

## **National University of Ireland – Galway, Fall semester 2018**

Start date study abroad: 01-09-2018 end date 22-12-2018

Period of classes: from 03-09-2018 until 30-11-2018

Examination period: from 10-12-2018 until 21-12-2018

Courses completed at the host university:

1. Criminal law I
2. Banking law
3. Irish Legal System
4. International Protection of Human Rights
5. Health law and Policy

I recently returned for my semester in Galway. It has been great, although it has not been as I expected my exchange to be, but more about this later. First, I want to tell a little about the University, since this is one of the most important aspects of the Erasmus. NUIG is a University in which all buildings are located on one campus, coming from Groningen this is something to get used to, yet it turns out to be pretty handy because it makes everything easy to find; and even if you do get lost, the people there are always super helpful and willing to show you around. When it comes to the lectures, it must be noted that all classes are much bigger than the ones in Groningen, at least for my experience. The courses I took were Irish Legal System, Environmental law, International Protection of Human Rights, Banking law, Criminal law, and Health law and policy. On first glance, this seems a lot. Each course gives you 5 credits, and you will need 30 credits to pass your exchange. However, the workload is really doable. Not only will the professors exactly tell you what to study, but the workload is also spread out, as some courses only consist of continuous assessment and do not have exams. The courses offered to the Erasmus students mainly have a focus on Irish law, but your background from Groningen is actually very useful in the courses offered. In addition, you do not need to worry about legislation too much, due to the fact that Ireland is a common law system and the focus is on learning the rules and the case law, which is a very interesting change. Overall, I find the academic aspect in Galway very fair and doable as an exchange student, as the overall support is great at NUIG.

As I said, NUIG is a campus university, which also includes campus housing. However, the apartments on the college grounds are in high demand and I didn't manage to move in myself (also because the Erasmus acceptance comes in later than the deadline for the housing application). The overall housing situation and rent prices are comparable to Groningen, meaning that it is advisable to start looking for a room early. Also, although the university website advertises Galway as a biking city, it is, of course, nothing compared to the Netherlands. Nevertheless, you will mostly see international students on the bikes, since local will never put themselves in the stressful situation of biking alongside the angry car drivers. One thing I especially enjoyed in Galway, and NUIG in particular, is the huge offer of extracurricular activities and sports. The university has a wide range of activities to offer, ranging from swimming to mountaineering, and circus. I joined to athletics team, which is my passion, and I was greeted with warm welcomes! My friends who joined other clubs shared a similar experience. If you want to be active, in whatever way, NUIG gives you the opportunity to do so. The clubs also organize trips every semester, which are very fun. If you do decide to go to Galway, and you like hiking and nature, try out the mountaineering club. This club took me to the most screening mountains every Sunday, a chance you won't get as a tourist!

Now coming to the part, which I had to get used to - the nightlife. In that regard, the culture in Ireland is very different from Groningen. You will see lots of heavy drinking, little clothing, and even louder music. Something I decided I do not want to fit in. Especially because everyone could see that I am a foreigner, just because I did not wear half the amount of make-up the others did. This does not mean, however, that I did not have fun going out. Instead of clubbing, I fell in love with the numerous Irish pubs, the live music and the relaxed atmosphere. In the bars, you will find many Erasmus students and Irish students alike, which do not share the passion others have for their culturally very different clubbing scene. However, my nights ended early because I decided to have a more active Erasmus. On the weekends I had races, went hiking, or trained for my first full marathon I finished in Ireland this December. This activeness is something I did not expect before.

What is striking about Galway is, that it is a very lively city. Everyone is friendly, relaxed, and at every corner in the city centre, you will find live music or dancing. To me, going to Galway has definitely been a very good choice. Throughout the Semester, I spent my Erasmus hiking, running, and mainly in the countryside I couldn't have wished for a better place to be.