

Report Form Exchange Period Abroad 2014-2015
Please submit your report form and your report in English

To which foreign university did you go: University of Cergy Pontoise
Country: France

- study period in: 1st semester
- start date study abroad: 08/09/2014 end date: 31/01/2015
- period of classes: from 15/09/2014 until: 12/12/2014
- examination period: from: 08/12/2014 until: 19/01/2015
- did you follow a language course: yes, from 15/09/2014 until 10/12/2014

Courses completed at the host university:

1. Intellectual Property
2. Introduction to French and Civil Law
3. Introduction to British Law
4. Rules of Evidence
5. Criminal Law and Procedure

a) Study programme

The study programme from the University of Cergy Pontoise offers a wide range of courses that one could select. The French courses available are ranging from bachelor to master level. Moreover, students who wish to study in English have the possibility of choosing from the Anglo-American law programme. The university also has an LLM programme (also in English) open as well to exchange students.

I ended up choosing only English taught courses as I was not pleased with the manner in which the French lectures took place. For the French courses the lectures do not resemble at all with the manner of teaching we are used to in the Netherlands. The courses took place in a very old amphitheater, with more than 500 students present. It is very hard to find a place or to hear something, as the teacher does not use any PowerPoints and the microphones barely work. Moreover, the method of teaching seems pretty archaic as there is no interaction with the students and the teacher simply reads his/hers notes or from the book and waiting for the students to write every word.

Therefore I have decided to switch up to the English courses as the methods of teaching were more interactive and quite similar to what the University of Groningen offers. I ended up choosing 2 LLM courses (Intellectual Property & Introduction to French and Civil Law) and 3

Bachelor courses from the Anglo-American programme (Introduction to British Law, Rules of Evidence and Criminal Law and Procedure). I was very pleased with all of them. The LLM programme offers a variety of courses and some of them even take place in a law firm in Paris. All the exams were in written form, except when the teacher decides on another method of evaluation. Since the French courses differ significantly from the English ones I would recommend taking Anglo-American Courses, since here one does not simply just have to write the monologue of the teacher and is engaged constantly in discussion regarding various topics.

b) language / language preparation

The level of French required by the university is a B2 which as I noticed is essential in order to keep up with the French courses and to be able to live in France. I knew exchange students which had a lower level and had difficulties on a day-to-day basis. And remember, not a lot of people know English in France.

Before going to Cergy-Pontoise I took an intensive summer French course in order to refresh my French knowledge and that really helped me as the language will be the first barrier that you will have to cross in France.

The university does offer French Courses for the Erasmus students which are free. They vary from A1 to C2. However, I was not completely satisfied with them. In my group there were around 35 people and it was really hard participating and engaging into a conversation as you had to “compete” with that many people in order to answer a question

c) finances and general matters

There were not really any additional costs to pay to the university. I did not have to pay an extra tuition fee or anything. However, the health insurance may cause certain problems. If you have a European health card there is no problem, however if you are privately insured or not from the European Union you might have to pay around 120€

Since Cergy Pontoise is the 5th zone of Paris things are not as expensive as in the capital. I would say that the prices are more or less the same as here, but if you move to Paris things change drastically. You could easily live with around 350-400 euros a month. However, I did not need the Navigo or ImagineR which is the monthly public transport.

Moreover, Paris can be an extremely pricy city, so keep that in mind as well as you will probably travel there frequently. A weekend ticket costs around 9 euros (for the whole day) while during the week the price doubles.

d) preparation and contact with the faculty abroad

Before the exchange it was a bit difficult to obtain the description of some courses as they were not all available. The Erasmus law coordinator, Mrs. Gombert replies quite promptly at the emails and will do her best to answer to any questions that you have regarding your period there.

I was pleased with the contact with the teachers as they were very helpful towards me. They have the time to talk with the students and offer clarifications. Some of them even borrowed me the

books as they were not available at the university library. However, this was what I experienced from the Anglo-American courses. For the French classes the situation is not the same, as it is hard to get into a contact with a teacher or obtain extra information. Some of them even do not make any distinction between the Erasmus students and the native French students with regards to the language and it can be harsh during the exams, since in the French programme, they are oral exams.

e) housing

My only significant problem I have encountered at this university was the housing situation.

You may opt to live in one of the university's campuses or in Paris. In order to apply for the university housing you have to complete an online form. One thing to keep in mind is that you can choose in which campus you want to live. I did not know that as the ladies from the International Office did not answer to this question. They only said it to me after that it was posted somewhere on the website. Moreover, all the law exchange students are given the Neuville residence, so keep that in mind as well when you apply.

I did not choose where to live and I was assigned the Chenes d'Or residence which seemed a great option as it was the cheapest (337e) at a walking distance from the law university. However, once I arrived there I found out that all law Erasmus students are in the other residence. It seemed odd to me since some of them did the same as me (did not choose a residence), however they were assigned to Neuville.

The first room I got at the Chenes d'Or was in a terrible condition. I could not imagine how someone can live in that room. Most of them are like that, however if you are lucky you get assigned one of the new ones. I tried to change my room however after a lot of discussion I succeeded. However, I still remained in the Chenes d'Or but the room was a million times better. The Neuville residence is brand new and a little bit more expensive (around 420e). Also, you need to take the train to go to the university which may seem as a hassle. However, all the law exchange students will probably be there (check maybe they will change it). Also you will leave alone as you will have your little studio. At the Chenes you will have to only share the toilet and the kitchen with one other person.

Moreover, you can apply for the CAF which is a housing aid from the French government. This can be a really slow process and do not forget to bring your birth certificate translated in French.

f) guidance / reception at host university

The first days at the university were a great way to start my exchange semester. The law department and the university organized some introduction days, in which certain information about the university or the law programme were given. Then they organized a trip to Paris for the international students which also included a ride with the boat on the Seine.

g) other (tips, suggestions, comments, opinions, etc.)

You may hear that Cergy Pontoise is a dangerous city, however I never experienced certain unpleasant. But yes, it may be recommend for girls to not walk alone during the night as it not as safe as Groningen might be. But this goes the same for Paris.

Moreover, there is an association called GeoMoov which helps international students. You can find their group on facebook and can aske them anything as they do have experience with all the administration stuff. There you can also find house utensils (plates, cutlery, pans) and they are for free.

In addition, there is a programme developed by the University of Cergy Pontoise with a home organization which requires international students to go to different high schools and talk with the students about their experiences and maybe help them with their English. You may ask about this at the International office (if it is still happening) and then apply for it. If you are selected you may earn 1000e. I was a part of this programme and I must say that it was a pleasant experience which did not interfere at all with my studies there.

To sum up, I think choosing Cergy Pontoise as the place for your exchange semester is a great ideas as Paris is right around the corner. It is needless for me to say all the amazing opportunities that you will find in Paris: from nightlife to art and culture. It is the perfect city to be an Erasmus student.