

Exchange Report

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

UvA Economics and Business

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Major in FINA&IS



The Dusk of the UvA campus

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Monthly Activity Log

February

I arrived at Amsterdam on 31st of January. Unfortunately, I missed the University's free pick-up day and I have to do all the stuff on my own, including getting to the city center from the airport, picking up keys from the De Key office, registering with the city hall, receiving resident permit, purchasing an OV chipcard as well as making appointment with the bank.

As the orientation camp hosted by the ISN doesn't provide accommodation for the students, getting back in and out for three consecutive days is not realistic for me, given I am living on the verge of the city center in the east side. Therefore, I decided to spend my days exploring the city and get familiar with it.

During my first month, I managed to get my museum card and gained access to over 800 museums in the Netherlands. I visited several museums and knew lots about the city origin and some of the famous artists like Van Goah and Rembrandt. Museum pass can be expensive in one point of view, on the other hands, its worth going for it. All in all, Amsterdam is a shining gem in the art world.



The Oude Kerk (The Old Church)



De Waag



The Dam



The seaside in Den Haag

Besides, I visited the Johan Cruyff Stadium to watch a football match in person, that's the second leg of the Europa League, Ajax vs Getafe. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, the crowd are enthusiastic, and when ajax bang in a goal, the crowd gone crazy. The flag of the ajax red swing along the chant.



Inside the stadium



Outside the stadium

March

Although I didn't have a semester break for my enrollment of 2 courses in block 1. I managed to squeeze out some of my time to take the trip to London. I haven't been to London before, but the hustle and rustle gives me a sense of familiarity. The crowd, the street..... all the scene brings me back to what I come from. And somewhat I did get back to Hong Kong a few weeks later.



Zaandam's Windmill



London eye

"Not much information can be provided due to COVID-19"

General Information

Visa Application

For the visa application, you have to plan it in advance as its not a simple process to go through, make sure you get all the required documents in forehand so that you don't need to travel to different places to get all these documents .

It is advised to prepare all your documents before receiving your acceptance letter from the UvA as an exchange student. Then follow the guideline stated in the email and prepare your documents to apply for both the resident permit as well as the student visa.

After completion of the application online, you have to book your appointment in the embassy located in Wan Chai. Don't forget to bring your passports and a specific-sized recent photos of yours. After a few weeks you need to go back to the embassy and to get back your passports. As application takes times, you are advised not to plan any kind of trip ahead of your application. Otherwise, you may not be able to arrive on time.

Orientation Activities

If you plan to arrive at the university's proposed pick-up day, you can follow the procedure and the orientation as well as the orientation camp hosted by the ISN, which last for 3 days. Its not mandatory to arrive Amsterdam at that specific day though, but it would be a great convenience as it would streamline all the process you need to go through and save you lots of time.

International Services & Activities

There are plenty of activities hosted by the International Student Network – ISN, including the Dutch cultural night. Other than that, the buddy program hosted by the university is also a way to meet the locals.

Accommodations

UvA doesn't provide on-campus housing. However, the university cooperated with some of the local housing agency to provide international students an opportunity to obtain a short-term tenancy deal for 1 semester. One of the housing contractors would be De Key.

Make sure you put hard work into it, there are massive demand in housing in the Amsterdam and they are generally not easy to achieve a short-term tenancy contract. Good offers usually run out very soon and the remaining location may not be ideal. I knew some of the international students failed to get their offer would pay a handsome amount of money for their housing.

Course Registration

The school would send you emails about the details of the course registration after the acceptance of the exchange program. Make sure you don't miss the starting day of the enrollment period, otherwise you may not be able to enroll in your preferred timeslots as well as the courses.

However, during my time, the system suddenly stopped and later on UvA sent another email to notify us that the system is overload and the registration day is rescheduled to another day in the next week after queening for 1 hour in the system by being late logging in the system for 5s. So, make sure you take your time and plan it carefully.

The course registration is similar than that in the UST. First, you shall browse the course catalogs to see if the courses are open for enroll in your exchange semester, if available, then mark down the course code as well as the course name for your reference. Then, you can make use of the official timetable to adjust for your study schedule. And finally, at the day of enrollment, register your courses. Be remembered that for some tutorial sessions may get cancelled and you may be relocated to another session.

You can always add or drop your courses during the add/drop period. You can do so by simply logging into the system and selected the corresponding courses. You can also enroll some of the courses from other school. However, you are limited to register a certain number of courses outside the business school. Also, you must have your IELTS approval to apply for HUMA courses.

Teaching and Assessment Methods

The teaching schedule in the UvA is quite intriguing. Unlike what we are used to in UST. One semester can be breaking down into three blocks, the first two blocks just like regular semesters and the last block are like the summer/winter with limited number of courses for enrollment. For Block 1 and block 2, courses are intensive and usually last for 4-5 weeks. So, make sure you don't fall behind the schedule.

Also, students are more likely to be guided rather than taught. Most of the courses are designed to steer students to learn more by themselves rather than relying on the teachers. Many courses require extensive reading and examination mainly refer to those materials.

Sports and Recreational facilities

There are gyms and different kind of sports facilities in Amsterdam for the UvA students. But usage of those facilities would create charges. Make sure you have applied for an USC account beforehand.

Finance and Banking

Opening a bank account is crucial in the Netherlands as most of the transaction rely on your debit card e.g. shopping in the local supermarket Albert Heijn, topping up your GVB card as well as paying your phone bill. So, I strongly recommend you get it done as soon as possible.

In the Netherlands there are several major banks. ING is the renowned one, but the school arranged Rabobank for the international students to open a bank account in the student desk on Saturday. Rabobank is a traditional Dutch bank and less adopted to its transition to the modern world. On the other hand, ING is a better choice if you prepare to open your bank account here. However, it advised to make an appointment in advance and prepare all the documents you need. One-point worth noting is that the official page of the ING bank is only available in Dutch, you may need google translate to guide you through the process.

Social Club and Networking opportunities

At my dorm, there are always be parties everywhere and there is no shortage of opportunities of socializing with other international students, English would be the universal language, but sometimes you may meet others using Spanish and other language. So, it's not a bad decision to pick up more language to engage in conversation with the others.

Health and Safety

Amsterdam is, if not, one of the safest cities in Europe. Crime rate is low, and people are nice and helpful there. But be cautious when you get pass the red-light district located in the city's center.

As the university already provide medical coverage, medical expenses can be claimed afterward, so don't hesitate if you feel sick, but local hospital would only provide basis diagnosis. Drugs has to be purchased in pharmacy by yourself.

Food

Depending on your way of living, food costs can vary. Food is by no means cheap in the Amsterdam. A meal can cost at least 10 EURO if you opt for dining in the restaurant. Therefore, it's advised to make your own meal.

For food source, there are several big brand supermarkets in Amsterdam, mainly Albeit Heijn, along with Jumbo and the others. Albeit Heijn is the largest one and its everywhere, I mean everywhere is that you can see at least one for every 100-200m. There are lots of food ingredients, the problems lie on the fact that all the food are described in Dutch, you have to rely on your Dutch language or google translate to search for the food you need.

Transportation

There are a few ways of travelling in the city, and in Amsterdam, most of them are operated by the GVB, including the Metro, buses as well as the tram. Given transportation is expensive in Amsterdam, its better to get a personal OV-chipcard. Only the personal OV-chipcard can grant your right to purchase for monthly tickets which allows you to travel through the city. Personal OV-chipcard can only be purchased online with your Dutch bank account through iDeal.

Upon your landing, I would recommend you purchase an OV-chipcard first. 1-hour travel ticket is also available for 2.5 Euros. One tips to save your travel fee is that interchange with 45min would waive your more than half of the fee (which is the handling fee charged by the GVB), and every time you interchange with, the timer would reset.

Another way of travelling is to travel by bike, get your self a second-handed bike for like 40-50 euros through online marketplace and resell it when you plan to leave. You can only rent it for 20 euros each month and rent it for at least 3 months from some places.

Climate

As I arrive in Amsterdam in late January, the temperature is low, dipping below 10 degree Celsius. Therefore, remember to bring enough clothing to endure the climate and not to get a cold.

Communication

Nearly all the people in the Netherlands can communicate fluently in English. Communication is not a problem at all.

Cautionary measures

Although Amsterdam is one of the safest cities in Europe, it's advised to stay cautious and download the "International SOS" apps from the Appstore. Log in to it and you would get necessary information regarding safety as well as upcoming crisis regarding public health.

Things to bring

Medicine	Money
Credit Card	Stationery
Clothing	Passport
Identity Card	Laptop
Smartphone	Emergency contacts
Wallet	EU Adopters
Calculator	Chargers

Cost Estimation

Rent: 600 euro per month

Food: 200 euro per month

Transportation: 50 euro per month with GVB Zone or 20 euro per month with bike

Useful link for your reference

Course registration: <http://student.uva.nl/en/sis/sis/html/>

Uva Homepage: <https://www.uva.nl/en>

UvA SIS: <https://student.uva.nl/en/sis/sis.html>

UvA My Timetable: <https://rooster.uva.nl/schedule>

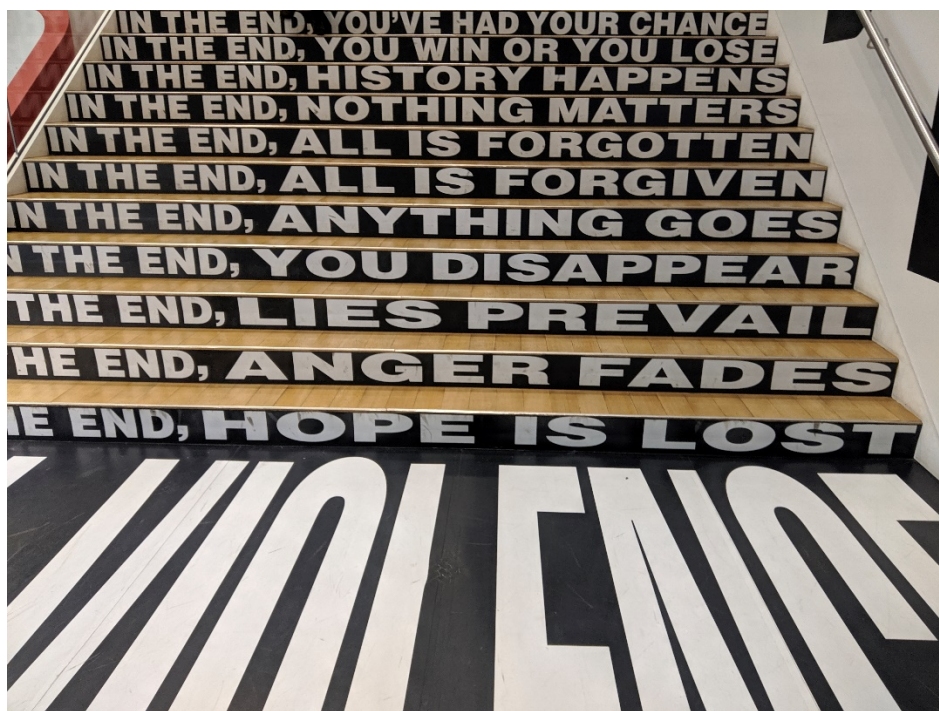
Emergency contact: 112

Transportation: <https://9292.nl/>

NS website (For train): <https://www.ns.nl/en>

Flixbus: <https://global.flixbus.com/>

International SOS apps for more safety information



Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam