

Exchange experience University of Exeter, UK, Fall 2018

For my Erasmus Exchange period in the first semester of my third year as an LLB student from University of Groningen, I had chosen to spend the semester at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. When looking for the courses available at the University of Exeter, the study abroad team had sent us a link to the courses available for exchange students. However, a majority of these courses were only available for the 2nd semester which limited my module options by a large extent. Furthermore, 3 of the 4 courses I had initially chosen before the mobility turned out to not be available once I actually arrived in Exeter. Ultimately, I ended up doing 4 modules, each worth 7.5 ECTS. These courses were commercial law, discrimination law, technology and human rights law and law, politics and power.

Commercial law and discrimination law had a heavy focus on the UK legal system and legislation, which I was not very accustomed to because in Groningen the focus was more on European law. However, it did not take very long to adjust to it. Technology and human rights law and law politics and power were less focused on specifically UK law and we worked with a wider array of legislation from different countries which I found particularly interesting. Overall, I would recommend all the courses I took during exchange because I found them all to be very well taught, and they were all modules which were not offered in Groningen.

For the duration of the semester, I had to take all 4 modules simultaneously, which was different from the system at RUG where we took 2 courses per block. Initially, it was quite challenging to manage 4 courses at the same time. However, after a while I found that the actual material for each module was actually less dense than in Groningen, and the workload per week was comparatively a lot less, so it turned out to be quite manageable. The level of study was arguably less challenging than in Groningen, mainly because instead of just 7 weeks to cover an entire course, we had the entire semester. Thus, more time was spent on certain topics and slightly less independent study was required in my experience.

In terms of the examinations, students could choose whether they wanted to take a written exam at the end of the semester, or to submit a 3,750 word essay for each module that would count as 100% of their final grade. Students were automatically enrolled for the 'alternative examination' which was the essay. This was done in order for exchange students to not have to come back to Exeter after the Christmas holidays as we could submit the essays online and did not have to submit a hard copy of it. If students opted to take a written examination instead, they would have to contact the lecturer and notify them of this change. The level of English used in all the modules was quite high and the literature we were expected to read was complex. Thus, a very good command of English would definitely be necessary in order to adequately cope with the workload. Seeing as though I am a British national, I did not need to apply for any residence permits or any other documents to reside in the UK and therefore, I am unable to comment on this process.

In terms of the living costs in Exeter, it is definitely more costly than Groningen. On average, a room in a student house which was not too far away from the campus and city would cost around 500 GBP, which equates to around 530 Euros. Costs for things such as grocery shopping and miscellaneous items would vary depending on the needs of every person, however I required around 400 to 500 GBP per month. The great thing about the student accommodation system in the UK is that all landlords renting out their rooms to students are legally obliged to fully furnish the rooms, thus all student rooms come furnished. The university

does have accommodation for students however they prioritise students who will be staying for one academic year over the ones staying for one semester. Thus, unless you apply quite early, it is unlikely that you will be able to secure a room at one of the University's halls.

Before my departure to Exeter, the study abroad team and Exeter University were very helpful and were prompt to reply to any emails I had sent to them. They had sent several emails prior to the beginning of the exchange period and clearly explained everything that needed to be done before we arrived in Exeter. Once I arrived, there were several lectures prepared for the incoming exchange students which gave us all the information we needed to get started at the University. The registration process, collecting the University student card and finding my way around the campus was a smooth process overall. The only issues I encountered was the fact that 3 out of the 4 courses I had initially enrolled for turned out to not be made available for exchange students despite the fact that they had been included in list of available courses sent to us beforehand. However, we were granted 14 days to change our module choices however many times we wanted and so after meeting with the study abroad coordinator, this issue was quickly resolved and I could enroll myself for other modules.

There are many more societies and activities available in Exeter University in comparison to at RUG (for example, there were societies for anything you could think of, even a quidditch society!). Thus, there were more outlets for students to be able to meet fellow students who shared similar interests. Exeter University is also very active in terms of sports societies, and for international students who cannot speak Dutch, being in an English speaking sports team may be a little bit easier. For instance, I joined the rowing team during my Erasmus mostly because I knew I would be unable or find it quite difficult to join on of the rowing clubs here in Groningen. These societies offer a wide array of events throughout the semester. Every Wednesday most societies hold 'socials' where members of a society gather for drinks and often go out afterwards.

Aside from these types of events linked to the university and societies, there is not much else to do in Exeter. The university gives the city life but otherwise, it is quite a dull city that lacks its own charm that is undeniably present in Groningen. Due to this, most students are very heavily involved with the University and the University organises many events that are not just related to academics. Despite this, the area surrounding Exeter is filled with lots of beautiful nature such as Dartmouth national park and the Jurassic coast. These areas are definitely road trip worthy and makes up for the lack of activities offered in Exeter itself.

Overall, my Erasmus experience at the University of Exeter was very pleasant and it was a great opportunity to take modules that otherwise would not have been offered at RUG as well as get involved in clubs and societies that were also not available in Groningen.