



# WUR Goes Abroad

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## 1. Student Information

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<b>Study programme WUR</b>	Biotechnology
<b>Exchange semester (dd/mm/yyyy)</b>	20/09/2023 until 02/02/2024
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	UGent
<b>Faculty</b>	Bioscience Engineering
<b>Country</b>	Belgium
<b>City</b>	Ghent

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### **Why did you choose to go on study exchange?**

I originally wanted to go during my bachelors, but I couldn't because of Covid. I have always wanted to go because for personal development. Wageningen is very close to where I grew up and I wanted to live somewhere completely different, further away from family, to see how I would be outside of my comfort zone.

### **What is the reason you chose for this country/university?**

I chose it because for both the university, to follow specific courses, and because I have had two friends who studied in Leuven before and liked that, so that's why I started to look at studying in Belgium. I preferred Gent over Leuven because Gent is such a beautiful city and looked very cosy.

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### **Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination?**

Talk to other students you know about where they went and what they thought of the places they went. I think liking the city, and not only going for a specific university, is very important.

## 4. University and studying

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	Microbiomics	4	Learning about different molecular techniques and giving a 'lesson' on one specific technique with a group for the other students. Also focusses on how these techniques are applied with real life examples.	3	
2	Protein Chemistry	4	Learning about different analytical protein techniques and how to apply some of them in the lab. Also learn about how to critically read a scientific paper.	3	
3	Bioinformatics	5	Applying Python for analysing biological data	4	
4	Enzyme Engineering	3	Learning what enzyme engineering is and what different approaches can be taken. Included a group project about an enzyme engineering problem.	5	
5	Bio-Imaging and Image Informatics	4	Learning about the different microscopy techniques and how they work	3	
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### What is it like to study there?

Academic level is comparable to the WUR. I think the courses I took were not more difficult than the course I take at the WUR, and also the workload and how they set the courses up is very comparable. They also make use of readers and Brightspace for course contents.

### What is the culture of the university?

I think that Belgian students are a bit more closed off than Dutch students, but that may also have been because I went during my masters, and then people generally already have their friends and are less open to new people. Other

exchange students off course are very open, but I didn't have that many or any in my courses sadly. However, friends of mine had a lot of exchange students in their classes, so it depends a bit on your faculty / the courses you take. The teachers are very approachable, just like they are at the WUR, and there is also other support for exchange students. The only big difference is that they have different faculties, spread out all across the city, which I think is pretty nice. It was very different for me to follow all my courses at the same time and then having all of the exams in a four week period at the end. It took some time to adjust to that. I think the courses are very comparable to WUR courses, but the exams are very different. For almost every course I followed, I had both a written exam and an oral exam. Also, they focus way more on just remembering all the material, instead of really understanding and applying. One thing I found very interesting was that almost all Belgian students go back to their parents during the weekend. Therefore, during the week, the city was a vibrant city with a lot of student life, while in the weekend it was still busy but mostly due to the tourists that come to visit Ghent.

### **What does the university offer students additionally?**

All throughout the city you can find student resto's. Here you can get lunch and diner for a very good price! They always offer a vegetarian option, and I thought the meals were pretty good. The universities offers sport halls for various sports and a swimming pool. There are also various student residence halls where you can get a room through the university.

## **5.Housing-travelling-living**

### **What are the possibilities for housing?**

You can try to get a room via the university in the student residence halls. However, there are not that many places so it is likely that you will have to find a room on your own. There are various Facebook groups where you can try to find a room. You do have to be aware of possible scammers, and that is also something the university warns you for. They are very open to help you with any questions regarding finding a room in Ghent when you couldn't get into the residence halls. My room was almost twice as expensive as my room here so that is something to take into account. That is to be expected though, because Ghent is a bigger city than Wageningen is.

### **What is the culture of the country like?**

Belgians are more closed off so it is a bit harder to really get to know them. Most students go home during the weekend to their parents, where their parents will do their laundry and give them frozen food for them to eat during the week. I think that is a very big difference compared to the Netherlands, where in my opinion we are more independent.

**Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?**

Ghent is a very bikeable city, so you can bring your own bike or rent one which is not that expensive. The city also has trams and busses which you can use to get around. There are two train stations located nearby.

## 6. Expenses

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

Housing cost can be higher, because it is a bigger city than Wageningen. Public transport is cheaper in Gent. I only really used it for trips to other cities, and then the train is considerably more cheaper than it is in the Netherlands. Going out for dinner and getting groceries is comparable to the Netherlands.

**Additional remarks regarding expenses?**

Overall, I think the expenses are similar to what you would pay in the Netherlands, but during an exchange you do spend more in general than back home. Because you do a lot of extra things: I went out for drinks way more, went on city trips, went out more often to have dinner etc.

## 7. Free time

**What are must-sees in the area?**

Brugges is very nearby and also other bigger cities (like Antwerp and Brussels) are very easily to visit with the train or FlixBus (which you will get a discount for when you get an ESN card). You can visit a lot of places during the weekends, but you have to keep in mind that in Belgium a lot of places are closed during Sundays so it is better to go on a Saturday. We also had a couple days off due to a national holiday and we took that time to visit Paris for a few days, which was super fun. With the Flixbus this takes about 4 hours.

**What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth a visit?**

Off course, Belgium is known for their beer, and there are a lot of places where you can drink a good beer. However, there are two places which I think are extra special, because they also provide live music at some nights of the week: Missy Sippy or Hot club Gent. When you like jazz, this is the place to be. At some nights, they also have students perform there. There is always a really nice atmosphere there.

**Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time?**

Just walking through Ghent is already a treat. The buildings are so beautiful and walking along the canals or taking a boat tour is really nice when the weather allows it. There is also a small castle (Gravensteen) in the city center that you can visit. They have a free audio tour where a Belgian comedian takes you through the castle, which is really nice.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

### What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

You meet such nice people during your exchange but it can also be a bit lonely. I stayed in a studio, while I'm used to living with roommates so that was a big change for me. However, when I was feeling a bit down or lonely I would contact my friends from home to talk about it or I would also talk to the people I met during my exchange. Most likely, other people are also experiencing the same feelings you are experiencing.

### What is your best memory of your time abroad?

I don't have just one specific moment, but just the feeling of how nice it is that everyone is so open to meet new people and wanting to experience new things. It was so nice that everyone was so spontaneous and up to do anything.

## 9. Contact details (optional)

<b>Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?</b>	yes <input type="checkbox"/>	no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Name/e-mail</b>		