

2013-2014

University Attended: EM Strasbourg

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

I arrived alone, without a place to stay or a hotel in mind; luckily a member of the BDI (international society) let me stay at their flat for a week so that I could get my bearings. It was incredible as I managed to meet lots of the new people through nights out etc each day, and made friends with both Erasmus and French students within the first few days. At the university we had welcome lectures each day to introduce us to the system and explain course enrolment. Each evening there was an event organised by the BDI which included: bar crawl, restaurant, club nights etc so orientation was pretty busy and great fun. Additionally you could take part in an orientation weekend (this year was in Brittany). I didn't go as I tried to find an apartment however some Erasmus did go and loved it – a weekend of drinking, games, partying etc with 100 students or so. Only downside of orientation was lack of involvement after Christmas when the new Erasmus start. I wasn't told about any of the events to meet the new students and I missed out a bit that week.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

Lots of focus on presentations and group work, so be prepared for lots of group meetings and to speak a lot. Level is lower than Manchester, however there is often more work to do. Classes took widely varying structure. French classes were 2 hours a week, whereas other classes could be 4 hours. Classes often started on a Monday and could finish by Friday (especially in 2nd semester). I had an interesting few weeks in March, where I had class 8-12 & 2-6 each day including 8-12 on a Saturday. Of course you can choose classes to avoid these timetables, however the French are useless with posting information in advance, so often timetables are unknown when you select the course. When choosing modules, the administration would emphasise the importance of not selecting clashing classes so that you don't miss too much. What they don't mention is the lack of timetables already so that clashing is inevitable. I was particularly unlucky here with 50 hours of clashes lined up in semester 2, so I had to change 5 of my modules to get around this. The French admin are helpful to an extent but will always blame someone else and tell you "they can do as much as they can" – but not promises. However speaking to my friends, I really did get the worst deal out of anyone, so you'll probably be fine. Also exams tend to be in the last class of each course rather than in an exam period (despite what they claim on the calendar): so be wary of which classes you decide to skip, as you could miss big presentations, coursework or exams (and yes that sucks for 4 hours classes – but then the courses finish pretty quickly). So more class, lower level work tends to even it out in the end.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

I didn't really need anything else and I felt they would help in any matters I had, so this area did not concern me too much as they were all helpful and replied to things very quickly! (unlike the French).

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

I think more focus on finding accommodation would be good, that was my greatest issue in France.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

The coordinator over there (Elodie) will help you with most queries quite well, but don't expect anyone to reply to emails, the French are archaic and it's best to go to her office. BDI (international society) are more helpful for most things and can help you: find a flat, find friends, pick courses, help with a bank account, electricity etc. They're really helpful and should be your first point of call. They'll also pick you up from the airport or train station when you arrive and should be always around to organise nights out and French integration. Most of them

speak good English (to an extent) and one girl next year (2014/2015) involved is actually a 2 year exchange student from Scotland, so she can help you out plenty.

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 didn't need to do anything additional in France, my European health card and Manchester cover were perfect. However I didn't find out as I was never ill/injured so I never had to claim in any way.

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.

No book costs or visa. But may want to buy a tram pass for Strasbourg or a bike for more efficient travel depending where you stay. Also some costs for joining societies: 15 for BDI, 65 for BDS (sports) and 100 for BDE (students – but included if you go to integration weekend (WEI)). I bought BDI: saved me money on nights out and a trip to Berlin. I also bought BDS for sports accessibility and joined the Futsal team. But didn't fork out for BDE as it didn't seem worth it: only about 5€ off big events e.g. Open Bar Nights.

ACCOMMODATION

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

I arrived with no plans about accommodation. I'd spoken to some people on Facebook and tried to find something online with them, however this was very difficult. If you're searching for private accommodation it's easiest to go through an agency when you're there and get them to show you as many places as possible and go to a few agencies. Furnished flats are harder to find, but they are out there. French landlords can be awkward about foreign students and one guy turned us down after sorting out all the documents for 2 weeks! So that was a big blow to me, it took me around 3 weeks to find a place. They often want a French guarantor so that was our issue. Sometimes the bank can help with this but it's rather complicated. Also they need a bank account to get a flat, but you need a French address for a bank account so it gets overly complicated. However if you want to live with French students (like I did) this is the best way. Halls are usual boring, plain and mostly foreign students (depending which ones). From my experience those in halls rarely stayed there, as they were pretty quiet and dull. Again the BDI helped with all this, contacted agencies and took students on tours of flats. So get in contact with them and they will help you!

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

Bikes are great way to get around, you can hire a "Velhop" for a year for only 40€ and they will never get stolen. Be careful cycling drunk! – especially near tram tracks. Strasbourg train station is great, and has lots of access to France and Germany, however train tickets can be quite expensive! (60-100€ single journeys). Make use of the decent car share offers on websites. We got to Berlin for only 25€ each and it's even cheaper to Paris or Milan. Social life is not on the same level as Manchester at all, clubs are smaller and crowded and music is, well, French. So a little behind the times, although some really good Berlin DJ's do come for special events and decent nights. Check out the L'Ososphere festival! Fatboy Slim was there last year with some better French and German DJs and is very similar to Warehouse Project for the weekend. Other than that keep track of university organised events as these guarantee lots of students and normally better music. The BDS and BDE organise a lot of good nights often with a bus from near university there and back again. And some of these can be open bars for 20€ or even for free. Integration with French students is fairly easy especially if you contact the BDI a lot. They all tend to speak some English but can be shy (until drunk), so try to be more approachable and dive in yourself. Again BDS, BDE and BDI are more outgoing and often speak the best English, but French is always much appreciated even if you're not so good. Strasbourg can be quiet but if you make the effort to get involved with Erasmus and French students you will have a great time and find the decent parties/clubs. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

Extremely challenging but an incredible year, which I would ALWAYS recommend.