host university was very helpful in that sense, since she was able to sign us up for the course earlier than other students were able to register. The programme itself has a very broad range of courses in many different departments and if I wanted to, I could have signed up for any of those courses. There were no particular restrictions.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The quality of the art programme at UC Riverside is fantastic! They have the whole building dedicated to the department of arts and hence, they have many facilities (such as photo labs, art, music and theatre studios), which are not available for me in my home university. All the professors in the art department are also practicing artists, so they are very much aware of current tendencies and demands.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

There was such an option, however, I didn't really have a need to use anything.

Transfer of credits:

As for now, I expect to get the required amount of credits transferred.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

I believe that if you come for a Fall quarter, the university has a big orientation programme. However, I came in January and the orientation was only a small presentation, touching upon some of the main questions new (international) students might have.

Accommodation:

It was not hard to get a room, since at some point of the application process you have a chance apply for on-campus accommodation, if you wish to do so.

Leisure/culture:

Since you live in a town and close by a big city, it was not hard to find things to do. Furthermore, there are lots of committees and clubs, which one could join. There is also a gym, to which students have free access.

Suggestions/tips:

Conclusions

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

I would definitely recommend UC Riverside if you're thinking of going on exchange, especially if you're an Art major. Besides the university having wonderful facilities, there are also lots of museums in the area, which you've most likely heard of because they possess works by some great masters in their collections. And it's no secret that the weather in Southern California is amazing,



so that's also something to keep in mind while deciding where to go.

Overall, I think everyone can find something to their liking in America. It is a very versatile country, and if you think that California as a state is not something you would like, there are 49 other states, which you might find more appropriate for your taste ☺ But I do believe that America is worth experiencing.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Go on exchange and enjoy every minute of it!