

Exchange Questionnaire – Winter 2024

a) Your Program of study (courses, assignments, course format). Add the exact number of class hours per course.

At the University of Ottawa, I major in International Management at Telfer School of Management. In the Netherlands, I am studying at Hogeschool Van Amsterdam (HvA), and I am enrolled in the Cross-Cultural Business Skills Minor (CCBS). The school I attend in The Netherlands has two different enrollment options: premade minor programs consisting of 30 ECTS, or you can do a “tailor-made program” where the student can choose their own courses and make their own timetable. Important to note: 30 ECTS are equivalent to a full course load of 15 units or 5 courses at uOttawa). The individual courses you can take at HvA are similar to uOttawa courses and each have different levels of difficulty, commitments, and assignments per course you take.

I opted for the pre-made minor program since the timetable was already made, and I could ensure my 30 ECT requirement was met. I would highly recommend this to any student planning to study at HvA. In the CCBS minor, we have 3 professors for the entire semester who work together for each class and deliverable. The CCBS class schedule is very flexible, as each day has an in-person class and a virtual class available, depending on your needs. In addition, we have a live class 2 days a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays), and pre-recorded lectures to watch the other days of the week, but they are available to all students as soon as the first day of school, so it is easy to get ahead on homework and recorded lectures. The live classes typically last between 2-3 hours, and the recorded lectures are typically no longer than 45-60 minutes.

Next, I will talk about the content of the classes and the deliverables. Most of the deliverables are completed in a team, which you can choose yourself. However, there are some individual assignments as well such as the stream task, midterm exam, and final exam. The stream task is completed within the first two weeks of the course. The stream task has many options, such as a book review, country lesson, translation of course material, and more. I chose the book review, which was one of the harder stream tasks available, but was an enjoyable assignment. We were tasked with reading a book about the culture of another country, and then wrote a review consisting of important quotes and facts found throughout the book. Next, the midterm exam is an hour long, and consists of true/false and multiple-choice questions. The midterm exam is based on three chapters regarding business in different countries, and there is a review provided by the professors

as a study guide. There is also a final exam, which is 2 hours long and is also true/false and multiple-choice questions. The CCBS minor also offers students to participate in an optional class trip, which this year was in Malta. You must complete a week of classes in the chosen country, and an essay-style assignment as well.

Importantly, the program consists of a team project which is completed throughout the semester. The goal is to create a book chapter on business leadership in the chosen country. Most of the deliverables come from this project. It is best advised to choose your native country, as there is a lot of primary research to be done, and having someone in the group who speaks the language of the country you've chosen is a huge asset. Throughout the semester, your group has deadlines to build up to the final draft of the chapter. You must conduct a survey and a video interview with professionals in your chosen country, therefore, there is quite a lot of work and research to be done. The interviews and the survey seem to be the hardest part of the book chapter assignment, as it is hard to find enough qualified respondents who wish to participate. Much of the content for your chapter comes from this research. Ultimately, the goal of each semester is to publish a new book about business in different countries, and each chapter is dedicated to a new country, which each group completes.

b) The timetable (academic calendar, registration dates, orientation, beginning and end of classes, exams, holidays, number of semesters, etc.) *Please submit the precise dates so students will know when to book flights next year.*

The following table lists the dates for the 2024 winter/spring semester.

Date	Notes
January 31 st , 2024	Residence Check-In
February 1 st – 3 rd , 2024	ESN Intro Activities
February 5 th , 2024	First Day of Classes
February 19 th – 25 th , 2024	Spring Holiday
April 29 th – May 5 th , 2024	May Holiday
June 10 th – 21 st , 2024	Final Exams
July 1 st – 5 th , 2024	Resist Exams
July 5 th , 2024	End of Semester

Other Holidays: (2024)

March 29th (Good Friday)
 April 1st (Easter day)
 April 27th (King's Day)
 May 9th (Ascension Thursday)
 May 10th (Mandatory Day Off)
 May 20th (Whit Monday)

In the CCBS Minor, the exam is completed in the final week of May. Therefore, your semester is done much earlier than other programs. Due to this early ending, the Spring Holiday is removed, and the class trip is planned during the May Holiday. My flight landed the morning of January 31st, which was the perfect time to arrive.

The spring semester provides students with more holidays and breaks compared to the fall semester. In addition, students who arrive for the spring semester get to experience the national holiday “King’s Day”, which is a large celebration in The Netherlands.

c) Procedures to follow upon arrival. List and description of services offered by the International Exchange Office of the host institution. Registration and course selection. Social activities.

Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) was extremely organized and helpful in our arrival and preparations. There are lots of preparations which begin a few months prior to your arrival – such as registering and waiting for approval for your residence permit with the IND, sending in a photo for your student ID card, enrolling in classes, and housing applications (*see section E*). All these activities happen at different times, places, and durations. However, HvA sends a lot of emails to remind you of these dates and deadlines, and the forms and requirements needed well in advance. Upon arrival, you must find your own way to the residence, or wherever else you wish to go prior to residence check-in. Luckily, it is very easy to get around the city. You can simply use google or apple maps or download the app “9292” which is made for travel around Amsterdam and provides you with multiple routes and pricing options – I highly recommend downloading this prior to your arrival. My flight landed early in the morning, so I completed most of my registration activities in the late morning/ early afternoon, as I waited for residence check-in to open. You must register with the municipality within the first two weeks of arrival (exact dates will be given by email), in order to receive your BSN number which is used to open a bank account. Having a Dutch bank account is essential and must be completed close to arrival. The online banking app Revolut also works great for this, but there many banks in The Netherlands such as ABN, which is the one I used. I recommend completing these on your first day, if possible, as it’s helpful to start the set-up process since bank accounts take weeks to open here. In addition, once approved for your residence permit (which is essential to live in the Netherlands), you will be able to book a day with the IND

to provide biometrics, and second date to pick up your residence card. I recommend booking early and as close to your arrival as possible. Overall, the arrival procedures are very straight-forward and are well-communicated by the school. However, in my experience, it is important to complete these activities as close to arrival as you can. Prepare for it to be busy and possibly a little chaotic as many students complete the same activities on the same day. In summary, there are many steps and procedures to follow upon arrival, but I did not find it stressful at all, as the school was very organized and helpful throughout the entire process.

In addition, there is an optional intro week to participate in which is hosted by ESN. It is similar to frosh week at the University of Ottawa. It is optional; however, I would highly recommend all students to join. ESN hosts an introductory week which consists of 3 days of activities around the city including canal tours, free entry to student bars, and more. It was an amazing way to meet people. Importantly, you must go to pick up your wristband and intro activity bag on January 31st, or Feb 1st very early in the morning if you are not able to make the time on the 31st. This is something else to consider for upon arrival activities and booking flights.

d) Budget outlining the cost of studying abroad (i.e. airplane tickets, housing, vacation, and daily travel costs, textbooks, meals, etc.)

Overall, the cost of studying abroad varies by person and budget. It is really important to create a monthly budget and personal spending limit before coming on exchange, as it can get quite expensive depending on your chosen activities.

I flew from Toronto directly to Amsterdam on an overnight flight with KLM airlines. My ticket to Amsterdam was labeled as “premium economy” which included a checked bag, 2 carry-ons, and priority boarding. I am also flying directly from Amsterdam to Toronto on June 27th, and that ticket is also labeled “premium economy” but includes 2 checked bags, 3 carry-ons, and priority boarding. Both flights cost \$1763CAD in total. I found this was a good deal, because it was direct and had a lot of included baggage. However, I have heard of some other students that got a cheaper round-trip. It really depends on your needs. My best recommendation is to monitor the prices and have price notifications on, as they do fluctuate quite a lot with the big airlines. Booking well in advance also helps reduce the price.

First, I will discuss the everyday and somewhat unavoidable expenses. Tuition is paid to the home university, so I will ignore that. Rent varies on your chosen budget category and room type. The rent price in my chosen building can range from 600-900 euros, but that included all utilities and internet. *See section F for more information about housing and my experience/costs.* Groceries also depend on your eating habits. I find myself spending between 20-30 euros per week. There are many groceries stores to choose from such as Albert Heijn, and cheaper options like Lidl.

Daily travel costs vary depending on your use and chosen travel mode. Amsterdam has very good public transport which includes the metro, train, tram, and buses. You must check in and out of all modes of public transportation, and the price varies depending on how far you've travelled and at what time of the day. I have found the average prices to be between 1 – 4 euros. There is also a night bus, which is quite costly, between 5 – 6 euros. You can buy a “personal OV chip kart” which works similar to a presto card found in Ontario. With the personal one, you can load deals onto it which you subscribe to. For example, for €2.50 a month, I get 40% off the train during off-peak hours. It's a great deal. Many students, including myself, also get a bike at the start of the semester, which saves a lot of time and money on travel. The company recommended to us is Swapfiets, which is a subscription service. This is a great option for exchange students, as you only need the bike for a few months. This costs around 20-25 euros per month, for a 6-month contract, with no application fee.

For CCBS, the textbook is free, and there are no school costs except if you wish to participate in the class trip to Malta. Students who decide to join must pay for their own accommodation, flights, and a university fee.

Travelling is very variable. However, there are many options available to get around Europe depending on budget or time constraints. If traveling within a country or to a nearby country, national trains or Flixbus are great options as they are cheap (but also long travel time). I was able to travel to Brussels, Belgium and back for \$34CAD with Flixbus, with about 4-5 hours travel time each way. Flights to other European cities vary between \$100-250CAD and are readily available. You can also take high-speed trains, which are worth it to save on time but can be quite more expensive. I took a high-speed train between Amsterdam and Paris for \$250CAD, whilst the Flixbus option was \$80CAD. It all depends on the budget, your value on time, and the options available. Hostels range between €30-€50, and Airbnb is a great option for group travel.

e) Application procedures before your arrival (visa deadlines, documents required for visa, course registration, housing deposit, etc.)

The process of enrollment for study abroad with Hogeschool Van Amsterdam (HvA) was very well-informed and moved fast. Preparations for the winter 2024 semester began in October of the previous semester. Officially, I was in contact with HvA as of October 13th, 2023, and, our first due date was October 15th, 2023, which was a *simple online form* which includes personal information about yourself for HvA to create a student profile for you. There was no need for additional paperwork, and it was simple and fast to fill out. After the form was submitted, it took about 3 business days for the school to process the information and send us our new school email and student number and sent us a pdf of our proof of enrollment.

The second step in the application process was doing research on the *course catalogue* for HvA, and then sending our desired courses to uOttawa for them to be approved. It is important to be prompt in this step, as course enrollment happens fast at HvA and you want to be prepared on both ends, by making sure uOttawa understands and approves your choices. The University of Ottawa will send you a form, or you can request it, which you fill out the details of all courses you wish to take, along with a back-up plan. HvA also suggests you research a minimum of 2 other back-up options.

The third application procedure that we were notified about was regarding our *housing application*. I would recommend all students to apply for housing through the university, as Amsterdam is known to have limited to no houses available for students or short-term rentals – the school will recommend you the same. The application period was open between November 6, 2023, until November 10th, 2023, which means you have five days to complete the form and pay the housing fee. I would highly recommend having your application done and submitted on the first day, as it is a lottery system and not everyone is guaranteed a spot. How it works: first, you must have received your student number and student email to sign in and fill out the forms with your HvA/AUAS ID. Next, you will fill out multiple sections to match you to options in the housing portal. These sections include questions such as your budget category. Once you have filled out the questionnaire, you make a payment by Credit Card, PayPal or iDeal, which includes your first month of rent and a deposit fee which will be sent back to your account if the room is left clean and undamaged. Also, you must pay a housing-fee at the beginning of the process which

costs €235 for 1 semester, per person. Please note: if you are accepted to receive an offer, you will only receive one and must take it, or you will not be given a second option. *Please see section F for more information on my housing provider and residence.*

The Next application procedure which must be completed is your *visa application*. As a citizen of Canada, we can apply for a residence permit which is essential to live in the Netherlands for more than 90 days. The final deadline for all the following documents was November 30th. It is possible you may have filled out a form incorrectly or missed a step, which the IND in Amsterdam will find. However, if you must resubmit, the deadline is still November 30th, hence I recommend submitting it as early as you can before the deadline, in case of any mistakes. The required documents include a student details form, a pdf copy of your passport valid until the end of your stay, and an antecedent certificate. These forms are provided to you by the university. In addition, you must also provide proof of financial means. The first step is to send the IND €215 which is the IND fee transfer. Then, you must show proof of financial means for living expenses which for the Winter 2024 semester was evaluated at €5850. You have two options: 1- Send the IND €5850 to prove you have the funds, and it will be put into a Dutch bank account for you upon arrival to Amsterdam, or 2- if you are a Canadian citizen, you are able to prove financial means via bank letter. A sample bank letter will be provided, and essentially the bank will need to write your account balances on a letter addressed to the IND to prove you have the funds currently. I went with option 2, and my bank letter got approved. My bank letter took a long time to create, as I had to book multiple appointments with the Branch Manager at my bank in Canada to have a personalized letter written, so prepare ahead of time for that delay. About two weeks after my documents were submitted, I received confirmation that my residence permit was granted. I then received my V-number, and a link to book my appointment for dropping off my biometrics in Amsterdam (*see section C for more information*).

Next, is *course registration* which opened on November 20th and closed on November 24th. You must complete 30 ECTS at HvA to fulfill an equivalent of 5 classes at the University of Ottawa. For course registration, I also recommend you to be prompt and to have your classes pre-chosen and pre-approved by uOttawa. Course enrollment works very similarly to registration at uOttawa. It is done through an online portal where you can add your courses and back-up courses to a list and submit. Courses were confirmed on January 11th, 2024. For more *information on my chosen courses and the types of courses available at HvA, please see section A*.

f) Address and description of housing. Cost of housing.

I live in the student residence called “Fraijlemaborg”, which is both the name and address of the building. It is located near the Biljmer Arena metro stop in Amsterdam and is right beside the business campus for HvA. It is about a 30-minute metro ride to get to Amsterdam Centraal Station, which is the main hub for the centre of Amsterdam. If you decide to rent or buy a bike while you are here, it is also about a 30-minute bike ride. The location is good for business students, as it is about a 2-minute walk to class, however, you sacrifice a longer commute to the centre/downtown area. Also, there are many businesses nearby which can make shopping for necessities such as groceries or household items super easy and convenient. I pay €603 per month for a room in a 3-room apartment-style unit. The unit comes with a shared kitchen and bathroom, and then each of us has our own private bedroom. The bedroom comes fully furnished and there is a welcome package added to the admin fee you pay for housing which includes bedding and some sponges to get you started. Although it’s a good start, expect to still spend some money upon arrival on making the place more comfortable. Previous tenants had left us dishes to use in our unit, which was great, but not everyone was as lucky, so be prepared for that. There are other units available such as 4- or 2-bedroom apartments, or a studio apartment. The studio is at the top of the price range but includes your own private kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom area. The furnishings in my bedroom included a twin bed, nightstand, desk and desk chair, closet, desk lamp, lounge chair, and a bookshelf. Similarly, some people were left other furniture items from past tenants. Overall, I would say this is a nice building to live in and the rooms are quite spacious. Also, there is a common room in the lobby of the building which has many couches, tables, and a projector. The common room is a great place to meet people, and there are often parties or get-togethers being held there. The building has 7 floors which contain the units, and a basement which includes a laundry room and a bike storage room as well. The laundry costs around €2-3 for a wash cycle, and around €3-4 for the dryer.

g) Work term (if applicable).

n/a

h) Other comments or recommendations

A piece of advice I would like to share is regarding the phone plan. A cheap and popular company to use in The Netherlands is Lebara. Lebara has many options available for different amounts of data, or texting and calling limits. When I first arrived in The Netherlands, I ordered a pre-paid sim card which contained 5gb of data and lasted two weeks, which costed €5. This was a great option to start with, as I could pay for it with my Canadian Credit Card. Then, I received my BSN number within those two weeks and created a Dutch bank account which allowed me to sign up for a monthly plan. Signing up for a monthly plan is much cheaper than only using pre-paid cards. I was able to get 15gb of 4G data, 150 text messages and 150 minutes of calling per month for €10. All data through Lebara works around the EU, and I always had a good connection in any country I visited. In addition, if you are on a monthly plan, you can top-up your data if you are running low, as they have an app which allows you to track your data. I would highly recommend this for convenience and as the cheapest option.

i) Add a description of about five to seven sentences summarizing your experience.

Overall, my exchange in Amsterdam has been nothing short of amazing. This is such a beautiful city with many fun activities to do and take part in. The schooling here has been a learning-curve, and challenging at times, yet I am happy to go home to Canada with so many new learning experiences. The ability to travel throughout Europe has been a significant and special change to my life, and every day I cannot believe how lucky I am to be here. It is hard to take the step and move away from your family and friends into the unknown, but it's one of the best experiences of my life and a memory I will cherish forever. You may feel out of your comfort zone or overwhelmed at times, but that's part of the growing and learning experience that only exchange can offer you. I am so happy I chose to do my exchange with HvA in Amsterdam, as I felt well-informed during the entire application process, and was able to really enjoy getting to live in the beautiful city of Amsterdam.