

Student Exchange Questionnaire

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Massey Degree: Bachelor of Food Technology with Honours

Host University: Wageningen University

Semester and year of exchange: Semester 2, 2015

- **Why did you choose this particular university and/or country for exchange?**

Firstly, I chose this university because I have read good testimonials of previous students that have come here. On the way, I also found out that this university is renowned in the field of life sciences, including food technology. After further research, I found this university to be very appealing in terms of study prospects and opportunities. Secondly, the Netherlands is in central Europe, thus placing me in a prime location to visit different places.

- **Did it meet your expectations?**

As I had little knowledge of the Netherlands, let alone Europe, I did not have many expectations. However, if I had any they would certainly be exceeded. The university is great beyond my imagination and I was very impressed by every aspect of it from the facilities, classes and resources, to the student life and activities.

- **What papers did you study on exchange? Would you recommend them?**

I studied Introduction to nutrition and health in developing countries, Food microbiology, Food chemistry, Food production and preservation, and Food physics. Apart from the nutrition paper, all the other papers were relevant to my studies and were in fact the exact papers that the second year Dutch food tech students were taking. Those courses are all recommended since they are necessary for the food tech degree. Note that papers are called courses here.

- **Were there differences in the teaching methods and academic environment at your host university, compared to Massey University? If so, what kind of differences?**

Teaching methods differ from paper to paper and depends on the size of the class. In larger classes, as is often the case for food subjects, you are expected to be more independent. The materials are provided online and you need to access them yourself. There are time slots that you can use certain computer rooms and supervisors are there to answer any questions if you have them. This is because there is not enough time for both lab classes and lectures so lectures are video-recorded with online exercises to study while the class is split into groups that take turns doing the lab classes. All in all, there are not too many differences in teaching methods other than a greater use of computers.

- **Did you stay on-campus or off-campus? What was the accommodation like?**

Currently, the accommodations are off-campus, though some are so close you could consider them on-campus. They are building new accommodation at the moment that is directly on-campus. I stayed at one of the student buildings very close to campus. You can choose to have shared facilities or private facilities and the extent of shared facilities you want. The accommodations are usually well-maintained and neighbours are

generally friendly. Flatting is not as common here so most students apply for a student housing. Flatting is usually only for Dutch students for various reasons.

- **How did living expenses compare to New Zealand?**

Rent is similar to flatting in New Zealand with the added advantage that you do not need to worry about electricity bills or internet bills etc. so sometimes it even works out to be cheaper. Groceries costs similar amounts to NZ. There are many supermarkets and also markets that have good prices. I found that transport, such as trains and bus, costs a lot more and so does eating out so most students cook themselves. Practically everyone cycles in the Netherlands so you won't need to ride a bus when travelling in town, only when travelling to another city/town.

- **What extra-curricular activities did you participate in at the host university?**

The sports offered here are very extensive so you are sure to find at least one thing that you could do. I tried participated in several kinds of sports and exercise classes. Also the student life here is always buzzing with activities going on every week. You won't be bored here if you choose to go out and do something. There is ISOW (international student organization) and IxESN (Erasmus exchange organisation) that organises many different activities from movie nights, to drinks, to excursions, language or music classes, parties, international kitchens, buddy groups etc.

- **What's one thing you learnt about your host country or culture?**

I came knowing the stereotype that Dutch people are very direct and will speak their minds. This didn't really hit me hard when I first arrived though I did notice it from time to time. Sometimes it may feel like they are offending you but they are really just stating their opinions without any ill intentions. Another thing is that they don't really seem to engage in small talk as much. Even after working with some students in a lab group, they don't greet you afterwards even though you know each other. They only do this with friends. I found this a bit odd since I was used to greeting anyone I knew.

- **What did you find challenging?**

I didn't find anything that was particularly challenging. The only thing was the language from time to time however, most Dutch people can speak English and some Dutch words are similar to terms in English too so It's not too hard to find your way around.

- **What do you feel you have learned or gained from going on exchange?**

The exchange experience has definitely made me a more confident person. It pushes your boundaries and forces you to get out of your comfort zone. Going on exchange not only made me more self-confident and independent but also widened my mind to whole new possibilities. You get to learn so much about the world and meet people from all over the world. It's an amazing experience and helps you appreciate how big and diverse the world is.

- **Do you have any tips for future students intending to go on exchange to the same country or university?**

Getting all the necessary documents ready before going on exchange can definitely save a lot of stress. Keep in mind that there will be lots of administrative things to get done so

try to list all the different things you need to do and the documents required for those things. This way you can come prepared with x number of photocopies of your passports etc. Otherwise there will be hundreds of other students trying to use the photocopy machine at the same time.

- **Do you have any comments provided to you by Massey university and/or by the host university before/during/after your exchange?**

Know that going on exchange is your adventure and you are very much responsible for organising everything and making sure you are well-informed. However, both Massey University and the host university are always there to lend a hand should you have any questions or require any assistance in any way. You just have to be pro-active and contact them rather than wait for them to ask you since both parties are very busy.