

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY FALL SEMESTER 2018

1. STUDY PROGRAM

The University seems to be very organised in terms of the units of study they offer, at the beginning they will send you a nice table where all the classes are enlisted and you can read descriptions which appear incredibly attractive. However, do not let it confuse you. All of the courses, unless they have in the name itself written “international” are pure Australian law. The Sydney Law School is one of the best ranked in the world, and the teachers expect only the best from students. Therefore, you may find yourself completely lost in a system which is completely contradictory to everything you have ever been taught. This has happened to me, with the course Evidence, I was really excited to take this unit as it seemed really appealing and it is something we never had a very close look at in RUG. Yet, the first class I left almost in tears, terrified of what I just witnessed. The lecturer went on talking about cases I had no idea even how to write down and expected us to know the cases from previous classes, we have gone through at least 100 cases in the first class (I am not kidding!!). Thus I went to the study advisor to change the unit, however, as I will explain later, it was not as easy as I would have expected.

All the other classes were extremely competitive and interesting, you are being taught by the world leading experts. In the International Commercial Arbitrations we had a lecturer who has been involved in majority of the arbitrations we have dealt with in class, and offered us a first hand experience. Another subject I took was International Commercial Transactions which was a very useful subject, and fun to study, since you know you can use the knowledge in real life. Since I had to change the Evidence unit I chose to do International Private Law hoping I would be able to catch up on the basis of my previous knowledge, however, this proved to be the most challenging unit I took and the exam was fundamentally different from what I have expected and from the exams we are used from back home. The last unit I took was Not Guilty Exoneration Project, this was the best unit I took, we actually worked with Public Defenders Office who allowed us to take insight into a lawyers work. This unit was at times extremely frustrating but we worked in interdisciplinary teams which helped us to take a different perspective both at law and the issues we dealt with.

When it comes to exams, expect the worst exam period ever! The summer will come and that means incredibly humid heat. However, libraries and most rooms have AC so you only have to survive the route to library. But AC doesn't help to solve the issue with the workload you have to get through. We had two lectures each week for 13 weeks, that means about 26 topics to get through and learn for your exam in about 2 weeks. The exams I had were all problem questions, however, there is a constraint on the time you have to answer the questions, which makes it impossible to answer all questions.

2. LANGUAGE

Aussies have their own accent. But do not worry! Everyone is extremely lovely and they are happy to explain to you what they mean. :) Although sometimes you will get yourself into funny situations when you agree to meet with people in arvo.

3. FINANCE

You will read that Sydney is one of the most expensive cities in the world. This is partially true, but do not let it discourage you. The accommodation is extremely expensive you will pay approximately 1200 euros per month for a room in shared apartment or in shared room. However, the quality of accommodation is much better than in Netherlands, although the insolation in houses is not a thing in AUS either, and you will HAVE to buy a heater. When it comes to everyday expenses, you might find yourself spending much less than in Netherlands. You can get a warm, large and really good meal for about 7\$ in one of the many restaurants spread around the campus. However, you will have to buy bottled water, since Sydney has 5 million people (this is definitely inaccurate information that you find on wikipedia, the city is totally empty, the only time you encounter people is between 4-6 pm) the quality of water is

terrible, although they claim their water to be drinkable and nothing will happen to you if you drink the water, it is a pure chloride and your throat will hurt after it.

If you are lucky you might find a job here, however, to find a job on student visa for the period of 4 months is extremely challenging and none of my friends who were here just for a semester managed to do it.

4. CONTACT WITH THE FACULTY

Contact with the faculty has been very difficult from the beginning. It takes a long time for them to let you know whether they accepted you. When you send an email it might take weeks before you get an answer, sometimes I have not received a reply altogether. I was one of the lucky ones who experienced change of study advisor 4 times, just as all of the European students who came here. So to get any information was literally impossible and took quite a while. However, once you manage to get a hold of them they genuinely want to help you and will provide you with really good advice.

The problem with communication will become clear at the orientation day when you find yourself in a classroom with other 500 students who all have the same study advisor and came for exchange just like you. There were in total 2000 incoming students and only 3 study advisors!!!!

When it comes to administrative stuff the university is not always on top of the things. You will have to submit your picture 5 times and then wait 6 weeks for the student card to be delivered to you! I got mine after one month of being in Australia.

5. HOUSING

As I mentioned above, housing is expensive, but is of much higher quality than we are used to, at least from my experience and from the houses I saw. The university offers on-campus accommodation, which will sell out immediately, and if you have constantly changing study advisors who do not always send you all the emails, you will not have a chance to get the cheapest one. I decided to not go for the campus accommodation since all the cheap options were sold out and the international house (Queen Mary) did not seem to be worth the money. I found myself accommodation from the Australian Catholic University, which was a campus accommodation located just a 20-minute walk from the Law Faculty (a 20-minute walk in Australia is nothing!), and ended up in a studio room which was cheaper than the shared rooms. But it's all about luck.

6. CULTURE, FREE TIME, TRAVELLING

You will fall in love with Australia. It is the most beautiful and the most amazing country in the world. I came here worried about all the animals which are there to kill you, and scared of how I will survive in such a huge city. But this has been the best time of my life! The weather is always amazing, even though it can get pretty cold during the winter nights. You will meet so many friends from literally all around the world, will go to the most beautiful places on earth. The most important thing which they told us on the first day of arrival was say yes to everything. I followed this advice and found myself doing things I never even imagined doing and having so much fun all the time. But be wary! You will not study here!!! However hard I tried to not make plans and study I always found myself doing something completely different, and not procrastinating or Netflixing, just enjoying the life and experiencing new stuff.

But the University knows this and they will encourage you to travel and explore, as long as you comply with their deadlines. There are two reading weeks during which you can travel (unless you have essays to do), and a mid-semester break all dedicated officially to 'catch-up' with the readings, however everyone knows that it's for travelling.