

ESSEC Business School



Exchange Report

Spring 2017 | HUANG Weiqi | FINA&IS

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Part 1 Monthly Activity Log

- **February**

I arrived in Paris CDG Airport on Feb 13th, after a flight of twelve hours from Hong Kong. From the airport, I took the taxi to Alessec as I carried two large luggages and cost me about 70 euro. Please note that you were only required to arrive before the compulsory orientation held at the end of February while the new semester began on March 6th. If you chose the French language course, there would be an oral test after the orientation to ensure your proficiency, even if you were a total beginner. I spent two weeks visiting Paris on February. RER Line (the red one) would lead you to the center of Paris (Chatlet) in around one hour.

- **March**

As the semester started quite late compared to other business schools in Europe and I didn't attend the three-days intensive courses, my semester began on the second week of March. Usually the first month should be easy for exchange students, since there were few group works and the course content was not deep enough, and normally professors would allow students some time to get used to the new life. Don't forget to submit the assignments. Later I opened a bank account and bought a SIM card. Please note that Société Générale was the only bank nearby available for exchange students to open a temporary account. At the end of March, I visited Stockholm and Lund, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark to meet with my friends.

- **April**

Although there was no Easter holiday for Essec students, the first week in April, as a spring break, would be a great chance to travel, if you didn't enroll in the intensive courses as well. I visited Frankfurt, Berlin and Hamburg, Germany and Venice, Florence and Rome, Italy, together with Athens, Greece with my friends during the break, along with several days off at the end of March. Midterms came after the break. Again, please note that if you were enrolled in any intensive courses during the break, don't prepare for any travelling plan. A friend of mine had to cut her journey and reserved a flight back to Paris in order to give a group presentation.

- **May**

As the course content got harder and harder, I spent more time on accomplishing weekly assignments and the group projects. As a Finance student, I enrolled in International Cash Management and Merge & Acquisition, of which both required a case project. I had to get in touch of them frequently, but fortunately, most of the work could be discussed on WhatsApp. My mom came to Paris on the third week of May. Later I travelled to Munich and Fussen, Germany and Interlaken, Lucerne and Zurich, Switzerland and Barcelona, Spain, together with several cities in eastern Europe, including Prague, Czech and Salzburg and Vienna, Austria. The oral final exam of French course happened at the end of May.

- ***June***

This is the last month I spent in Essec. There were several days off before the finals and I chose to go nowhere but to review. Meanwhile, deadlines for group projects was placed right before the finals. I enrolled in a total of four courses but I had five final exams. Thus this was literally a busy week for me. After the finals, I returned Hong Kong with plenty of fabulous memories.

Part 2 General Information

- ***Visa Application***

There were three main parts for the visa application. First, filled in relevant information and submitted a form online on French Embassy website. Second, sent an email exclusively to Campus France Office to make an appointment for the Academic Interview. Third, went to the French Embassy in Hong Kong for the visa section and interview section. Normally they would happen on the same day.

Visa Application Link:

<http://www.consulfrance-hongkong.org/New-Visa-online-appointment-system>

- ***Orientation Activities***

The compulsory orientation for fresh exchange students happened at the end of February. During the orientation, you would get a broad but basic information of all the things you need to know as a student in Essec and a residence in Paris. You would get your student ID card right before the orientation. And since everyone home university would be mentioned, it was a great chance to meet new friends, together with a cruise tour along La Seine held by a student society. All new information would be posted on a Facebook group.

- ***International Services & Activities***

You would be paired with a buddy by the school before the compulsory orientation, it was a great chance to know local students and practice your French if you wish. There were several student societies available for exchange students, including KMT and MELT. They held activities for students to get familiar with each other. I personally didn't join any of them, since I was not good at alcohol but it was always the melody for parties.

- ***Accommodations***

There were three accommodations available for exchange students, Cergy Le Haut, Les Linandes and Du Port. Most of us choose Cergy Le Haut and Les Linandes. In terms of rent, the latter is a bit more expensive. However, Cergy Le Haut required RER every time you went to school. Thus in total the monetary expense for them should be much the same. I have chosen Cergy Le Haut. Here you could find two supermarkets, several banks, some restaurants as well as a bus termination. Cergy Le Haut is also the termination for RER Line, which took you to the school in ten minutes and the center of Paris in one hour. Rent was paid monthly but cash was not accepted.

In the fall semester in HKUST you would receive an email, asking to choose a residence and pay the security deposit which would be refunded later. A welcome kit

was optional, including some bedding and kitchenware. Later you would receive a document to prove that you could arrange your residence in France, which is essential for the visa application.

The APL theoretically was not applicable for exchange students from Hong Kong. However, you could prepare all the required documents and apply for the subsidy, betting on your luck.

- ***Course Registration***

In the fall semester of HKUST you would receive an email, asking to activate your myEssec account, along with the academic pack, with which you could plan your courses to take with the reference to course equivalence system. There were two rounds of course enrollment online before the new semester. I highly recommend incoming students to enroll in the first round and enroll as much credits as possible, as you were able to drop it later and some courses could be very popular.

- ***Teaching & Assessment Methods***

The course accomplishment requirements were similar to HKUST, consisted of midterm, final and group project. Some courses required presentation. Here are the courses that I have taken.

- 1) Merge & Acquisition & Private Equity

The professor was well experienced in banking and very willing to discuss with students. But she was quite strict with students coming on time. As a local and an elderly madam, her English was good enough to communicate and elaborate ideas. A lot of cases were provided as weekly assignments.

Midterm N | Final Y | Group Project Y

- 2) International Cash Management

The professor was the same as the M&A one. A lot of cases were provided as weekly assignments.

Midterm Y | Final Y | Group Project Y

- 3) Portfolio Management

The professor gave us a lot of time to analyze problems and calculate returns and risks during the classes. He spoke English with strong French accent and sometimes could not understand students' questions well. The course content was relatively easy but the exams were much harder, including points didn't been covered in class.

Midterm Y | Final Y | Group Project N

- 4) Beginner French

The professor was well experienced in educating of French and the course was systematic and well organized. Quiz was compulsory every two weeks. Discussion and questions were highly encouraged and rewarded. The final exam consisted of two parts, oral and paper, in different time.

Midterm N | Final Y | Group Project N | Quiz Y

- ***Sports & Recreation Facilities***

Gym was available both on campus and on Cergy Le Haut. A small football court and a basketball court were located on campus. And a tennis court was just near the entrance of Cergy Le Haut residence. For recreation, a pub was opening during class hours till late night, which was the most popular place on campus.

- ***Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities***

A QR Code and Facebook account would be attached in an email sent before the semester began, and you could scan to join the Facebook group. Almost all new information and remind would be posted there. Meanwhile, there existed a WeChat group for all the Chinese students. You could ask a full time Chinese student to add you in. For social clubs, all related information could be found outside the football court on campus. Two clubs would introduce themselves during the orientation.

- ***Health & Safety***

Clinic on campus was easy to be reached but the doctor was not available everyday. There was also a clinic in Cergy Le Haut near the RER station. Apart from the insurance required for visa application, French government required additional health insurance, charged by Essec.

For safety reasons, do not stay outside along in the night. Although robbery seldom happened, pick-pockets was widely mentioned and well-known, not only in Paris, but in most parts of Europe. Pay more attention when you were in the metro station, monuments and crowded places.

- ***Food***

As quite an amount of restaurants could be reached in a walking distance from campus, you could choose to eat either outside or on campus during lunch. You could also bring your own lunch since several microwaves were provided in the canteen. For dinner, normally I cook with my roommate as it was much cheaper and it was a good chance to meet new friends. Supermarkets were convenient in Cergy Prefecture and Cergy Le Haut.

- ***Transportation***

RER was the most frequently used public transportation in Cergy. Since generally the metro was even more expensive than the one in Hong Kong. A monthly ticket cost 70 euro, called Navigo Pass, was a reasonable consideration, of which the price was almost the same as five return tickets to Paris center. Please note that you would better attach your own photo to Navigo Pass. I was fined 50 euro for not doing it.

- ***Climate***

Climate in Paris was literally colder than Hong Kong, especially in February and March. Starting from April, sun set around 8 to 9pm and the weather was constantly changing, sometimes raining, sometimes really cold and suddenly really hot. Thus jacket was a good alternative here. If you planned to travel to northern Europe during Feb and Mar, thick coat was a must.

- ***Communication***

English was definitely not common in Paris, especially for the elder. Even our professors could speak with strong French accent. My friend suggested me to learn how to say "Could you speak English" in French. Try to use simple words and sentence structure when you communicated with strangers. Some restaurants would provide with English menu, otherwise since menu with photos was not normally applicable, you would rely on your fortune to pick a cuisine.

- **Cautionary Measures**

- 1) Do not stay outside alone late in the night
- 2) Do not put all the identity documents in one place. E.g. wallet.
- 3) Be aware of pick-pockets in crowd
- 4) Attach your own photo to Navigo Pass
- 5) Check the door and window before going outside. Burglary was reported.

- **Banking & Finance**

Items	Amount (EURO)
Accommodation (4 month)	2,372
Transportation (Within Paris)	300
Daily Expense	1,800
Others (Travelling, shopping, etc.)	5,000
Total	~9,500

In addition to the return ticket from HKG to CDG of 6,200HKD, total expense was around 90,000HKD. For HKUST students, Cathay Pacific offers student discount tickets with a very reasonable price.

Part 3 Checklist (Items to Bring)

Only important things which would be easily neglected are mentioned below:

- HKID Card & Passport
Birth Certificate
- Cash in euro
Credit card
- Thick clothes
Sunglasses
Hairdryer
- Medicine

Note: If you didn't purchase the welcome kit, you were required to prepare all the bedding and kitchen ware yourself.