

# Our first international student exchange with Fontys kicks off

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Three 2015 Brand Strategy graduates spent the first semester of 2016 at Fontys Academy for Creative Industries, one of the largest universities in the Netherlands. Thomas Berti, Viloshan Appasamy, both Strategic Brand Communication honours students, and Devon Solomon, a Brand Building and Management degree student, completed subjects ranging from Concepting and Business Model Innovation to Service Marketing to Futures Research and Trendwatching with distinction.

We were curious to find out more about their experience at this well-respected institution and asked each student three questions:

1. Please describe your experience at Fontys;
2. What is the most important thing that you learnt about yourself whilst in Holland?
3. What advice do you have for future Vega exchange students?

Our team agreed that it is nearly impossible to describe their experiences and learnings in a few sentences and according to Tom their horizons were broadened substantially: 'Fonty's has been an unforgettable experience where I've learnt a lot both inside and outside of the classroom. I've loved interacting with over 20 nationalities on a regular basis, making friends and connections all around the world.' Viloshan adds that 'The assignments and modules that I took introduced me to industries that I never thought I would be able to add value in.' Devon agrees that 'not only did Fontys give me access to new subjects, some of which are not available for study in South Africa, but a new format and way of learning, which was both challenging and exciting.'



Developing entrepreneurial skills and exploration is close to a Veganite's heart and combined with travel students are able to gain a global perspective that builds independence, reflection and the curiosity to explore. For Devon 'studying abroad has

some really tough moments- these end up being huge growing moments. Independence is realising that even when you're miles away from your comfort zone, wherever you are, as soon as you dive in you're back in control.' Viloshan agrees, 'The most important thing I learnt is that I have the capacity to start my own business. Living independently in Holland gave me time to think about my career and where I could add the most value with the skill set that I possess; so in two words, self awareness; that's the most important thing I learnt about myself whilst in Holland.' For Tom the realisation that he '...can work with anyone from anywhere and produce great things' changed the way he now views his future.

Our international exchange programme continues next year and our now wiser travellers have the following advice for future exchange students. Firstly, be big picture thinkers and connect. According to Tom 'The university is awesome, and the people you meet will open your mind and give you a global mind-set', whereas Devon encourages students to engage and actively make friends; 'Everyone's in the same position, people appreciate you reaching out to them.' Viloshan stresses that one should not go in with any expectations and 'Be ready to learn, have an open mind and embrace every day on exchange as if it were your last before going back to SA... The exchange is not just about learning at Fontys, it's about being a twenty someONE with an opportunity to learn how to live independently...there's no better opportunity to learn about yourself and become self-aware of what your purpose is.'

Wisdomwithmagic indeed! To our ambassadors Tom, Devon and Viloshan, Vega salutes you; you made us proud! We can't wait for the 2017 exchange. Hup Holland!

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