



LUT School of Business and Management

UT Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences

Double Degree Studies at University of Twente, Netherlands

- Erasmus Exchange Report

22.7.2019

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Table of Contents

1	FOREWORD	1
2	MY BACKGROUND.....	1
3	UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE	2
4	STUDYING AT UT	2
5	FOOD, CULTURE AND LIVING IN THE UT AREA.....	4
6	GRADUATING EARLY REQUIRES CAREFUL PLANNING AND HARD WORK	5
7	OVERVIEW.....	6

1 FOREWORD

Nice that you are interested in my travel report. I hope this report provides some insights for you when deciding whether to head for "regular" exchange or choose a double degree program. My profile is a little bit different than in the usual case. I studied as "an adult student" targeting to increase my knowledge in business administration and in parallel to get some new experiences. Even though I had not considered traditional exchange studies before, I have some experience abroad, while I stayed in Germany and Sweden some time to specialize professionally. This specialization was arranged by my former employer. Reflected the previous experiences, I didn't take studying in Europe so much as an experience, but rather as a possibility to enhance my skills for my future career. If you are seeking to read experiences mainly, this might be wrong paper for you, but if you want to find more about the possibilities and challenges of the studies in a double degree master programme, this paper might turn to be useful for you.

2 MY BACKGROUND

Even though I studied business, my background is, actually, in construction engineering, where I have got my previous master's degree. Before my business studies, I've worked for two construction companies and a real estate owner. Right after my earlier studies in engineering, I noticed that I prefer the business and management side of tasks compared purely engineering tasks. I also noticed that within the construction industry, there often is a conflict of interests between the construction project stakeholders. When writing my previous master's thesis on supplier relationship management, I noticed that these adversarial relationships exist everywhere in the world within the industry. Seeing this as a possibility for improvement, I applied for LUT Business School to study supply management (MSM) targeting to learn more about these issues and how to solve them. These studies took me a year to complete, excluding finishing the master's thesis. I enjoyed them because they combined practicality to academic knowledge nicely, where the knowledge was usually very anecdotal, coming from the real-life business cases.

3 UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

Choosing University of Twente (UT) was a natural choice because it has double degree arrangements with my home university LUT. These arrangements enabled me getting the full benefit from the thesis and previous studies, while the both universities accepted them. The double degree structure in UT was prefixed, in which the only choice to be made was selecting between two selectable courses – all the other classes were fixed. Even though some of my colleagues were criticizing the stiffness, I liked it very much because the topics were relevant for supply chain management studies, even though some of them were considering management in general or accounting areas. The program has a tuition fee for 2060 euros per year (EU students), which, I think, is a decent sum to pay for a master's degree completed abroad.

UT is situated in Enschede, nearby the German border, in the eastern side of Netherlands. It is a small city, only a little bigger than my hometown, Jyväskylä with its 157 000 habitants. Because the relatively small size of the town (only 1/10 of Jyväskylä area measured in square kilometres) Enschede feels more crowded than my hometown. Also because of the small size of the Netherlands in total with its approx. 17 million people, everything around is near and achievable easily. It takes only 2,5 hours by train from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol to Enschede – almost across the entire country.

4 STUDYING AT UT

As mentioned earlier, the PSM double degree structure in UT was prefixed. It included the following courses:

- Entrepreneurial Leadership and Organizational Design (5 ECTS)
- Business-to-business Marketing (5 ECTS)
- Purchasing Strategy and Systems (5 ECTS)
- Supply Chain Innovation (5 ECTS)
- Corporate Governance and Responsible Organizational Design (5 ECTS)
- Information Systems or Business Development in Network Perspective (both 5 ECTS)
- Master Class BA (5 ECTS)
- Master's Thesis BA (25 ECTS)

The total ECTS-credits to complete the program is 60 which is the same amount of work than for standard BA degree students in the Netherlands, on the other hand, is only the half of the credits which is required in Finnish university master programs (120 ECTS). I also found out that the Dutch grading and the amount of work is identified to be quite demanding compared to some other European countries. More information about the grading system can be found here: <https://www.studyinholland.nl/documentation/grading-systems-in-the-netherlands-the-united-states-and-the-united-kingdom.pdf>

The courses were majorly evaluated by group or individual assignments, and some of them had written examinations, too. For me, the written exams turned out to be more complicated than the group/individual assignment, mainly due to the highly limited time of the examination, where the time for structuring the answer was limited. Anyway, I managed to pass all the courses with the first try, so all of them are doable. If I would do one thing differently, I would concentrate more on writing the assignments following the exact the same structure that the rubrics require answering exaggerated clearly the questions the assignment requires - none of the texts or answers should be left any openness for interpretation if a good grade is wanted.

The studying culture is a mix of German strictness and Dutch easiness. Some things are bureaucratically required, and some are more flexible in dealing with. Finding the key persons to do business with makes your life easier also in this case.

From the course list, I preferred the Business-to-Business marketing course, which gave me new insights about business between companies, especially business problem solving, value creation and the decision-making theory. After the course, I changed my perspective by giving more value for the solution-based selling activities, being more than just empty selling talks. Also, one of the best courses in the program was the Supply Chain Innovation course, where the supply chain function was studied as an innovation driver for companies. Particularly from that course, I learned about the global megatrends and how the supply chain should be designed to address those megatrends.

5 FOOD, CULTURE AND LIVING IN THE UT AREA

This chapter remains a bit short while I used most of my time in the Netherlands exercising or studying. However, I managed to make some shorts trips within the area, and also a bit longer to Amsterdam, Münster and Berlin. Travelling in continental Europe is easy because of the decent railway connections. However, German railway time tables are not as "pünktlich" as one may expect, being sometimes late and sometimes not show up at all.

The food was very similar than traditional Finnish food, often consisting of meat or fish and potatoes. UT has a one "real lunch restaurant" and a couple of snack places/kiosks and one dinner place situated in the library building. During the first weeks, I visited quite often the Subway restaurant, but I got the saturation for the food quite quickly, so I started going to eat "traditional" menu in the lunch restaurant. The lunch cost around five euros plus extras (drink, etc.) and it was not supported similarly than the Finnish government supports it. The campus area also has a mini Coop market, but there are also some supermarkets nearby (<2 km) where the daily groceries are a little bit cheaper.

In the Netherlands, almost everyone rides a bicycle. Luckily for the exchange students the local bicycle leasing company, Swapfiets, lease regular bikes quite cheaply, which are billed monthly. Leasing a bike was a great choice to make, while everything is achievable easily with it. The local cities and the government have also built an excellent infrastructure, such as bike lanes and other priority arrangements for bikes. Also, there are no hills in the country, which also makes a feeling of effortless driving.

The local flat leasing markets are quite limited, which may create troubles finding one. Especially finding a flat from the school's own markets (=local LOAS) is challenging. Some students rent an apartment from Enschede centrum, and some choose the neighbouring city, Hengelo, which is, actually, equally close to campus area as Enschede centrum. I personally rented the apartment from Camelot Europe, which had renovated the old "De Hogekamp" campus building to 450 flats and a hotel. Despite the initial administrative challenges, I managed to get an approx. An 25 m² apartment from the building for a relatively reasonable price for the time staying in Enschede. The proximity of the building to

the campus made convenience in the early mornings and late study evenings in the Vrijhof library.

The UT campus also offers many cultural and sports activities within the area. If you are interested in team sports, especially football, the campus is the right place for you. For individual sports, the campus area offers fewer activities, but there is something, e.g. possibility to swim in campus' swimming pools.

The FC Twente football stadium is also situated nearby the campus. In the Vrijhof library, there are cultural events, such as art exhibitions, music events and stand-up culture almost every weekend. The faculties sometimes arrange also academic debates/ discussion evenings within the campus premises, which I also once participated, enjoying the event.

6 GRADUATING EARLY REQUIRES CAREFUL PLANNING AND HARD WORK

When writing this report, I've graduated from my master's studies from LUT and waiting to be graduated from University of Twente. I've completed all the required courses from both universities in two academic years.

Graduating this early requires careful planning for the master's thesis process and hard work for completing the required courses in time and with the first try. However, there was also a recipe which enabled my efficient graduation from both universities.

First, as an adult student I was able to get adult student funding from the Finnish government, which provided me with the necessary resources for all the expenses, but also pushed me to complete both of the degrees in 15 months which is currently the limit for the funding. Secondly, I agreed with my employer that I need to graduate until a particular time frame, which pushed me to concentrate on school assignments rather than free time or work. The third ingredient was starting the master's thesis already in the first year's summer. I managed to make the empirical part of the thesis (short preliminary literature review, interviews, survey and participatory action research) during the summertime, and I analyzed the results during the exchange period startup. This "prework" provided me with a rapid continuum during the next (2nd master) spring when I continued my literal part connecting the results to the created theory. These three ingredients provided me with the possibility of

early graduation, but they may not be available for everyone. Regardless of the various premises, my key message is that you need to find, plan and execute the ways if you wish to graduate as early as possible. On the other hand, not everyone needs early graduation, and they instead spend one extra year maintaining the student status and having a little bit more relaxed time. In this case, I would advise seeking if a 2nd-year scholarship can cover the tuition fee.

7 OVERVIEW

Overall, I consider UT-LUT PSM/MSM double degree program as the right choice for everyone willing to make a little bit extra effort to get two MSc BA degrees. Especially, if you're already studying at LUT for 120 ECTS degree, with careful planning, you're able to manage both degrees in the planned two years. The study culture is pretty similar than in Finland, even though some extra effort is required to obtain good grades. Enschede as study place might be a little bit too calm for one's taste, but luckily the university offers some activities on the campus during the weekends. The Netherlands also has a central situation in Europe, which makes it a perfect place to study – if you have spare time from your studies (which I hardly had). Even though I don't consider myself as a parlour man, I managed to get a couple of new friends from the trip, which is also essential considering building a network.

After the studies, I'm enjoying my first summer holidays in Finland, and I've managed to start also start my dear old hobby, mountain biking. Even though I miss being in the Netherlands, I, on the other hand, enjoy finding myself riding local trails in Jyväskylä, which I dreamt while I was practising for the exams at Vrijhof library on late evenings and weekends.