

Name of the university: Universiteit van Amsterdam/University of Amsterdam

City: Amsterdam

Country: Netherlands

Semester: Fall 17

Programme: Media and Communication Studies

Amsterdam

A city vibrant in culture, Amsterdam has many iconic scenes and attractions that captivate millions of visitors every year. My study abroad experience was certainly rewarding, not only for the opportunity to study at one of the best universities in the world, but also for being exposed to more knowledge and possibilities that broadened my outlook on life.

University of Amsterdam (UvA)

UvA was my #1 study abroad destination, as the College of Social Sciences lists an extensive number of courses from a variety of fields that are made available for exchange students. The university has competitive programmes which, in some respects, could be more demanding than the ones offered by Lund University. The pace is rather fast and exchange students are expected to contribute in class sessions as much as the full-time students are.

Arrival

New students can sign up for the UvA Start Appointment service upon arrival in Amsterdam, which facilitates the housing key pick-up, registration to the municipality and other administrative matters. The study abroad coordinators are very informative, too. Throughout the orientation week, students receive regular updates and reminders by email and have opportunities to attend talks on “survival tips” at the university (and Amsterdam, in general).

Approximately a month prior to the semester kickoff, students are invited to join an orientation programme held by the International Student Network (ISN), in which group challenges and tours around the campus areas and city are arranged daily, in addition to pub crawls and parties. To participate the “ISN Introduction Week”, students pay around 75 EUR (early bird fee: 65 EUR). Personally, this was a good platform for me to meet new people and to make friends during the semester.

Courses

General

The fall semester typically begins in late August and ends in early February in the following year. At UvA, one semester is divided into three blocks. For each block (roughly 6 to 8 weeks), students are expected to complete 12 to 18 ECTS/credits. In cases where the faculty programme at Lund University require outgoing students to resume the spring semester at an earlier date, I would advise choosing courses that fulfil the total number of required credits by the second block.

As for the course registration, it is done online and goes by a first-come, first-serve basis. It is recommended to make the course selection from the programme catalogue in advance, then register as soon as the online portal is open (especially to sign up for popular classes with limited placement). A back-up choice, in this case, would come in handy.

Name of courses

1. Youth Cultures in a Transnational Context (12 ECTS)

Lecturer(s): Dr. Olga Sooudi & Cornelia van Diepen

This anthropology course is arranged in a lecture and tutorial format, where for the latter the class is split into two groups to allow in-depth group discussions and exercise. Students are evaluated based on a weekly assignment, class presentation and final paper in the form of an ethnographic research project. Apart from engaging in interesting new themes every week, to be enrolled in this course was beneficial to me, as it inspired my chosen thesis topic for my final semester at Lund University.

2. Topic National Identity and the News (6 ECTS)

Lecturer: Dr. Penny Sheets Thibaut

Having a strong interest in the study of news media and national identities, I thoroughly enjoyed this course as it explores various case studies in relevance to recent trends. Students are expected to complete weekly readings, which are mostly advanced. The overall performance is evaluated based on an academic essay and final examination (in multiple-choice and open question/short essay format).

3. Topic Are You for Real? Reality and Truth in a Mediated World (6 ECTS)

Lecturer: Dr. Renske van Bronswijk

The course aims to encourage students to critically reflect on the role of media in their perception of truth and reality, and its implication on their media experiences. Topical issues and programmes in entertainment media are discussed in reference to empirical case studies, which I often found thought-provoking. The course assessment consists of an assignment and final examination (in multiple-choice and open questions format).

4. Topic Always Connected: Key insights in youth, media and technology (6 ECTS)

Lecturer: Dr. Sindy Sumter

This course is suitable for those who are interested to delve into the role of media and technology in the everyday lives of young people. Much of the insights offered in the course are related to child and adolescent psychology, with debates on both opportunities and controversies surrounding media and technology usage. Three types of assignments are given, including a final examination (in multiple-choice and open questions format).

Accommodation

It is possible to source for more affordable housing through a variety of Facebook pages, however I would advise outgoing students to apply from the official Housing Service offered by the UvA. Finding accommodation in Amsterdam through unofficial means is known to be extremely difficult and requires a great deal of luck. The Housing Service has proven to be more reliable, and should they fail to offer a place, a full refund would be made. The application fee in 2017 was 340 EUR (early bird fee: 285 EUR). The price may differ in the following year.

Fun and leisure

Countless of places to visit and explore! Whether you are into arts, culture, history, culinary, shopping, sight-seeing, music, pubs and nightlife, Amsterdam has a never-ending selection of things to do. Students can also take advantage of perks and discounts that are afforded in many

locations.

Costs

The cost of living is generally lower than Sweden. However, accommodation is on the higher price range. It is also worth noting that some places (e.g. the Albert Heijn supermarket chain) do not accept VISA or MasterCard, but only Maestro and cash.

Other

As a non-EU citizen, I was necessitated by the UvA to apply for a Residence Permit (RP) for my stay in the Netherlands. Legally, this could have been problematic as it overlapped with my Residence Permit validity in Sweden. In my case, I went ahead and applied for the Dutch RP and used it only during my stay in Amsterdam. The application cost was 340 EUR for a one-semester exchange and valid for up to 6 months.

Lastly, I would suggest renting a bike rather than purchasing one from Facebook groups/marketplace. Rental bikes are typically insured, which is preferable since bike-theft is incredibly prevalent in the city. Be prepared to face the never-ending rain during the fall and winter season; it would be helpful to invest in a good raincoat and waterproof bag!