



**GO GLOBAL:
Utrecht University, The Netherlands**



Zaanse Schans, Zaandam

About me



Hello! My name is Ana and I am one of the Go Global Student Liaisons at York International for the 2019-20 academic year.

I am a Glendon student majoring in Psychology and minoring in Linguistics and Language Studies.

I went on exchange at **Utrecht University in the Netherlands in Spring 2018**, where I took courses in psychology, education, and health. Utrecht was my first choice because they offered courses in psychology and I've always wanted to live in Europe.

I am happy to share my personal experiences with you and I hope you find this information helpful! 😊

Utrecht, Netherlands

- Located in Central Netherlands
- 30 minutes away from Amsterdam by train
- 4th-largest city in the Netherlands
- 2nd highest number of cultural activities, after Amsterdam
- Points of interest: Dom Tower, Oudegracht, Kasteel de Haar, Museum Speelklok, and many others!





Domplein, Utrecht

Utrecht University

- Founded in 1636
- Ranked #1 worldwide by the Times Higher Education for climates and ecosystems research
- Utrecht is one of the BBC Travel's top five happiest cities
- 12 Nobel Prize Winners



The Academic Year



At Utrecht University, the school year is divided into 2 semesters. Within each semester, there are 2 blocks as follows:

Fall Semester

- Block 1: from September to November
- Block 2: from November to February

Spring Semester

- Block 3: from February to April
- Block 4: from April to July

At York University, you'd be taking 4 or 5 courses at the same time in one semester. At Utrecht University, you'd be taking a total of 4 courses in one semester, but only 2 courses per block.

Courses and Grading System



Classes

- I took *Adolescent Development and Health Psychology* in Block 3
- I took *Health in Society and International Perspectives on Education* in Block 4.
- Classes run for 1 hour and 45 mins. with a 15-min break in between. Tutorials run for the same amount of time.

The Grading System

Utrecht University uses a 10-point grading system. 1, being the lowest, and 10 being the highest. As 9's and 10's are rarely given out, most students can expect to receive an average grade of 7.5.



Housing

- Although the university doesn't own residences, it has special agreements with student housing companies. Many of these rooms are furnished, and are very close to the campus.
- Utrecht is a very popular exchange destination and **housing fills up very quickly**. It can be difficult to find housing outside these student housing companies.
- TIP: **research** the potential apartments that you'd like to stay in and organize all of that info well ahead of time. That way, you are well-prepared when the online portal opens to book your accommodation!

Housing



Example photo of a room in De Bisschopen - Cambridgelaan

- You will most likely have housemates. I shared my apartment with one other girl but it is common to have 2-6 housemates.
- I stayed at the De Bisschoppen - Cambridgelaan building at Utrecht Science Park.
- The apartment was furnished though you have to supply your own bedsheets (or purchase one from them) and toiletries.
- My rent was around €470/month (includes electricity, internet, hydro, and maintenance repairs).

Money Matters

- Most of my funding came from part-time work savings, YIMA (York International Mobility Award), and OSAP
- I prepared a budget sheet to get a rough estimate of how much I would be spending
- Check if you qualify for other bursaries and scholarships!
- Some places do not take cash, so it would be helpful to open a Dutch bank account to get a debit card

Costs of living

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Accommodation | 400 - 800 euro per month (for more specific information about rental prices click here) Furnished, including utilities, individual/ shared, etc. |
| Living expenses | 350 - 450 euro per month Food, clothes, personal services, public transport, etc |
| Books / study material | 65 - 85 euro per month Depends on the degree programme. |
| Visa & permits | 0 - 304 euro (once) Depends on your nationality |
| Contingencies | 500 euro (once) Bicycle, higher phone bill, financial setback, etc. |

Screenshotted from Utrecht University's website



Transportation

- The **OV Chipkaart** is the primary method of payment (similar to a Presto card) and can be reloaded on train stations and some grocery stores
- The card is used on **trams, trains, buses, ferries**, etc. throughout the country
- Useful transportation apps: **9292; NS Reisplanner**



Bicycles

- A very common way to get around
- You can either buy or rent a bike
- Second-hand bike prices range from €50-€120 (browse through Marktplaats, Facebook, etc.)
- Make sure that you park it legally, or else it will get confiscated
- ALWAYS lock it to prevent theft!





Making Friends

- There are many exchange students at Utrecht University
- You can opt to join the Dutch buddy program for exchange students to have a local Dutch student show you around
- Join ESN events to meet more exchange students



Safety

- The Netherlands is generally safe; however, exercise precaution as you would anywhere in the world
- The **Registration of Canadians Abroad** is for Canadians travelling abroad
- The Canadian Embassy is located in **The Hague**, should you require consular assistance
- Continually check **'travel advice and advisories'** on the Canadian website



Pre-departure:

- **Research sim cards:** unlimited data is relatively inexpensive and there are no roaming fees when travelling within the EU
- **Learn basic Dutch words:** most Dutch people speak English but it's still good to know some key words and phrases
- **Research potential accommodations:** extremely crucial!
- **Pack light:** I brought two large suitcases for my 6-month exchange. Although winters are not as harsh compared to Canada, it is very windy from January - March so keep that in mind!

Upon arrival...

- You will arrive at **Schiphol Amsterdam Airport**. There will be signs that lead you to the trains where you can buy tickets/OV chipkaart from the machines.
- From the airport, you can take the train to **Utrecht Central Station**.
- Get settled in your apartment and explore the beautiful city of Utrecht!
- Start the process of opening a Dutch bank account early and get to know the campus.

During your exchange...

- Enjoy your classes! Bear in mind that classes run twice as fast in Utrecht because of the block system
- Travel within the Netherlands: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Gouda, Giethoorn, Zaanse Schans (TIP: travel with a group of friends to get group discounts on train fares)
- Eat as many stroopwafels and Dutch delicacies as you can!
- Travel within Europe as well! During long weekends and breaks, I explored Belgium, France, Germany, England, and Sweden

After exchange...

- Make a checklist of things that you have to do before leaving (closing your bank account, returning residence permit, returning your keys, etc.)
- If going in the Spring semester, take advantage of the summer break and explore more of Europe (I travelled to Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, and Iceland)
- Post-exchange blues is completely normal. Give yourself lots of time to recover and take lots of pictures!!!

Helpful links:

- **Utrecht University Website:**
<https://www.uu.nl/en/education/exchange-and-visiting-students/utrecht-university>
- **Travel Advisories:** <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/netherlands>
- **Registration of Canadians Abroad:**
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>

Best of luck!



Dam Square, Amsterdam

I hope that was helpful! If you have any questions at all about studying abroad, feel free to reach out to me at anavill@yorku.ca.