

Study Abroad Evaluation

General Information				
Host Country	The Netherlands			
Host School/Agency	Rotterdam Business School / Hogeschool Rotterdam			
Participation Dates	Feb – Jun 2015			
Your Program of Study	International Business & Languages – RBS / BBA HRMT - KPU			
Type of Study Abroad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> Practicum	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
General Evaluation				
In a couple of sentences, summarize why you rated your experience the way you did	Amazing, is what I say when people ask me how my experience was. I learned so much from my program, living in a different country, learned a lot about myself. I saw some of the most beautiful places in the world with the opportunity to travel and had the most delicious food as well. Thank you KPU for this opportunity			
Arrival				
How easy or challenging was it to obtain your travel documents (visa, permits, etc.)?	The whole process was fairly smooth, my RBS coordinator made sure I was aware of the upcoming deadlines and due dates, however there was some miscommunication on Kwantlen's end with keeping track of the appropriate outgoing documents I needed such as LOP. Obtaining the special Visa for the Netherlands was provided by the RBS website with instructions, hours of operation at the immigration office in Rotterdam were varying and I didn't get my residence card until the end of Feb.			
Describe your transportation arrangements to your host country. Would you alter any part of those arrangements?	I took a direct flight from Vancouver to Amsterdam via KLM. I'm lucky to have Dutch relatives who picked me up at the airport, hosted me for two nights and then took me to my student housing accommodations on campus at the university. In the event that another student didn't have help settling in, The Netherlands is fairly easy to navigate with their extensive train, tram and bus services.			
How was your experience clearing customs and immigration upon arrival in your host country? Any surprises?	Upon arrival when asked my purpose of visit I informed customs of my exchange, they asked to see proof of enrollment and my approved VRR (visa permit), have the documents ready in case customs asks for that information.			
Describe how you traveled to your host facility. How long did it take and how much did it cost?	As mentioned above, I had family transport me from the airport and eventually to my accommodations. For those who don't have that luxury, you can take a train directly from Schipol Airport (located underneath the main terminal) to Rotterdam Centraal – this takes just over an hour depending on which train you catch. They would then have to get to the office to pick up the key and sign the housing contract and followed by their accommodations – I would advise the student to take a taxi from the train station to these destinations, although this may be more expensive – with their luggage and lack of transportation knowledge it would be much easier. Each taxi ride shouldn't take more than 20 minutes around the city of Rotterdam. Expect to pay no more than 50 euros for this travel day for train and taxis.			
Orientation and Assistance				
How satisfied were you with the orientation and student assistance available to at your host school?	RBS did a great job of orienting the students around the campus, the city and meeting new students. All exchange students attended a welcome seminar which overviewed the different programs, what to expect and other general information. They also introduced us with fellow student "buddies" who offered their assistance to the newcomers. We then were divided into groups and paired with two student buddies who took us on a scavenger hunt around the school and city which was an awesome way to orient us with the transit system, explore the city and learn some history and cultural aspects. They also organized a bowling event the following day, but I got lost on the transit system and didn't			

<p>What help did you receive from the international staff or office? What was your evaluation of your host schools international staff or office?</p>	<p>make it. The student buddies also invited us to an international student party for some mingling. There were some inefficiencies I noticed with RBS and their departments, often I would be instructed to a different part of the building to talk to another office to answer my question. Usually regarding online registration. Registering us students as inhabitants of Rotterdam at the city hall was a bit inefficient, however that was partly to blame on the process of getting student Visas approved prior, etc. Sometimes they would take a while to respond to emails. My mentor and program coordinator, Kim Orsel, did a great job organizing my courses and answering any questions I had. She was always available to visit in her office .</p>
<p>Orientation and Assistance (cont'd)</p>	
<p>How was new student orientation at the host university? How did it suit your needs?</p>	<p>See question answered above – they made it really easy to meet new students and orient ourselves with the campus and city.</p>
<p>What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? Were there people and resources available for you to talk to about what you were experiencing?</p>	<p>During the first half of my semester, I took a course called Dutch Culture – which was a great buffer and explanation as to what makes the Dutch, Dutch. Our first assignment was to compare and contrast Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of the Netherlands to Canada. The countries are similar in many of the ratings, however power distance acceptance is much lower in the Netherlands and Canada is more of a masculine country, making it more competitive. I noticed these differences primarily in the classroom with the Dutch students. They are less motivated and concerned with achieving high grades and I found some of their interactions with the professors slightly disrespectful of their authority and position. Dutch people can also come across as closed off or rude, it was easier to make friends initially with exchange students over the Dutch students. Many professors understood my opinions on the Dutch lifestyle but I never was concerned by them.</p>
<p>Housing</p>	
<p>Describe your accommodation in your host country.</p>	<p>The U-Building I stayed in was right on campus at Kralingse Zoom, it took me 5 minutes to walk to class, however it was further away from the city center than the other student housing buildings. There was 5 buildings total for the exchange students in my school. The building was modern with FOB-key capabilities and a modern washing machine and drier area..which often broke down. I shared a kitchen , bathroom and sitting area with who girls. There was always a student residence assistant to help with questions or problems in the building.</p>
<p>How early could you move into housing before term and how long after the end of term were you allowed to stay?</p>	<p>I moved into my housing on the 1st of Feb and orientation started on the 3rd. My schooling ended on June 26th and my contract date went until July 17th. I chose to move out earlier because I was beginning backpacking at the start of July. Advise to tell students to check end of semester dates and end of housing contract dates.</p>
<p>How comfortable were you with your accommodation?</p>	<p>The building was very secure and safe, I had all the basic amenities I needed, plus some. My room was referred to as the penthouse suite with a view (13th floor) compared to the more dated and run down student housing rooms.</p>
<p>Describe what you did about meals and what other options were available. How satisfied were you with the food?</p>	<p>I only had a stove top to use to cook food and fridge. I mostly cooked all my meals because I like to cook as well. The campus had three cafeterias and a food court so there were always many options around. The closest grocery store was less than 10 minutes by bike, there was also a smaller grocery store on campus.</p>
<p>How close was your accommodation to where you studied?</p>	<p>5 minute walk, 2 minute bike ride – 15 minute bikeride to city center</p>
<p>Academics & Course Registration</p>	
<p>Please describe the registration process at your host institution.</p>	<p>Somewhat frustrating – the enrollment into classes was partially done by my coordinator Mrs. Orsel, however the electives I had to register myself in a confusing system called Osiris. This is also how you have to register for all the exams you take – we were better off</p>

What assistance was available to you? Were you satisfied?	asking fellow students to show us how to use OSIRIS than some of the staff at the school in IT. It was also somewhat unclear what courses had to be taken and how much each credits were worth etc. I feel that Kwantlen's registration system and course search system is much more efficient. Some of the schools online applications were also only in Dutch. Mrs. Orsel helped as much as she could.
What advice would you offer to another exchange student about registration at your host institution?	Find a Dutch student to help you navigate the websites, register for the classes you need as soon as you get your student number. Don't worry if you're in 6 courses – it's not the same amount of work as 6 KPU courses.
What course load would you recommend for future students? Are there particular courses would you recommend?	6 courses is manageable, most courses don't require homework, just an exam and/or project. Take Dutch Culture, it's great for international business too. E-commerce and International Marketing Management with Mr. Phil Mead – he's a tough British businessman with high expectations but I learned a lot from these courses. Marketing Plan for Life is a self-help type course. Do not take Logistics or Research Training (especially if you've done Statistics in Excel)
Academics & Course Registration (cont'd)	
How satisfied were you with the amount of knowledge/skills you obtained from your host?	Some courses were similar to ones I had already taken at KPU (research Training 1 & 2), I learned a lot from the International Marketing and E-Commerce courses about business today and what it takes to market a product into a new country or region. Dutch Culture helped me understand more about cultural differences and similarities.
How did the style of teaching compare to Canada? How did the workload compare to Canada?	The lecture style teaching was less engaging and the teachers did not stimulate conversation among the classes as well as at KPU. Because the Dutch students don't respect authority of teachers as much, they would often be distracted or not pay attention. Less workload compared to Canada – not as much homework. Exams and projects had similar expectation levels.
How many courses did you take during your time abroad?	My "semester" was broken up into two separate terms which had the electives switch over half way through my exchange. Throughout the whole semester I took International Marketing, E-Commerce, Research Training and Business in Central Europe. First term my elective was Dutch Culture and second term my electives were Fathoming Britain and Marketing Plan for Life.
If applicable, what impact did the language barrier have on your learning?	Practically none, all courses were taught in English and majority of the professors for my classes were English speaking natives. Dutch students would sometimes speak in Dutch but revert to English when asked.
What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, internet access, specialized equipment and supplies available at your host facility?	Good library, very good online databases and sources, high-tech printing and scanning. Overall fairly impressed with all amenities – good wifi throughout as well.
Cost – IN EURO	
Books and Supplies/per term:	Did not buy textbooks – received online access or used library. 20 Euro on Supplies
Flight:	1100
Accommodation/per month:	350
Meals/per month:	300
Local transportation/per month:	200

Health insurance/per term:	Covered under parents
Communication (internet, phone, etc.) – per term	Pay as you go SIM card – 50 euro total over 5 months
Travel documents (passport, entry visa, etc.)	Visa – 200 new passport – 80 canadian?
Vaccinations:	none
Personal spending (entertainment and extra travel) – per term	2,000 euro
Were there unexpected costs you encounter? What items were less or more expensive than expected?	Groceries were fairly cheap if you went to less expensive grocery stores. Transportation was the most expensive or eating out a lot – transportation is super efficient though so you pay for good service.
Extra-Curricular & Social Activities	
How satisfied were you with the out-of-class opportunities available at your host site?	I was never bored a day in Rotterdam, extremely close to the city center and many places to Explore in the city Students should get the RotterdamPas from the city library for many tourist related activity discounts.
What type of organized activities were available to you? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future students?	There were international student associations such as RISA or Wanderlust who would organize parties, outings, vacations for exchange students. I traveled without the assistance of these however. Easy to get in contact with and meet people.
What opportunities were there to work or volunteer? Did you require special permits to do this?	In the Netherlands you cannot work and go to school as an international student. There may have been some volunteer opportunities however, school and leisure kept me busy enough – I wouldn't recommend working unless you have to.
Health and Safety	
Did you feel safe in your host country?	Very safe, I never felt uneasy about being around the city by myself – as a woman I am cautious at night but never had any incidents of concern. Crime in the Netherlands is not particularly high from what I experienced.
Describe any safety concerns you had during your experience.	Walking alone at night – certain neighbourhoods can be avoided especially as a young white female.
Personal and Cultural Connections	
How successful were you at making friends with local (not international) people and students?	It took about half way through the semester to really talk to and spend time with the Dutch students – they mostly keep to themselves but small talk was always polite and they often said Hello and asked how I was doing. I did reconnect with one Dutch student from RBS during his trip to Vancouver with his family. Some were more welcoming than others but I never felt like an outsider necessarily. Most of my time was spend with international students.
How did you find it adjusting to	Fairly smooth, the netherlands isn't too different from Canada, some weird food habits

the culture of your host site?	and getting used to biking and the rules of the road was interesting. People also don't tip for foods and services like they do in Canada. P
What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging?	Not many differences that were challenging. Maybe the "appeared laziness" of the Dutch – often taking the elevator over the stairs, or lack of commitment to school work. They are such an efficient country but the youth don't promote that.
What part(s) of the culture did you most appreciate?	Biking, diverse food, leisure, art, coffee shops, electronic music, Dutch scenery in the city and countryside, freedom & acceptance of all cultures
How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?	Many thought I was dutch because of my appearance, even more pleased to find out I was Canadian and not from the USA.
As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?	I don't physical disabilities would be a problem, the campus seemed wheelchair accesible. I'm unsure of the aide the uni has for other disabilities however.
As far as you could tell, for students who are visible minorities in your host country?	There were many visible minorities in the school, I think part of the Netherlands past colonial history, many cultures with Dutch-ties come to study or work in the Netherlands. Both the Dutch students and International Exchnage students represented many minorities.
For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered?	The Netherlands has one of the biggest Gay Pride festivals in the world, they are a very accepting country of the LGBT community and the Dutch natives follow suit. I was friends and met people represented in this community and they had positive experiences.

Overall

What are five important things other students should know before going to your host country/region?
1. The Netherlands is wet, and very windy. The weather is bi-polar so always bring something to keep you dry.
2. Bikes are essential to get around. Buy one off a colleague or marktplatz.nl as soon as you get there, by bike is the best way to see the country.
3. Dutch people can come across and rude and closed off, give them time to warm up to you – they have a blunt humour about them.
4. Transportation will be one of your biggest expenses, get an OV Chip-Kaart.
5. Many shops and services are not open or available on Sundays.
What are ten important things you would tell another student who is going to your host facility/agency?
1. You will meet a ton of international students, make a giant family with them and do a lot of things together.
2. Kralingse Bos, Witte de With Straat, Erasmus Bridge, Blaak Market (Tues & Sun), Tref Punt – all places to go around Rotterdam.
3. Keep in close contact with your school contacts at RBS, they will get you all the info you need.
4. OSIRIS is how you register for exams and courses, it's confusing and in Dutch – have a student help you with it.



5.	Try to stay ahead on your projects, they'll creep up on you because Dutch students also procrastinate.
6.	Say you have preference for the U-Building or Hatta Building if they give you a student housing option
7.	Don't fail any exams and rely on your resits (re-takes), that is very demotivating.
8.	Make LinkedIn and social connections with students and professors, never know where it can lead you.
9.	Don't be on your phone during class, teachers hate it.
10.	Always lock up your bike.
What was the most rewarding part of your study abroad experience?	Gaining independence and confidence away from your comfortable environment back in BC. I impressed myself with what I accomplished during my time.
What was the greatest challenge you faced during your experience abroad?	Time management, procrastination while you're having fun living abroad will catch up to you at the end of the semester.
How has your perspective changed as a result of your study abroad experience?	I believe I'm more aware of how cultures are similar and different but that its more important to focus on similarities. My perspective of the business world and environment has changed drastically as well.
What else do you want to add out your study abroad experience?	Go in confident, you can be whoever you want away from home so be as true to yourself as possible – you will make friends and meet amazing people no matter what.