

2013-2014

University Attended: Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

The ESN is the more social aspect of induction and involved purchasing a weekend pass with parties, games, basic Dutch language course, free food/drinks etc. It's definitely worth purchasing I've kept a lot of my friends from it through the whole year and is the best way to meet people outside your flat. As far as I remember the University side of orientation was a tour of the university and some drinks/snacks after. This is also worth doing as it's a reasonably big campus.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

I have enjoyed most of my courses here. They seem quite lenient in relation to access to courses, meaning it appears straightforward to switch according to your preferences but I haven't done this. Some of the assessments are multiple choice which some people excel in, I tend to do better in written exams. The staff who take the courses have all been competent teachers and will respond to e-mails and queries reasonably soon. However, if you have any issues with the university itself or problems outside of a specific class it is quite difficult to solve these. The international desk at the VU are good but anyone beyond that doesn't seem to have too much information on who to talk to about issues and getting an appointment with an academic advisor is not an easy task.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

MBS international team helped me with any issues I had including problems with course selection etc. They also made me feel at ease when I was stressed about the application process and always responded quickly to queries I had.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

Covered everything necessary. Was also nice to have an insight into other institutions my peers were heading to.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

The VU international office is helpful and you can always talk to them easily without an appointment which makes them a good reference point should you have any trouble.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

All that's necessary is an EU health insurance card. I visited an expat doctor here and the appointment was free because of the EHIC but I did have to pay for the prescription. So if you feel a policy is necessary perhaps invest, but I should note that the prescription was only around 30e so nothing extortionate.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

No extra costs from the university, but you should definitely budget for the cost of a bike (around 100e) and perhaps an OV chipkaart for public transport which is 20e.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

Uilenstede campus is definitely the recommended accommodation. It's a large student campus with many facilities, good social life, plenty of friendly people, and if you stay here you will be with other international students who will all speak English. It's less than 10 minutes by bike from the VU and around 30 minutes from the centre of Amsterdam. I have friends who stayed at Spaklerweg which was more of an isolated set-up where student live alone or share a flat with one other person. It's also around 40 minutes from the university. I can't recommend Uilenstede enough. I chose the lowest price option which was a shared kitchen and bathroom (two showers and two toilets), so I have a reasonable sized bedroom and shared my flat with 12 other people. I preferred this setting the most and the whole building is very sociable across all the flats. If you prefer an en-suite then that building for international students is also good fun and still very reasonably priced.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

A flight from Manchester is around 1 hour 10 minutes and normally around 100 pounds with luggage. A bike is definitely necessary and is the most efficient (and fun) way to get around Amsterdam. There is also a lot of public transport with the metro and tram facilities. The social life is incredible, aside from amazing night clubs and bars if that's what you're into, there's a lot of free festivals, super cool spots to hang out, the city is rife with museums and art and culture; it's such a fun city. Living in Uilenstede, most of my friends are international students which is great as I have friends from literally every corner of the world now. I should say at this point that the language barrier is virtually non-existent and everyone in Amsterdam speaks English. The only integration with Dutch students we have is via university classes where they tend to speak Dutch to each other, so I think you tend to mix with international students more than Dutch. I would definitely recommend joining ESN as it is a great way to meet people, feel instantly more settled and get to know your way around the city.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

Just amazing in every single aspect.

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

Induction is 3 days long, which you sign up for with ESN. When I got to the campus for this tickets had sold out. From what I heard, it was tours round Amsterdam, zoo trip and nights out.

Faculty orientation is for a day, where you have presentations from staff, campus tours, and then meet your "buddy" and do an activity with them.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

Teaching style normally lectures same as home, and then a lot of private reading of articles.

Not easy to access materials, if you want the book you are 99% of the time are going to have to buy the book (no copies or very little copies in the library and hardly any online versions) and they are very expensive.

I found the majority of exams here are multiple choice! And they are not easy! Pass rate is higher than Manchester most of time is 5.5 however this can go up in different modules! Be aware of this.

You can have retakes for each exam, which would happen the following semester a week before you take that current semester exams. Make sure to check time tables for clashes as they will not inform you, you have to go through the time table and find this.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

I found everyone on MBS international team to be very helpful.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

I did not find the host international office that helpful in such they don't do sit down meetings which can be quite stressful when you want to talk to them about problems, which you don't want to do over a counter. I found them to be quite unapproachable.

However, if you had questions about your courses, and changes by email they were quick to change them over.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

I did not purchase any additional health insurance, the EHIC was enough to cover me and the regulations here is that if you are a student and under 30 and not working no additional insurance is needed.

However, future students should know that you get a letter through the post, it will be in Dutch and you have to reply to this saying you are a student and not working or else 3 months later you could be looking at a € 350 fine for not replying.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

You get charged for printing, scanning etc. but these are small fees.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

The accommodation I stayed in was Stavangerweg, it is a studio flat. Its located in a nice area, 7 minute bus ride from central Amsterdam, however it is very far from university, looking at 40 minutes -1 hours tram/bus journey or 40 minute bike ride. Transport is quite expensive, so getting back from university by tram and bus can be quite expensive. It's a nice place to live in however, socially can be hard to get to know people as you are quite secluded. In my time here I have also found that a lot of VU students don't live here, it's more UVA or non-students living here.

I would recommend staying at the university halls which is a 5 minute bike ride from the actual university.

Socially this is better as well as they have a lot of parties there, which can be hard to get to staying where I am as trams and buses don't run all night. I think they are a bit more run down than Stavangerweg it just depends what you are looking for.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

There are programs for going out and activities at the beginning of the year as an induction, make sure to get a ticket, me and a couple of people were unfortunate and didn't get one as by the time we had got to campus to buy the tickets they had sold out.

I found it quite strange when I arrived here the social induction week was separated from the Dutch, which I found odd as they would be fellow students, so it was harder to get to know them.

They have a society called ESN that organise some trips around Europe to go with other university students, I find it to be a little overpriced. Transport as I have said above is quite expensive, unless you cycle as that's free! Social life here is very expensive, drinks and clubs are both a lot more expensive than at Manchester.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

Challenging and eye opening experience