

Erasmus in Groningen



In the summer of 2020 I embarked on an exciting year at the University of Groningen. If you would like to experience a different culture not too far from home, then I would most certainly recommend the university of Groningen. I am Charlene Ngwerume, 22 years old and from Zimbabwe

Preparations and Applications

I chose to go to Groningen, not only because it was so close to home but, I had visited there twice. As our degree has links to Ernst and Young Groningen, I was introduced to the peaks of working at this firm and I was even more convinced that I wanted to spend a year here. I did not consider any other universities besides the RUG, because after seeing and meeting some of the people that attended classes there, I knew this was the place to be. I was lucky to meet some people from my country of origin Zimbabwe. As I was purely motivated, applying was not as difficult. The process at the University of Oldenburg was also very simple and all questions we answered clearly and promptly. There were two time slots to which one could apply for a place at the RUG. As a student of Comparative and European law I could also apply through the university of Bremen. I chose to apply using University of Oldenburg as the time to apply was earlier and I wanted to make sure that I secured my place early enough before Christmas. This therefore left me with around 8 months to plan for my stay and look for accommodation. I most certainly would confirm that finding a place to stay was not every easy. This was unfortunately not the most stressful element of planning my stay. As I still hold my Zimbabwean passport, I had to apply for a visa. Although the University of Groningen took up the responsibility to apply for my visa, I was not adequately informed about the payments that needed to be made and neither did I know what procedures I had to take part for. I would recommend asking extensively what one needs to hand in and at what time. It is essential to take heed that you are expected to present yourself at the visa offices and train costs are yours to carry.

Travel and arrival

After finding accommodation, my move to Groningen was not all too difficult. As I did not own a car, big enough to transport all my belongings, I borrowed a car from a car rental service. There were no

issues travelling or moving into the new home. I looked for my own accommodation as I preferred to do this.

After a long search and much luck I found a house that had two rooms free, this allowed for me to move in with one of my friends. It is a very nice place to be, but I would be very expensive in terms of food therefore a good budget would be advised. One of my best experiences during the week was the option to get fruits vegetables and meat from the Market at Vismarkt. The Market is significantly cheaper when it comes to certain things but not all.

Studying, Everyday life and leisure time

Being a German student I would say the system in the Netherlands gave me shock. All the classes and exams are arranged in a way that there is barely time to learn between the end of classes and the beginning of exam period. Therefore, I did not manage to do nothing else other than study, work and sleep. The advantage to where the university is that it is right in the city therefore you can always study till late and enjoy the city at night where it is most alive. I personally enjoyed the fact that the clubs were free, and one could go without needing to consider the costs. As far as learning goes, I would advice to take hid of the advice all the advisors gave to us. Study as the classes go and do not wait for the exams to come. The readings that you are given may be a lot and exhausting to read but they are what will get the top marks that are rarely given. The books are also very expensive but through associations you can always resell the books and receive part of your money back. One has to acknowledge that the everyday is very much what you make it. As classes are right in the city you have endless options of what to do during the day and between classes. I could not say I had much leisure time as I was very ambitious in the tasks I took on.

Credits Transfer and end of stay

Unfortunately, the world was hit by a pandemic right during our stay, therefore the end of our stay was very weird. We had classes online and had to acquire our grades and papers all online. The process was very complicated as the officials in the Netherlands go on the summer holiday very early are thereafter very hard to reach. Being organised is very essential to be able to get all your grades and documents on time.

Conclusion, dos and donts

I can only recommend a year in Groningen or even just a semester. DO keep dates in mind that are essential. DO all your reading. DO enjoy the city as much as you can. DO try the diverse restaurants as much as you can. DO NOT forget to fill in your confirmation of stay document at the beginning as you will need it in the end. DO NOT forget to take as many classes as possible in the beginning as it hard to acquire many credits at the end of the year. DO NOT forget to file to get your grades in time as you will need to hand them. I was happy to have made this experience and thanks to university Oldenburg and staff it was a great one