



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student information

Study programme WU	BES
Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)	03/01/2024 until 07/06/2024
Exchange destination: University	University of Reading
Faculty	School of Agriculture, Policy and Development
Country	England
City	Reading

2. Motivation for exchange

a. Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

To push myself out of my comfort zone and gain new experiences.

b. What is the reason you chose for this country?

I wanted to study in a native English speaking country, since I have noticed that I am able to pay more attention to lecturers when they are able to speak in their native language. I did think about going to Canada or Australia, but I did not want to go too far since I have a history with being homesick.

c. What is the reason you chose for this university?

I looked at the different universities that were available to study at in the UK and made a list of all the courses at those universities. I then simply chose the uni that had the most interesting courses for me to take.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

a. Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?

Have very nice parents that will drop you off by car :).

If you do want to go by car, I would advice taking the train instead of the boat cause it is much faster (both the check-in and the actual trip)

If this is not possible, there are four airports near London, but Gatwick and Heathrow are the best options to get to Reading since there are direct trains/buses to Reading station (otherwise you will need to take all your luggage with you into London). From Reading station, there are buses (bus 21) that go directly to campus, but with a lot of luggage a taxi might be worth the extra money (it is a short trip so it won't be too expensive).

4. University and studying

a. Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Preparing for Floods	10	Interesting course that look into the different aspects (social, practical, etc.) of flood preparedness	4	
2	Deathscapes and Dark Tourism	10	Very interesting look at tourist destinations surrounding e.g. genocide, but also about things like cemeteries and roadkill. (The Dark Tourist on Netflix gives a nice idea of the topics discussed)	5	It did not include as many aspects of Environmental Science as the course guide lets you think.
3	Climate, Environment and Ancient Civilisations of the Andes	10	The course title really says it all.	4	The course guide says you don't need any prerequisites but in the course it is somewhat assumed that you have some knowledge of different pollen, but the teacher is very nice and understanding and will help you out with all your questions

b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English: Yes, every course is thought in English :).

c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest: Yes, even though the exchange is officially at the *School of Agriculture, Policy and Development* you are allowed to pick courses from all the other schools as well.

d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed: Yes, even though it was not as high of a level as at the WUR, I learned a lot of interesting things and it gave me more time to explore the country as well :).

e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed (Yes, No - Explain): Yes, although I would have maybe selected other courses if I was given more time to choose.

f. What is it like to study there?

There are not that many contact hours and much more self studying and there are almost no classes in the summer term (but I think they are changing this system). The examination was mostly based on papers and even the exam I took was basically just writing a small paper in three hours. If you do all the recommended reading I think the workload is still somewhat lower than at the WUR, but most courses also offer *further reading*. I did not need to buy any books and only had to read online papers, but this depends on the courses you follow.

g. What is the culture of the university?

The lectures of the courses I followed were in small groups of around 20 people which meant the lecturers were very approachable. During the lectures of *Deathscapes and Dark Tourism* there were discussions about the topic each class.

h. What does the university offer students additionally?

You can take a meal plan with your room to be able to eat at the different locations on campus (there are ofcourse other options if you don't take this). There's a minimum of three meals a week and the most expensive plan is 21 meals a week. The food could be better but it does save a lot of time when you're busy with other stuff. Additionally, most exchange students take the plan so it's a nice way to have dinner with your friends. There is a university gym at the edge of campus, but I did not take a membership. Every hall has a room with driers and washers available. This could be in your building or at a 2 minute walk depending on where you live. You have to download an app on which you can put money and with this app you can reserve a machine and you will get a notification when your laundry is almost done.

There is also a bar on campus that organizes club nights on Wednesdays as well as boardgame night, trivia/karaoke night and a lot more.

There are also a lot of fun activities planned by the housing committee such as paint and sip, uno tournament, murder mystery night and one day they even had a pofoertjes stand!

5. Housing-traveling-living

a. What are the possibilities for housing?

The uni does not guarantee housing, but nobody I know had issues getting a room. You will get an email with more information but you can give a top three of places you want

to live and they will then give you and offer for one of these rooms (I got my first option). All rooms are private and you can choose whether you want a shared bathroom and with how many people you want to share. As far as I know it is not possible to rent a studio at the uni itself. Rent is more expensive than in Wageningen. I had a room where I had to share my bathroom with 1 other person and my kitchen with 11 people and I paid around 180 pounds a week. You have to rent your room for the entire semester. (this is all for renting at the uni)

b. What is the culture like?

They're less direct, but not that different from Dutch culture in general. Most halls don't really interact with each other.

c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?

There are busses all around Reading. You can buy a ticket on the bus or you can tap on and off. Day tickets are 3.40 and one-way trips are 2.00, but there is a daily cap of 3.40 as long as you use the same card. If you're travelling with a group its cheapest to get a group ticket which is 5.50 for 4 people for the entire day. The day tickets have a five letter code on it each day in case you're phone is out of battery you can just say this word to your bus driver.

I was not able to pay with my Dutch card on a bus so get an (online) credit card to be sure you can pay everything.

If you're planning on going to London more than three times (or to other places by train) you should buy a railcard cause this will save you money.

If you rent via the university all your classes will be withing walking distance.

6. Expenses

a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	*
Visa - if applicable	/
Vaccinations - if applicable	/
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	/
Daytrips/sight-seeing	*
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	180 pounds a week
Grocery costs per month	*
Public transport costs per month	*
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs per month	*

*It really depends on how you travel/how much you want to do :)

b. The price levels were in general [higher; lower; equal] in comparison to in the Netherlands: They were a bit higher

c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

I would recommend to get an online international card such as Revolut so you can pay everywhere without making a lot of extra costs because of paying in pounds. This will also make it easier to send/receive money from you international friends.

7. Free time

a. What are must-sees in the area?

London is a 30 minute train ride away and a lot of fun to visit. You should of course see the Big Ben, the national museum etc. I also really enjoyed going to a lot of musicals and plays. There are also a lot of big and nice bookshops in London, as well as everywhere else.

Wales is also only about an hour away from Reading by train

The study abroad office will organise a couple of trips as well. In my case, we went to Bath in the first weekend and later they also organised trips to Portsmouth and Stonehenge.

Scotland is also a beautiful place to visit and its doable to travel by train.

All my friends that travelled to Ireland went my plane, but they did really enjoy it.

b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?

If you like books, there's a book wholesaler in Hemel Hempstead to has one day a month on which everything is 70% off to members (which only costs 2 pounds). It's not very easily accessible without a car but it's worth the travel

8. Challenges & best moment abroad

a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?

UoR is not the best at doing things on time so don't stress out when everyone else you know that's going on exchange knows a lot more about everything before you do. They'll give you all the information, just very late :).

b. Best memory?

The real treasure was the friends we made along the way :).

9. Contact details

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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