This form needs to be completed by every student who has received a scholarship from the Marco Polo Fund.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last name* Please write your name as shown in your passport</th>
<th>Köhler</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First name* Please write your name as shown in your passport</td>
<td>Paula Maria</td>
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<td>RUG Student Number</td>
<td>2905744</td>
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Please enclose a 2 page report on your experiences abroad, using the following headings:

1. Your study programme or your internship programme
2. Language
3. Finance and other conditions
4. Preparation and contacts with the faculty before, during and after your stay
5. Housing
6. Culture
7. Free time
8. Travelling
9. Other

Signature Participant

[Signature]

Date: 15.12.17
Study Report by Paula Köhler

Your study programme or your internship programme

My name is Paula Köhler, I am a third-year International Relations student in Groningen and I had the opportunity to study as an exchange student at the University of South Carolina (USC). At USC I was allowed to take mostly Political Science classes with an international component. Therefore, I choose classes in the field of US Foreign Policy, Ideology and World Politics as well as Political Violence and Revolution. These were all under-graduate classes. Additionally, I took one class on Special Topics in Political Science about the politics of the Middle East which was a graduate class. All of the courses I participated in were really interesting content-wise which was helpful for me as I chose them specifically to find out whether I would be interested to go into the direction of security studies in my master. Therefore, the study programme here has helped me to better assess the topics discussed in these areas and I am more certain that I would like to follow this path in International Relations for my later studies.

The teachers as well as my classmates were all very helpful in navigating any difficulties that arose and I had no problems following the content of the classes as I was well-prepared for the amount of work that I faced through my previous education at the University of Groningen.

Language

The language of instruction and also the daily language at USC was English. Therefore, communication was not difficult. Still, at the beginning I sometimes felt intimidated to discuss in class or to turn in written work as the teachers as well as my fellow classmates were all native speakers. Therefore, although my level of English is very good, at the beginning, I was still a little shy to speak. Still, I learned really quickly that it was no problem to not know a word once in a while and that I could contribute valuable insights during class. So after a short while, I became more confident and participated actively. In daily life, it was no problem communicating with my peers, although of course sometimes you have to ask twice when your friends use slang or certain abbreviations that are new. All in all however, there barely was a language barrier which helped to integrate quickly and easily into the new environment.

Finance and other conditions

The biggest costs for the study abroad were the flight, housing health insurance as well as tuition fees in Groningen. I received the Marco Polo Grant which has helped me a lot in financing my stay abroad. Apart from that, I receive a scholarship from the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation which was generous in supporting me in my academic stay in the USA as well. Additionally, I am grateful that my parents could contribute to my exchange semester financially.

Preparation and contacts with the faculty before, during and after your stay

Before my stay abroad the faculty was very clear on what I needed to provide them with so that they could send me abroad. A lot of the preparation I had to complete was especially related to visa and bureaucratic issues. I especially enjoyed the possibility of meeting someone who had been at USC the year before me as that allowed me to ask some questions about the experience. This was made possible by the University of Groningen. Arriving here at USC was not a problem as everything was well organized and easy to figure out with the help of the staff here. During my stay, the only problem I encountered was with a small confusion about the conversion of American credits to ECTS. Yet, the faculty in Groningen and the faculty here worked quickly and efficiently to resolve the issue to my satisfaction. As I have just started the phase of after my stay, I am still finishing up the last steps that need to be taken. Yet, until now, everything went smoothly.

Housing

At USC I lived in the international dorm at Maxcy which was a great experience. I shared my room with a fellow student from America and the bathroom with a total of three people. The
rooms themselves are furnished with a bed, a closet, a drawer and a desk. There is one shared
kitchen in the basement (although I decided to get a meal plan) and there are washing
machines conveniently located in the building as well. Furthermore, there are spaces for
collective activities or quiet study rooms. It is one of the less expensive housing opportunities
on campus – which is still very expensive by European standards – and it is located very close
to all campus facilities, such as the classrooms, the dining halls or the gym. The house itself is
very vibrant and offers a lot of activities that bring international and domestic students
together and create a feeling of community, which makes it easy to feel at home.

Culture
As USC is located in South Carolina, I got to experience the Southern culture of the USA. This
included getting to know the Southern hospitality, for example as I got invited to celebrate
Thanksgiving at the home of one of my fellow students, or getting to see football games which
are huge cultural events in the South.
As the South of the US is also known to be more conservative, it was very interesting to listen
to and engage in debates with people who had very different views on government and
society than me.
It was also intriguing to see the differences in how religion is lived and practiced here in the
South of the US, for example we got invited to some church trips or church dinners by fellow
American students and were welcomed very warmly.
All in all, it was very enriching to get to know this part of the USA which I do not think is
possible to experience in such depth when one is only travelling.

Free time
I enjoyed spending my free time with my friends here at USC, especially since there is always
something happening at the Maxcy dorm. We also often participated in one of the many
events organized by the university, for example karaoke evenings or sports competitions. I
also went to the gym or simply relaxed at the historic horseshoe of USC. Although Columbia
is a rather small town it still offers a lot of small shopping stores, restaurants or bars and has
a vibrant student life. Every Saturday morning we went to the farmer's market at the main
street which offers handmade art, food or fresh vegetables to buy.

Travelling
During my time in the USA I got to travel to some small towns in South Carolina, such as the
historic Charleston, Charlotte or the beautiful beaches of South Carolina. I also got to see
some bigger cities farther away, for example we travelled to Nashville in Tennessee and
Washington DC with a group of friends. I also met an American friend in New York, who had
done his exchange at the University of Groningen last year. Traveling the country and getting
to know it even better was a great experience.

Other
During my time at USC I wished to not only receive from the American community, but also
give something back. This is why I participated in a programme called “Thinking Globally”
which is offered for international students at USC. Within that program I got to talk to first­
year university students and present to them about my home country and home university in
order to get them interested in studying abroad as well. Additionally, this intercultural
exchange allowed it for them to ask questions about my own culture and helped to enrich
their understanding of other societies. For example, we often discussed cultural differences
or exchanged traditions and customs celebrated in each country.
Another valuable experience for me was my voluntary internship with the Columbia World
Affairs Council, which is an organization that is active in Columbia to bring awareness for
international issues and international speakers to the city. Through my work there I got a
glimpse of the work environment in America and saw first-hand how planning, fundraising
and networking are conducted in an American organization. I also met very kind­hearted and
spirited people who immediately embraced me as part of their team.

All in all, I really enjoyed my time here in the US and it was an incredible, unforgettable
experience.