

Reflection Report on the First Semester of IT Studies



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The purpose of this report is to reflect on my first semester of studies at NHL Stenden and evaluate its impact on my studies and life. In this report I will cover my study choice, possible consequences this first semester may have on the upcoming second semester, my study progress and future plans.

The first semester started with an amazing “Study Start Week” where I partook in various fun activities organized by the university together with my future colleagues and get to know each other a little bit better. This really helped me to start things on the right foot and motivated me. The first week of studies began with a heavy load of new information and assignments. It felt overwhelming at first, but by the end of the week, everything was properly explained. All doubts were cleared, and I gained a clear understanding of the project requirements and lesson structure. One thing I really liked is that we received a full overview of the period and lessons, and I was able to plan ahead and know exactly what to expect, properly dividing the group work from the individual one. Thus, I managed to make a Period Plan and each week I made notes on what deadlines and important tasks I must do in the upcoming week, this helped me a lot in managing my time and making study habits. In the following 4 weeks we worked together as a group to design a website for a coffee shop and had regular meetings with the client which gave us feedback and steered us in the right direction. These first weeks were the hardest ones since I was still adapting to the new country and environment and had to solve a few issues with housing and municipality. Thinking back, they were indeed stressful but they helped me gain an insight into the society and the culture which is very different here than back home in Romania. During this time, we had 3 Web Design lessons each week that taught us how to create a website and design it. I had little prior knowledge on how to create a website, but the teacher helped me understand the basics very quickly and had a fun way to teach that really motivated me to learn and he was always there to support everyone that needed help. During the whole period we also had Professional Skills lessons and individual/group mentorship, which I think was very important and helped me both in my professional and personal life. After we finished the design of the website as a group, we had three more weeks in which we had to program and make it come to “life”. There were some struggles and setbacks but with the help of each other we managed to deliver a good and functional product that we were satisfied with. I was personally very proud of the website and the part I took into creating it,

this was one of the key achievements I had this semester. I was always working and learning so these weeks flew by very fast for me and when we finally got a holiday week, I was surprised that the first period was coming to an end. Reflecting on everything I did during this period I felt a sense of accomplishment and I was very satisfied with how things went. During this holiday week I relaxed and prepared for the upcoming exam week. During the exam period, I initially felt quite nervous despite being well-prepared but once the exams were over, I felt relieved. I knew everything was good. As expected, I managed to pass all the exams with good grades, and I was happy to see my study progress going so well. In that moment I knew that this was the right choice for me and Information Technology is what I truly love, and this university was the perfect environment to study it with amazing teachers and good facilities.

The second period started pretty much the same as the first one, a lot of information at once and confusion on what exactly we had to do. This time it was harder, and it took longer for the information to get sorted and took 2 weeks to understand what I had to do alone and what we had to do as a project group. The project was completely different this time, building a network infrastructure. With the help of the teacher that was leading the project we managed to understand what we were asked to do and steered us in the right direction and during the upcoming weeks we managed to work together and finish the infrastructure for a network. I felt worried at first, this was completely different than the first period but after everything was cleared up, I started feeling hopeful again and realizing that things were not as hard as they looked. Now I am sitting at the end of the 2nd period just after the Christmas Holidays and with the examination weeks about to start and after that the 2nd semester.

I have gathered a lot of information, insights and experiences from this first semester. It was something totally different than what I'm used to. Back in my Country the relation between teachers and students is a very distant one where here they work closely together, and you feel that you can talk openly to them. Also, the concept of "Applied Sciences" doesn't even exist in my home country, the teaching method is totally different, and I had to adapt to it. In Romania the teaching method is very repetition based, they just want students to learn like robots and be able to replicate perfectly the lesson and they don't care if we learned something from it or not. While here the teaching method is more meaning oriented, and they first teach us how to think logically and be able to actually use in practice the things we learn. Overall, I think it's a way better teaching method and it aligns much better with my personality, beliefs and values. These experiences will be very helpful in the future semester, and I plan to use everything I learned so far to improve myself and my tactics on how I will approach this upcoming semester of university. One specific subject that I want to improve in is self-studying and managing it better. To improve this, I plan to dedicate specific hours each day to independent learning.

In conclusion, this first semester of IT-studies in The Netherlands was a huge step in both personal and professional development and I am happy that I made the decision to come and study here. I plan to finish this course in the upcoming years and after that I would like to find a workplace here in the Netherlands and keep living in this beautiful country full of wonderful and warm people.