

Exchange period at the University of Lisbon, Autumn semester 2019-2020

I went on exchange to the Faculty of Law in Lisbon, Portugal. This report will give an insight into my experience during the exchange and some Tips to consider for future applicants for the exchange in Lisbon.

The courses

The Faculty of Law of Lisbon offers a large variety of courses, in Portuguese and English. The English courses are generally sub-classes from the Portuguese classes. This means that in general the exchange student is not expected to visit lectures of the Portuguese courses as this is somewhat incorporated already in the Working Groups of the English classes. It is necessary to check whether the courses are provided for Semester 1 or 2 of the year. The courses offered vary from comparative, to International law, students have access to national law courses and can also study about the EU, aviation law or a LLM course for Law of the United Nations. The content of the followed courses was generally based on present topics, so for example international regulations of the conservation of living resources in the High Seas was a topic for the Law of the Sea course. The administrative course was conducted more in a comparative way as the exchange brings a lot of internationals, thus providing a great opportunity to compare and discuss different law systems. Overall, it can be said that the level of study is higher than I had expected, the University has great staff and a well-structured course, which at times is also demanding as regards to presentations, paper deadlines, reading and in-class examination. A Bonus is that class participation is also graded, this also motivates students to step outside of their comfort zone to start discussions and it is essentially necessary to participate to amount to a good grade in the Course. I would surely recommend the courses provided to other students, I have had new insights into different legal fields, and the methodology of teaching is also different as it is more verbal as opposed to visual with presentations etc. The way of examination is decided by the Professor, some have a requirement for a presentation and a paper plus class attendance, others will just require a paper or a written exam – this will be sorted out once you are on exchange and will depend of the course you are taking.

Language

The language requirement for Portugal is a good prerequisite as it facilitates the exchange student's ability to navigate through the city and help himself, as locals tend to not speak English or if so then poorly. However, in order to participate in the Faculty a good level of English will suffice to follow the courses and pass them.

Finance and other conditions

Portugal is considered a medium cost country. The estimated cost per month in Portugal with Rent is as high as 1200-1500 €. This greatly depends on the lifestyle you are living. It can be noted that public transport and Uber is generally cheap, however it must not be underestimated as Lisbon is one of the main tourist cities in Europe and therefore also provide a lot of opportunities to spend money. The rent is also pretty high in Lisbon, especially if you are looking for a space for yourself like an apartment or studio. Experience wise I have found that the people living in shared places are better off on exchange, there is always someone to talk to and spend time with, it will lower your living costs and it is easier to find friends and be involved in fun activities. Remember to also step outside of your comfort zone on the exchange, for example living with others if you have not done this previously. Additionally, try to find a place close to the faculty as the Bus system is extremely unreliable and classes can start early and end late usually. Lisbon will probably be the main place of stay and therefore it also makes sense to be close to the faculty which will place you in a favorable position for both locations, Uni and Leisure/Home.

Preparations and contacts with the faculty abroad

It is important to note that schedules of the faculties vary and that the faculty of Lisbon will generally show to be behind in providing documents and information. This is because they also finish and start classes at different times. This means you need to be on top of your learning agreement early on and you should take the courses from the previous year as an orientation, because essentially the course list will change again beginning or mid-September. This means you have to be prepared to have 2 or 3 more courses in the course

approval list as changing courses in Portugal is common, either because of the way of assessment, clashing times with other courses or that the course has been moved to a different semester. I would say around Mid-August you will start to be properly informed by the faculty of Lisbon. There is no need to panic because of their later start there is still plenty of time to organize everything. Make sure to also be present at the introduction week, this will help you orientate yourself in the faculty, meet the right people with whom you will have to stay in touch throughout the mobility and important information is provided during these sessions. Once the sessions were held, there is a tendency that you will also have some work to do as things will get rolling from there on. To find housing in Lisbon is not very hard, however it should be done on time as there is a large demand towards a month before the faculty resumes classes. Portugal is also very safe, and most neighborhoods in central Lisbon are safe to live and go out in.

Culture

The Portuguese people are amazing, they are open-minded and giving. It is easy to find new friends in Portugal, also they enjoy showing internationals around their lovely cities as they have a lot of historical monuments and locations which attract millions of tourists a year. This is a bonus to the exchange, as there will always be great activities to participate in and always a new something to see. Lastly, the exchange group from the faculty of Lisbon organizes a lot of activities and has proven to be very active and fun, thus I recommend to sign up there for good parties, fun leisure activities and finding new friends.