

Studying Abroad

Studying abroad can be a wonderful experience – the best time in your life – or a complete nightmare, if you were unprepared.

Studying abroad can be a very valuable addition to your time here at Leiden University. By studying and living somewhere else for a semester or two, you will practice your language skills, social skills, and your ability to adjust to a foreign environment. All of this sounds kind of scientific. Of course studying abroad also means tons of fun! Making new friends, trips to must-see attractions, and experiencing all aspects of a different culture. Going to the pub is also experiencing English culture – very valuable!

These days surprisingly few English students choose to study abroad, because they think they can't afford it. Of course, you do have to save up some money. You can't expect it to be as cheap as studying over here, perhaps still living with your parents. But there's no need to regard studying abroad as an unattainable ideal, that only the rich can achieve. There are scholarships, and there's the Erasmus Exchange Programme. Nothing is impossible.

The Erasmus Exchange Programme is instigated by the EU and part of the European lifelong learning programme (LLP) to stimulate cooperation, exchange, training and internships. All universities and colleges in possession of an Erasmus University Charter (EUC) can partake in exchanges and receive subsidies. The English department of the University of Leiden has specific agreements with the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, University of Liverpool, Gent University in Belgium and the National University of Ireland – Galway, and the University of Nottingham.

Most Erasmus students, if educational budgets permit, will receive a scholarship of approximately 250 euros a month. Apart from that, you can take your IB-groep funding with you, you will receive additional payment, for the OV-card (because you don't use it), and you can rent out your room. So, if you're a bit clever, the Erasmus programme doesn't have to cost you much money.

If, however, you wish to go outside of Europe, you might need to do some more financial planning than just this. By all means choose a university which has bilateral agreements with Leiden University. This means that you will not have to pay any tuition fees. Definitely an advantage if you consider studying in the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. The universities in these countries are known for their educational excellence, but also for their sky-high tuition fees: 30.000 dollars a year is not unusual.

So far I have already named some possibilities of universities you can go to. Here is a more extensive list, although certainly not the full list:

Inside Europe:

- University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England
- University of Liverpool, England
- National University of Ireland, Galway
- University of Gent, Belgium
- University of Leuven, Belgium
- University de Bologna, Italy
- University of Pisa, Italy
- University of Bergen, Norway
- University of Granada, Spain
- University of Poitiers, France
- University of Lille, France

Outside Europe:

U.S.A:

- University of California, Berkeley, California
- University of California, Los Angeles, California (UCLA)
- Boston College, Boston, Massachusetes

- College of William and Mary, Virginia

- Washington College, Washington

Canada:

- McGill University, Montreal
- University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Australia:

- University of Melbourne
- The University of Sydney

South Africa:

- University of Stellenbosch

Brazil:

- Universidade de Sao Paolo

Argentina:

- Universidad Nacional de Cordoba

Japan:

- Kyoto University

China:

- HongKong Baptist University

Apart from the Erasmus programme and all of Leiden's bilateral agreements there's also ISEP: International Student Exchange Programme. It's an American programme established to give Americans the chance to study in Europe, and to give Europeans the chance to study at American universities, without having to pay large sums of money. The American ISEP universities are smaller and less well known, but as there are more than 100 universities to choose from, spread out over all of the country, and also Canada and Mexico, this still gives you lots of opportunities.

As you can see the possibilities are numerous. For some people this makes it more difficult to choose. Choosing the right university is important. If you are unhappy in a far away country, you can't just go back. You'll have to stick it out. Therefore some advice on choosing the right university:

- Consider what the purpose is of your studying abroad. Do you want to experience a different culture? Do you want to study at a world-class university, like Berkeley? Do you want to improve your language skills? Do you want to travel and see the country?
- Consider the type of person you are. Are you good at making new friends? Would you survive at a highly competitive university?
- Do you like big cities, like Los Angeles or New York, or would you rather study in a small and compact city, like Leiden? What kind of cities do you like?
- Consider the climate. Do you love heat? Or snow? If you're planning to go to Calgary, Canada in the fall semester, take into account that the average winter temperature: minus 10 degrees Celsius is quite normal over there!

So, if by now, after reading part of this article, you have decided to give studying abroad ago, then there's some serious considering for you to do.

Then, if you have made your decision, your next task is to sign up. At <http://www.onderwijs.leidenuniv.nl/buitenland/> you will find different forms for Europe and outside of Europe. After you've done this, the International Office is aware of your big plans. They will help you plan and arrange things. But beware of the deadlines! The deadline for the Erasmus programme, for the fall semester is March 1. Applications for universities outside of Europe need to be submitted before December 1. This means you have to plan far ahead. So if you want to go to Canada in the first semester of your third year, you will have to start arranging that a year earlier.

At the moment I am going through this whole process myself. Studying in America has always been one of my dreams, but I always thought it was completely impossible and unrealistic. By writing this article I wanted to encourage and inform other people.

by Anna Visser

It is not impossible! Make it happen!



sources:

www.nuffic.nl

www.onderwijs.leidenuniv.nl/buitenland

www.hum.leidenuniv.nl/studenten/internationalisering/beurzen-uitwisseling/mogelijkheden.html