



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

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

destination city & country	Xiamen, China
name university abroad	Xiamen University
start date	10 / 09 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	10 / 01 / 2020 (dd/mm/yyyy)

### PREPARATION

#### exchange application process

The first step in the application process was, of course, applying via Osiris. Xiamen University was the number one in my top 3. I was kind of nervous to find out if I got in, since there were only 4 places, but I later found out that I was the first (and only one) from Utrecht University to go to Xiamen since four years. For some reason (one I still haven't found) Xiamen University is not that popular. About a month after getting the news that I got to go to Xiamen University, I got more information about the application process at Xiamen University. They send me a document with the application guidelines which contained a lot of information about things such as the university's calendar, visa, accommodation and much more. This document was very helpful! I had to do online application before April 1<sup>st</sup> which was well explained in the application guidelines. The only trouble I had, was with finding the right information about the courses, since the website of Xiamen University did not contain a lot of information and was not very clear. But I contacted them via email and they were very kind and helpful even though I had a lot of questions. I got information about the courses that were available, only when I got in Xiamen I found out that the information was not up to date. However, if you go on exchange it is very common that you end up not following the classes you chose beforehand and this is no problem.

Next, I also had to apply for a Visa. It is good to know that there are two types of students Visa you can apply for. There is one for 6 months, a X2 visa, and one for one year, a X1 visa. Since I was going on exchange for only one semester I applied for a X2 visa. This was a very easy process, you can find all the information online and after applying I had my visa within a week! The only problem was that a X2 visa is a single entry visa (at the embassy in The Hague they told me I could apply for multiple entries once in China but turned out not to be possible). This means that you can only enter China one time with the visa; once you leave China you cannot go back in with the same visa. Thus, travelling to other countries during your exchange is not possible with this visa. Luckily, China is very very big so there is enough to travel to in China itself! But if you are planning on travelling to other countries during your exchange I would apply for a X1 visa (I believe that is also possible if you are only going for one semester). Although, applying for a X1 visa might be a little bit more work (you also need a health certificate for example) and more expensive.

#### counselling & support at Utrecht University

The counselling and support at Utrecht University was very good! The International Offices (there is one specifically for Asia!) are very helpful with any questions you have, so do not hesitate to contact them! Moreover, there was a pre-departure meeting for students going to Hong Kong & China. There were also some students who previously went on exchange to one of the universities in Hong Kong or China. They shared their experiences, gave tips and answered questions. Sadly for me, since I was the first to go to Xiamen in four years, there was no one who went or was going to Xiamen University. But the meeting was still very helpful because a



lot of general information about going on exchange to China and the application process was explained! Furthermore, I also had a pre-departure meeting for all the Biomedical Sciences students that were going on exchange. This meeting discussed topics concerning exchange and my study/faculty, which was also very helpful.

academic preparation

I did not do any specific academic preparation. I followed courses at the School of Medicine in Xiamen and since I study Biomedical Sciences I was qualified to enrol in those courses. All of the courses were also taught in English so did not have to learn Chinese ;).

language preparation

I had to provide a Language Proficiency Form for English. I had followed a course in English at Utrecht University, so I could let the teacher of that course sign it for me. Otherwise you can also do an English language test or if you got an eight or higher (I believe) on your high school diploma this will also be sufficient. But this will all be explained to you, and is not difficult, so do not worry about it!  
If you plan on following courses in Chinese, you have to provide an HSK certificate but I am not sure which level of HSK.

finances

Life in China, compared to The Netherlands, is very cheap! Food is very cheap, as are transport in the city (by bus, metro or taxi) or to other cities/places (by plane or train) and accommodation. I chose to stay in the dorms of the University which costed me 800 RMB for the whole six months. This is about 100 euro's! If you choose to stay in an apartment this will be a lot more, about 1500-3000 RMB (so 200-400 euro) per month depending on where in the city and if you live with roommates or not, but this is still not that expensive.  
Before I went on exchange there were, apart from the one from my faculty, no scholarships I could apply for that I knew about. However, during my exchange (about 3 months in) my contact person at the School of Medicine told me I was entitled to apply for the Chinese Government Scholarship. I eventually got the scholarship, which was about 3000 RMB per month, so I definitely recommend looking into that!

**STUDY ABROAD PERIOD**

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I followed courses from the Medical Bachelor and Bachelor of Science (MBBS) programme of the School of Medicine. This is a bachelor programme for International Students who come to Xiamen University to study Medicine. The programme takes six years and sadly they do not work with time slots like Utrecht University does. Each year has a specific set of courses that the students have to take and the students do not have the option to choose their courses. Therefore, for me as an exchange student (the only one at the School of Medicine), it was very hard to chose my courses since a lot of the classes of the courses from the different years overlapped qua timing. Eventually it worked out but there were not many options to choose from. In the first week I was allowed to follow some random classes to see which ones I liked. One other organisational issue was that there was no information online, no website or something like that, I think this is mainly because the School of Medicine does not have a lot of experience with exchange students. So before I arrived I had to get information about the courses via email. When I arrived I often just went by the office of the School of Medicine if I had any questions or needed information. In the end this worked out fine but it did take some more effort and time.

I believe the School of Economics and the School of Management also provide courses given in English and they are a lot more experienced with exchange students, so choosing courses from those schools might be a lot easier. Furthermore, there is also the Overseas Education College for International Students who come to Xiamen University to study Chinese. I met a lot of students who did this and learned that the Overseas



Education College is also way more experienced than the School of Medicine with exchange students and everything there was organised very well.

academic quality of education activities

In my experience the quality of the medical courses at Xiamen are less good than at Utrecht University. This is mainly because there were only lectures and no seminars, practical's or anything of the sort. Because of this the classes quickly became kind of boring to me due to lack of variety and I also found it harder to understand everything. Another problem was that, especially in the beginning, I had some difficulties understanding the teachers as they had a Chinese or an Indian accent. Eventually I got used to the accents and could understand them better.

However, I also followed a Chinese Language course and I enjoyed this very much! In contrast to the Medical courses this course did have seminars next to the lectures. And the lectures were also very interactive which helped a lot with learning the language. The English of these teachers was a lot better as well and with way less of a Chinese accent. I really enjoyed learning Chinese, and found that I could very quickly apply it in day to day life (in shops and restaurants etc.) which was very helpful as there are very few Chinese people who speak English. I highly recommend following a Chinese Language course!

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

My contact persons at the School of Medicine (Kathy and Candice) were very nice and helpful! I could always come to their office or contact them via WeChat (kind of the Chinese version of WhatsApp) whenever I had any questions, and they were always ready to help. Sometimes it took some time to make clear what I or they wanted/meant due to language and cultural differences but that is understandable and was never because they did not wanted to help. There were also some older students (from the MBBS programme) whom the new students could contact with questions. They were always ready to help as well! These students were also there upon arrival to help and with registration and accommodation.

transfer of credits

Sadly, there is/was no conversion table available for conversion of Xiamen University credits to ECTS. Therefore, the exam committee decided about the amount of ECTS I got based on the course descriptions and the amount of teaching hours per course. I ended up getting 27 ECTS for 20 Xiamen credits (4 courses), I would have gotten 30 ECTS but one of the courses partly overlapped with a course I had already followed in Utrecht. So, 20 Xiamen University credits is about the same as 30 ECTS. However, I recommend discussing this with your exam committee.

**STUDENT LIFE**

welcome & orientation programme

There was not really an extensive orientation programme. The first day of arrival on campus is focussed on registration and getting assigned to your dorm (if you chose to stay in the dorms). On this day the university will also help you arrange a Chinese bank account and sim card, which is very useful to have! The rest of the week is for settling into your dorm, and some welcome meetings with general information about the university, the courses and your schedule. Then after one week you will start with the classes. Furthermore, there are no fun activities to get to know your fellow students or anything like that. I did get to join/see the opening ceremony of the University (traditional Chinese performances and a tour on the Siming Campus). Normally this is just for the Chinese students but as the students from the MBBS programme will be doing their complete studies at Xiamen University they get to join/see, and therefore I was lucky to be able to join as well.

accommodation

There are two campuses, Siming campus which is close to the city centre, and Xiang'an campus, which outside the city centre and about an hour by bus. The School of Medicine and the Overseas Education College are



located on Xiang'an campus and the School of Economics and the School of Management are located on the Siming campus. On both the campuses the university has dorms available for the international students. I was living in the dorms on Xiang'an campus which I found pretty okay. I shared my room with one roommate and we lived in the dorm with eight in total (there are girls-only and boys-only dorms, no combined ones). Together we shared two showers, two toilets and a common room. However the common room only contained one wooden bench so we rarely used this to hang out. The dorms are not very luxurious, in essence you have everything you need but it is not much. For example, no kitchen and you are not allowed to cook in the dorms. There are enough places to eat on and around the campus, and since this is very cheap and I really enjoy Chinese food, I found this to be no problem! Living in the dorms was good enough for me considering I only stayed for one semester and I did not want to travel from the city to the campus every day, but I can imagine wanting to live in an apartment. I knew a lot of international students who did rent an apartment and they were very positive about it. Especially the students from Siming campus did this, since the dorms there are not very nice. You share a room with 4 roommates and the dorms in general are a lot older with, for example, only a squad toilet and no normal toilet.

If you want to live in an apartment, I recommend looking for one once you arrive in Xiamen, maybe after a month or so. That way you can maybe search together with other internationals you have met. Besides after some time you will already know the city a little bit and know which areas are nice to live in and which have good connection to the campuses. Since Xiang'an campus is far outside the city centre, it is good to have a good bus connection. I know that you can take the teachers bus from Siming campus to Xiang'an campus, which is a lot faster than the normal bus. I believe they were also working on a metro line to Xiang'an campus, so that will make travelling to the campus a lot faster.

#### leisure & culture

There is a lot to do and experience in China and in Xiamen. I really enjoyed it because the culture is so different than from The Netherlands. It is good to know that around Xiang'an campus there is not a lot to do. There are some hikes in the area and right outside the campus is a night market with really good food and a nice ambience, I often went there for dinner. I really recommend trying the Chinese barbecue places, it's really good!! However, if you want shops, bars, clubs, etc. nearby (and you are okay with travelling to the campus everyday) you should go live in the city centre. Nearby Siming campus there is this area called Sha Po Wei (Art Zone) with a lot of nice shops and bars. In these bars (especially Phoebe and Mojito) a lot of international students come together to hang out, this is a lot of fun! Furthermore, Xiamen is a very big city with a lot of nice areas to shop, a botanical garden, some old city areas and temples, the beach and much more to offer! The city is very beautiful and what I liked a lot was that it is not very well known and therefore not as big as Shanghai or Beijing (but still big though haha).

There is also a lot to see in the rest of China! An advantage of Xiamen is that it is located close to (for Chinese measurements) some popular sights such as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taiwan. So you can easily plan some trips to these places (although make sure you have a multiple entry visa before going to Hong Kong or Taiwan!). In the province of Xiamen, Fujian, there is also enough to see and do. I recommend buying the Lonely Planet for a lot of good travel tips for China.

Overall I had an amazing time in China, the people are very nice, the food very tasteful and the country is very beautiful!

#### suggestions/tips

Be prepared that a lot of the Chinese people do not speak English. Therefore communication can be very difficult sometimes. It might be handy if you can speak a little bit of Chinese before coming. However, I did not know a word of Chinese, apart from ni hao (hello) and xie xie (thank you), and I managed, so you can as well! What you cannot live without is a translate app; I found that Google translate works perfectly (but make sure you download the app and then download the Chinese language so you are able to use it offline). Besides, a lot of the Chinese people have a translate app themselves, which they use to make themselves clear to you!



Secondly, it is good to know that a lot of apps and websites are blocked in China: you cannot use Google, Facebook, Instagram and some more apps/websites. Before going, do some research to which apps you cannot and can use (for example Firefox and Bing instead of Google) and/or get a VPN connection.

## CONCLUSIONS

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

I would definitely recommend going to Xiamen University! As I said China is a very beautiful country with nice people and I had an amazing time. It might be a bit more of an adventure going here on exchange, due to cultural and language differences but that is the part I really enjoyed about my exchange! Besides, you will learn a lot about the Chinese culture, but also about how you can handle yourself in such a different environment and such different and new situations. For me this was a very valuable experience that I will never forget.

If I had to redo my exchange I would definitely choose Xiamen again! The only thing I might do differently, and what I recommend doing, is learn Chinese at the Overseas Education College and not also follow medical courses. I really enjoyed learning Chinese and the quality of the classes is very good! I was surprised at how fast I could apply what I had learned in real life. And that while I only followed one Chinese language course, imagine how fast you will learn if you focus on just learning Chinese!! Besides for most students their exchange is in the time they could also do a minor, so they do not have to follow courses related to their major. Out of experience I can say that learning a language is a nice break from your studies back home 😊.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Since not many students chose to go to Xiamen and there is not a lot of information available on the website of Xiamen University, I know that it Xiamen might not be your first choice. I am also familiar with the struggle to get to get the information you need in case you already chose to go to Xiamen. So please do not hesitate to contact me if you are considering to go or are going to Xiamen University and have any questions! I have a lot more information and tips for you and am very happy to help!



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Betawetenschappen
Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	MCLS

Destination city & country	Xiamen, China
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Xiamen University
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)	12-09-2014
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	29-01-2015

### Preparation

Exchange/placement application process: After you received permission of Utrecht university to go on exchange in Xiamen you can apply via the site <http://admissions.xmu.edu.cn/en/index> for the exchange program of Xiamen university. Via <http://admissions.xmu.edu.cn/application.php> you can create an account for Xiamen university. With this account it is possible to submit your online application. Together with the online application, your international office needs to send the following documents by post:

- (1) Application Form for Exchange Students, which should be completed in Chinese or English and then printed out after successful online application.
- (2) A letter of recommendation from the applicant's home university.
- (3) Current academic transcripts in English or Chinese.
- (4) Write a personal statement (minimum 1000 words) in Chinese or English, which should include a self-introduction, a description of educational experience, the motivations for studying in China.
- (5) Photocopy of Chinese (HSK) or English Proficiency Certificate or medium-of-instruction certificate. Note: This is not necessary for UU students.
- (6) Photocopy of a valid passport.

After you send these documents, you will have to wait for a very long time for your letter of acceptance (admission notice) which will be send to the UU international office together with a little information of what you need to do upon arrival in China and a campus map. Take these documents with you to China together with about four copies of your admission notice and lots of pass photo's!

### Counselling/support at home university:

Because of the crappy information distribution of Xiamen University, a lot will remain unclear before you leave. The international office tries to provide you with all the information necessary, but sometimes, no information is received from Xiamen University. Don't worry, once your there you



will find out what you need to know. It is not so complicated to get things done in Xiamen, once you know the rules (smile and nod).

Academic preparation:

None whatsoever

Language preparation:

None whatsoever, but In Xiamen, or China in general, it is not common for people to speak English. Chinese is a real world language, in addition to the huge area called China spoken in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia etc. Once you are there you might feel a bit stupid for never learning Chinese before and a little language preparation won't harm you. Huge tip: Install pleco Chinese online dictionary on your smartphone, together with a VPN to gain access to google and facebook (because of the Chinese firewall) etc. for once you there. These are life savers and especially Pleco comes in handy every moment of the day.

Finances:

China is relatively cheap, especially traveling and food, but as China's economy is growing the yuan rises in comparison with the euro. Thus China is getting more expensive for us to travel to each year. However, you can survive on your student grant quite easily. Once you are there, especially when you are blond, tall and blue eyed, you can even work as a model, which offers you money, traveling and a whole new experience of Chinese curiosity. By default you will get a campus dorm bed, which you share with either one or three other roommates. This costs about 100, really only a 100 euro's, for five months. You can also get your own apartment in the city, which will cost you about 200-300 euro's per month.

**Study/placement abroad period**

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

In advance, with the online application, you can indicate which school you want to apply for. For me this was medical school. You are not able to select courses in advance. In the first week of the semester, I was allowed to follow random courses after which I could make a decision about what subjects I wanted to follow for the rest of the semester. Whether this is the same for other schools I do not know. Since none of the courses of the first week appealed to me, I decided to switch and joined the overseas educational college (OEC) to follow lessons in Chinese, a decision I never regretted. The only thing I needed to do was to inform my study counsellor at UU and the study counsellor of medical school (Cathy) helped me to switch (this took about an hour).

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

None of the courses at medical school appealed to me because I considered the level to be too low. After I switched to the Chinese language courses I was happy to find the level being very high. Within two weeks I was able to have a little smalltalk with the locals, to our mutual appreciation. I even heard language students, which in their own country already studied Chinese for two years, state that they were amazed about the level of Chinese of the elementary students. A big PLUS!

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Compared to UU quite good, as long as you follow the rules (again, nod and smile). People at university are very willing to help you with just about everything as long as you keep calm, polite and explain yourself clearly, in other words, behave normal.





Transfer of credits:

For the language course I was able to get 20 Xiamen University studycredits. As the language course takes a semester, calculating these credits back to ECTS will provide you with a little bit more study credits. In the end I was able to get 22.5 ECTS for the courses I followed. When you are on exchange for a semester, do not expect to be able to get the full 30 ECTS.

**Student life**

Welcome/orientation programme:

Not really there, apart from the first week of peeking at some courses.

Accommodation:

As stated before, the university will provide you with a dorm bed on the campus. When you accept this, you will have to share your room with either one or three other roommates, depending on whether you reside in Siming campus in the inner city (4 beds per room) or in Xiang `an campus, an hour and a half by bus away from the city in the middle of nowhere where you will die of boredom (two beds per room). This will cost you about a 100 euro's for five months. However, electricity, hot water and internet (there are no standard central heating systems in the Chinese households south of the yellow river it appears, so in winter it gets cold but you don't have to pay for central heating) are not included in the price. Internet you can purchase from one of the campus providers yourself and if you want a hot shower or electricity, you can get this by putting money on a so called e-card. With this e-card you can also dine in the canteen, and you will be forced to dine in the canteen as it is not allowed for students to cook in their dorms (but no one listens to that, officially it is also not allowed for female students to stay in male dorms overnight and vice versa, but although there is a campus police watch with adorable red /blue light helmets on mopeds overnight and during the day, I have never heard them break into to a dorm room to separate a couple of lovebirds). At first, you will be amazed by the cheapness and diversity of the canteen food, however, after a month you will discover that because of the outrageous amounts of sodium glutamate and oil in the food, everything tastes the same. In that case it is best to get your dinner out on the streets where, if you don't go the the fancy restaurants, you can also get a good cheap meal (Tip: go to Carl's place, a restaurant near Siming campus, just ask your classmates, where you can eat unlimited from a fresh veggy buffet for only 15 yuan, about 2 euro's).

Leisure/culture:

Xiamen has a lot to offer and walking around Siming campus, with nearby a beach and a Buddhist temple is great. In the city center you have Zhongshanlu, the shopping street, and near the ferry dock, with ferries going to Gulanyu island, you can wonder off into Taiwanese snack street. However from Xiamen it is very easy to travel to other places within and around China, as it has its own big railway station and airport. You can very easily take the ferry to the Taiwanese island of Jinmen, near the cost of Xiamen, and from there travel to Taipei (very cheap flights from Jinmen!). You can also take the sleep coach to Guangzhou (Kanton) and stay there for the weekend. Near Xiamen however you have Tulou, a park build around old traditional Chinese villages with flats, some more than 700 years old. It is very nice to go there, but last year the university joined the so called Tulou Hakka marathon and students who would run an easy eight kilometres could enjoy a really nice weekend in that park while travel costs, accommodation and food was paid for by the





university. The university itself has a free gym and in the library a free cinema is present.

Suggestions/tips:

I already gave plenty of tips, the most important one however is this: Do not be afraid to go on exchange in China. Once you are there it will be like you took the plunge into a warm bath. I have never felt unsafe while in China and met a lot of friendly people, some of them have become very close friends

### **Conclusions**

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

As long as you don't end up in Xiang'an campus, I can definitely recommend this university for the experience it will give you.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Try not to get crazy by the campus anthem, which is sang each morning around 9:45 and blasted out over the campus by speakers which are placed everywhere, everywhere!



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	humanities
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	history (fulltime)

Destination city & country	Xiamen , China
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Xiamen University
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)	06/08/2014
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	30/01/2015

### Preparation

#### Exchange/placement application process:

The application process for Xiamen University was sometimes a little confusing. At Xiamen University everything is not so well arranged as in Utrecht. They are especially bad in providing clear information. Just make sure you start on time with the application process,. Apply on the XMU website and hand in all the right documents at our international office and everything will be all right. You will get an admission offer, but you are allowed to take courses from other departments as well. I would recommend to check on which campus your department is located, because there is also one campus two hours outside the city. It is also all right but not everyone liked it. It is almost impossible to decide which courses you are going to take in Xiamen on beforehand but once you have arrived there everything will become clear eventually. If you face any problems during your application process you can always ask the region coordinator of the international office, they are always very helpful. Or you can ask previous exchange students for advice.

#### Counselling/support at home university:

I found the support of the international office very good. Laura the coordinator was always very helpful and quick with replying. Of course they do not always know how everything works at Xiamen University at the international office but they can email the international office there and will try to solve your problems.

#### Academic preparation:

During the application process, you need to hand in a study plan, signed by the international coordinator of your study. I did not need the credits at Xiamen University so for me it did not matter which and how many courses I would take. If you need the credits though I would recommend you to check the grading system and how the credits are transferred (they do not have ECTS) and discuss this with your study adviser.



Language preparation:

It is useful to learn some Chinese before you leave. I travelled one month in China without being capable of speaking any Chinese and that was possible but sometimes challenging. Speaking a little Chinese is very helpful in many situations and it is fun because you can get to know Chinese people much better. I am taking another Mandarin course right now at "Chinees college Nederland which is really good" (most of them are in Dutch).

Finances:

If you are a Dutch student you should apply for a public transport compensation, which is about 90 euros a month. If you have a room you should find a subtenant, which should not be hard to find in Utrecht. It is also useful to make some financial plan. Vaccinations, insurance, travelling stuff and flights are quit expensive. Living in Xiamen is really cheap although you can make it as expensive as you wish of course.

**Study/placement abroad period**

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

I was enrolled in the school of humanities. This faculty was not really well-organised. I took master courses because they do not have bachelor courses in English. The secretary of the department does not speak English, but there are always helpful Chinese speaking students who are willing to help you. The course I took here was about Chinese philosophy, but in the first semester they also provided courses about Chinese history (recommended) and Chinese cinema (not recommended). I also took some interesting courses at the faculty of International Relations. These were Theories of International Relations and Social Research and Statistical Method.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The quality of the courses differed a lot. Some courses were good and interesting. Many of the professors have studied in the Unites States or in Europe. But some of them were quit bad and did not possess a good command of English. Overall I would say: do not expect the same quality as at Dutch Universities.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The support at the host university is not very good but it also depends a lot on your faculty. Some faculties like the schools of business and economics were better organised and focused more on international students. They even organised some field-trips for their students. Overall everything is not very well arranged though. At the international office of XMU they can speak English and are willing to help you, but the information that they provide is not always really clear. It is always helpful to bring a Chinese person. I would advice you not to worry about anything and be very patient. In the end everything works out and if you have any questions there are many international students who faced the same problems and can help you out.

Transfer of credits:

I am currently still in the process of transferring my credits. You will get an academic transcript from Xiamen University that will be send to Utrecht university about three months after the end of your exchange. Than you need to give the transcript to the exam committee of your study and they will decide what they will do with it. This differs per study so you can look at the website of your programm for information or email them. My exam committee asked for course syllabi so I would



advise you to make sure that you have all of them already once you are in Xiamen. For most courses in Xiamen you will get about 2,3 or 4 credits, but they will be transferred to the ECTS system and then you will probably receive more credits.

### **Student life**

#### Welcome/orientation programme:

You will get a letter with some brief information about the process of arriving. In the letter the date of registration is stated. At that day you will have to register at your department and get your student-card. In this week there will also be a meeting for all the international students about the exit- and entry laws of the PRC and about the registration for courses. One week later the courses will start. There is no organised orientation programme but there are many international students and there is enough to discover in Xiamen in this free week. If you want to visit other places outside China like: Taiwan, Kinmen Island, Hong Kong it is useful to apply for a residence permit which will give you multiple entries and extend the duration of your visa. You will also need to take a physical examination if you want to apply for a residence permit. The whole process will take a long time and you need to be very patient. The Chinese love bureaucracy.

#### Accommodation:

It is useful to think about your accommodation before leaving. You can sleep in the dormitories on campus. This is very cheap but also not really luxury. If you are an undergraduate student you will share a small room with three other girls or boys (also internationals) and pay 8 yuan a day (less than one Euro). Many internationals choose to move into apartments which are often very nice and not really expensive (200-300 Euros). It is a more complicated process though because you need to be with a group and visit apartments with a Chinese speaking estate agent. You also need to register your address at the police station. I chose to stay in the dormitory with three Asian girls. The advantages were that it was an interesting experience, it was easy to go to the lectures and the canteen and I saved a lot of money for travelling.

#### Leisure/culture:

Many things in China are very different. The Chinese culture is really interesting. People are very superstitious, hard-working, modest and respectful to hierarchy. Try to take part in celebrations of Chinese festivals. Often people are extremely helpful and generous. If a Chinese person insists on paying the bill at a restaurant, the best advice is to just accept it. Many Chinese people and students found foreigners very interesting and pretty and were very curious about our culture and wanted to take pictures all the time. Although the censorship is less strict than it used to be, you will still experience this. Websites as youtube, facebook and pages of google are blocked but you can buy/download a VPN before you leave. I would advise you to get to know Chinese students because they can teach you a lot about the Chinese culture. You can talk to Chinese people about sensitive issues like Tibet, Japan, Taiwan and Mao, but be careful with what you say. It is often astonishing what these people learn in school but they are really convinced. I found the Chinese also very happy people. They really love singing and dancing and sometimes it seems like they have no shame. Going to KTV and singing karaoke is a must! Just as trying some weird food like chicken-feet or insects. Most people do not speak English and everything is written in characters so this can be challenging sometimes.



Suggestions/tips:

- I would suggest you to download a VPN (virtual private network).
- Make sure you have a few copies of all your important documents and bring many photographs.
- It is useful to get a Chinese bank-account at bank of China.
- It is useful to get a Chinese simcard at China Unicom or China Telecom.
- Try not to worry to much about anything and experience the culture. In China many things will turn out to be completely different from your expectations. Planning everything on beforehand is not possible.
- Buy a bicycle. You have to be careful whit the Chinese traffic but it is really fun and a good way to explore the city. There is a path along the beach around the whole island without cars. You can get really cheap second-hand bicycles.
- The last tip is: go travelling! There are so many interesting and beautiful places in China that are word visiting. Travelling by train is very cheap. Taiwan is really close to Xiamen and also Hong Kong is very interesting.

**Conclusions**

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

I would definitely recommend Xiamen University. People say it has the most beautiful campus in China and I can imagine this because it looks very nice. There are many other international students from almost everywhere which is really cool. The city is probably one of the best cities to live in China because the weather is really good most time of the year, there is a beach, there is a huge national park with mountains right behind the university and the pollution is not as bad as in cities like Beijing or Shanghai. Xiamen was also chosen as one of the special economic zones of China and is therefore a very international city with many ex-pats and Greek, Mexican, German and many other international restaurants and also many foreign bars and cafés. Overall China is a very interesting country whit many contradictions. It is developing very fast and you can really see and experience this once your there. The Confucian culture is very interesting just as the Chinese people. It is a very special country that has a lot to offer and is definitely worth visiting.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

Enjoy the time, try to get to know the Chinese culture by not only hanging out with foreigners and just take everything as it comes.



**UU Study Abroad Report Form**

faculty/college	Law
level	X bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
name degree programme	Law
destination city & country	Xiamen, China
name host institution and/or company/organization	Xiamen University
purpose of exchange	X study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	11/ 09 / 2012
return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	25 / 01 / 2013

<b>preparation</b>
exchange/placement application process
Xiamen University was not included in my top 3 when I applied for a place abroad. However, I was not selected for one of my favourite countries/universities. I had to make a choice out of the list with rest places. Xiamen University was my favourite among the rest places and I could be placed there easily. The communication with the International office about this was good. They gave me the information I had to fill in for the application in Xiamen University and sent it for me to China. The information was clear, so the application process was quite easy.
counselling/support at home university
The international office has organised a meeting for all students who would go to Asia. Someone who had studied at Xiamen University the year before told about his experiences. This was very useful. In general the international office responded to my e-mails very fast. They were helpful.
academic preparation
I didn't do any specific academic preparation.
language preparation
The courses were given in English. I did a beginners Chinese course at the James Boswell institute. This was nice, but not extremely useful. Chinese is a very difficult language and you need much, much more study than 10 hours of class to speak some Chinese.
finances
Living in China is cheaper than in Holland. Especially housing, transport and food is cheap. I didn't get a scholarship. My parents gave me some money every month, I had my student grand from Holland and some savings by myself. This was enough for a living and I travelled a bit as well.



<b>study/placement abroad period</b>
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
<p>There are almost no bachelor courses in English. Therefore I was allowed to participate in an English master programme, international relations. It was not too difficult for a bachelor student. The courses I did were: theories of international relations, history of international relations, rudiments of Chinese language, selected issues on modern China and Chinese civil law. Especially the first two courses I would recommend to exchange students. When you arrive you'll get a schedule with the courses of your master programme. In the first week you can go to these courses and see if you like them. You can also take courses from other master programmes (I did the Chinese civil law from another master). There is no central registration, there is an internet system, but I didn't work for exchange students (and it was completely in Chinese). The best thing you can do is to ask your teacher how you can register for a course. For some courses it was enough to just tell the teacher, for others I had to go to a secretary. In the beginning it was quite confusing, but you must be persistent. There was not a clear study programme as in Utrecht, for some courses I just got the book from the teacher and had to copy it myself. In the beginning it was unclear if you would have an exam or a paper or whatever. Some teachers just think about that later. It is not so structured as in Holland, so you have to be flexible.</p>
academic quality of education/placement activities
<p>Some courses were quite good, where others were too easy. (Especially rudiments of Chinese language, this course is very easy). Compared to courses in Utrecht, it was more reading and less preparing working group questions. In general it was not very difficult, although some things took a lot of time (much reading, writing papers of at least 15 pages). I was not unsatisfied about the courses I did. I learned a lot, had nice discussions with other international students and teachers and it was a good experience to see how the Chinese education system works. Chinese students are studying non-stop, however it is mostly learning facts by heart and they won't criticize what they learn. Fortunately this is different for exchange students, they don't have to work that much.</p>
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
<p>Xiamen University is very bureaucratic. Therefore it was sometimes difficult to get what you need. Besides that, it was ok. Not everything was available in English.</p>
transfer of credits
<p>This was not very easy. When I was in Xiamen I needed course descriptions to send to Utrecht. For some teachers this was new, so it took a lot of mailing and asking before I got all the descriptions. When I was back in Holland I had to send some reminder mails as well, before I finally got my results and the transcript of record. But I got it anyway 😊 (four months after I came back). I was not very satisfied about the exam committee in Utrecht, since I had high marks in China, but got only a V (voldoende) on my Dutch list. Furthermore, I did five courses but got only 18 ECTS for this. I think this is quite low for everything I did.</p>
<b>student life</b>
welcome/orientation programme
<p>The University organised an introduction tour through Xiamen for all the exchange students. This was a very nice day. With Chinese festivals, they organised some events for exchange students as well.</p>
accommodation
<p>They promised me accommodation on campus. However, when I arrived in Xiamen, the campus was already full. (this was one week before the courses started). They made a mistake in calculating and therefore there was not enough place on campus. I had to stay in a hostel and look for accommodation myself. This was a little challenge, since I didn't know anyone in Xiamen and spoke Chinese only a little, little bit. With some creativity and just asking students on campus to help me, I managed to find an apartment after four days. It was close to university and I stayed there with two other exchange students. In the end this was much better than staying on campus, but when</p>





## UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Geosciences
level	X bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
name degree programme	Human geography and planning
destination city & country	Xiamen, China
name host institution and/or company/organization	Xiamen University, faculty of international relations OEC, overseas education college, Xiamen University
purpose of exchange	X study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	24 / 07 / 2012
return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	23 / 01 / 2013

### preparation

#### exchange/placement application process

Application process was alright. I needed a motivation letter and a recommendation letter. There was no one else that put Xiamen as their first choice, so I guess it was not hard to get in ☺

#### counselling/support at home university

The regional officer, Laura van der Linde, was helpful and always willing to answer questions through mail. I was in contact with a few people who visited Xiamen before, so this was helpful in the preparation, since information from Xiamen university is not always very clear or accurate.

#### academic preparation

I was well prepared to follow courses in Xiamen if I look at it afterwards. On beforehand, it was not yet very clear what my options would be in terms of courses or the level of courses.

#### language preparation

I did not know any Chinese before I got to China, except for Hello and thank you. This was pretty inconvenient during my travels through the country in the summer, because even in lots of touristy areas, English is hardly spoken, except for the hostel staff. Beijing and Shanghai are exception in this ofcourse.

#### finances

Eating and sleeping in China is not expensive. I prepared money for my trip and took care that I would have enough during my stay. Work as an English teacher is easy to find and pays very well, so in case your money preparation is not as good as you planned. China is good place to find yourself a job-on-the-side!

### study/placement abroad period

#### study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)

University organization is not as good as you would be used to in Holland. Enrolment in courses starts 1 week before the actual course begins. Being early in making your preferences known does not have much effect. Things happen on the time they schedule (after you stand in line for a while ☺ ) so patience is a great tool.

You get a student card to pay with on campus, you receive an overview of the subjects given in English and I received some important information on my courses and their starting time, 2 days before hand. Again, patience is your best friend. In the meantime, just enjoy yourself en do not worry. In case you missed something organization-wise, the staff is willing to help you (although it might take you some more time).

I was confused where to go on my first days, because if you come to early, the overseas Education college



(OSAO) is not yet fully functioning. This office is the best place to go with your questions.
academic quality of education/placement activities
<p>Because of a lack of bachelor subjects in English (those courses are mostly economics), I enrolled in the masters degree 'international relations'. There were 5 courses in that programme, of which 2 I found interesting ('Theories of IR' and 'History of Asia-pacific relations'). Because no other courses had my interest (there were other courses in law, organization behaviour and more history), I decided to enrol in a Chinese language course. This is a daily course with 3,5 hours of class every day. This was outside of my masters programme, but they let you enrol because you are an exchange student. For me, the combination of these subjects was very interesting, though sometimes, quite intense!</p> <p>Quality of the Chinese language course depended on the teacher. I had three: One was great (grammar), the other two were mediocre. Also there are many students in class (we started with 34 students). Later some students stopped, so 20 were left in the end. You learn good grammar and good listening in these classes, but for speaking the quality is poor since the classes are so big. You have to meet language partners for example if you want to practice well. The other courses on history and IR were interesting and the quality was alright. This depended on the teacher as well of course, but in general, I learned a lot. We had to read a lot too!</p>
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
There is a big problem of bureaucracy so chances are that you have to visit several offices before your question is answered. Once you find out where to go with your questions, the staff is very willing to help you. I needed to renew my visa and the OSAO (for overseas students) could help me with that.
transfer of credits
<p>Make sure you apply for receiving a transcript before you leave. You have to ask for this kind of things at your faculty office, because they will not come up with it themselves. There are multiple steps and stamps needed to make the transcripts and it takes the organisation quite some time, so be aware of that in your study-planning. My credits are not yet transferred. 20 Chinese credits is supposed to be full load. My history and theories of IR courses were 3 and 4 points. I thought this was not very much in balance with the amount of work it still costs. Chinese language is supposed to be full-time (so 20 Chinese credits). This is more in balance. It takes you about 24 hours every week to go to class and prepare the necessary homework. This is excluded the preparation time for exams.</p>
<b>student life</b>
welcome/orientation programme
Welcome and orientation was not very big. There was one day organized for the foreign students through the university, in which we could do sightseeing in the city and we got offered a great lunch ☺ Except for this day, not much activities are organised, so it's mostly a do-it-yourself-introduction. There are more than enough foreign students though, so you probably won't have trouble finding friends!
accommodation
I found some off-campus apartment with two other students. On-campus accommodation is in a 2 persons room. The rooms are fine, but I preferred my own room. This is not an option on-campus. Through the housing agencies around the campus you can find a home easily. Bring someone to translate though, because most agencies have no English speaking agents! You can also look on <a href="http://www.whatsonxiamen.com">www.whatsonxiamen.com</a> , because a lot of time, people that look for a roommate post a message up there. This website is awesome for every newcomer to Xiamen anyway.
leisure/culture
You can have a look on <a href="http://www.whatsonxiamen.com">www.whatsonxiamen.com</a> for city activities, concerts and (beach)party's. There is lots to do. On campus there are also many activities organized, especially with the Chinese festivities during autumn-



and spring festival. On campus there are 2 lakes, one of which you can swim in. There are a lot of (sometimes free) sportfacilities and nice parks to chill out in. The beach next to campus is a good spot and going out at night a lot of times is for free! You will not be bored!

suggestions/tips

Take patience with you, since standing in line is a second nature for Chinese people. Learn some Chinese before, or during your stay, because it will make life in China so much better and more interesting (plus easier)

**conclusions**

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Studying in Xiamen is a great experience. The weather is good, food is cheap and awesome, so you can go dine out every day. Party is great and the Chinese are willing to help you. It is not always easy, especially because the language is so hard, but if you take the effort of getting to know the Chinese, you will find a lot of friendliness and awesomeness in Xiamen for sure!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Good luck with your application. If you are interested in learning Chinese, Xiamen university offers a lot of full-scholarships for learning Chinese, but also master degrees. It's worth looking into it.