

Hey guys, I spent my last semester at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands, and I would like to share my experience with you. I am studying at Hohenheim Food Science and Biotechnology and went to the Netherlands in my 5th semester. I started to organise this in my 3rd semester, so you need a lot of time to organise! Hohenheim is sometimes a bit slow with the ERASMUS process, so be patient. It was sometimes hard to get all the information, and also because of COVID, the application process wasn't always easy. But it was worth it! I wouldn't change anything. I had an amazing time in Wageningen and learned a lot.

Things you have to know

I know that not everybody reads the whole experience report. So here is a short summary of what you have to know if you are planning an exchange semester in Wageningen:

- ✓ **You have to study a lot!**
- ✓ **The education is really good, but they expect a lot of you**
- ✓ **The campus is amazing—a good place to spend the whole day**
- ✓ **The sports centre at the campus is nice—they have a huge sports programme**
- ✓ **Attend AID (Introduction Week) and ESN (Erasmus Association)!**
- ✓ **Start early with finding a room. Use Idealis. Take the first room you get!**

Introduction

First of all, you have to know that Wageningen University is one of the best universities in the world for food science (and also other programmes). So, if you choose Wageningen, the exchange semester does not mean partying, relaxing, and that it is easy to get good grades! You have to study a lot! This means you start in the morning at 8 and you will get out of the university building at 5 – Monday to Friday. Road trips or holidays are not possible on weekdays. But the good message is that the weekends are free. All the assignments and tests are usually due Friday in the afternoon, and the next tasks will be online on Monday. So, we had a lot of time on the weekends for traveling.

Accommodation

I lived in the student house in Dijkgraaf. The only way to get an apartment in Wageningen is with Idealis. So, the first thing you should do after you know that you will do an exchange semester in Wageningen is to sign in there! With this, you will have more priority. Finding a room is very difficult, so take the first room you get! Unfortunately, they have a lot of unfurnished rooms, but with a car, it is easy to get second-hand furniture.

Here are my comments on the different student housings:

Dijkgraaf: perfect location, 2 min to the campus, not really a pretty place to live in, often not very clean corridors, shared kitchen.

Bornseesteg: also a perfect location, next to the sports centre, same building as Dijkgraaf, but no shared kitchen! You have to buy a stove, etc. by yourself.

Haarweg: 15 min with the bike to campus, but closer to the city centre and the International Club. nice kitchens and living rooms.

Education

All in all, the university is really good. The buildings are super modern, the courses are really interesting, the technique is new, and the teachers are very motivated and help you all the time. The education is really good and I learned a lot for my future. The teachers have a high level of English, and, in total, the Dutch people are good at communicating in English. I had no trouble with the fact that I am not able to speak Dutch. I took five courses, and at the beginning, I had no idea how to choose courses. Here is a tip: The courses have 3 letters and then numbers. The first number indicates which students participated in

the course. Digit 1 indicates the introductory (bachelor) level and digits 2 and above indicate more advanced level courses. I also had a course with digit 3 (it's with master students). So, the level was high.

Courses

From best to worst, I would like to give quick feedback on the courses:

Consumer Research in Food Design (FQD24806): My favourite course, I loved it. The teachers there are amazing. It is just a report and not an exam. It wasn't easy, but it was super interesting. I can recommend this course!

Milk in the Dairy Chain (FQD21806): My second favourite course, I loved the teachers. It is not that time-intensive, and the topic was really interesting. We had nice lectures about new product development and an excursion to a farm.

Principles of Sensory Science (HNN30506): This is also a nice course. The level of the report was high, but I learned a lot. The exam was doable, and the teachers were really nice.

Food Production and Preservation (FPE21306): I needed the course for my transcript of records. It was very time-intensive, and the report of the lab practicals has been really, really difficult. The exam is okay.

Introduction to Cell Biology (CBI10806): It is very difficult, takes a lot of time, and this was a first-year bachelor's course. We had a lot of assignments, tests, and lab work, and the exam was a multiple-choice exam with 90 questions. My least favourite course. Not recommended.

Daily life

There wasn't a lot of free time during the weekdays, but I loved the lifestyle of the Dutch people. They are very active and spend a lot of energy on their hobbies. The sports centre in De Bongerd is amazing. I loved the sports program there. It is huge and you can do all kinds of sports there. One of the best aspects of the Wageningen University. After a nice workout, everybody usually meets in the city centre for a beer or other activity. Usually, all the students spend the whole day on campus. They go to lectures, do groupwork there, study in the library, eat their coffee breaks and go to the sports centre. It is not necessary to go home on breaks. There is always something going on at the campus.

The first thing you should do in Wageningen is participate in the AID. It's an introduction week and they organise a huge festival and programme. I met almost all my friends there at the first week.

Another "must do" is the participation in the association ESN. They organise around 4–5 events every week, including weekend trips, for example to Arnhem, Amsterdam, Den Haag, or Rotterdam. It is the perfect way to find friends from all over the world, travel together, and get to know the Netherlands. By the way, Utrecht was my favourite city. Definitely worth a visit.

Another "must do" is a night at the ICA, the International Club Association. This is the go-to party location on Friday.

A bike is necessary to get to all those activities. I borrowed one from the brand Swapfiets. The idea of the company is really nice. But my experience with them wasn't always positive. They definitely do not fix the bike in 48 hours (I waited 2 months).

Conclusion

I had an amazing time in Wageningen and learned a lot. I learned how to study in a group, how to write professional reports, make presentations, and do literature research. They have really good education there. But this is also a negative aspect. I had a lot of stress and not a lot of free time there. But with this, you learn how to divide important and not-important tasks. The university is well organised and has a good structure. All in all, I found lovely friends from all over the world and improved my English. We got to know the culture of the Netherlands and travelled a lot. This country is pretty (but the weather in the winter is horrible – cloudy and rainy all the time). I wouldn't change something at my exchange semester in Wageningen and hope you will also have an amazing time there!!!