

## Trinity College Dublin 2016: My Exchange Experience

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### **General Information**

I spend the first three months of my 3<sup>rd</sup> bachelor year in Economics and Business Economics as an exchange student at Trinity College Dublin. I stayed there from mid-September until mid-December. This time period corresponded to the Michaelmas term, one of the two terms of Trinity College. The other term is the Hillary term and goes from mid-January until the end of May.

### **Preparation**

Since Ireland is a member of the European Union no visa is required to enter the country. That being said, there is still a lot of work to be done as a preparation. Most of this is paper work: there are a lot of papers that need to be signed by several different parties (you, Erasmus University and Trinity College). Once you are selected by the ESE you have to send your application letter to Trinity. This consist mainly of selecting the courses that you are interested in taking. The courses that are offered can be found on their website. At Trinity, most courses last both terms, so the entire academic year. However, it is possible to follow the course for one term only. When registering keep in mind that although the name of the course might be the same, the course code is different depending on whether you are taking the course for the entire year or just one term. Since in Ireland the academic year starts late it can take some time before your application is accepted by Trinity. In my case I only received my acceptance letter at the end of August, a little less than one month before the start of the Michaelmas term.

Besides the exchange application, you will also be nominated by the ESE for the Erasmus+ grant. The amount of the grant depends on the cost of living of the country that you are going to. Given that in Ireland this costs is high I received the highest amount: 270 euros/month. In order to receive the grant, you need to get signatures and stamps from both universities. My advice is that you prepare as much as possible before the start of your exchange and that you get the required signatures from the exchange coordinator at Trinity during the first week. On top of the grant, if you are a Dutch student and you receive student financing from DUO you can apply to get an OV subsidy of 100 euros/month. In order to get this grant, you need to submit a form signed by your home university stating that you are going abroad on exchange. Furthermore, you have to cancel your OV-card. This can't be done online, so make sure that you do it before leaving the Netherlands. My insurance covered my stay abroad, so I didn't had to do anything about that.

Finding an accommodation in Dublin is incredibly hard since there is a big housing shortage. As a result, the rents are incredibly high and often the rooms that become available are far away from the city centre. Sometimes families that have an extra room rent it out to students. The downside is that they often kindly request you to leave the room during the weekends. A more attractive alternative is to share a room with other students. Before leaving to Dublin I spend the entire summer looking for a room in Dublin. I used sites such as [housinganywhere.com](http://housinganywhere.com), [gumtree.ie](http://gumtree.ie) and [daft.ie](http://daft.ie) (When using these sites be careful for scammers, this is a common problem in Ireland). Trinity has its own dorms and some of them are located on campus.

However, it is difficult to be offered a room there. Besides their own dorms, Trinity has partnerships with several student housing complexes. Also, they have a department that helps (international) students finding accommodation. I contacted them and requested for their help. However, all my efforts to find a room in Dublin were in vain and when I left Lisbon (where come from) I still didn't had a room.

### **Arrival**

When I arrived in Dublin I stayed in a hostel for the first few nights. After some days, I received an email from Trinity saying that a student had cancelled his room and that I could have it. It turned out that my room was in a newly opened student complex, similar to the Student Hotel (it was called the Student Housing Company). This was full of international student, most of which were also on exchange. Since I was living relatively close to the city centre I did everything by foot. However, it is possible to get a leap card (equivalent to the OV card), that you can use the public transportation. A cheaper alternative is to get a bike.

The fresher's week at Trinity Dublin is very different that here in Rotterdam. There was only one welcoming lecture at the beginning of the week, followed by a quick tour around the campus. There were no activities for the rest of the entire week. During fresher's week, all the societies have a stand on the campus's main square. There are a lot of societies which you can join for only a few euros. I joined the International Student Society, which I highly recommend. Besides parties, they often organized trips to destinations in Ireland. Since the university doesn't organize any activities during the first week, joining a society is a great way to get to know people and make friends.

Besides partying I also did take care of some important task during my first week in Dublin: I went to Trinity College to sign my exchange documents, to get my student card and to register for the courses I wanted to take. This last task was very time-consuming as the University is very inefficient. Course registration has to be done on paper. It is possible to take courses that are offered by different departments. In this case, every department coordinator has to sign the form. After getting the necessary signatures from all the department coordinators the next step is to go to the Academic Registry where they check that there are no timetable clashes and they officially registered you for the course. It is your own responsibility to ensure that there are no timetable clashes. If this occurs, you are not allowed to take the courses that you selected. It happened to me, so I had to choose other courses. Because of the changes, I had to start all over again and get the signatures from the department coordinator again. After some puzzling, I finally managed to enrol in most of the courses I was interested in.

### **Courses**

The ESE requires you to get 24 ECTS from which at least 12 have to be within the field of economics. Thus, when choosing your courses, you have to keep this in mind as well. In Trinity, all the exams are in May. This includes the courses that are held only in the first semester. One semester-only exchange students have to do additional assignments instead of the final exams (usually essays or presentations). All the courses I choose were given by the department of Economics:

### **EC301B-A-Y: ECONOMIC ANALYSIS (5 credits)**

The course Economic Analysis is given during the entire year. However, for each term the content of the course changes: in the Michaelmas term, it is concerned about Behavioural and Experimental Economics. In the second term (Hillary Term) it is about Macroeconomics. In the second year of my study I took the course Introduction to Behavioural Economics. The contents of the two courses were practically identical. For this courses you have to do a group assignment (worth 100%). In this assignment, you have to replicate and experiment or to design an experiment yourself to empirically test some component of Behavioural Economic Theory. I quite enjoyed this course, despite the similarity with the course taught at EUR, the focus at Trinity lies more on the practical aspect of Behavioural Economics and not so much on the theory.

### **EC304B-A-Y-201415: ECONOMICS OF LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (5 credits)**

I really particularly liked this course. It is not as any other course that is offered at Erasmus University so for it was interested to learn about a new field within Economics. For this course, you have to write two essays.

### **EC302B-A-Y- 201516: MONEY AND BANKING (5 credits)**

This course is about the principles of banking, the fundamentals of finance and the economic theory behind financial intermediaries. For this course, you have to summarize three articles every week. The grading consists of one group assignment (summary of an article), an individual presentation and an easy online test. Despite the large work load, the content of the course is interesting and easy to follow.

### **EC410B-A-Y-201617: INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS (10 credits)**

As I already mentioned I had a time table clash and was therefore forced to change the courses I wanted to take. Since I wanted to take the courses that I mentioned above but had to meet the requirements set by the ESE I opted to take this course. I had already followed this course in the second year of my bachelors (IBEB). The course that is taught at Trinity College is quite similar to at Erasmus University. Also for this course you are required to write two essays.

### **Finances**

Dublin is an expensive city and consequently the costs of living is quite high. Not only the accommodation, but also public transportation is quite expensive. To circumvent this, most of the locals use the Luas (that's how the trams are called in Dublin) without paying for a ticket. This is possible since there is no one that controls the tickets. Because of this, the Luas are always packed. I do have to warn you that in the case you decide to get adventurous you will get fined if you get caught. Also, I found that the prices in the supermarkets were quite higher than to what I was used to. The Irish are known for linking the occasional pint of Guinness, however also the prices of alcohol are high in Dublin. A pint in Temple bar will cost you around 6 euros.

Expense	Amount	Comment
Accommodation	1900	Single room for 3 months.
Flight	150	Dublin-Lisbon (including two suitcases).
Groceries	600	Groceries are expensive. Although there are cheap options available (Aldi, Lidl) I used to go to Tesco.
Travels	450	Multiple trips in Ireland.
Sports	0	Gym membership for Trinity students is free.
Insurance	0	Wasn't necessary for me.
Others	600	Restaurants, Pubs etc.
<b>Total</b>	3700 euros	

### Daily Life

Ireland is a land of emigration, and I noticed this during my day-to-day. Besides this, it also a very Catholic land, and certain issues such as abortion and homosexuality are forbidden. It is thus quite a conservative country, and this was a cultural shock for me. I found the common belief that the Irish are one of the friendliest people to be true. People are always nice and ready to help. Dublin as a city is a lot of fun, I made a lot of new friends and had a great time there. As a final note, if you decide to go on exchange to Trinity College don't forget that you are still a student. This means that you will have to work, and I strongly advise you to not fall too much behind. The reason is that the deadlines for most of the courses are in the final weeks of December, so if you don't keep up it will be quite stressful. For the rest, enjoy your exchange!