Personal Erasmus Report

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Host university: University College Dublin (UCD)

Programme: Master in Humanitarian Action (NOHA)

As part of the master in humanitarian action, every student needs to go on a mobility semester to one of the eight universities that participate in the NOHA program. I got offered my second choice which was the University College Dublin (UCD). I was very excited about this as I had already been on exchange to Canada during my bachelors and I was ready for a new challenge abroad. On the second of February I took a plane to arrive in rainy Dublin. The weather is not all that bad, especially not in the second semester when you approach spring and summer.

The reception at the host institution overall was good. However, communication on when and where to meet could have been communicated earlier in advance. UCD has a very nice campus with lots of different buildings, libraries and sport facilities. I regularly went to the gym which you could easily enter with your student card and played tennis and squash a few times.

The first thing that was stringing about going on exchange to Dublin is the housing situation. Currently (this is 2017), there is a major housing crisis in Dublin with the result of extremely high rental prices for houses. One really needs to take this into account when going on exchange to Dublin since most prices for a single non-shared room will be around 600 to 700 euros in the city centre but also a bit further away. I did not manage to secure housing upon my arrival, but luckily I could spend the first few days with fellow students I had met in Groningen before. After about 10 days I finally managed to get my own place. It was only 15 minutes biking from the university. A bike is rather necessary in this city if you do not want to spend all your travel money on the busses. Biking is more difficult and dangerous compared to the Netherlands due to many hills and dangerous traffic.

I followed three courses at UCD, each course was worth 10 ECTS. At the RUG I was used to following multiple courses at the same time but at UCD you follow one course at a time and finish that within a couple of weeks and then move onto the next
course. In the beginning I had to adapt to this system, but in the end it worked out quite well since you get to focus on just one course at a time. We had a lot of group assignments which really taught you to work together with people from different cultures which brings with it certain challenges. Currently I have managed to earn all my credits, however the grades of the last course are still pending. The quality of education at UCD is high, however this could depend on the course and on the teacher. My second and third course were of high quality whereas my first course could improve on that. The teachers were very kind and knowledgeable and came across as very approachable. This is something I sometimes miss with the professors at the RUG. Information was always provided per course so we would only have the schedule for the next course one week in advance. Personally I found this a little annoying as you cannot plan anything ahead when information is provided so late in advance.

As for the home institution, in this case the RUG, overall contact and support was good. E-mails could sometimes have been answered quicker and in a more clear manner, but in the end you would always receive help if you asked for it.

As I mentioned before, Dublin is very expensive. Not only the housing situation, but also daily life. I used to do my groceries at the Lidl or Aldi because the main supermarkets were simply much more expensive. Going out for dinner or drinks in the city is also rather expensive. Dublin has many pubs which are great to experience but drinks are pretty expensive, so keep that in mind when going on exchange here, your living costs will almost be twice as much as those in Groningen. I mainly used my bike for transport but the bus and train also have a good transport system. With a special student transport card, you can even get discounts for the bus and train.

Ireland is an English speaking country which I enjoyed very much whenever you had to ask someone for directions or just wanted to chat with someone, because you can always communicate with them. The accent is not that bad, but in the beginning you have to get used to it. Furthermore, the weather in Ireland is actually not all that bad. Sure there are some rainy and cloudy days but overall it is sunny and an agreeable temperature. Even though it is a capital, Dublin is not that big and you can see the main sights of the city in one day.
All in all, I have enjoyed my time in Dublin and if anyone feels like they have questions or want to know more, just send an email to the address on the first page.