

Experience Report



Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) Erasmus University Rotterdam

Bachelor: BWL
Autumn Semester
September 2019 – December 2019
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Information about the host university:

The campus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam is much larger than that of the University of St. Gallen. Most faculties, as well as the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) are located on the campus. In addition, there are several buildings spread throughout the city. The campus is very diverse with sports fields, various catering facilities and two student residences. The university is a good 5 minutes by tram from the city centre near a residential area called "Kralingen". However, most students travel around the city by bicycle, as the city centre is limited to a manageable radius. From the city centre it takes about 15 minutes by bike to the university. At the university there are about 29'000 students studying in different faculties. Since this is relatively a lot more students than what we're used to at the HSG, the university has adequate space for their students to study, eat and get to know each other. When it comes to support services, the university barely leaves anything to chance. As soon as you are registered you will be guided through all the relevant tasks such as course registration, to find yourself suitable accommodation etc. by the International Office.



Academics:

The most general and most important thing is that in the Netherlands they do not have semesters as we know them, but trimesters. However, this will change to the coming year, from when the RSM will have semesters as standard at the HSG. The average number of credits that students complete in a trimester is 20, which is already quite sufficient in terms of workload. But if you are dependent on doing more credits during the exchange, you will be quite busy and I definitely wouldn't advise it to anyone. Moreover, the workload in Erasmus is already high enough if not even higher than in St. Gallen. Therefore, you can be sure that they keep you busy all the time and there is not as much free time during the trimester as you might hope.

Philosophy of Science 3 ECTS (3 credits at the HSG)

A rather boring course that has a very high workload for the few credits. It consists of an individual essay on a given topic. This assignment counts for 50% of the final grade. Finally, there is a final MC exam which counts 50% of the total grade and includes the entire course content. The final examination takes place after half a trimester, which is why you should attend this course from the very beginning. The assignment and the exam request an effort relative to the amount of credits at the upper limit of what is feasible.

Quantitative Decision Making 6ECTS (6 credits at the HSG)

Those who are good at math should be able to cope with this course without too big of an effort. It consists of two exams that count 50% each. The first one takes place in October and the second one in December. The first is the more difficult of the two whereas the second one

is comparatively easy. The lectures are not worthwhile in this course, but there are online videos that are very helpful.

Corporate Finance 5ECTS (5 credits at the HSG)

Those who are good at math should be able to cope with this course. It consists of one exam that counts 100% at the end of the semester in December. The lectures are very helpful for a deep understanding of the topics and assumingly even necessary if you want to pass the course. The course covers a very broad area of corporate finance and goes even beyond the course content discussed during the correspondent course in St. Gallen. Since the course is only valued with 5ECTS it definitely quiet an intense course which requires a lot of studying time.

Organisational Theory and Dynamics 6ECTS (6 credits at the HSG)

OTD is a very special course that focuses on the design, development of and transformation within an organization. The effort for this course is enormous because you have to write 2 group assignments during and a written exam at the end of the term. The first of the group work is rather small and is only weighted with 10%. The second group project involves an enormous amount of time and effort as it is done in cooperation with an existing company. The students have to look for a company themselves and work out a project for the company similar to the integration seminar at the University of St. Gallen. The final examination is included in the overall grading with a 60% weight. It is an MC exam, where in principle only the theoretical basics are tested.

Information prior to going abroad:

The organisation of the exchange was very pleasant, as the partner university sends you very helpful and extensive information about finding accommodation, bidding and transport.

Four to five months before the semester begins, the International Office will contact you to complete a formal registration as an exchange student at the RSM. A transcript of grades, the TOEFL result and a copy of your passport or identity card are required.

The week before the semester starts there are two opportunities to engage in social events



to get in touch with other exchange students from all around the world, the “Introduction Days” and the “Orientation day”. Since I myself did not take part neither in the “Introduction days” nor the “Orientation day” before the start of the semester, I cannot give more detailed information in this regard. Nevertheless, there is the possibility to participate in these events, which I can only recommend

to exchange students in order to establish first contacts. Registration for these events takes place a few weeks before the start of the semester.

The International Office is very helpful and takes enormous care of the exchange students in advance, but it can happen that you have to wait a little longer for an answer during the exchange. Bidding at the RSM is self-explanatory and usually you will be assigned to the courses you choose, as bidding does not work on a first-come, first-serve basis (except minor courses).

The easiest way to get there is probably by plane although students from Germany might prefer a train ride. There are no Visa requirements or any form of immigration formalities needed if you're a citizen from an EU, EEA country or Switzerland.

Living Arrangements:

It is definitely advisable to start looking for accommodation early enough, as Rotterdam is known for housing shortages.

There is the possibility to get a room in a dormitory on campus, but this is rather difficult as the first-come first-serve principle applies and only a limited number of rooms are allocated to exchange students. Other very helpful options include Facebook groups, a few real estate brokerage websites and [HousingAnywhere.com](https://www.housinganywhere.com).

Money:

The cost of living would be nearly the same or a bit cheaper than in Switzerland. However, it is difficult to define an exact budget, as it depends on the respective lifestyle. According to my experience, since it is your exchange, you will definitely spend more for various reasons. The most obvious are that you will probably go out more often than back home and that you will travel more than usual.

There are many bars and restaurants that offer discounts to students.

It is advisable to open a bank account, which can be done quickly and easily on a mobile phone app called "bunq", which is a FinTech company. In some situations, you will be specifically asked for a Dutch bank account, debit or credit card to pay or take out a subscription. However, it is not mandatory to open a bank account for just an exchange semester.

Host country:

Rotterdam is generally a very safe city in which you can quickly find your way around. The weather is very changeable and from October on it rains a lot, so I highly recommend a rain jacket. Rotterdam has very diverse architecture and interesting buildings as well as the city's history. Rotterdam has about 600,000 inhabitants and is therefore the second largest city in the Netherlands. Amsterdam can be reached in half an hour by train.



The national language is Dutch, which is not difficult to learn if you speak German. However, it is not necessary at all, as everybody speaks English almost fluently.

As the country is very small and the public transportation system is very good, I would recommend visiting as many cities and different countries as possible.

Social life:

I would highly recommend joining the ESN Facebook group, because all the big student events are posted there, not only from the university but also in Rotterdam and other cities. This makes it easy to integrate quickly and experience as much of the social life as possible. Additionally, weekly parties are organized (usually every Tuesday).

There are many bars and clubs in Rotterdam, most of which are located near Rotterdam Central. When the weather is not too bad most students cycle to bars and clubs.

Evaluation of my exchange experience:

Overall, I loved my time abroad. I definitely had to study more than what I am used to compared to the HSG, but it was worth it anyways. The amazing people you meet and the stunning city you will live in will make up for it. And since it is a partner university, I had the appropriate expectations about the awaiting workload. Famously if you have the right expectations they don't get shattered and you don't face huge disappointments. I can only recommend everyone doing an exchange semester, even if it's not going to be Rotterdam.



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