TU Delft - optimized studies and student life

Before departure
I applied for exchange studies because I wanted the experience of living abroad and to learn more about another country. I also wanted to improve my skills in English. Delft was my choice because it’s famous for being one of the best Technical universities. Delft offered courses that seemed very appealing and a bit different to the courses at my home university KTH. I had also decided to study in Europe and use the great possibility of Erasmus. By choosing the Netherlands I expected to meet good English speaking, open-minded people. I also did hope to have a lot of fun and being able to visit Amsterdam, Rotterdam as well as other cities with good reputation that I never had the chance to visit before.

Upon arrival
I arrived in Delft one week before the school started, but it was only one day before the quite intense social introduction week started. The introduction program offered the chance to get to know other exchange students as well as getting useful information. The atmosphere was very welcoming and the activities several to choose from. I met friends the first week that I kept seeing during my whole stay in Delft. I also bought a bike already the second day in Delft. It was a very orange, typical Dutch bike and I liked it a lot. Many other students rented their bike during their stay in Delft. All rented bikes had a typical blue front tire which made them very easy to recognize.

Financials
I must say prices in the Netherlands and in Sweden are quite similar but maybe slightly lower in the Netherlands. You could for example found cheaper bear but also alternatives where the prices were the same as in Sweden.
Accommodation

TU Delft offer help to get accommodation. The price for this service is about 300 Euro including the final agency cost. I chose instead to find a place through Facebook. That was not very easy and took a lot of time. Finally, I was really lucky to find a place on campus right next to the Faculty of Architecture. I shared kitchen and toilet with three other students. It was an old building, but newly renovated. My room had a ceiling height of more than 5 metres which felt a bit luxuriously. The cost was 497 Euro per month.

University and studies

The number of students at TU Delft are a few thousand more than at KTH. TU Delft offers courses and study programmes in many different technical areas. In that way, it’s similar to KTH. The way of teaching though is a bit different. The assignments are very important and you often get a lot of requirements but not so much guidance. It is confusing not to know what you have to learn for passing the course. You are often supposed to find the answers yourself and somehow realize how much you need to know. There might be recommended literature but very seldom any exact chapters you have to learn for the test. You could also get questions on the tests about knowledge from earlier courses which means that they aspect you to remember to a greater extent what you have learned before. You can often not get answers to earlier tests as at KTH which also means it’s difficult to know the level of knowledge you have to reach. The teachers are generally very good in English and the quality of the lectures are high. It’s therefore highly recommended to attend at the lectures. The lectures are sometimes recorded which makes it possible to follow a course although the class is exactly the same time as another course.
Courses
At first when I applied for studying in Delft I was interested in the courses where it was possible to combine both building engineering and architecture. Later when I was already admitted to Delft and was about to choose courses, I found out that you as an exchange student are not allowed to take part in the courses at the faculty of Architecture. The regular building engineer students though have this option. Once I came to Delft I asked if there was any possibility to make an exception. I was lucky the faculty of Architecture made such an exception twice which made it possible for me to take two courses there. I am very grateful the international office of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geoscience helped me with this. It really made my time in Delft something special.
The first course at the Architectural faculty was a course called Technical Façade Design (AR0115). In a group of four student we had an assignment designing a new façade of the innovation centre of a steel company called TATA steel. The assignment was very realistic in the way that we visited the company, learned about its products and talked to the people working in the centre.

The course was a competition where the winning design could actually be the real design of the building. I was lucky to be in the winning team. This was an honour and also included a dinner at the sky bar of one of the tallest buildings in Amsterdam.
The second course was a course called MEGA (AR0026). It consists of designing a high rise building more than 180 metres high. This assignment was made in a group of six students. Each student was responsible for a different area. I was responsible for climate design and building services. Each student in the group had its own teacher to discuss the design which developed throughout all the course. The challenge was to integrate each area into one concept and to get a deeper understanding for the other areas in the group.
I also had two courses that actually was at the Faculty of Civil engineering and Geoscience. The first was Structural Design, Special Structure (CIE5251-09). The course was about understanding the concept of optimization and free form structures. The course also included lectures in BIM and getting to understand computational design. The assignment was to design a light structure situated at Temple Mayor in Mexico City.

The other course at the Civil faculty was a course called Concrete Structures 2 (CIE3150). This course included knowledge in prestressed concrete. The course consisted of an assignment and a test.

**People and country**

I must say I really like the people of Netherlands. They are generally very open minded, welcoming and also direct in a way that they say what they think. But as a Swede it is a bit shocking the way they cope with rules. For example, a requirement in a course doesn’t have to be a requirement in that way that it have to be fulfilled. Something illegal doesn’t have to be bad if it doesn’t disturb anyone. At the same time they seem to threat people in order to tell people that if you break the rules in a way that disturbs other people you could get punished, so you better be aware of the rules not to break them too much. In a way it’s confusing but also an interesting and practical approach to what’s right or wrong.
Delft is not a big city. It sometimes feels like being in a museum town with all canals and old houses. It is very beautiful. If you are looking for nightlife though there are other cities like Rotterdam (only ten minutes away), den Haag (also ten minutes away) or Amsterdam (one hour away) that offer more exciting bars and clubs. That is also what makes Netherlands so special. You have many cities and places to go to and explore. And you don‘t have to go far away to experience something new.
Leisure and social activities

In my spare time, I went to the gym at TU Delft a couple of times a week. But most of the time when I had some time off I went to some bar together with other students to have a beer. In the beginning of my visit I was most of the time hanging out with other exchange student and took part in activities organised by the student organisation ESN. In the end of the semester I also had met some Dutch students that had become my friends. In evenings and weekends, we had parties in Delft or went to Amsterdam, den Haag or Rotterdam.
Conclusion

I highly recommend doing an exchange semester and studying in Delft. But you have to be prepared that studying in Delft takes a lot of effort and you will probably study more than other exchange students at other universities.

You will have a lot of good knowledge when you return home. You will also have met a lot of nice people. Studying hard can definitely bring you close to other students that are in the same situation as you. And being away from home together with other students in the same situation is always a good reason to hang out together. There are friends around you and activities to take part in all the time. So you will definitely have a good time in Delft.