

My Semester Abroad at the University of Groningen

2024/25

1. Preparation

The University of Groningen was my first choice for a semester abroad because of its diverse course offerings in psychology. The range of available topics includes talent development, environmental psychology, economic psychology, social psychology, and neuroscience, providing a breadth of subjects that is difficult to find in other countries.

The application process through the University of Oldenburg's department and the submission of documents for the online learning agreement were straightforward and easy to manage.

Additionally, communication with the host university regarding course selection was smooth and uncomplicated, which made the preparation process stress-free.

2. Arrival

Travel connections to Groningen are excellent, which makes getting to the city relatively easy. Upon arrival, the city was immediately impressive with its charm, vibrant atmosphere, and accessibility.

3. Accommodation

Finding accommodation in Groningen, however, was a real challenge. The housing market is highly competitive, especially for international students, with overpriced options that are often in poor condition. Networking is the best way to secure a room, and it's essential to start searching as early as possible. Despite the difficulties, settling into the city is worth the effort.

4. Studying at the Host University

The psychology campus is located in the northern part of the city, and the courses are well-designed. The curriculum is often practical, with many hands-on assignments during the semester. However, the exams are a significant drawback. Despite the practical nature of the lectures, the exams require a lot of rote memorization from scientific papers and a fair amount of luck when it comes to the phrasing of exam questions. Even simple topics can be made unnecessarily complicated in the exams, as reflected in the overall grade distribution.

5. Everyday Life and Leisure

Groningen is a beautiful and lively city. The weekly market, especially on Tuesdays, is highly recommended for fresh produce and a great local atmosphere. Another highlight is the Forum, a cultural hub and library with stunning architecture and panoramic views of the city.

Getting around is easiest by bike, which is essential for living in Groningen. I recommend purchasing a second-hand bike through Dutch online platforms, as it's the most affordable and convenient option.

6. Overall Experience and Conclusion

My semester in Groningen was a mix of highs and lows:

- **Best experience:** Exploring the vibrant city life and benefiting from the wide variety of psychology courses offered.
- **Worst experience:** The stressful housing search and the overly challenging exam structure.

Dos and Don'ts:

- **Do:** Start looking for accommodation early and use your network to find housing. Get a second-hand bike for efficient transportation. Take advantage of the city's markets and cultural spots like the Forum.
- **Don't:** Underestimate the difficulty of exams or rely solely on the practical nature of the courses to prepare.

In conclusion, Groningen is a fantastic city with much to offer both academically and socially. However, you should prepare for a challenging housing market and approach exams with diligence and a strategic mindset.

