

Exchange experience University of East Anglia (UEA), UK, Fall 2018

UEA is located in Norwich, a small capital of the Norfolk county in the East of the country. Prior to the exchange, I had never heard of UEA, let alone Norwich. It is, indeed, normal that few people have heard of this university since it is in the "small" city. The size is quite relative because the Norwich is still two times bigger than Groningen. However, the university itself has approximately 17,000 students compared to RUG which counts more than 27,000 students.

Study programme.

An enjoyable and remarkable aspect is that UEA offers various courses to foreign students, at least 10 courses were available for foreign students. Compared to UEA, most university in the UK offer few courses which were, mostly, specific national courses such as constitutional or administrative law. If you are interested in such courses, then there are many universities in the UK offer such courses, but they might not be available for exchange students in UEA.

I ended up studying Internet, company and competition law. Before briefly discussing about the courses, I would like to say that, prior to my exchange, I was already interested in competition and internet law. Thus, don't be surprise if I am bias toward these courses.

Internet law

Due to cross-cutting area of internet, internet law is not only law related. We did not only assess these subjects in the eye of law but also considered the market, the never-ending development in technologies and/or social norms. Topics such as data protection, privacy or cybercrime were taught. Students are encouraged to study the law but also to reflect on the role of the legal system in a digital and connected world. Personally, it is one of the best subjects that I have ever studied. I highly recommend this course for students who want to witness the role and impact of laws on the internet and vice versa. It is unlikely that you will study the same content as me because internet keeps changing.

Competition law

The subject focuses on the substantive and procedural rules of competition law as well economic concepts of competition. We discussed cartels, abuse of monopolies and merges. I was afraid that the course will be focus only UK (giving Brexit), but surprisingly, UK competition law is a copy of EU competition law so the whole course was focus on EU cases. Do not be afraid of economic concepts since only the basics (what we have seen in Introduction to economics in RUG) are taught.

Company law

This course focuses on the legal regulation and control of companies and the role of shareholders and directors. Although very technical and requires more time to study, it remains very interesting in the term of providing an excellent insight of the corporate world

Time and examination

The level study was approximately the same for the three courses. Students only have twee hours of lecture per week for each subject and the seminars take place once every twee week. And the seminars last 2 hours (with no breaks in-between, at least from my experience). Thus, students are given more liberty to organize themselves. Moreover, autumn students do not have

exams but only essays to hand in at the end of their study period (some deadlines are past the study period which was on the 14th of December). An advice is to not fall for the “free time” trick and do your readings and work weekly.

Usually seminars are composed of 10 students maximum. I personally find the setting more practical to enable a real discussion about a topic not just questions/answers. The inconvenience may be that it is easily noticeable if one student does not do his/her work.

Concerning essays, UEA gives you 2 opportunities. Firstly, formative assessments which are not mandatory and do not count in your final grade but are used to provide personalized feedback. Usually, you have 1 formative assessment, but it can happen that you have multiple ones. For instance, in company law, we had an essay and group essay to write. Secondly, you have summative assessment which is your final essay and counts in your final grade. The deadlines in summative essay varies. In some courses you will only have 1 week to do your final essay and in other courses you will have more than 1 month. Obviously, they are expecting students to provide deeper analysis for a 1-month deadlines compared to 1 week. My personal advice would be to seriously do the formative assessment since you will get proper feedbacks which then can be used in your final essays. Do not underestimate formative assessment just because it is not mandatory. They are often reflective of the final essays and exams whereas the seminars aim at a better understanding of the concepts taught in the lectures. A last point concerning essays or examination in general is that you can pass your essay if you get 40%. But it is also much harder to get a grade above 80%!

Language: UEA programmes are taught in English, there was no problem.

Finance and other conditions

The exchange office at RUG already warned us before going on exchange that the cost of living in UK is quite high. Thus, students must arrive financially prepared. I did not get any UK sim card nor bank account simple because my exchange period was too short. Although I lived a little bit far away from the university, I was lucky enough to get a free bike from my roommate, so I did not have to pay any transport fee. So, I was paying roughly 660 pounds per month (734 euros) which I find quite acceptable. I did not have any additional costs from my host university (no administrative costs for instance).

Preparation and contacts with the faculty abroad. UEA contacts students quite quickly, and easily guide them through the procedures (what, who and when to contact). I had already done all the administrative works since the end of June. When you arrived in UEA, you just must show your ID/passport for the university to confirm that they have seen you at least once

Housing

This housing application was complicated. Even though UEA rapidly contacts students regarding accommodation, it only confirms accommodation at the beginning of September. Even though UEA has a campus, 1st semester students rarely get the opportunity to live on campus. They rather favour full year students. Yet, finding an accommodation off-campus is not easy as well since landlords are also fond of 1-year contract or at least 6 months. However, compared to Groningen, exchange students have good alternatives. The university recommends students housing which is a website controlled by the UEA student unions, so it is safer to use. But students are still confronted with the 1-year minimum requirement. Another option (not controlled by the university) is finding a room through spare room website where you can find people that allow students stay for 3 months. Often,

students end up staying with the landlord/landlady or a family for instance. Personally, I got my room through an agency that allows me to pay for 4 months. It can also happen that you must pay 1 month more for a short-term period or pay more for 3 months. Those factors will depend on the person/agency. If one is lucky enough to get a room on-campus, then the rooms are often expensive. For instance, UEA offered me (mid-September) a room for only 200GP per week which was $\frac{3}{4}$ of my rent in Norwich per month. I would recommend avoiding signing a contract for 1 year and then find someone to replace you simply because during the 2nd semester it gets empty, so incoming students have better choices and will not necessarily choose your room.

In Norwich, I lived 10 minutes by bike with 3 other master students. My neighbourhood (Bowthorpe) was extremely calm. If you want to leave closer to the UEA but still off-campus, best areas are golden triangle, unthank road and Dereham Road. You can also live closer to the city centre and take bus 25-26 that stop at the university. My best advice is to live closer to the university and avoid living in the city centre due to the noises and avoid Lakenham and Anglia square. Moreover, no need to live on-campus to meet English students since you will have many other opportunities to do so (through sports, associations).

Guidance/reception at host university

Exchange students had various events that allow them to get familiar with the programme or the university. For instance, the university offers city centre, library or campus tours. It also organized several social events (introduction social event, thanksgiving, Christmas dinner and farewell dinner as well). UEA prioritizes talks about prevention of sexual harassment, mental illness, depression. Moreover, advisors, people that guide student through their university years, are considered essential for students. Thus, you always have someone to discuss when facing with difficulties. Although talking to advisors is less relevant for 1 semester students, it is still helpful if you need them.

UEA also considered social event such as sport associations or societies important. They have gigantic sport building where you can practise almost all sports. Student usually pay per year, but you can choose to pay per semester depending on the sport activities, I had to pay 55 pounds to get access to the gym. Moreover, societies allow students to get together around a hobby, for example, there is a Disney society where students often talk, watch or organized events around Disney. You do have to pay for these associations but the price ranges from 3 to 10 GBP.

The only expensive association I found was the law society in which students pay 40 pounds for a year. The fees covered moot courts, events or any goodies you can have that are law related. Such societies are not recommended for short-term students. However, it is highly important for exchange students to join both sport clubs and societies. Not only they give great opportunities to meet English students (not only your exchange friends), but also permit you to widen your social network beyond your courses and people you live with. There are also benefit in term of skills, qualities and knowledge you develop for your employability. That is one of the reasons why I choose UEA because they really give a huge importance on non-academic's activities that are helpful to develop or improve your other skills.

Culture, free time and travelling.

People in Norwich are quite indirect so if you upset them, they will not necessarily tell you that. During the introduction week, the University prone the punctuality of their people and transport. This is not quite true, especially in Norwich. I would recommend to future students to not take the bus to the University (unless it is the bus 25 and 26), the rests are never on time.

UEA also has their own bars and groceries shops. Contrary to their supermarket, their bars and clubs are cheaper and are giving the opportunity to play table soccer and other games with friends. Moreover, UEA has various restaurants or snack places with amazing menus where you can taste Asian or African cuisine. I would not advice students to eat in those restaurants every day since it can be heavy on the wallet.

If you can easily organize your study time, you will end up having more free time to travel. Norwich centre is small, but it is 30 minutes away by train to the beach, 1 hour away from Cambridge, 3 hours away from London. If you have more time you can visit Bath, Nottingham and so on. Best time to travel is around October and beginning of November. Avoid travelling mid-November because it is already the end of the semester.

Other

Food is quite expensive in the UK, I would recommend going to Aldi, Lidl to save money. Have a proper Wi-Fi or internet connection because you will need it in Norwich. Download UEA jargons, it will help you find buildings names and location since some building abbreviation do not make any sense. Have fun and do not be afraid to ask questions because if you don't understand, people will gladly help you, if ask politely.

I very much enjoyed my time at the university and in the city. I recommend this university for their programmes which are nicely taught with amazing teachers but also because it is not only academics focused.