

## **Exchange report University of Durham, United Kingdom**

### **Study programme**

Exchange students can choose from all available undergraduate courses that are offered during that academic year. I chose (1) Contemporary Issues of the law of the EU Internal Market, (2) International Human Rights, (3) Jurisprudence, (4) Competition Law and International Organisations as well as French as non-law courses. I will explain each course briefly to give an overview over the academic system and learning environment in Durham.

(1) This course gave a great overview over all four freedoms of the Internal Market, focussing on lots of different cases as well as practical examples. Next to a weekly lecture, we had four seminars. This means that one of the lecturers meets up with around six students to talk about issues and to go over questions that had to be prepared beforehand. Finally, the final grade consisted of an essay that had to be handed in in February and an exam, which – like all other exams – was written in the end of the academic year.

(2) International Human Rights was a very interesting subject which covered different Human Rights Systems such as the African, Inter-American and European ones and different areas of Human Rights such as children's rights or the prohibition of torture. The final grade consisted of one exam. Although, several essays had to be written over the year, they did not count towards the mark.

(3) Jurisprudence was an extremely interesting course as it combines law and philosophy. The core of the course is generally to understand what law is and why certain systems are in place. Hence, one will look at different topics and discuss various opinions as well as analyse academic debates. In my opinion this course was one of the best courses as it makes you think about many questions of law, but also makes you understand what law inherently is and what law ought to be according to various academics or countries. The assessment consisted of an exam and an essay.

Great course, highly recommendable!

(4) This course outlined competition law's goals and its means to achieve them while focussing on the European system. A very interesting course where you learn more about interdependence of MS and the EU and the powerful position of the Commission as a global actor. This module's final grade consisted of two workload-heavy essays. Very recommendable!

(5)&(6) The academic year gave me the possibility to do two non-law courses. The choice is vast and you can literally choose from every faculty whether it is history, politics or even if you want to dive into a new subject area.

### **Language**

Since I was used to listen to different accents from my time in Groningen and before, I had no issues in communication or understanding others. Primarily, students in Durham are from the south; thus, they speak a very clear and understandable English. However, the local accent can be quite challenging from time to time. Furthermore, Durham also has a decent international community which enables everyone to learn different languages alongside making new friends.

Nevertheless, staying in an English country definitely helps to improve your language skills and to learn more about the culture behind the language.

### **Finance and other conditions**

In comparison to the Netherlands, life is a bit more expensive in general and especially with regard to rent. Though, since both Groningen and Durham are student cities and demand for housing is very high, rent is higher than usual anyways. You can estimate rent between £100-150 a week.

N.B. For EU students no residence permit or application procedure is required!

Besides that, food is rather cheap since Durham literally only has one big supermarket in the centre of the city which is a discounter. Moreover, you can go for very cheap drinks to college bars (i.e. a pint costs around £1.40-2).

The only additional costs you have to keep in mind are college activities like balls, festivals etc. Depending on what college you will be allocated to, you can quickly spend around £100 for a ball ticket.

N.B. You literally get student discount in every single restaurant, store or shop!

### **Preparation and contacts with the faculty abroad + Guidance at host university**

The preparation was very easy. From the beginning, both Groningen and Durham were very supportive and sent me detailed information about how to proceed. I received several emails in which I was informed about the procedure and further application details. There is honestly nothing much to say about it since it was easy and clear from the beginning. You should not worry about anything. The university and the faculty organised lots of meetings and events

where I could meet new friends, meet the professors, staff and I was advised on courses and the academic year. There is no need to worry about choosing courses before your exchange since everything will be sorted out in Durham anyway.

Once you arrive you will be allocated to an academic advisor. This is a member of teaching staff who functions as your mentor; thus, you will see them several times a year and can talk with them about everything; ranging from private matters to academic questions such as exam preparation. Moreover, every staff member has office hours every week in which you can simply pop by their office and ask for help, talk about lectures or mention any concerns.

### **Housing**

Durham is a typical student city in which everything evolves around university and colleges. All first year students and some third, fourth year and postgrad students live in college. For Erasmus students this is not possible. All other students live across town in houses. Since demand is high and houses usually will be rented out by the end of October for the next academic year, it is slightly difficult to find a spot; though, not impossible. There will be posts on Facebook groups where you can have a look at and find a spot in a shared flat. Just make sure to look for it early enough! Also, the university and your college is always very happy to help.

N.B. It is important to mention that living costs are slightly more expensive than in the Netherlands.

### **Culture, free time and travelling**

Unlike Groningen, Durham has exams in the end of the academic year. This means you have a lot of freedom with regard to planning your free time, study time and other activities. There are some compulsory seminars you have to attend and during December and January, you have to write a few essays for certain courses. However, if you are not a lecture-person anyway, you can enjoy a plethora of freedom.

Durham itself does not have a lot to offer. Besides some historic buildings it is mainly a student city – lots of pubs, sport facilities and nice spots to spend your free time at. So Durham is an amazing place for meeting new people, spending time with your friends and simply to have a splendid student experience.

From Durham, you can easily get anywhere in the UK. Newcastle is only 10 mins away, Edinburgh 2h and London 3h. Make sure to book your train tickets in advance since UK's train-

tickets are very expensive! (Places you MUST visit: Edinburgh, York, Whitby, go to the seaside and do some camping in the Highlands)

However, Durham has no airport. This means that the best connections are either Newcastle (the airport is easily accessible), Manchester or Edinburgh. This is a bit of a downside, but nothing really to worry about since the connections are all very good and all airports are easily accessible with public transport.

Overall, these were mainly practical things I was talking about. Nonetheless, I can just say that this exchange year was the best year of University and Durham is truly a place to find great friends, feel like home and spend an amazing year! I really enjoyed every second, made fantastic friends and will always remember this city and all memories. If you think about going to Durham, do not hesitate – it's worth it 😊