

# Exchange Report: University of Technology, Sydney

By Marieke Oomen

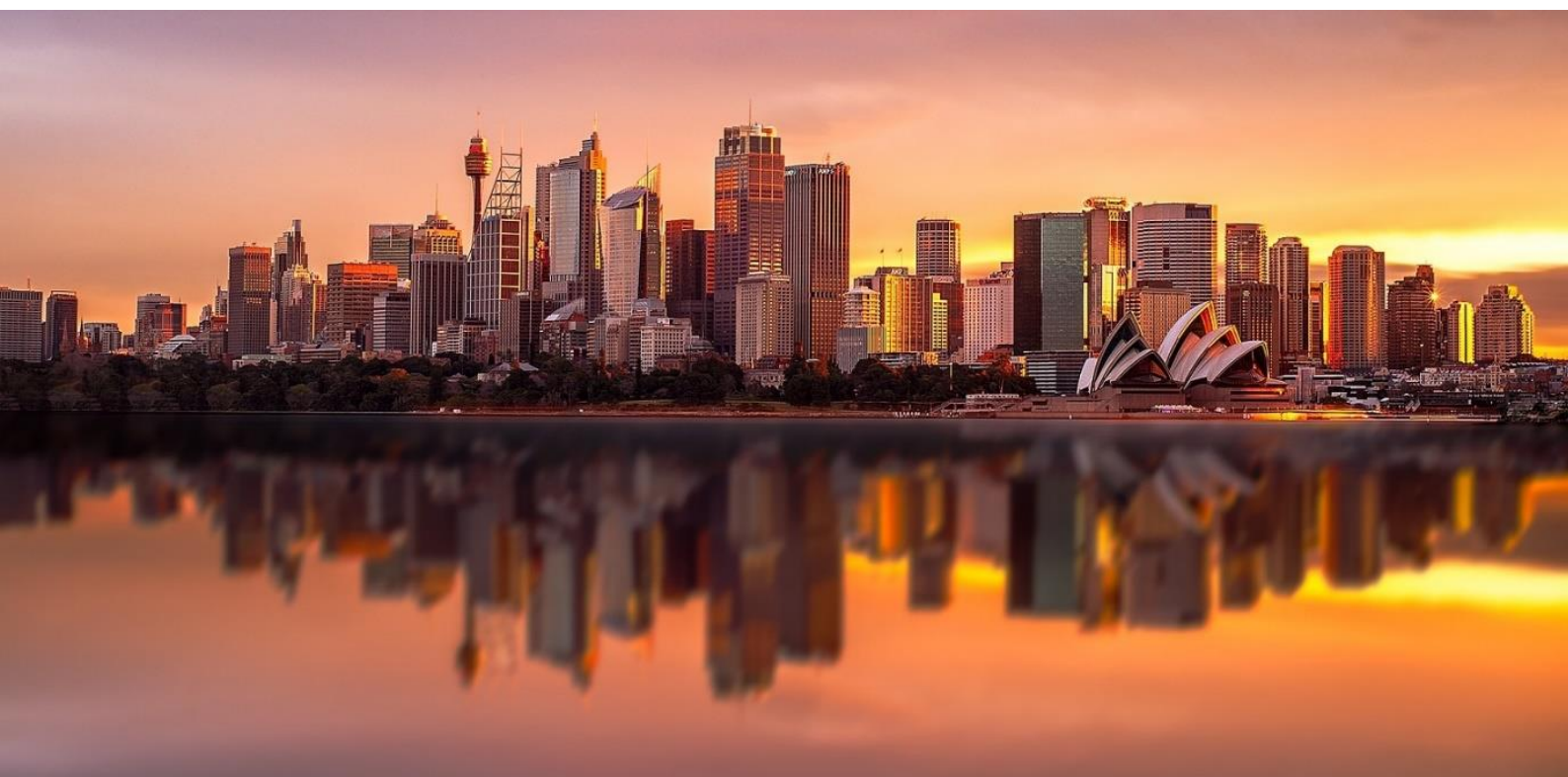
Dear future exchange student,

My name is Marieke, I am currently in my third year of Economics and I recently came back from my exchange. I had the pleasure of going to one of the best destinations out there: Sydney! In this report I will give you some general information about my exchange, hopefully this will give you a helping hand while you are choosing and preparing your own exchange. If you are still doubting whether or not to go on exchange at all, I would say just do it. The six months of my exchange were probably the best months of my life so far. And I know that this may not be true for everyone – you can also have some bad luck, of course – but even then, going on exchange will make you a stronger, more experienced and internationally connected person. It is well worth it, no matter where you go.

But then, of course, if you are fortunate enough to have the possibility to go to an incredible city on the biggest island of the world, one that includes many variations of landscapes and people, awesome beaches, an amazing food culture and of course a very nice climate, why would you NOT choose Sydney?!

## General information

Location: Sydney, Australia  
University: University of Technology Sydney (UTS)  
Period: spring semester 2015  
14 juli 2015 – 01 january 2016



## **Preparation**

First you have to apply for an exchange at the EUR. I had to fill in three choices, with a motivation letter. I dedicated my whole letter to my number one choice (Sydney), but some others divide their motivation letter into parts for each destination. That is up to you.

Once the EUR allocates you to one of the destinations, you have to start arranging things on your own. Apart from the fact that your place at the partner university is taken care of by the EUR, you'll have to arrange the rest pretty much by yourself. This includes doing your own application at UTS, arranging a VISA, buying health and travel insurance, possibly doing an English proficiency test and arranging housing beforehand if that suits your wishes.

I did not do an English proficiency test – UTS accepts Dutch students that have a >7.5 average in English on their High School diploma. Besides, I already did a Cambridge test (CAE) in high school, which they also accept.

I applied for housing at UTS. Apart from the fact that it is really easy to arrange housing this way, it will also give you the opportunity to meet lots of international students, starting the day you arrive. I believe this will make your exchange period a lot more valuable. Once you are registered as a UTS student, you can simply apply for housing online. Keep the opening date of this application in mind, since they allocate rooms on a first-come-first-serve basis.

You will have to arrange quite a lot and do a lot of paperwork, but in general it is all pretty easy. You can do a lot online and you'll receive email after email that tells you exactly what to do next. UTS even has this very useful 'to do'-list for future exchange students. So preparation might take some time, but in the end it is mostly just some paperwork.

## **Arrival**

I arrived on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July and spent the first night in a hotel in Sydney. The next day, I could move into housing. I recommend to be there on this general moving-in day, because people start bonding immediately. I was allocated to an 8-share in a student flat called Gumal, which was my first preference. Even though I was doubting this at first – seven roomies might be a bit too much, I thought – this turned out to be the best decision. I was really lucky with my flat ("701"), which eventually became known as the 701-family, consisting of eight people from all over the world: France (x2), India, Pakistan, China, Australia (x2) and the Netherlands. The 8-shares are generally more social than the 3-shares for example, partly because there are more people but also because the 8-shares apartments are much bigger. Parties or pre-drinks are usually held in these flat. A bonus: you pay less, but you get more. A large kitchen, a living room, three bathrooms/toilets and two balconies. Gumal also had a really nice rooftop on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, but if you want to have an absolutely incredible view over Sydney you could always go to the other UTS Residents Building: Yura. All bills, including taxes and internet, and even weekly cleaners are included in the rental price. The location of Gumal is ideal: next to the UTS campus, in the middle of the city and between two shopping malls. Not bad at all!

The UTS-housing activities started about an hour after I dropped my stuff in my room. With all the new people that were already there, we went to K-mart to buy sheets and blankets. It is really nice if you are there from the beginning, because everything is new to everyone. The weekend that followed, the RN's (= Resident Networkers, which are students that help out with all kind of things) from UTS Housing already had several activities planned, like the Bondi-to-Coogee walk (definitely worth doing!). You can go to the things you like, nothing is compulsory. In general these activities are the perfect way to meet people, explore the city and have lots of fun. And a bonus: they are free, you only have to pay your own transport if necessary.

## Courses

I followed three courses at UTS, for a total of 25 ECTS (of which 24 count as my minor and electives).

1. Managing People and Organisations (7.5 ECTS, Business faculty)  
The topics within this subject are hard to summarize, since I felt this course dealt with a lot of different topics at once. This made some weeks interesting, while others were not at all. You don't really get in-depth knowledge, but they do give you a big framework to reference to in the future. In general this course is easy to pass. You'll have to do two essays that make up for 60% of your grade and a final exam that is the other 40%. The final exam is just reproducing what is stated on the lecture slides. If you put in just a little bit of effort, you will get a pass.
2. Quantitative Business Analysis (7.5 ECTS, Business faculty)  
For the students that like mathematics and statistics, but don't want to have a hard time on exchange: this is the course for you. This subject is divided in two phases. The first one will teach you general mathematics, stuff that you have learnt in Mathematics 1 and 2, but on a more basic level I found. Phase 2 is about statistics and is very similar to the course Methods & Techniques in Bachelor 2, but less elaborated. So if you had good grades for these subjects before, the one at UTS is not really hard to pass. For this course you do a group assignment (20%), a midterm (20%) and a final exam (60%).
3. Global Politics from Above and Below (10 ECTS, Communications faculty)  
For people that are interested in politics – especially major world problems, like migration, poverty, terrorism, war and the theories behind these problems – this course is definitely worth taking. The lecturer knows a lot and the course is the perfect introduction to major international issues. Bonus: there is no exam, so you'll be done by the end of October. You'll be graded based on group work, presentations and an essay.

General advice: make sure you check how you will be graded for each course. You can, for example, make sure you do not have any midterms, which allows you to have a week more to travel during Springbreak.

## Finances

As you might have heard before: Australia is expensive. If you choose to go on exchange to Sydney and plan on travelling, I'd say you better start saving. I kept a quite precise record of what I was spending, though this might scare you a bit (it is a lot... I know). In the end you will not regret a thing though, so no worries! I've put all the amounts in total, I've been away for a total of 24 weeks. All amounts are based on the exchange rates during the period, which was on average about €1 = 1,52 AUD.

I borrowed about half of the expenses through my student loan from the government. The other half is financed by savings, plus a lot of extra work in the months before going, about €1000 from my parents and €500 from the EUR. Unfortunately, if you go to Australia you will not be eligible for the monthly Erasmus grant.

Flight	€1500
Visa	€390
Travel insurance	€90
Health insurance	€250
Rent	€4.140
Living	€1.400
Social life / extra's	€1.200
Study costs	€150
Phone	€130
Gym (3 months)	€120
Travelling	€3.200
<b>Total</b>	<b>€12.570,-</b>

## Daily life

Living in Gumal (UTS Housing) was ideal to me. You can walk to uni if you have to be there. In general, I only went there a couple of hours a week. Supermarkets and shops, as well as a gym, several swimming pools and parks are in walking distance too. Besides, you are in the middle of the city and next to Central Station, which can take you to the Blue Mountains within two hours.

In general, I spent a lot of time in 701 (my flat). With my seven roomies there was always something going on in our flat and we had friends over all the time. Almost all my closest friends lived in Gumal as well, so you could catch up easily, chill at the rooftop, watch a movie, go to the beach, have dinner or predrinks together... you name it. The exchange semester I experienced was chill and easy in general.

I did not get a job, since I spent a lot of time working before I came to Sydney and I wanted to enjoy the semester as much as I could. Looking back though, a job would have been a good idea as well. It is just another opportunity to get to know people and to see Sydney from a different perspective. The money could come in handy as well of course. Finding a job in Sydney is relatively easy, quite some exchange students worked in shops, restaurants or at uni. Bonus: the salaries in Sydney are high compared to the casual jobs in the Netherlands.

In the weekends and during the holidays we did a lot of trips. In and around Sydney there is so much stuff to see and do, that even after 6 months I surely cannot say I have done and seen it all. You will never be bored, the city and its surroundings are amazing. From the beach to Sydney's CBD, from the Blue Mountains to the steep cliffs in the Royal National Park – everything you can wish for is within reach. Every Sunday you can travel the whole day for 2.50\$, which is a perfect opportunity to go out of the city.

I did not have any travelling plans before I arrived. I knew I wanted to travel a lot, but I preferably wanted to go with friends that I met in Sydney. Luckily everything worked out perfectly for me. I did a couple of short weekend trips: to the Blue Mountain (with 2 German and 1 Italian friend), a 5-day trip to Melbourne and the Great Ocean Road (with a Mexican and Colombian friend) and a Surfcamp, which was together with about 50 other UTS students. Surfcamp Australia gave UTS students a discount of \$100 if we booked a certain weekend. All these weekends are very much recommendable and not too expensive.

Besides these weekend trips, I did two bigger and more expensive trips. During Springbreak I did a tour – basically a massive roadtrip – through the outback, all the way from Alice Springs to Adelaide, for a total of 8 days. This included the Kings Canyon, Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta, Coober Pedy and the amazing experience of sleeping outside in a 'swag'. Me and three friends (two Germans, one Colombian) joined about 16 other people and a tour guide for this trip. The group was filled with interesting and spontaneous people, which made it even better.



During the summer holidays, I travelled down the East Coast for almost a month. My last exam was on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, I flew to Cairns on the 17<sup>th</sup> and travelled down to Sydney by bus. The East Coast is pretty touristic but that does not make it less worth it, especially not if you like the beach and the sea. Personally, highlights of this trip were a 2-day Sailing Tour around the Whitsunday Islands and a 4x4 jeep safari on Fraser Island. These tours are not cheap, so I recommend you save some money before you go, but definitely do not skip these destinations!



Hopefully this report made you a little bit wiser. The best of luck with your choice and preparations. I am jealous I cannot do another exchange! (Though, in the future I might do it anyway...). Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions left. And wherever you end up: enjoy!

Kind regards,

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