

Personal Report

University College Ghent, SoSe 2022, 1 Semester FB4 – Social Work: transnational - Bachelor

Language

Which language did you use? How did you communicate with your fellow students?

Most of the time I used English on campus and in the dorms, but I also had a Survival Dutch course, where I learned some basic Dutch vocabulary.

How well were you able to follow classes linguistically at the partner institution? Did the partner university provide language classes?

I could follow class very well. During the semester they provided language classes.

Accommodation

Did the host university arrange for accommodation? How would you describe the quality of your accommodation?

Yes, in a dormitory and the quality was good.

How high were your overall monthly costs for accommodation (in euros)?

250€

How well was the accommodation situated? How long did it take you on average to reach the partner university (in minutes)?

The dorm was very well situated because you can reach the city center within 10 minutes and the next supermarkets within 5-10 minutes by bike. The way to the university also took about 10-15 minutes by bike.

Which websites, forums, Facebook pages, contacts, etc. can you recommend for looking for accommodation?

I can recommend the HoGent webpage.

Where have you been accommodated (name of dormitory, location, part of town, etc.)?

I stayed in the Mercator D residence from HoGent. It is close to Overpoort, which is a street with many bars and nightclubs and there were several supermarkets around. But there was also the river Leie close to the dorm as well as the lake Blaarmeersen. The dorm was perfectly located because nature was very close but also the city center was not far away.

Arrival at the Partner University and Orientation

Which is the best arrival time?

I think 1-2 days before the semester starts is a good arrival time.

How did you organize your arrival? Were all important questions answered? What did you have to find out yourself? How fast were you able to get in contact with the domestic students?

The orientation program from HoGent was really helpful because they showed us for example where we can rent our bikes and where we can go out during the week.

They also provided an info sheet with the most relevant information about living in the dormitory.

When I arrived in the dormitory I got immediately in contact with other Erasmus students and we organized the first activities together. When the classes at university started, I got in contact with many Belgian students very easily, too.

Living Abroad

Compared to Frankfurt, how high was the cost of living abroad? What additional expenses did you have during your semester abroad?

About 150% higher than in Frankfurt. There were two study trips to Lisbon and Milan in my study program, where I had to pay additional expenses for the flight, accommodation, and living costs.

I can recommend Lidl and the T2 second-hand shop for clothing, as cheap ones.

How far were you able to travel with your semester ticket? How were the libraries? Was their use free? Did the university provide computer workplaces/ computer pools? Was Wi-Fi available on campus? Did the university provide a sports program? Was this free of charge?

We did not have a semester ticket for the public transport, but as a student, we could travel through Belgium for around 19 Euro and during the weekend it was even cheaper. The student life off-campus in the dormitory was very lively because we made a lot of trips to Belgian cities for example to Oostende or Brugge. Furthermore, we organized activities in the dorms such as game or movie nights and we went out a lot together.

There were several cafeterias at the HoGent university and the meals were really good and not too expensive (around 4-5 Euros). The coffee shop on the campus was really nice, too. The libraries could be used for free and they provided free working spaces with laptops. Over the whole campus, there was a good Wifi connection available.

Studying at the Host University

How would you describe the academic standard of classes compared to Frankfurt?

Similar to Frankfurt.

Did you experience any difference in teaching methods/ class structure? Which were the difference regarding your expectations and your experiences at the partner university?

We made a lot more field visits than I did in Frankfurt. I expected to have separated classes from the Belgian students but we had mixed classes (Erasmus and Belgian students together). This was really nice because it facilitated contact with domestic students. The Belgian students were really outgoing and interested in the Erasmus students which were quite surprising for me but it was so nice to get in contact with them. The classes were quite similar to Frankfurt, therefore I did not have to face any major difficulties in university life.

Final Remarks

What should future exchange students know/ do/ avoid? How would you overall rate your exchange experience? In what ways have you benefitted academically, personally, and linguistically for your future career?

Future students should not worry too much about their English skills because the Belgians are very kind and do not blame you for making mistakes since they are also not native speakers. You should be open-minded and try to get out of your comfort zone and get in contact with local students.

My overall experience could be described as an amazing adventure because I met a lot of new people, tried new things, learned a new language, and developed my personal and professional skills while having a lot of fun.

Due to the fact that we had to speak English most of the time, my English level improved a lot and I became more self-confident. This will benefit me in my future career and my social life.