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# Exchange Report

## ESSEC Business School

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BBA in Operations Management and Marketing, Year 3

Fall 2017

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## Part I

# Monthly Activity Log

### August 2017

#### 🇫🇷 Paris

I arrived Paris on 29 August, 2 days before the Orientation Day, as well as the mandatory arrival date at the residence. I took the flight of Turkish Airlines with another student from HKUST. Once we arrived Charles de Gaulle Airport, we took the bus to Cergy with a friend that we just met from the ESSEC Exchange students Facebook group. It took around 1.5 hours. Actually **Cergy** is in the suburban area in Paris. You can simply treat it as Tuen Mun in Hong Kong. They also take you around 1.5 hours to go to the city centre.

After we arrived the residence (**Les Hauts de Cergy**), the staff told us that we need to get the key at the campus, which is 2 railway stations from Les Hauts. Therefore, we needed to go to the campus first to do our registration, got our student card and got our room key. There were also staff from **Societe Generale** to help you to set up a bank account. After we have settled down in our room, we started to explore Cergy and Paris. There is a shopping mall near the campus called **Les 3 Fontaines**, and we bought our SIM card there. Different from previous years, the Orientation this year only lasted for one day (31 August). There were introduction of the program and the residence, campus tour, presentation from student societies and general information to live in Paris.



### September 2017

#### 🇧🇪 Brussels | Brugge | Antwerpen | 🇫🇷 Marseilles | 🇩🇪 Munich

As classes started at 4 September, me and another student from HKUST decided to go to **Belgium** before the classes started. We went to Brussels, Brugge and Antwerpen. Belgium was a good choice for the first travel. It was next to France and the tourist spots were also

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mainly located in city centre, which is suit for unexperienced travellers like us. We joined a trip to **Marseilles** in mid-September organised by **MELT**, a student society in ESSEC serving exchange students. Southern France was very different from Paris, there were beautiful sea and beach, and sunshine. On the next week, my HKUST friends studying in the Netherlands came to visit me. I brought them to nearly all tourist spots in Paris, as well as the Disneyland. I also watched the **PSG vs Bayern München** Champions League match. You really can't imagine how hyper when the Europeans watched football. As I only had classes from Tuesday evening to Friday morning, I managed to go travel nearly every week. I went to **Munich** with my friends from Hong Kong for the **Oktoberfest**. If you are coming ESSEC in Fall semester, there are no reason for you to miss the Munich Oktoberfest. Drinking beer, dancing and singing. It is the biggest carnival in the world. However, you should remember that the Oktoberfest starts at September and ends at early October, so don't be mislead by the name!



## October 2017

🇨🇪 Prague | 🇳🇴 Oslo | 🇩🇰 Copenhagen | 🇸🇪 Stockholm | 🇨🇭 Zurich | Zug | Interlaken | Luzern

At the beginning of October, I went to **Prague** to meet my UST friend who was having exchange there. This was my first time in Eastern Europe. It was quite different, a bit vintage and slow pace of life, and most important, the price level is a lot cheaper than Western Europe. In mid-October, I went to **Oslo** to visit my another friend who was having exchange there. After that, I spent a few days to explore Scandinavia, including **Copenhagen** and **Stockholm**. I planned to go there at October cause it was still not freezing at that time, though it was already 0°C. Price level in Scandinavia is higher and it gets dark early. At the end of the month, I went to **Switzerland** cause one of my friend has driving license and it lower the cost of the trip cause the price level there was even higher



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than Scandinavia. I highly recommend you should go there cause everywhere is like paradise, the air is fresh and the views are wonderful.



## November 2017

🇬🇧 London | Liverpool | Brighton | Cambridge | 🇳🇱 Amsterdam | 🇫🇷 Nice | Menton | Cannes | 🇲🇰 Monaco

As there was a one-week mid-term break at early November, so I went to the country that ranked first in my bucket list — **Britain**. One of the main reason was I am a super fan of Liverpool FC, so I had bought ticket for a match in **Anfield** on early September and spent a day in **Liverpool**. Actually, I had also watched 3 more matches in **London**. It is wonderful that finally you can understand every word in a country, and I highly recommend you should go to London at the middle of your exchange cause the China

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Town there was like Hong Kong. Everyone can speak Cantonese and it really made me miss my home. You can also spend one day in **Cambridge** and **Brighton** cause they are near London. As the pace of studies start to get fast after mid-term break, I only went 2 more trips this month. **Amsterdam** was a vibrant city and I also tried some local things there which was a great experience. **Nice** was a coastal city located in Southern France, the view is fantastic and you can also spend some time to go to **Monaco** which is one of the richest country in the world cause it only spends around 1.5 hours to go there from Nice by bus.





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## December 2017

🇵🇹 Porto | 🇵🇹 Lisbon | 🇵🇹 Sintra | 🇪🇸 Barcelona | 🇪🇸 Madrid | 🇪🇸 Segovia | 🇦🇹 Innsbruck | 🇮🇹 Rome | 🇻🇦 Vatican City |

🇮🇹 Florence | 🇮🇹 Pisa | 🇮🇹 Cinque Terre | 🇮🇹 Milan | 🇮🇹 Como | 🇮🇹 Venice | 🇩🇪 Berlin | 🇭🇺 Budapest | 🇸🇰 Bratislava | 🇦🇹 Vienna

As my last final exam was on 30 November, I had two more months in Europe for travelling and it sounds really crazy when I recall these memories now. In early December, I had a trip to Portugal and Spain with my UST friends. One of friend who was having exchange in **Lisbon** brought us to **Sintra**, which is a beautiful ancient city with castles in the suburban area in Lisbon. Then I went to **Barcelona** and **Madrid** to watch the match of two of the greatest football teams in the world. Both **Camp Nou** and **Bernabéu Stadium** are great stadium with huge capacity. You can also spend a day to **Segovia** which is a beautiful suburban city if you visit Madrid. After a few days rest, I went to **Innsbruck** to meet my friends and had a gathering there. After that, I spent 9 days in Italy with my friend. I went to all of the four most famous cities. Every city has their unique attractiveness and you should definitely visit all of them. At the end of the month, I had a solo trip from **Berlin** to **Vienna**. It was a great experience when you travel alone as you can do whatever you want and explore more.



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## January 2018

🇫🇷 Lille | 🇵🇱 Warsaw | 🇱🇹 Vilnius | 🇩🇪 Aachen | 🇲🇦 Marrakech | 🇧🇬 Sofia | 🇬🇷 Athens | 🇮🇹 Santorini | 🇩🇪 Cologne | 🇹🇷 Istanbul

As I had checked out from my residence, I had to put my luggages in my friend's residence in **Lille**. Then, I went to **Warsaw** and **Vilnius**. Regrettably, I did not have enough time to go to the Concentration Camp in **Oswiecim**. It was an interesting experience to visit country in the Baltic Sea, but actually it was quite boring in Vilnius. In mid-January, it came to one of my highlights in my exchange. I went to **Aachen** to meet my friend having exchange there and went to **Marrakech** together. I never thought that the first time I left Europe in my exchange was to Africa, but not Hong Kong! It was unforgettable to ride camel and spend a night in **Sahara desert**. However, you should have high concern on safety as Marrakech is a lot more dangerous than most European cities. After that, I went to the **Balkan peninsula** and spent a day in **Sofia**. **Athens** was my next destination with my friend, and all of the heritages there are free of charge for EU students! So I think you have no reason to miss Athens in your travel plan. Then we took ferry to **Santorini**, the most beautiful island in Greece and that was definitely a truth. Trip to Greece was my final trip in Europe, then I spent half a day in **Cologne** for bus interchange to Lille. My flight was on 26 January departed from **Paris**. As there was a free half-day Istanbul tour provided by Turkish Airlines for interchange passengers, I spent my last few hours in Europe in **Istanbul**. Finally, I ended my exchange and arrived **Hong Kong** on 27 January with lots of memories.







## Part II

### General Exchange Information

#### 1. Visa Procedures

For HKSAR and BN(O) passport holders, you need to apply for the long-stay visa (as BN(O) holders are not EU citizens). When I visited the website of visa application on February 2018, I found that the interface of it have changed, but I believed the procedure is still the same. You need to first make appointment for visa application while you have all your documents ready (you may find the required documents from <https://france-visas.gouv.fr/> ). Then you need to make another appointment for **academic interview** in Campus France, which should scheduled before your appointment date for visa application. I suggested you to start to make an appointment **2 months** before your departure, as the time slots are always full and the office is very strict for the documents.

Important notes:

- you need to pay the exact amount in **cash** for the visa as there are no change
- **don't late** for even one minute, otherwise you need to book another appointment, they are so strict (I have experienced it before)
- apply for the **official transcript**, don't use the unofficial one
- submit an application for the travel **insurance certificate** to SFAO Counter at Room 4592, Annex Building (via Lift 29-30), as it is required for visa application (it takes at least a week)

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- the office requires you to provide **accommodation proof** for your entire period of staying, if you plan to go France before the residence check-in date, please also provide your hotel/hostel booking information
  - the **ID photo** requirement for French visa is different from the normal ID photo size in Hong Kong, you may need to take a new ID photo

## 2. Orientation Activities

Since 2017, there are only a **1-day orientation day** for exchange-in students. While staff from ESSEC will introduce you some information about the school, Paris and Cergy. There will also be student societies presentations and campus tour.

There are student societies organise activities for exchange students, especially **MELT**, which is a student society in ESSEC serving exchange students. They will organise a trip in Paris, international cuisine night, BBQ gathering, pub night, etc, and even a trip to Marseilles.

## 3. International Services & Activities

You MAY have an **exchange buddy** from ESSEC, as it is draw by lots. For us, only one student among three of us from UST had been assigned an exchange buddy.

As I mentioned before, **MELT** will organise various activities for exchange students, keep track on their Facebook page for different events. (<https://www.facebook.com/MELT-ESSEC-666919710118379/> )

ESSEC will also have an official **Facebook page** for exchange students in that semester. They will send the link through email.

You may also join the **WeChat group** of the Chinese students, as they have a really huge network and you may always seek help from them if you encounter any difficulties.

## 4. Accommodations

There are actually 4 residences provided by ESSEC (all of them are off-campus), but you can only apply 3 of them as Le Parc is for first year students only. You will receive a housing pack from ALEGESSEC (ESSEC housing office) and required to submit application before late June. I have chosen Les Hauts-de-Cergy.

**Les Linandes**: It is 25 minutes by foot from the ESSEC campus and easily reached by city buses as well. A supermarket, restaurants and fast foods are conveniently located nearby. This quiet residence offers single and double studios for living with a roommate as well as

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a workout center and a TV room. (577€/month for single studio, 499€/month for double studio)

**Les Hauts-de-Cergy: Most exchange students choose to live here** (I think there is no reason but a tradition). It is just two stops on the RER A (a 7-minute train ride from Cergy-le-Haut to Cergy-Préfecture) which is located in walking distance of the campus. It takes around **30 minutes** in total from Les Hauts to ESSEC. A range of on-site services are available for your convenience: workout centers, a tennis court and a squash room, several recreational areas with a piano, a billiard, table football, and table tennis, TV rooms, a mini-market, several meeting rooms. Single and double studios for living with a roommate are available. (590€/month for single studio, 528€/month for double studio).

**Le Port:** It offers apartments for couples as well as single and double studios. Located close to the lively Cergy Port, the residence is 5 minutes by foot from the campus and under 40 minutes from Paris by train. This recent construction is equipped with a fitness room, meeting rooms, a game room (billiard, table football, etc.), a multimedia room and a Club with a piano. (759€/month for single studio, 719€/month for double studio, 965€/month for couple apartment)

**\*SAFETY CONCERN:** During my residential period, there were a number of **robbery** occurred while students walking back to **Les Linandes** and **Le Port**, which the students did get hurt. The school had sent us notice and reminders, but actually they can do nothing. While there are no such incidents in **Les Hauts-de-Cergy**, thus I believed Cergy-le-Haut is much safer than Cergy-Préfecture.

**Housing subsidy:** You may have heard of the housing subsidy **APL**. You may also be told that by both Campus France and the French consulate that you are not likely to be able to apply APL. Students also mentioned we can't apply APL from their exchange report. However, I did try to apply it and I had received the subsidy for September and October (~400€ in total). Therefore, please try to apply it. You may apply it through the Internet (you will receive the instructions through email from ALEGESSEC), then you can hand in the documents to the booth in mid-September in ESSEC (you will receive emails for further details).

Other notes:

- there is also a **welcoming kit** cost 99€ provided by ALEGESSEC, which includes plates, cups, cutlery, pots and pans, as well as sheets, a pillow and blanket



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- you need to **collect your keys at ESSEC** when you arrive, so please don't go to the residence first
  - you can either **extend or terminate** your contract earlier (through the housing portal with one month prior notice)
  - if you have only 2 to 3 days school day per week and you look for accommodation in Paris, you may take a look of the exchange report of CHUNG, Wing Laam as she rented her apartment in Paris
  - you also need to pay a deposit of 590€, which will be reimbursed after the end of the contract

## 5. Course Registration

There are **3 rounds** of course registration (round 1 for exchange and double degree students, round 2 for the rest and round 3 for everyone). You may not have a complete course information or catalog on round 1 as round 1 is quiet early, but you can still register the course as there is a **one-week add drop period** at week 1. Also, the course schedule maybe change and new courses maybe add, so please keep track on the course schedule after you receive it. You will receive information through email in summer.

## 6. Teaching & Assessment Methods

For non-languages and non-intensive courses, there are usually 10 lessons (each lesson is 3 hours). If you skip more than 2 lessons, you will have a 4 points off your final grade (out of 20, the **passing score is 10**). The Department of Languages and Cultures has its own rules, you need to ask on your own.

I have taken 6 courses (5 normal course and 1 intensive course), including OM, IS and MARK courses.

There are **participation marks** in every course, and there is only one course I have taken have no **project**. **No assignment** in every course I have taken. I had only 2 final exams, which were the Purchasing Management and Advanced Excel. Both of them were on the last lesson, so I didn't have any exam during the exam period. As I know from other students, there were no exams in Marketing and Management courses. In conclusion, the workload in ESSEC is much lower than that in UST.

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## 7. Sports & Recreation Facilities

There are sports facilities in every residence, including gym, tennis court, squash court, etc. There are also sports facilities in ESSEC. You may also join the school sports team, they will have a presentation in the orientation day.

## 8. Finance and Banking

There is a partnership between ESSEC and **Société Générale**. You will receive email from MELT to open a bank account. You may submit the application form before departure to speed up the process.

It is strongly recommended to open a French bank account as the exchange rate and service charge for VISA and MASTERCARD is unfavourable. And most of the paying machine in Europe only accept VISA card with PIN code, which is not common in Hong Kong, while you French debit card include VISA service.

However, the procedure to cancel the **Société Générale** account is quiet complicated. You can only go to the agency that you open your account (which is usually the branch next to ESSEC). And you need to make sure the account balance is **0.00€**. I suggested you to cancel your account 2 weeks before departure to avoid any problems.

Items	Expenses (in HKD)
Flight ticket	~7,000
Accommodation	~18,000
Monthly grocery	~1,200
Transportation	~700
Others (travelling, shopping, etc)	~90,000
Total	~116,900

## 9. Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

As I mentioned before, MELT will organise different activities and it is a great opportunities to meet both exchange and local students. You may also join the student events on Facebook in Paris. And for sure, if you have an exchange buddy, you may know more locals easily.

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## 10. Health and Safety

There is on-campus Nurse and Doctor. The office is near the main reception desk. It is daily presence, you need to check the noticeboards. But the doctor only available every Thursday and last Monday of each month (check door for times). He will provide preventive medicine.

Safety in ESSEC is good. But safety in Cergy-Préfecture is not good, so please avoid staying there at night. Safety in Cergy-le-Haut is a lot better, when I went back to the residence in midnight and I found that it was safe. However, you should always be aware of robbery and pickpockets in Paris.

## 11. Food

There are canteen and cafe in ESSEC. However, the canteen only open in lunch hour. There are also a bar in ESSEC which opens till night.

There are many different restraints in both Cergy-Préfecture and Cergy-le-Haut, including fast food, high-end restaurant, Japanese, and a food court in Les 3 Fontaines.

In Paris, you could find cosines from all over the world, I believed I no need to make any recommendation as you will definitely explore by yourself. But if you want to go to China Town, it is in 13ème (Tolbiac station). Also, if I have any friends who come to Paris, I will also take them to Le Bouillon Chartier.

However, cooking by yourself is always the cheapest option! (if you want to save money for travel)

## 12. Transportation

The main mass transport in Paris is metro, RER and bus. The ticket price is more expensive for RER than metro. I suggest you to buy a Navigo if you go Paris frequently, which is a monthly pass for all transport in Paris, as a single journey to Paris from Clergy is ~7€ and the Navigo is 75.20€/month. You can also download the RATP and Vianavigo app for transport information (it is like the MTR app). For CDG Airport, you need to take the RER B and for the Orly Airport, you need to go to the Denfert-Rochereau station by RER B or metro and take the OrlyBus which is included in Navigo (while the Orlyval is not). If you need to take the Flixbus and Ouibus, the bus stop is usually in Bercy Seine which you can go there from Bercy station by metro.

## 13. Climate



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In August, the weather is similar to in Hong Kong. In recent years, the summer in France is getting hotter and hotter. However, it is for sure much cooler and drier in winter, and sometimes snowing in Cergy, so make sure you have a warm coat. Also, as every indoor area in Europe also has warmer or heater provided, so you should also bring T-shirts and shorts even if you come here in Fall semester.

#### **14. Communication**

There are four major mobile network operator in France: Orange, SFR, Free and Bouygues. I have chosen Free as there is a branch in Les 3 Fontaines. It costs 19.99€/month, with 100G of internet and unlimited calls. However, I found that its coverage is not so good and seems Orange is better than it. So feel free to choose your own plan and remember to ask the procedure to terminate the plan.

For language barrier, it is well known that France do not speak English. It is definitely a truth, especially in Cergy. No matter the staff in RER station, supermarket, post office, restaurant and bakery in Cergy can only speak French. People in Paris is slightly better in tourist spots. But it is not really that difficult to live in Paris if you don't know French, you can always use Google Translate and body language.

#### **15. Cautionary Measures**

Pickpockets are well known in Europe, specially big cities like Paris, there are even robbery in Cergy Thus make sure you take good care of your belongings and avoid to go to the crowded area. You may buy a waist bag to put your valueless things inside. You should also avoid walking in the street at night, if you do, don't walk alone. Luckily, I had not experience pickpocket and robbery, but if you do so, find the police immediately and claim the insurance.

In Paris, area above the Seine is more dangerous (especially 10, 17-20ème), so avoid going there at night.

You should always pay attention to the announcement in the metro and RER stations as there are always strikes and accidents, but there is only French announcement, so please ask the French or the staff what happen if you hear the announcement, or simply follow the crowd.

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## 16. Other Notes

Nearly all the tourist spots and museums in Paris is **free of charge** for EU students below 26 (except the Eiffel Tower), so remember to bring your passport with visa if you plan to visit them.

**Cathay Pacific** offers discounted tickets for exchange students (~HKD6000 for Paris return tickets). So please buy them well in advance as student tickets may be sold out near the departure date. I recommend you to buy it in June or even May since there are no ticket left when I want to buy it in July. However, you can always find flight tickets cheaper than the Cathay Pacific discounted price from **skyscanner**.

There is also student semester tickets of **SNCF** which you can travel around France by train in a low price.

Find the cheapest transportation method to travel in Europe through **goeuro.com**.

Purchase the **ISIC card** before departure as it provide different discount for students.

## Part III

### Items to Bring

Items to Bring
Passport (bring both if you have BN(O) also)
Euros
Credit card, debit card
Stationaries
Calculator
Converter
Chargers
Cables
Laptop
Mobile phone (one more for spare)
Tripod for taking photos
Coats, jackets, scarf, gloves
Sunglasses
Umbrella
Medicine

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## Items to Bring

Anything will make you feel less bored

## Part IV

### Useful Links and Contacts

France-Visas: <https://france-visas.gouv.fr/>

Campus France: <http://campusfrance.org>

French consulate: <https://hongkong.consulfrance.org>

MELT ESSEC: <https://www.facebook.com/MELT-ESSEC-666919710118379/>

RATP: <https://www.ratp.fr/en>

Vianavigo: <https://www.vianavigo.com/en/home>

goeuro: <https://www.goeuro.com/>

skyscanner: <https://www.skyscanner.com.hk/>

SNCF: <http://www.sncf.com/en/passengers>

Flixbus: <https://www.flixbus.com/>

Ouibus: <https://www.ouibus.com/>

hotels.com: [https://www.hotels.com/?pos=HCOM\\_ASIA&locale=en\\_HK](https://www.hotels.com/?pos=HCOM_ASIA&locale=en_HK)

booking.com: <https://www.booking.com/>

Airbnb: <https://www.airbnb.com.hk>

Free Mobile: <http://mobile.free.fr>

ESSEC BBA Incoming International Exchange: <https://sites.google.com/a/essec.edu/bba-incoming-international-exchange/academic-info>

ESSEC BBA Global Education: [bba-globaleducation@essec.edu](mailto:bba-globaleducation@essec.edu)

Emergency number:

Police: 17

Fire paramedics: 18

Hospital paramedics: 15

International English-speaking emergency number: 112

Campus hotline: (33)(0)1 34 43 37 00 or 3700 from your ALEGESSEC rooms



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Going to exchange would be your most precious moment in your life. Living on your own for five months, you may experience happiness and difficulties, you may feel happy and frustrated, remember to talk to someone you trust if you feel depressed or homesick. Also, remember to try new things, whenever you hesitate, tell yourself this might be your last time in this place in your life. But most important, have a good estimation of your budget and don't spend too much. Feel free to find me if you have any question from SBM Exchange Team by emailing at [bmugexch@ust.hk](mailto:bmugexch@ust.hk) and enjoy your best time in your life!