

Global & Public Health Programme Reports

1 General Information	
Study programme & Degree (if applicable: undergraduate studies/degree/institution)	Global Health (Research) (M.Sc.) Athena Institute, Faculty of Science
Weblink	https://vu.nl/en/education/master/global-health-research
University	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
City / Country	Amsterdam / Netherlands
Semesters / Years	4 semesters / 2 years
Study / semester abroad	<input type="checkbox"/> mandatory <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> optional
Language of instruction	English

2 Preparations / Organizational Aspects	
When did you start to prepare for the study programme?	<p>I initially did the application within a few weeks in May and June. As I then had to wait for a longer time to have the interview and get the confirmation of my acceptance, I couldn't do anything for that period. I got accepted at the end of June. Therefore, there was only a bit more than a month to prepare all relevant things about moving, getting into the university's digital infrastructure and so on.</p> <p>A few important things are outlined on the university websites: https://vu.nl/en/education/more-about/what-happens-after-admission and https://vu.nl/en/education/more-about/when-you-arrive</p>
What must be considered in preparation for the study programme?	<p>The most time in the preparation process, I spend on getting all the needed documents together. But as I was already preparing some of the documents for other applications, it was useful.</p>

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	<p>Additionally, a bit of preparation for the language test might be required, depending on how good your English is already. But it is helpful to go through the procedure once before, to know what is expected from you.</p> <p>To complete the entrance examination, you should plan one or two days in your schedule, where you can focus on writing the essay. And if you aren't sufficient in basic epidemiology, you can do online-based preparation programs.</p>	
<p>How is the application process? Is there a deadline for the application?</p>	<p>After the initial application including all necessary documents is accessed as sufficient, you have to complete an entrance examination. This examination consists of an essay based on a lecture and a recent research project of the institute. Lastly, an interview with one of the leads of the programme will finalize the application process.</p> <p>The programme has two application deadlines. The first one for international students (non-EU countries) is on the 1st April and the second one for students from EU countries and Dutch students is on the 1st June each year.</p>	
<p>2a Documents</p>		
<p>Which documents were needed for the application / country entry? How/Where did you get them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> report <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> language certificate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> motivational letter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CV/ resumé <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> recommendation letter <input type="checkbox"/> insurances <input type="checkbox"/> visa <input type="checkbox"/> vaccines 	<p>The language requirements are: IELTS: 6.5 overall; TOEFL Internet-based test: 92 overall; Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE): A, B, C; Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE): A, B, C</p> <p>I did the TOEFL internet-based test, as it was possible on short notice and all tests cost kind of the same.</p>

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		<p>One recommendation letter is needed. As it preferably should be from the supervisor of the bachelor thesis, I got it from them as well. On some pages of the website of the university, they talk about two recommendation letters, but one is enough.</p> <p>Also, a bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher is needed. Having a basic knowledge of epidemiology/statistics (preferably at least 6 ECTS) is recommended but can be compensated by taking an additional course before the start of the programme.</p> <p>A visa wasn't required for me at least, as I am an EU citizen. But for non-EU/EEA citizens, it is needed.</p>
2b Financial Aspects		
<p>Are there costs related to the study programme? How much are they?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> semester contribution <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> tuition fee <input type="checkbox"/> enrolment fee <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> others</p>	<p>There is an application fee of 100 €, which covers any applications at the VU Amsterdam.</p> <p>For each academic year, you have to pay 2209 € (EU/EEA student) or 15500 € (non-EU/EEA student). These numbers are for the year 2022/23.</p>

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<p>How do you finance your study programme (abroad)?</p>	<p>Luckily, I get a lot of support from my family, who sponsor me partially. Additionally, I have a job as a student assistant, which helps me to have a sound financial base.</p>
<p>Do you get financial support? (e.g. scholarship, BAföG, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From which institution do you get the financial support? - How much do you get (optional)? <p>Do you have any tips / experiences for application?</p>	<p>No. I tried to get BAföG at the beginning of my programme but stopped the process after I got my job as a student assistant.</p>
<p>Do you have insights into jobs for students?</p>	<p>For this master programme they most of the time looking for two student assistants from each year, which help in running the programme from an administrative side, but also get to help out in research (projects) at the Athena Institute. Sometimes there is a need for additional, temporarily tasks at the Athena Institute, which could be an option for income.</p> <p>Additionally, there are a lot of minimum wage jobs around Amsterdam in the Horeca sector (e.g. bars, restaurants, cafés, supermarkets), where also non-Dutch speaking students can work.</p>
<p>How would you rate the cost of living in your city (in comparison to specific cities in your country?)</p>	<p>The living costs in Amsterdam and the surroundings are high. The housing situation in the whole Netherlands is bad, therefore, it is difficult to find a place to stay in the first place. Student housing is a cheaper option, but it is difficult to get it, especially as an international student. The trouble for international students to find housing is a bigger struggle in general. Eventually you have to be okay with commuting every day from other cities, which can be around 30-45 minutes by train.</p>
<p>Based on your experience, how much should someone calculate for accommodation/ food/ public transportation/ wifi?</p>	<p>The costs for accommodation can vary between 300 to 800 €, depending on whether you get student housing and of course with how many people you live with.</p> <p>The monthly expenses for food can vary between 200 to 350 €, depending how often you eat outside of your home (e.g. takeout, university cafeteria).</p>

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	<p>The public transportation is a bit more expensive, but most students use the bike for transportation anyways.</p>
<p>Are there other costs that need to be considered? (e.g., vaccinations, insurances, visa, travel costs)</p>	<p>If you don't find any accommodation before your arrival, you might need to stay in a hostel or hotel for a while, which could create additional costs.</p> <p>You also need a health insurance in the Netherlands. If you have a health insurance from your home country, which works in the whole EU, that is also fine. But if you want to work in the Netherlands, you still need a Dutch health insurance.</p>

<h3>3 Studying</h3>	
<p>Why did you decide to study at that university?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What appealed to you most? - What does it offer what others don't? 	<p>The first reasons, why it came up on my radar was the late application deadline, as I decided pretty late that I wanted to do a master programme in global health. Apart from that, the programme includes two half-year internships, which results in a research-focused/practical orientated master programme. It also teaches the basics of qualitative research in the first modules. This convinced me more, as I had barely any experience with that kind of research.</p>
<p>Which modules did you take? (brief overview)</p> <p>Which modules did you like/ were special at that university?</p>	<p>The mandatory modules in the first year are called Research Methods in Global Health (includes quantitative and qualitative methods), Global Health Interventions, Academic Writing, and International Comparative Analysis of Health Care Systems. I also did an elective called Migration, Culture, Health and Research.</p> <p>The first two modules were the most fun. We had to first develop a research proposal ("Research Method in GH") and then develop an Intervention program ("GH Interventions"), which focused on improving the health situation in that specific area. This was very enjoyable, because my project group worked well together and also, we needed to learn and apply various research methods, as well as, using our creativity for problem solving.</p>

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<p>How would you rate the workload/ amount of self-studying/ group work, etc.?</p> <p>How were the lecturers/ teaching style? What was new for you? What did you have to get used to?</p>	<p>The workload within this master programme shouldn't be underestimated. During the first four months, which includes the four mandatory modules, the weekly workload was big and included working on the weekends. Having (bi-)weekly deadlines contributes to a constant amount of work that needs to be done. Over the course of these months, the number of lectures and seminars decreases and gets replaced with more self-studying and especially group work. I would estimate that one could have 45-55 weekly working hours during that period.</p> <p>How helpful the teaching style was, varied for me between lecturers. One great aspect, which applies to most lecturers, was their great experience of the field and how much they included it to create an interesting lecture. I especially liked the lecturers of the first two modules, as they were divers regarding their background and research topics.</p> <p>However, challenging for me was the constant change of lecture style and the great variety of lecture topics that we covered, but then often without deepen it later. One teaching style was more problematic for me, because the lecturer didn't respond to given feedback and more unstructured and unique style, which annoyed and demotivated me.</p>
<p>Are there any specialisation areas in your programme? Which did you choose?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>To which extent were international and global topics discussed/ part of the study programme?</p> <p>Which topics were the most interesting/ you liked most?</p>	<p>Within every module, there was a large inclusion of international and global topics. The covered regions ranged from the Global South to Europe, whit the latter having maybe the bigger share. But also more global topics like Decolonialisation or Migration were covered.</p> <p>The aspects were included in lectures, but also group projects focused on health-related topics in countries all over the world.</p>

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	I enjoyed the topics Decolonialisation, Mental health in various regions and Migration the most. This was due to both interesting lectures, peer discussions and assignments.
Where is the campus located? Is the campus spread throughout the city? Is it easy to arrive?	The campus is located in Amsterdam Zuid. There is only one big campus, where everything is located, and which is easily accessible via public transportation (train, metro, tram, bus) and by bike. They also have a lot of bicycle stands on the campus.

4 Living	
Briefly describe your daily life. How is your study-work-life-balance?	It is difficult to describe a more generalised daily in this master programme, as at least for me, it varied much over the course of the semester. But in general, I would spend 6-10 hours a day studying during the week, which could consist of lectures, seminars, group projects or self-study. Apart from that, I tried to enjoy life in Amsterdam, by going out with friends to bars, visiting museums, going on bike trips and a lot of other fun activities.
How do you experience the city/country and people/fellow students? How is the atmosphere?	In general, the Netherlands and Amsterdam are very welcoming, as far as I experienced it. Because Amsterdam itself is very international and therefore a lot of people speak a good level of English, it is much easier to navigate the city and have a great time. But of course, learning Dutch helps a lot as well. The students show a great interest in international students and most Dutch students try to include us in their activities and parties. Speaking about parties, it seems that Dutch students like this activity a lot and if you are into that, you can have a lot of fun here.
What did you learn for yourself personally and culturally? [e.g. an event / situation which was eye-opening / insightful / enlightening]	One of the most insightful experiences I have made and still make is to get to know the variety and diversity of views, shaped by our e.g. cultural, ethnic or professional background, that exist. I experience it nearly every day, mostly through interaction with my fellow students, and it is challenging me to question my point of view as well.

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<p>Do you have any tips for leisure activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does someone have to see? - Are there college sports at university? - Are there any student events to connect (e.g. coffee break, etc.)? - Are there any (regional) cultural events? 	<p>My first recommendation would be to get a Museumkaart. This is an investment of 64,90 €, but if you like museums and want to visit a few, while in the Netherlands, it is worth it. Especially, as it only takes you around 4-5 museum visits before you would pay more for the single tickets in total.</p> <p>Second, I would recommend going on biking trips in the surroundings of Amsterdam. Because the roads are plain, it isn't super challenging to go for longer trips and you can see the nice Dutch nature in the meanwhile. If you are interested in getting to know other students outside of your programme, it is worth a try to join a student or study association in Amsterdam. The association "Gyrinus Natans" for example is the study association, where GH students can be part of, and they organise events for their members on a regular occasion. There are also a lot of associations centred around certain sports or other free-time activities, one could join.</p>
<p>What do you have to consider about public transport? What is important? What is different?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most used transportation? - Are there semester/ student tickets? 	<p>The mainly used mode of transportation in Amsterdam is the bike. The biking lanes are in pretty good condition and most of the time not that much slower than public transport. The public transport offers a variety of options with train, Metro, tram and bus, but one also needs to consider higher expenses by using that. Nevertheless, they are great options for longer distances or if one doesn't want to bike. Helpful when using public transport is owning an "OV card", which is used as an easy way to pay for it.</p> <p>Only if you are a Dutch citizen or meet certain specific requirements, you are eligible for having free of charge transport either during the week or the weekends.</p>
<p>What do you need (not) to pack/ prepare?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is life-saving in the host city/ country? - What do you regret (not) bringing? - Do you have any tips for preparation? 	<p>As the housing situation is very difficult, it is recommended to start as soon as possible to look for a room. Unfortunately, nearly all websites and services charge fees, without having a guarantee that you'll find accommodation. Additionally, you should be aware of scams, as especially international students are a favourite target.</p>

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5 Reflection	
<p>What is your personal experience about your study programme? Would you recommend the study programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What did you especially like? - What did you not like? 	<p>The study programme is very challenging, regarding both workload and difficulty level. Nevertheless, it gives you a broad overview of the field of Global Health, is very international (especially regarding students) and practical due to two big internships and the assignments, aiming at real-life examples and/or being in cooperation with other stakeholders.</p>
<p>How did you experience the organisation and support at your university?</p> <p>Is there any special support for international students?</p>	<p>The organisation at the university has still room for improvement. Certain aspects like lectures and workshops are mostly well organized. But unfortunately, certain aspects like consultation hours, support around internships, or personal support/mentorship is depending on the effort of certain individuals within the institute. During my first year, we had several interruptions/changes of responsibilities due to several causes, which made it more difficult to know whom to contact and also to get a helpful/timely response.</p> <p>The support for other aspects of life outside of the actual content of the programme is a bit lacking, especially in the first weeks/months, when one is still trying to settle in in Amsterdam, which can be a problem, especially for international students.</p>
<p>What are your personal experiences about living in the host city/ country?</p> <p>What broadened your mind? Have you left your comfort zone? Have you changed your mindset? If yes, in which way?</p>	<p>I enjoy living in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, my first semester was accompanied by COVID-19 lockdowns, which made it more difficult to explore the city in all its aspects. But with everything opening up, there is a lot of activities to do and venues to visit. One aspect I enjoy the most is the diversity of food from various cultures/countries. I was able to eat many dishes I haven't eaten before or at least more authentic versions of these.</p>

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6 Recommendation	
Do you have other tips for studying the programme & living in the host city/ country?	No.
Do you have contact persons or information for support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student supports - international office - accommodation service - etc. 	Studen Desk (studentdesk@vu.nl): more info at https://vu.nl/en/education/more-about/services-from-our-student-desk International Support Service (incl. accommodation service): https://vu.nl/en/education/more-about/services-from-our-international-office
Your name, contact information (highly appreciated, but not mandatory)	My name is Maurice Remy, if you have any questions or want to know more about the programme, don't hesitate to contact me at maurice.luca.remy@gmail.com .