

EXCHANGE REPORT
FONTYS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
Tilburg, The Netherlands



JUST SOME QUCIK FACTS

HOST UNIVERSITY: Fontys Academy for Creative Industries

WHERE: Tilburg, The Netherlands

CONTACT PERSON AT HOST UNIVERSITY: Michelle De Bruijn-Meijer, aciinternational@fontys.nl

PERIOD: End January till end of June 2019; Spring term.



WHAT TO READ WHERE AKA. TABLE OF CONTENT

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE	4
KEA & THE PROGRAM IN THE NETHERLANDS.....	4
<i>Period 1</i>	5
<i>Period 2</i>	5
THE CLASSES & THE SCHOOL IN GENERAL	7
CHOOSING CLASSES	7
MOOD PICTURES FROM THE SCHOOL/GROUP WORK.....	8
THE MOST REWARDING CLASSES/STUDY EXPERIENCE & THE LEAST	9
CULTURAL/PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.....	12
CHALLENGES WITHIN THE CULTURE & EXPERIENCE.....	12
WHAT WAS THE BEST CULTURAL/PERSONAL EXPERIENCE?	12
ADIVCE.....	13
PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	14
THE APPLICATION PROCESS.....	14
SETTLING DOWN IN THE NETHERLANDS.....	14
WHERE DID I LIVE?.....	14
OTHER EXPENSES	15
CONCLUSION	15

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

KEA & THE PROGRAM IN THE NETHERLANDS

The KEA program which I took/am taking, is called Digital Concept Development. It gives great opportunities for taking a semester abroad due to the variety of topics/courses they provide.

At Fontys you have two options; the first one is to choose a “finished” program for example *Transmedia* or *Trend watching* – these ones are fixed programs where the classes are decided for you. The second option is to mix and match with their single courses. Depending on your KEA program, you need a certain amount of ESCT points, in my example I needed 30. One course is 3 ESCT points, so I had to take 10 different classes – which I did, this program is called *Advanced courses*.

The semester at Fontys is divided into two periods – one period is 6 weeks. When taking the advanced courses, you have five courses per week, so you need to coordinate which courses you want on that day in either period 1 or 2 during the semester.

As an example, I took these five courses during period one: Business model innovation, Strategic communication management, E-commerce, Consumer behavior and Neuromarketing. So, I had one class per day. One class is either from 9.15-12.30 or 13.30-16.30. Which makes the days short and perfect for homework or a part time job while you are there – or you know, free time.

During the second period I took these five courses: Service marketing, Financial modelling, Media future, Leadership and Transmedia storytelling.

In general terms the classes differ a lot, and some teachers are stricter than others in terms of homework and final papers. In my experience most of my teachers were okay, do not expect a high and 100% fluent level of English from all of them – even though they are not bad, they are just not all perfect. They are however nice and super helpful (majority), but I did receive most of my guidance by other students. As with all schools it just takes time to get to know their system and how they work.

On the next page I will briefly describe what I learned from the differently classes.

Period 1.

BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION

This course was one of my favorites, good teacher and good knowledge. Here you get one group assignment, which is to come up with a new business concept (innovation) and create a business model for that. I found the course helpful, if you want to learn about innovation and how to build a company from the ground.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

It was a good course in terms of crisis management and how to communicate from a firm's perspective during a crisis. Also, how to handle it, respond and what to do when. It is one of the more theoretical classes and is a bit harder than others.

E-COMMERCE

If you have a background in either e-commerce or marketing, this course is not necessarily. Overall, it is a nice course and you learn about KPI's, website optimization etc. At the end, you have to optimize a company's traffic on their website.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

This course will give you a good insight in how to conduct consumer research, collect and analyze the data. It does require a specific program, which you will need to purchase. I did have some complications with the teacher and therefore I did not have the

best experience. But the outcome is useful if you want to conduct consumer research in the future.

NEUROMARKETING

Probably the best course I had in the first period. The teacher was super helpful, he had so much knowledge and helped me with other relating courses as well. I got knowledge about different psychology theories and how to use them in practice with marketing. Can definitely recommend this course.

Period 2

SERVICE MARKETING

This course really goes in-dept with service marketing and how different it is from product marketing. It is a heavy theory course, but you do learn a lot during those 6 weeks, that you can take with you. The exam is a bit harder here, but the teacher was really helpful.

FINANCIAL MODELLING

Do not take this course if you do not have a background in finance already, the teacher does expect you to have this since it is a mandatory course for some of the Dutch. If you have a background, the course is a good way to refresh your excel skills, with profit & loss, expenses, cash flow etc. The exam is however a tough one, but if you know you excel, you can manage.

MEDIA FUTURE

This course will give you great (and terrifying) insights in the future of technology. The teacher is down to earth, really helpful and knows a lot about the topic but involves you a lot as well. It is a great way to get insights and how important it is to stay on top of tech trends.

LEADERSHIP

This course is good if you like to get a little personal, because leadership is all about that. You will gain great knowledge about leadership styles and probably also gain some new insight about yourself, but only if you are open towards it. The teacher can be a bit pushy, but she has a warm heart.

TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

Without a doubt my favorite course! I loved the teacher and the course. During this course you will learn about creativity, transmedia and storytelling – it is the perfect course for creative people. You get to create your own campaign with a transmedia storytelling background. The teacher is really helpful in guiding you in the right directions and giving ideas.



THE CLASSES & THE SCHOOL IN GENERAL

Fontys is a great school and the students there are super helpful. The campus that I went to contained 8 buildings, one big canteen and smaller ones in some of the other building. The canteen is cheap (at least compared to Denmark) a coffee costs under €2.

The school was good in receiving us international students, they had a whole week planned with different activities to get us together. Unfortunately, I was only able to attend the last one, but heard great things about it from the other students. However, when it came to how the school works, the schedule, the exams, their platforms etc. The school were not good at introducing it to us. From what I heard they gave a very brief introduction and that was it. So, we had to ask a lot of the teachers, where a lot of them were not helpful and said we had to figure it out ourselves or ask the Dutch students – who luckily helped us out.

This also happened in terms of Paperday, where you need to use something called GradeWork. We had to ask other Dutch students, otherwise we would have failed in handing in. But other than that, the International Office at the school were good to help or guide us through issues.

Choosing classes

Before school start you will receive a course catalogue with the *Advance courses* (if you were to choose them). Here you can read in depth about the classes and their exam – this prepares you pretty good, however some of them do not live up to it in reality.

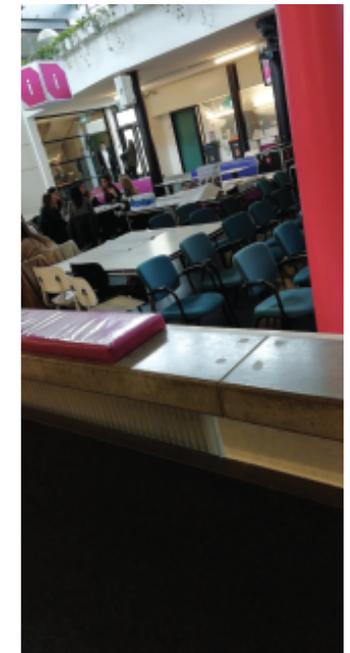
Majority of the international students did experience that they had to change a course or two, including myself. I had to change two courses in my second period. One of them were due to a mistake in the course catalogue, so the course was not available in that period. The only “issue” was that I was first told this on the day of the course, which meant I kinda rushed the decision on what to take instead (you can only take one course per day, which limits the options).

The other course I did attend twice, but the teacher and I had a bunch of complications. So, I decided to apply to get that one changed as well, and I was lucky to get it approved.

MOOD PICTURES FROM THE SCHOOL/GROUP WORK

I realized that I do not have a lot of pictures of the school or from the classes. But they do have super cozy areas to hang out in or work in.

They also lent out camera equipment, sound, studios etc. If you were to make something creative.



THE MOST REWARDING CLASSES/STUDY EXPERIENCE & THE LEAST

I kinda touched the topic already, but if I have to look at which class helped me develop the most, Transmedia is the one. Transmedia storytelling helped me push my creative boundaries and finally gave me the opportunity to create something and let me unfold different ideas. For me that was the most rewarding experience, since it was the first time I was allowed to do whatever I wanted in a project, which made me motivated to create something that I was proud of.

Also, the teacher was so helpful and really inspiring during all the courses. She clearly had so much knowledge and knew what she was talking about. She was great with helping us, exploring our idea, coming with different perspectives and being supportive like a teacher should.

This course was just a really great experience and I can definitely recommend taking it.

The least relevant course I had depends on how you look at it. Because for some people it might have had a big influence and for me not really. When looking back I would say it was consumer behavior. I was really looking forward to that course, because I have had it before, and I wanted to expand my knowledge within that area.

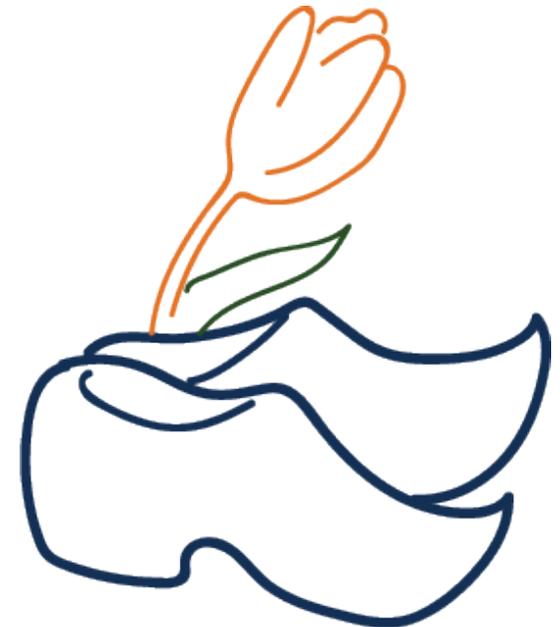
Unfortunately, already after my first course, I could feel that I would not gain a lot from the course. The teacher had a strict and very to the point attitude, and she made it very clear that if we needed help, we had to “only” ask fellow students or do it before class ends at 12.30, because she would not stay more than 30 seconds longer. It was just her way of introducing herself and the course, it gave no motivation. And when we asked about a program called SPSS (that she made VERY clear that we HAD to use) she would say “well, that is not my problem that you do not have the program or have experience with it. But you can ask the other teacher”.

She had an assistant teacher because she did not know the program herself. So, he was there to help us conduct the research that she required us to do. A lot of the times that was confusing, our group experienced up to several times that she would say “ask him” and he would say “I’m not sure, ask her”. And we were left with a question mark on our faces.

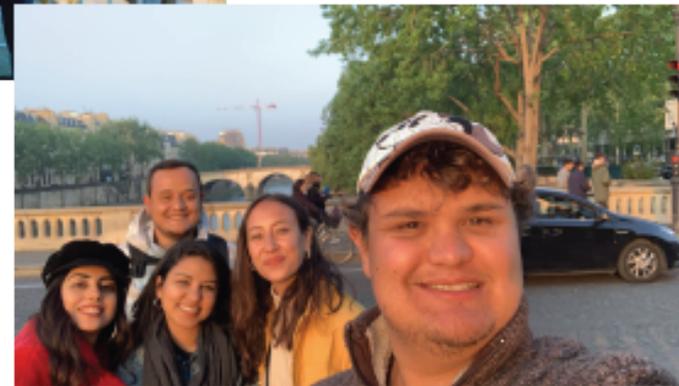
At the end we passed and so on, but none of us were truly proud of the results, because we honestly had no clue of what she wanted from us. And on top of that, we did not even receive help from her or the support teacher. We had to ask another teacher in another course who used the same program to help us. The only reason I really passed that course and understood some of it, were because of the teacher in my Neuromarketing course – which was not okay. I truly respected my teacher from Neuromarketing to help me with something that did not involve him.

As conclusion, I would not recommend this course unless you have experience within SPSS or have great knowledge about conducting consumer research.

In general, I would just advice you to take courses you have a little bit knowledge about and just a couple of new ones. You do only have the courses for 6 weeks, so you have to make the most of it in order to gain knowledge and experience.



MOOD PICS FROM EVERYTHING



CULTURAL/PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

CHALLENGES WITHIN THE CULTURE & EXPERIENCE

Since I went to Holland and in theory the culture should not be that big of a difference compared to the Danish culture, I still felt like I had to overcome some obstacles.

Even though Holland should be the best country in Europe to speak English, I felt like a lot of people that I met had trouble with communicating with me. Often in supermarkets or stores they were not able to speak English. But I could not figure out if it was due to the fact that they could not speak English or were just too lazy to try. I experienced a lot that even when I spoke English to them, they still answered me back in Dutch. But that was just a minor challenge.

Otherwise the challenges were within my household (I lived with 5 Dutch students – but I will get into that later), so I had to “fit in” with what they were used to vs. what I was used to in Denmark (I live with two other girls so I am used to roomies).

I did also experience some challenges with how to pay in stores. I have a standard VISA card and a MasterCard and only international stores, or big chains accepted my card. So, I had to withdraw

money and pay with cash majority of the places, since I did not feel the need to apply for a Mastroc card for 5 months.

WHAT WAS THE BEST CULTURAL/PERSONAL EXPERIENCE?

To be honest, the best experience was being able to be me and just me. I was able to find myself in a whole new way and perspective than in Denmark. I was the only person from Scandinavia, forcing me to always be outside of my comfort zone, not having anyone to speak with in my own language – but I loved it! From what I saw people from the same country had a tendency to “stick” together while of course still being social, but they quickly ended up speaking their own language.

From my personal experience, I really gained a lot of new knowledge about myself. I have always been an open person, but this really helped me realize how I am as a person and how important it is to be open.

Cultural wise, the best experience was to learn different people from different cultures, hearing about how their lives are, school system, government and much more. I have never gained so much knowledge about other cultures and now I respect them so much more.

Learning how “closed” Europe can be and how little you hear about countries like South Africa and Argentina really caught me. Learning so many different cultures, made me want to research more and stay much more on top of what is going on in the world (more than before).

Hearing about their obstacles and compare them to what we as students have in Denmark, I really started appreciating my life. I already knew that us students in Denmark have great opportunities, but you never truly realize it before you hear about it from other international students. Plus, I got to learn and taste so much good food!

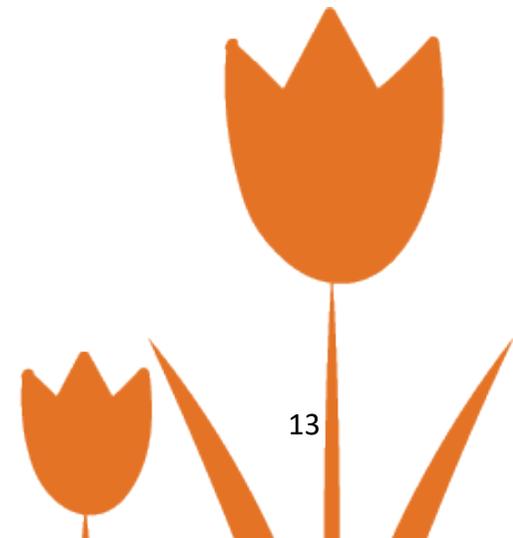
ADIVCE

If you are considering a semester abroad – DO IT! No matter what country and so on, it is an experience you will have for a life time and so many memories you can look back at.

Would I recommend Tilburg (Fontys)? Yeah, if you would like to go to a more chill place and you do not mind having the exact same weather as in Denmark.

Tilburg and Fontys was a great experience for me and you can easily travel around in Holland but also to other countries since it is close to France, Belgium and Germany.

In general, I would advise you to plan ahead, be prepared to a bit of school mess and a lot of platforms to learn. But they are super nice people both the international office and the buddy’s (students who will help you during the semester). And be open minded, do not limit yourself because everyone is in the same shoe as you. I quickly learned that the faster I opened up about how I felt being there, a lot of my fellow international students could relate – and that really helped us moving along and getting a better experience.



PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

In general, I found the application process easy and straightforward. KEA is good at guiding you and telling you what to do in the different steps. The same with Fontys, I had some trouble with the learning contract and the deadline and both schools were understanding and helpful. So, no problems here for me.

SETTLING DOWN IN THE NETHERLANDS

Besides having known beforehand that they do not really accept my card, settling down was easy. With all the technology we have on our phones etc. It is super intuitive. I did not need the help of Fontys in order to settle down, but I also arranged my own living situation so that might have been why.

WHERE DID I LIVE?

Oh, see this was a mess due to several things which I am not going to go into depth with, since the main reason for the mess were the people I lived with. But I found my accommodation through Facebook, I just searched for different groups in Tilburg and became a member of 3-5. I posted my own posts in the different groups but also texted a lot of the people searching for a roommate.

You do receive the option to go through a company called Student Housing Holland, which I started with picking. However, it is extremely overpriced and the deposit is around DKK20.000 depending on which room you choose/get. Also, they get “sold out” so quick, so you really need to stay on top. The room prices were around €460 up to €590. The houses and rooms are nice, and you have cleaning services, but it is not special otherwise. It is a nice safety to have when going abroad, also due to the fact that you will be living with other international students. Also, they arrange bikes, gym membership, Mastrocard and I*ESN membership for you.

I got offered two rooms through Facebook, one being with a lawyer and his dog with a rent under €300 and the other in a house with 5 other students for €367. At the end I chose the room with 5 other Dutch students to be more social and learn the Dutch culture. The room itself was big and nice, it was a Dutch guy going abroad himself, so it was a perfect match! Also, the deposit was only €100.

The room and the place of the house were good, it was a 12-minute bike ride to the school and 5 minutes to the city center. However, I would not recommend living with 5 other Dutch students (they were nice and all, but they have their life under control) since it is hard to fit in and surprisingly enough not all of them could speak English.

So, for me I spent most of my time in my room (also we only had a shared kitchen and bath, no living room) and socialized with other international students. I did experience issues with mice, people did not clean etc. But again, that is really depends on the people that you live with.

At the end, I would recommend student housing if you find it affordable, otherwise you can find something cheaper (probably better than mine) through Facebook. Also, the extra things that student housing offer you, you can easily get that yourself.

OTHER EXPENSES

Taking a semester abroad do involve a lot of expenses, flight tickets, accommodation, bike, gym membership, books etc. But it is possible to manage with a strict budget.

I had monthly expenses containing food, rent, gym, kick boxing, my bike (Swapfiets), Spotify and other expenses from Denmark which were fixed. But it all fitted under my SU, Erasmus and SU loan. I did also receive one grant to help.

You do of course take a lot of trips and do outings with other international students, which costs money

– but it is really all about prioritizing. I went back home to Denmark three times (more than enough) and took one trip to Paris. And I feel like this was fine, but a lot also travelled to Belgium, Austria, Germany and many other places. I also travelled around in Holland visiting Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Also, Fontys arrange three trips for €65 which I can recommend taking!

I did stay within my budget, but it is super easy to overspend so I did try to make it a bit stricter to not overspent too much and I did not really go out and drink.

CONCLUSION

I can definitely recommend going to Tilburg for a more chill and low-key semester abroad (I am sure you can make it wilder than me). Holland is a super cozy country and Fontys were a good school despite complications.

