



Faculty of Law, University of Amsterdam (The Netherland

Study Guide

1 Overall impression

The overall impression is fairly good. The campus and the law faculty are situated in a very modern complex which is very central in Amsterdam and has a lot of facilities. The law library is in the same building. The university itself is overall good organized. Unfortunately, there was a change in both the lead as well as the programme in our track last year, which is why a lot of things during the year were not really organized or tested previously. Also, our year was affected by COVID, which put an abrupt end to our abroad experience. The UvA however transitioned very fast and smoothly to online education (if one compares to, e.g. UZH) so that worked out as well. Some additional bumps due to COVID but the university overall handled this good too.

2 Making preparations

(e.g. administrative matters, finding information)

The website and the emails from uni which follow after registration contain all important information for settling in.

3 Contacts/Responsibilities

(e.g. important contact persons at the Partner University and Faculty)

- Student Desk
- Respective Track Coordinator (for Trade and Investment: Geraldo Vidigal)

4 Housing

Housing is a hard one in Amsterdam. The university provides assistance - but only against a hefty fee of EUR 400. And even if one takes up this offer (like me), they may end up not having accommodation at all. I would advise to register approx. 1.5 to 1 year in advance with the standard student accommodation websites (room.nl / studentenwoningweb.nl) or register at least 8 months prior to the waiting list of ourcampus.nl. My first student housing was not well administered and the company running it (Camelot) did indeed bill us several times. One cannot expect "Swiss Standards" when it comes to the organization of a housing company. Also, me and several other students received their accommodation in a very bad shape (dirty/broken things etc). Its important to raise voiced here and the university may also help with that.

The second semester I stayed with "Student Experience" and can very much recommend. Great value for money, very modern and many amenities. I was lucky enough to subrent from someone, as such

short contracts are otherwise not given out. Thus also a tip to search the web for ppl subrenting their student homes!

IMPORTANT: students may apply for housing benefits if they live alone (e.g. in a studio). Those may be up to 300€/ a month, so def. check this out. It is called "huurtoeslag" in Dutch.

5 Arrival

The university organizes "Welcome Days" on which not only keys for university-organised accommodation can be picked up, but also the student hand is handed out and one can register on the spot with the municipality of Amsterdam (as well as further services such as public transportation cards, ISIC etc). Those are a great opportunity, especially the hassle-free registration with the municipality. One is picked up at the airport, brought to university and from there picked up to the student accommodation. Attendance recommended.

6 Telephone

(e.g. costs, carriers)

I have stuck to my Swiss phone plan (my provider was WINGO) which included 3GB of internet usage within the EU (and unlimited in CH) for 25 CHF/month. An additional GB would have been, but with WIFI in both my accommodation and at university, I never exceeded the 3GB. I however also had a Dutch Number which is sometimes needed when ordering something etc. I ordered a free SIM Card from Lebara, but never put any money on it. Worked great. I know from friends that the cost for a mobile plan for a Dutch number are similar to the Swiss ones, around 25-30€/month for all inclusive.

Similar to Switzerland / around 30€/month.

7 Bank account

Upon recommendation of the university, I opened a Dutch bank account with "bunq". Its an all-online bank and opening an account was super easy in the app after I got my social security number after registration at the municipality. The app and all its features are great but the downside is the 7€ monthly fee. However, this also covers the usage of up to 5 debit or credit cards and there are zero fees for transfers to other currencies (i.e. Swiss Francs). But if one wanted, banks like ING or ABN Ambro offer free (i.e. zero fees) accounts to students, but I heard that opening one is quite a hassle and also that their online-banking is not too sophisticated.

8 Transport

Transport from Switzerland to the Netherlands/Amsterdam There are very regular flight connections to Amsterdam from both Zurich and Basel airport, at times even up to five connections a day. Even during the first months of COVID lockdowns in Europe, flights between Amsterdam and Zurich were still running (on a reduced basis) and entrance to the Netherlands was always granted, even in these difficult times. One can also swap the plane for the train or bus. Train connections to Amsterdam are often cheap

(around CHF 40 - 50) but are long and with a lot of changes. The faster trains (with less changing connections) are more expensive. The shortest connection possible is about 8hrs. Flixbus also offers cheap and direct (overnight) connections to Amsterdam, at around 40-60 CHF and 12hrs. Flixbus is a cheap and easy (but loooong) choice for moving, as one can take a lot of stuff without having to change connections and way cheaper than on a plane (bicycle 15€ / 20kg luggage 3€).

Transport from Accommodation in Amsterdam to Uni: CYCLE!

9 General information about the Partner Faculty and student life

General information about the Partner Faculty and student life Studies at UvA are divided in three blocks per Semester, usually 8 weeks. After the end of each block there are exams. This means that after a mere 7 weeks at the new university, exams are already held in the week after. In this sense, it is always "Lernphase". This, to a certain extent, curtails the social aspect of the year abroad and of student life. At the same time, the level and depth of examination may not be compared to end of term exams (whole year exams) like in Zurich, so social activities, sightseeing, partying etc is very well possible. Most tracks and LLMs allow students to choose certain subjects as electives. This is also a tool to shape the timetable and maybe have lectures only on three out of five days a week. Which then allows in turn for whole days at the library, sports or just to sleep in.

10 Teaching and studying at the Partner Faculty

(e.g. program structure, methodology, exams, etc.)

Teaching and studying at the Partner Faculty (e.g. program structure, methodology, exams, etc.) UvA has a big focus on RESEARCH. This in turn also means that the methodology of lectures orientates itself mainly on that and that many things are more theoretical than practical. The university wants to bridge this gap by offering a law clinic and moot courts. However, this only works to a certain extent as places in these "programmes" are scarce. That means that only around 20 ppl could do these (out of more than 100).

Moreover, the website and the consultation with study services at UvA mentioned classes in my LLM track of about 40-50 students. In fact we were a class of more than 80 and in certain lectures nearly 200. The "intimate" teaching experience got lost completely, the programme had to be adapted to this size and was accordingly were shallow. Lecturers in the track Trade and Investment Law are not really good, many are very unorganized. Exams of those lecturers were at times so unorganized that the entire class complained to the study board. Exams often consist of essay questions about principles, while the actual subject revolved in practice around cases - but such (fictional) cases were not solved. In other words, the applicability of what we studied did not seem to be at the forefront. POST COVID: Again, overall the university did a good transition. However, it was very difficult to follow lectures after the online transition, as our content was not apt to this form of teaching. Online exams were not ideal, but somehow worked. Only the grade release got delayed too much because of this.

Personal Remark: LLM European and International Law, Track Trade and Investment can not be recommended. No good faculty, badly organised, no practical application of what is learned, no real career opportunities.

11 City

(e.g. cultural activities, sports, discounts, nightlife, must-sees, short trips, etc.)

Amsterdam is a cultural meltingpot and there is lots to see, do and eat. I can wholeheartedly recommend on getting a museum pass ([museumkaart.nl](https://www.museumkaart.nl)) and explore the gems of museums that Amsterdam has to offer. Amsterdam is well known for its bicycles and I would recommend everyone to get one from the start and explore the city by it. Also, take the daily trip to uni or the library by bike - and you have done (parts) of your sport already. If that is not enough, the university has also sports centres. The variety of sports is however (compared to the Zurich ASVZ) not so big and also not for free. Still, compared to getting a membership at a local gym, it is the better deal.

Date: September 2020