

Exchange down under

General information

University: Western Sydney University

Campus: Parramatta South Campus

City: Parramatta, NSW

Country: Australia

Period: July - December 2016 (Spring semester)

In this report I will tell you about my amazing exchange at the Western Sydney University (WSU).

Preparation

After being nominated by the ESE to go on exchange to WSU, I received an email from WSU with an application package that I had to fill out and with a list of documents that I had to provide to WSU. Documents that were required are a proof of English sufficiency (If you study IBEB you can ask your student advisor to write a letter saying your program is in English), a certified copy of your academic transcript and a photocopy of your passport. You can either arrange an OSHC yourself or ask WSU to arrange this for you. The OSHC is required on top of your regular health insurance for every overseas student. You also have to list units that you would like to take during your exchange. After having sent this, I had to wait a couple of weeks for a certificate of enrolment, which confirmed the enrolment and also serves as a proof of the Australian government that you will be studying in Australia for a semester. Once you have the certificate of enrolment, you can apply for a Subclass 575 Visa, which allows you to stay in Australia up to one month after your last day of university, and to work 40 hours per fortnight.

It is advisable to wait with booking your return flight until you received your visa, as Australia is very strict; you cannot overstay your visa.

If you want to live on campus, you can book a room for a semester as soon as you receive your certificate of enrolment, so you know for sure you will get a room. I lived on campus and I can really recommend everyone to do so. When living on campus, you make a lot of friends very easily, and there are a lot of extra activities and parties. There are a lot of exchange students like you living on campus, and also quite some Australian students.

Besides the things you need to arrange for the university, there are some things you might want to arrange for yourself. At ANWB you can buy a translation for your drivers license (international drivers license). This is officially required in Australia, although I never had to show mine. Besides that, having a credit card is necessary, as it is the only way you can purchase things online (and book flights), and because it works everywhere. I could use my Dutch debit card at most ATM's, but it didn't work in most of the shops. While you're at it, don't forget to tell your bank you're going to Australia, and to set your travel insurance on worldwide or Oceania. You also have to stop your student OV, so you can get a monthly refund of 100 euros. You need to provide proof that you will be studying abroad for this, so you can use your certificate of enrolment for this as well. If

you think you have to use your DigiD while on exchange, it is useful if you keep your Dutch simcard so you can still login while you're in Australia. Lastly, it is good to have some savings before you go to Australia. You can transfer money from your Dutch bank account to your Australian one with the site Transferwise.com, which is relatively cheap and the money will be there faster than when you transfer money directly via your bank. Opening an Australian bank account at Commonwealth (biggest bank in Australia) is for free and super convenient, and the interest rate on savings was in my case much higher than in the Netherlands. Australia has other stock outlets than the Netherlands, so either make sure your batteries will last long enough till you can go to a (convenience) store while in Australia, or bring an international plug.

Arrival

I arrived the 5th of July in the evening. The university provided airport pickup, so a driver took me directly from the airport to campus, which was very convenient. I had to sign my contract with 'the village' (campus living) and afterwards I could go to bed. I purchased a linen package in advance, as the room doesn't provide bedding.

The next day I went to Westfield to buy some practical stuff and to do groceries with other exchange students. On the 7th of July the university organized the International Orientation Day. Here I met all the other exchange students, and the university helped us subscribing for units and solving all other practical issues. The week after the orientation day is the O'week, where the village organized activities every day, like breakfast, lunch, dinner, parties etc. Furthermore, the university organized a Bronte to Bondi beachwalk with all the other exchange students.

Courses

In Australia they call courses units, and the units are worth 10ECTS, which is equivalent to 7.5ECTS in the Netherlands. I only took 3 units because I also study philosophy, but in order to get the 24ECTS you'll need 4 units.

Derivatives

Derivatives was my favorite unit. It covers futures, options, swaps and hedges. The professor was quite young and very enthusiastic, and gave a lot of interesting background information and shared his relevant experiences when he worked at the RBA. As the professor also did the tutorials, he knew the names of everyone in the lecture. The unit has two midterms, a presentation and a final exam. The level of this unit is comparable to the level of IBEB, you really learn a lot but you do have to study for it.

Investment Management

This unit covers a lot of what is in Finance 1, but more focused on the activities of an investment manager. The study material in this unit is very extensive, but you

don't need to know a lot of this in order to pass the unit, it is easier than the courses in IBEB. This unit had a midterm, presentation and final exam.

Australian Macroeconomy

I took this unit in order to learn more about the Australian economy, but it has a lot of overlap with Macroeconomics in IBEB. Australian Macroeconomy is basically macroeconomics out of Australian perspective. Most of the students in the class had very little knowledge of economics, which made this unit relatively easy. This unit had weekly online quizzes, an individual presentation, a debate and a final exam.

Finances

Below you can find the rough expenses I did during my time in Australia. The expenses are excluding the costs for the travelling I did. During my exchange the Australian dollar was usually around 0.70 Euro. I didn't get student discount for public transport, but they are trying to arrange that international students also receive the 50% student discount.

Expenses	Frequency	Amount (AUD)	Total (AUD)	Total (EUR)
Costs room	1x	160	160	
Visa	1x	555.94	555.94	
Erasmus Grant	1x	-700	-700	
Linen package	1x	110	110	
Return Flight	1x	1760	1760	
Rent	weekly	230	5520	
Public Transport	weekly	35	840	
Gym	weekly	8.5	204	
Groceries	weekly	80	1920	
Phone	monthly	20	480	
Going out	weekly	50	1200	
TOTAL			12049.94	8434.958

Daily life

Living in Australia is amazing! The people are really friendly and helpful, and the sun shines almost every day. The campus is very beautiful with a lot of green and space. I didn't have classes on Mondays and Fridays so my weekends were extra long, which gave me time to explore a lot of Sydney. From the village it takes you 40 minutes to an hour to get to the CBD of Sydney. Sydney is very big with a lot of suburbs, and it has lots of nice beaches and areas to go to. The Blue Mountains are only 3 hours away by train. When you live in the village there are always people who want to go somewhere.

Compared to Dutch people, Australians are very relaxed and make the best of their free time. This makes the atmosphere in Australia really good, changes you as a person and makes you more relaxed.

During the mid-semester break in September I went up north to Port Douglas and the Great Barrier Reef for a week. We also had a week off to study for exams, which I used to go to Melbourne and to do the Great Ocean Road. On November the 10th I had my last exam, after which I went to the Sunshine Coast, Goldcoast and Byron Bay. Afterwards I had a little road trip from Sydney to Jervis Bay (whitest beach of the world!). As a last trip I went from Perth to Exmouth and back.

I hope I gave you a better view on what it is like to go on exchange to Sydney. I can definitely recommend everyone to go to WSU, as it is a good university on a beautiful location. Besides that, it will give you enough opportunities to travel through Australia.

Please feel free to ask me any question!

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