



Maastricht University, NL



Study Guide by Students for Students

This study guide is an information brochure created by students for students and is intended to give prospective double degree students the opportunity to benefit from former students' experiences, knowledge, and tips. It will be updated continuously and passed on to students from generation to generation. However, there is no guarantee that its contents are correct or complete.

We hope you enjoy reading this guide and look forward to your constructive input.

Status as of September 2015

1) Overall impression

2) Making preparations

a. Administrative matters

- You will receive all the information you need relating to the university partnership scheme from the person responsible at Maastricht University (UM)
- No visa, etc. is required
- It is useful to have a standard European Health Insurance Card (which is now standard in Switzerland too) in case of emergencies

b. Finding information

- A UM study guide can be found on the university's website (<https://myum.unimaas.nl/irj/portal>)
- The Student Handbook, which is published every year, is indispensable. It really does contain all the information you need

3) Contacts/responsibilities

a. International office

- There is no specific international office. Ask the staff at the general study desk and they will refer you to the relevant people
- Use the Electronic Service Center contact form (<http://esc-fdr.unimaas.nl/>) (log in using your student ID)
- Student Services Centre (<http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/ServiceCentres/SSC/AboutStudentServicesCentreSSC.htm>). This is located at Bonnefantenstraat 2, very near the Faculty of Law. You can get student ID cards and other items here.

b. Faculty of Law

- We have had excellent experience in dealing with Diane Crook, who always provides information knowledgeably and quickly
- There is a study desk in the Faculty of Law building

4) Finding a room/accommodation

- Finding a room is probably the hardest part of the year abroad. However, as UZH students we have the advantage of knowing from a very early stage whether we have been accepted to study at Maastricht University or not. It is therefore essential to begin your search for accommodation as early as possible. I highly recommend going to Maastricht for a few days in March or April, for example, to take a look at studios and rooms available there.
- Contact the student housing service
 - Please note: standards of "cleanliness" and room size, etc. are different here from what we may be used to in Switzerland.

- Student residences vary in terms of quality
 - The feedback for those by the Bonnefanten Museum has been positive
 - The feedback for those in the (old) town center (Kleine Graacht) has been negative
- Look for accommodation on general real estate sites
 - e.g. Pararius.nl
- There is also some accommodation available for students in the surrounding area (e.g. Lanakan/Smeermaas (BE))

5) Arrival

You can opt for a helper from the university to come and collect you from the station/airport and take you to your apartment/room.

You must officially register with the local municipality within a certain period of time (during which you will have to sign up for an appointment via the university).

If you fail to do so, you may be charged significantly higher tuition fees (around EUR 12,000).

6) Telephone

Various pre-paid packages are available from practically all supermarkets (e.g. Albert Heijn (AH), HEMA, C1000).

7) Bank account

The university provides ING with all the relevant information.

It is easy to open an account and then close it again at the end of your stay (see Student Handbook).

A Dutch bank card (included) is very useful for a wide range of services (e.g. buying train tickets, loading credit onto your student card for use in cafeterias or for photocopying, etc.).

8) Transport

a. Connections with Switzerland

i. By air:

- Zurich–Cologne with Germanwings (approx. EUR 60). From Cologne, it takes around two hours to get to Aachen by train (approx. EUR 19 for a regular ticket; twice hourly direct train service), then you can take a bus to Maastricht (approx. EUR 8 without a public transport card; buses run two to four times an hour).
- Basel–Amsterdam with easyJet (approx. EUR 30–100 depending on the date of the flight and when you book it). From Amsterdam, it takes around 2.5 hours to get to Maastricht by train, including one change (approx. EUR 25 for a regular ticket).
- Basel–Düsseldorf (approx. EUR 15–50). From Düsseldorf, it takes around 2.5 hours to get to Aachen by train (approx. EUR 19 for a regular ticket; twice hourly train service, sometimes with one change), then you can take a bus to Maastricht (see above).

ii. By train:

You can either travel by train via Cologne and Frankfurt am Main, or fly via Cologne or Düsseldorf. There is not much difference between the journey times.

- Zurich–Aachen by ICE (approx. CHF 130; several services a day), then take a bus from Aachen to Maastricht (see above). The best way to travel from Aachen to Maastricht is by bus (Veolia no. 50). There are no longer any direct train links between these two towns.
- City Night Line to Eindhoven (from approx. CHF 55), then take a train from Eindhoven to Maastricht (around two hours; approx. EUR 10).

iii. By coach:

- I am not familiar with it, but there is a coach service that runs from Zurich to Liège, where you can then catch a train to Maastricht.

b. Transport to the university

- Buying a bike is an absolute must! Of course, you can also take the bus (run by the transport company Veolia). Belgian buses operate in the suburbs over the border in Belgium (run by the transport company Lijn). However, they are not very reliable (by Swiss standards) and not as frequent as the Dutch buses. Another popular way of getting around is by scooter, which you can use in cycle lanes.
- Travel by bike! This is definitely the mode of transport of choice throughout Maastricht.
- Only take the bus when necessary.

9) General information about the university/university life

a. Specific information for exchange students

- Various events are organized, details of which can usually be found in the university's weekly newsletter or in information direct from the university.
- See Student Handbook. The entire university is geared toward the needs of exchange students.

c. General services

- INKOM, an introductory week that takes place around a week before the start of the academic year, is a good opportunity to get to know other students (from across all faculties) and to familiarize yourself a bit more with life in Maastricht.

10) Teaching/studying at university

a. Degree program structure

- Six periods:
 - Periods 1 and 2 → Each seven weeks long, culminating in a week of exams
 - Period 3, January/February → Reserved for working on Master's theses; no lectures
 - Periods 4 and 5 → Each seven weeks long, culminating in a week of exams

- Period 6, from around mid-June → Reserved for working on Master's theses
 - Periods 1, 2, 4, 5 → Two subjects per period

b. Tuition/classes

- For each subject, there is usually a two-hour lecture (all students) and a two-hour tutorial (approx. 10 to a maximum of 20 students). Subjects are mainly taught through lectures and tutorials. The tutorials require preparation, as they can be very intensive.
- Active participation is expected during tutorials and in some cases forms part of the assessment. Depending on the subject, students have to give presentations or hold discussions.

c. Resources

- Copies of past exams are available from the Faculty of Law association, Ouranos (<http://www.jfvouranos.nl/>). The association's office is by the rear entrance to the Faculty of Law building (next to the bicycle racks). It only costs a few cents to obtain exam copies.
- The professors will provide information on what resources are required
- Some exams are in open-book format
- Law documents are often required, in accordance with the guidelines
- You are allowed to stick tabs in law documents and mark or underline text with a highlighter or a ballpoint pen

d. Examinations

- Most exams are written. They are normally held at MECC (<http://www.mecc.nl/nl/Paginas/default.aspx>), Maastricht's exhibition center. The temperature in the hall is very cool, so you should always dress warmly.
- Exams always follow on directly from the corresponding seven-week period of lectures/tutorials
- Make-up exams (which you have to register for!) take place at the end of the next period

11) General

Organization, e.g. ESN

Sports activities: see university sport

To attend courses or take part in group sports, you will need to buy a UM SPORTS membership card (for prices, see

<http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/ServiceCentres/SSC/UMSPORT/MembershipUMSPORT1/CostsOfAMembership.htm>). However, this membership card does not allow you to use the fitness area. You will need to buy a separate fitness license for this, which you can only obtain once you have completed an introductory course. The fitness area is very busy in the evenings, so the best time to use it is in the mornings or afternoons. Apart from that, however, I would definitely recommend it.

a. Culture, information resources, benefits, events, etc.

- See the university's weekly newsletter
- The university offers a range of sports activities, including various sports clubs

b. Going out, parties

- Mostly bars (usually called "cafés")
- Parties organized by student associations

c. Excursions

- Cities in the surrounding area (e.g. Antwerp, Liège, Amsterdam, etc.). There is an hourly direct train service from Maastricht to Amsterdam.
- Take advantage of ticket offers. Kruidvat, Blokker, and Hema stores run train ticket promotions several times a year. For around EUR 13–15, you can get a train ticket that allows you to travel anywhere in the Netherlands for a day (sometimes these are only valid at weekends or for two people or more).
- Shopping at Maasmechelen Village designer outlets
- Various old castles in the Maastricht area
- Visit Aachen (especially for the Christmas market), an ideal place for shopping (get off the bus at the Aachen Theater stop, i.e. not until after Aachen Hauptbahnhof (the central station); the bus turns round to go back to Maastricht).
- Mount St. Peter in Maastricht (including some fascinating caves)
- Boat trip on the River Meuse (you can go as far as Liège)
- Texel, an island up in the north of the Netherlands, is also worth a visit
- Other excursion destinations: Brussels, The Hague, Utrecht.