

2012-2013

University Attended: EM Strasbourg, France

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

One main day, though it carried on through the first week:

- Information about the course and subject options
- Tour of the campus
- Meeting the societies and signing up
- Integration weekend

Overall, the induction was informative, though also not enough. Turned out, many of the courses were going to clash and others had already started before we had registered (you're not allowed to miss more than 4 hours). The tour was ok, done by students who didn't want to be there, but it meant people could just walk around and meet new people.

I also went on the 'Integration Weekend' which was a great experience. 13 hours to the south of France on a bus, but met many people (both Erasmus and French). This was organised and run by the societies of the business school, which is by far the best part of EM.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support.

French bureaucracy at it's finest;

First, choosing courses was the most unorganised thing I've been involved in for many years. The computer system was terrible along with the strict quota for the amount of people on each course, meaning you had to be certain of the course you wanted, and then work out where to click to ensure your place (not fun).

The teaching style cannot be generalised for EM; every teacher was very different in their assessment and grading methods. For example, some courses were assessed by a 15 minute presentation which at the end teachers would be happy to give you 19/20, whereas others there was an individual assignment, group project and exam and we knew the highest we could possibly get would be 16/20.

However, the range and variety of teachers from all over the world was refreshing and each was able to give me new perspectives on topics. The support is poor. The amount of times you will be told to "Come back tomorrow" is ridiculous, which made sense with 30 people queuing to speak to one person (but if the systems and timetables had been sorted at the start there would have been very few problems).

I must say however; the amount of international presence within EM is amazing; I was in a group one time with a Mexican, Russian, American, Romanian, Chinese and Georgian. It sound bads, but really once you have been in France for a few months you begin to understand the systems and warm to their ways. Realising that you must catch many people 'on the right day' and 'at the right time' is key. But also the fact that there is no point trying to do anything productive between 12 and 2 (LUNCH), and soon realise 'if you can't beat them, join them'.. they have a good life; they relax, understand when things are urgent, and when certain things aren't, they can wait.

Best thing is, I will now get a degree from EM "BA European and French Management", which can only be positive.

Overall, different, and at times so so, so frustrating! But once you try and understand why they act as they do, you can understand and integrate much easier into their system and culture (which extends into the business school).

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

I could not be more positive about the MBS international team! Sue and Andy helping me with sorting the accommodation issues over the summer was extremely helpful. You both kept me calm and made me realise it would work out (you'd fit in here!). From this, I knew if I ever had any 'real' problems here in Strasbourg, you would both be available to offer support and advice. The updates and reminders were great and made me remember that I am part of the UoM and MBS, which in turn reminded me of the organised system I would be returning to.

Thank you very much!

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

These were great, all the information was relevant and the meetings were planned months in advance. Helped me understand the options and what I should expect during the year.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

"Do not rely on them". As I said; if you don't catch them at the right time, they are not going to be much help (unless you just push them to realise you need help now!).

But, in general, there was always a way around any issue, in fact, one day it would be 'absolutely not possible' and the next 'no problem'...

Persistence was the key! Also, knowing yourself what issues there were; whether your timetable worked, if you had missed a class, if exams clashed. Naturally, personal responsibility is essential, but at times you'd find out the key information (e.g. exam date changes a week before the original exam) from friends.

But, I did deep down always know the issues would be sorted.

There were times I just had to laugh at the French, bureaucratic system. Again, once you get used to it, it's fine; just a shock coming from MBS.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

I had no issues with healthcare and insurance due to still being in the EU. Although to be part of the rugby team I had to have a full health examination and an insane amount of documents (classic French).

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

Only extra costs were lined to the EM societies for membership and trips.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

After taking 3 months to secure the accommodation, my accommodation has been great. "Studea Winston II" is very close to the university and full of other students. Others stayed mainly at "La Marne" residence which was less expensive, but this also coupled with the quality of the accommodation. Overall people were fine there though.

Some stayed in flats in the city with French people (best option), but for that, it would be essential to visit for a week in the Summer to sort it out! Very much worth it!!!

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Transport was easy, not great for planes (must go via Amsterdam or Paris) but for trains it was very calm. Within Strasbourg; the trams are frequent and on time, though nothing is really far (within a 25 min walk from everywhere really). Extremely good train links (TGV), expensive though, so must book early.

The social side of Strasbourg is what made this year so special. I have met a huge variety of people from all over the world including France. I have made very close friends and in turn, also now have lots of places I 'must' visit. In terms of the local students; many people didn't make one local friend. But I made many, becoming close friends with people in their first and third years in EM.

I also was the only 'non-French' on the rugby team in Strasbourg, which in turn gave me the opportunity to meet people from all across France, studying different things in Strasbourg. In March I went to Bordeaux for a sports tournament and was the only non-French person playing a sport out of over 2,500 students; incredible experience!

The student groups were really something special. They are given funding and sponsorship to be creative, and the freedom to be able to organise student friendly activities. They really bring all the students within the business school together, people are proud to be at EM Strasbourg.

I must also mention the city itself. It is such a beautiful, colourful place to live. There is an international culture and an overall acceptance of everyone, along with being a key part of the European Union (European Parliament). The quality of life I have had here has been something else; not only the 2 hours to relax and have lunch in the middle of every day, but also the quality of the food and wine and the acceptance of only the best (because why would you want anything else?).

It's location is perfect, and I have visited many places over my time here including Lithuania, Poland, Germany and every corner of France.

It's the city and the people you meet that make this Erasmus year so special. Once you realise everyone is in the same position as you; you work together and you therefore always know you are never alone if any problems arise.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

A cultural and social discovery of understanding and acceptance, something I feel should be compulsory to every student.

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

The orientation programme lasted for few days. It consisted of couple of big meetings with the programme coordinators who explained the teaching system in the school as well as covered topics such as opening bank account, receiving government rent subsidy.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

I found the French teaching style a little chaotic as the schedule kept changing every week including lecture times and buildings. There were plenty of courses to choose from however I had to make sure the lectures do not clash which very often was impossible because of reason mentioned earlier. Majority of assessments were assignments during the semester and the final exam in the end. The teaching support was poor from French lecturers as they could not be bothered to reply on student emails. However, the guest lecturers were very happy to help.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

I did not have much interaction with MBS International Team.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

Students going to France should be strongly encouraged to study French so that there are less problems with interaction when living in the country.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

Mrs Elodie Thevenet was very helpful all the time. Whatever was going on she always tried to find a solution.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

I did not have to buy an additional health insurance as I am an EU citizen.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

There were no additional costs.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

Student halls are definitely the best and the cheapest way of staying in Strasbourg but they go very quickly (all the available student rooms were full within the first 3 minutes of opening the application for year 2012/2013 so you must apply straight after the clock shows 00.01!) I stayed in Paul Appell renovated building E which was perfectly fine for 3 months.

I rented a room from a private landlord in the first semester and got into lots of trouble when I wanted to move out in the mid semester even though the contract allowed me to do that. Another unpleasant thing is that many landlords ask for a French guarantor and French bank account before signing the contract. Banks again ask for registered address in France before opening a bank account with them so very often I was getting nowhere.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

I must say that Strasbourg University has great sporting facilities which are completely free in most of the cases so it is a great place to be for someone who loves sports. Almost everyone rides a bike there so I got one as well for quite cheap price in their bike market in September. 99% of French students do not speak, understand or want to speak English and literally avoid foreigners. Therefore I did not get to integrate much with locals however I did improve my German and Spanish as there were lots of students from Latin America and Germany. French people do not party out instead they organise home parties with their close friends so the social life is not great in comparison to Manchester. However, if you have Spanish, Greek or Italian friends there then they do party every night regardless the lack of good clubs in Strasbourg.

Unfortunately, my overall experience was not great and I would not go back there again. I did meet some really nice people whom I still keep in touch with. However the stress and negative moments I had to go through during 8 months' time there were far more than in I had experienced over two full years in the UK.