

Study Program

General

Virtually all course from the law department are available for Exchange Students. Most courses consist of *cours magistraux*, which are lectures of 3 hours for French courses and 1,5 hours for the English courses, and *travaux dirigé*, which are working groups of 1,5 hours. You can either follow just the lectures, both the lectures and the working groups or only the working groups. The two are linked and it is recommended to follow the lectures if you are going to follow the working groups, but it is not necessary to do so. All lectures are worth 6 ECTS and all working groups are worth 3 ECTS. LLM course are worth 8 ECTS Exchange students can partake in all level of courses, from first year Bachelor to second year master and LLM. Most of these courses are exam based.

French Courses.

For French law courses exchange students have an oral exam. If you only follow the lectures the exam will consist of question based on the lectures. There is no compulsory reading. The exam will have one main subject. You will get this subject at the start of your exam, you will have 10-15 minutes to prepare a short presentation on the topic, and then the teacher will ask you some more questions on the rest of the course.

If you followed the working there will be some additional reading materials consisting of academic articles, speeches, and cases. The exam will include a case study. All working groups have compulsory attendance. If you followed the lectures and the working group for the same course, you will only have to take one exam worth 9 ECTS.

English Courses

Anglo-American Law

For the Anglo-American Law courses exchange students take the same exam as the regular students. Depending on the course this maybe a multiple-choice exam, an exam bases on open/essay question or an essay. All the exam material will be covered in the lecture. There is no compulsory reading. Some courses include participation in the final grade.

The working groups for Anglo-American Law are not connected to the lectures. If you take a working group, your grade will be based on attendance, and most likely an assignment or a short exam.

LLM

The university also offers some LLM level courses. These courses are taught by people from the professional world rather than people working at the law faculty itself. All LLM courses are in English. Officially you can only join 2 per semester, but the university can make exceptions on a case by case basis. Classes usually consist of about 20-25 students and the grade is based on participation, and either a paper or a written exam.

My program

I took the following courses: Droit du Travail, Libertés Publiques et Droit de L'Homme, Introduction to British Law, Business Law (UK), and Intellectual Property.

Droit du Travail

Droit du Travail or Labour Law, was a fascinating course. Labour Law is mostly private law, though it has some aspects of public law, as the right to labour unions is a fundamental right. I only followed the lectures, which means that I had 3 hours of class every Wednesday from 4.15 till 7.30 (you get 15 minutes of break time, usually in 5-7 minutes increments every hour). The teacher is a terrific lady. She is truly passionate about her subject. She is rather left leaning, leaving no doubts about what she thinks of the recent legislation curtailing compensation after firings or any of the other decreases in labour related rights and safeguards.

If you follow this course you need to be prepared to take handwritten notes. Isabelle Meyrat does not allow computers or any other electronic note taking devices in her class room. This to the

despair of the most students. Most students do however record lectures to listen to them later and most likely to take typed notes at home.

Droit du Travail is a third year course. Some knowledge on French (constitutional) law is expected, but there are usually enough students happy to help and the teacher has an office hour every week. Ms Meyrat was kind enough to answer my question on presupposed knowledge when I had one.

As for all French course the exam was an oral exam. The course was one of the more difficult I followed, mostly because it had more prerequisite knowledge than any of the other courses I took and because, although not compulsory, there were a lot of cases mentioned throughout the course. Although Ms Meyrat is very nice, I found her a bit intimidating and I was atrociously nervous for the exam. She was nice about it and tried to calm me down, but still the exam was not a success. I ended up with 13/20.

Libertés Publiques et Droits de L'Homme

Libertés Publiques et Droit de L'Homme or Human Rights Law is the second (and last) French course I followed. Here again I only took the lectures. The course started with a more philosophical overview of the different conceptions of human rights, which most students found a bit tedious. The course then moves on the human rights law in France and in a last part covers the European Convention on Human Rights and some other international and regional treaties on human rights.

The exam was oral again. It was not too bad, although less nervous than for labour law, I was still not completely relaxed. Luckily most French law teachers are quite patient with exchange students and Ms Celine Roynier was truly nice about it. The course was not too difficult, especially with our degree already providing us some background on Human Rights. A French student was also kind enough to provide me with her notes in exchange for some help with Business Law. I ended up with a 14/20.

Introduction to British Law

Introduction to British Law is truly an easy course. It is a first year introductory course. It consists of one 1,5 hour lecture a week, with no compulsory reading whatsoever. The teacher, Douglas Yates, is an entertaining man, with an undisguised disdain for Donald Trump. The exam is completely multiple choice. I definitely recommend the course, it is easy but still rather interesting especially if one enjoys history. I walked away with a 19/20.

Business Law (UK)

I found business law to be interesting. The course is an introduction to business law in England and Wales. The teacher for the course was Peter Mackinnon. He is a lovely guy but tends to read directly from a book instead of having a prepared lecture. The exam was based on short essay questions. Five were proposed and you had to pick three. The course is not awfully complicated, and I enjoyed it. I do not explicitly recommend it, but I would not advise against taking it either. I got a 16.5/20.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual Property was my favourite course. It was an intensive course, which means that instead of having one class a week during the semester we had one week of 2-4 hours of class a day. The teacher, Ewen Mitchell, was a solicitor from London who worked mostly with trademarks. The course was very interactive. It was a small group of people; I think we were about twenty in the class room. I found the course to be instructive and fun. There is no exam, the grade is based partly on participation and partly on a paper. The deadline for the paper is only halfway January so it does not get in the way of studying for the exams. I would absolutely recommend the course. The level of the course is said to be Master 2, but honestly it was not anymore complicated than any of our LLB courses. My final grade was 16/20.

Language

In order to follow French lectures, the university requires you to have a B2 level of French, in order to follow the working groups the university requires at least C1.

The university offers French courses, but only up to B2. I did not take any language course, but most of my friends were not particularly happy with how they were run or how much they learned from them.

There are enough English courses to cover 30 credits, but day to day life might be a bit complicated if you really do not speak any French.

Finance

I personally felt the monthly cost of living was a bit lower than Groningen if you disregard the rent. I would say you would end up spending about as much or a little bit less if you keep the same habits. What might add to the budget is public transport (you can find more on that below). I spend, excluding rent, about €400 a month. That includes cigarettes, which are more expensive in France and a lot of going out for dinner, because I had friends visiting me every month.

The only additional cost I paid to the university was a €30 fee to the sport organisation. This fee was not compulsory, if you do not want to play sports. Technically they want you to provide a doctor's certificate to allow you to do sports. However, if you sign up and promise to give it to them as soon as possible, you can play sports and I was never asked for it again.

France offers housing benefits to everyone that rents a place, but you will need a French bank account to receive it. The university had a helpdesk one day to help with the application procedure.

You can also work at the centre for foreign languages of the university. It pays relatively well. Your task would be to lead conversation groups in either English, German, Spanish, or Japanese. Every group is an hour, there are about 5 students, and your task is to make them have a conversation in whatever language you signed up to give. I did a couple hours a week for the English groups.

Application Procedure

Once the Exchange Office has sent in your candidacy, the University of Cergy-Pontoise sends you a couple forms to fill out. You'll also have to send in a CV, motivational letter and a list of grades.

The University of Cergy-Pontoise is relatively quick to answer emails, and you can email them in either French or English.

Housing

The housing situation was a bit weird. The University offers accommodation, but all student houses want you to sign a contract for the whole academic year. The housing platform told me to say I was staying for the whole year and then to just notify the housing agency one month before the end of the exchange period that I was leaving. I was afraid to be stuck paying rent for a whole year and thus I looked to privately rented rooms. But my fear was unfounded as all my friends in student housing managed to end their contract in December.

All the student houses are in the Cergy part of Cergy-Pontoise, which is also where the university is. However, they are not all as close. The ones in Cergy-Le Haut and Cergy-Saint Christoph are not within walking distance. They are about 15 minutes out with public transport.

I had a room in a four-bedroom flat, which I shared with three other guys. I found it through *le bon coin*, which is the French equivalent of eBay or marktplaats. I lived 8 minutes from the university by foot, which was very nice.

If I had known it was easy enough to terminate the contract for the student housing, I would have taken a room there. I feel like it would have been more fun to live in a student house. And honestly walking home alone at night after parties was a bit scary. My neighbourhood was not

especially bad, but not especially good either. The good neighbourhoods are in Pontoise or for Cergy it would be the harbour neighbourhood.

Though in the end my room was nice, and living that close to university was a plus, especially when they started to work on the RER tracks. My rent was €440,-, which is about average for the city.

Two of my friends lived in Paris. They lived in the north-west part, which is about 45 minutes with public transport.

Reception at Cergy-Pontoise

There were two introduction days a week before classes would start, and there was a closing event around Christmas. The University did not do much in terms of social events. For administrative procedures, the general exchange office and the exchange office of the law faculty both had open hours and were quite helpful.

The weirdest organisational issue was on how to pick your courses. We got a list of course that were available, but not when they were scheduled. Thus, we could not know whether there would be overlap or not. The schedules were not anywhere online but were pinned to bulletin boards in the corridors of the law faculty. The schedules were posted by year and it was a bit of a mess to figure everything out.

Culture, free time and travelling

Most of my free time I spend in Paris. Cergy-Pontoise is a cute city, especially the Pontoise part, but there is not too much to do. So, most of the time we ended up in Paris. I also studied a lot in Paris, in either the Sainte-Geneviève Library or in one of the many co-working cafés where you pay an hourly fee to study and have unlimited coffee and snacks.

You can travel to a bunch of places from Paris by bus, which is cheap but takes a lot of time, or by train, which is a bit more expensive, but definitely faster.

To go to Paris, you will have to take public transport more specifically the RER. One single ticket costs about €6, thus going back and forth costs €12. And if you do not live thus close to University taking public transport to go there will cost you about €2 single fare from either Cergy-Le Haut or Cergy-Saint Christophe. I would recommend taking a Navigo Pass, which is the French Oyster card or OV Chipkaart. I would recommend the monthly pass which gives you unlimited travel for €75. However, that obviously depends on how much you intend to go to Paris or take Public transport. I know for me it was definitely worth it.