



# EXCHANGE REPORT

**ESSEC**  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

**JIA NINGXIN**

*Economics and Finance*

*Fall 2022*

ÉCOLE SUPÉRIEURE DES  
SCIENCES ECONOMIQUES ET  
COMMERCIALES, FRANCE

# Table of Contents

PART I – MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG	3
PART II – General Exchange Information	5
Visa Procedures	5
Part III – Checklist	15
PART IV – Useful Links and Contacts	15



## PART I – MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG

### **September 2022**

When I first arrived at ESSEC, I was, at first, a bit disappointed about its relatively small size compared to HKUST. ESSEC only has two main academic buildings for undergraduates and graduates, and one canteen of 2 floors. However, things began to change after I met the first international student. She lives in the same student residence as me and she's been studying here for 1 year (mainly French). I have a not bad ability to read the map but the situation is different in Cergy (where campus is) so I unfortunately got lost on my first day to school. This girl then saw me and guided me through a bridge (the view is good around campus) and several crossings. All of the sudden, ESSEC appears in front of us and it's actually just a few hundred meters away from our residence. She is very kind and warm-hearted and she became my first friend at this school.



**October 2022**

ESSEC provided a lot of on-campus and off-campus activities to exchange students. One of those I joined was organized by MELT, an international school club, called Escape Game in le Marais. I met friends from Germany, Belgium, Japan, Ireland, etc and we had a really good time exploring the streets in one of the most beautiful districts in Paris, Marais. Le Marais is a district in Paris, France, located on the Right Bank of the Seine river. It is one of the oldest parts of the city and is known for its historic architecture and vibrant atmosphere. The Marais is home to many popular attractions, such as the Place des Vosges, the Pompidou Centre, and the Picasso Museum, as well as numerous cafes, restaurants, bars, and boutiques.





## November 2022

I am a big foodie and so are my friends. On the first weekend of November, we drove to Burgundy, which is a big area to the southeast of Paris. I am the only one with the driving license (sadly though) so I drove throughout the whole journey. Burgundy has the greatest ever countryside view and it's definitely a refreshing try if you're getting bored of Paris (you won't ahah). Our first stop is CIB, a Michelin 1-star restaurant with specialization in dealing with food rich in raw, natural and Scandinavian influences. The chef's menu we had on that day featured truffle and pigeon followed by honey and rum gelato, and it's really an unforgettable experience for me. Dijon is famous for mustard, so we were able to try all kinds of mustard. For example, have you ever tried mustard with a blueberry flavor? Burgundy Beef is something you must try in France and we cooked it ourselves in one of friends' houses. It's beyond words.



## December 2022

Paris has a wealth of museums and galleries to explore, and most of them are no-fee accessible to students under 26. I hereby wrote a quick guide to museums I visited in December:

**The Centre Pompidou:** This modern art museum is a must-see for art lovers, offering a wide variety of contemporary artwork from around the world.

**The Musée d'Orsay:** This museum is home to an impressive collection of impressionist and post-impressionist artworks, including works by Monet, Manet, and Renoir.

**The Musée Rodin:** This museum is dedicated to the work of the famous sculptor Auguste Rodin and features a wide selection of his sculptures, drawings, and photographs.

**The Musée de l'Orangerie:** This museum is home to a large collection of impressionist and post-impressionist artworks, including works by Monet, Cezanne, Renoir, and Picasso.



## PART II – General Exchange Information

### Visa Procedures

ESSEC Business School provides you with the Acceptance Letter for visa application but we need to apply ourselves. This can be retrieved after we completed the Online Academic Application (open between May, 5th and 30th, 2022) on ESSEC website. You need to prepare the following materials:

- Official academic transcripts in English or French, in one pdf file, with your name and home university clearly indicated on the documents.
  
- A proof of English proficiency (for non-natives only)  
a valid TOEFL iBT score 80 min, IELTS score 6.0 min or an official letter from your English teacher or International office confirming your level (B2 minimum).
  
- A proof of French Proficiency (only if you want to take Business classes taught in French),  
official certificate or a letter from your French teacher confirming your level (B2 minimum).

The Visa procedures vary with regions. I applied in mainland China. First I need to register at Etude-en-France to get the Pre-visa. The materials include acceptance letter, testimonial, official transcript, and other school records. The processing time of pre-visa will take around 2 weeks. It is worth noticing that you can start an application for Visa and schedule the meeting slot. The whole process will take around 1-2 months so you better start it right after you get the acceptance letter.



# Orientation Activities

The Orientation Session was held on 2nd September, which is exactly the date of school commencement. It is mandatory for exchange students to attend and register at an in-person session.

Besides the orientation day, ESSEC also had many exchange student activities (some with limited places) which we could participate in for a cost. Some of these activities includes:

- Saturdays 3rd and 10th September: Excursion in Paris (optional but recommended - the BDE will email more information later)
- Sundays 4th, 11th September & 2nd October: Visits in Cergy-Pontoise area (limited places)





## International Services & Activities

Most of the events are organized by an international association called MELT, such as visits of Paris, international dinners and boat trips to discover the French cultural heritage.

Below is their November planning.



The student council, Bureau des élèves, also provided us with a survival guide upon our arrival that includes some useful tips to enjoy both school life and Paris.

Buddy program is also a good way to meet French friends, but unfortunately I didn't hear from anybody till the end of the semester.

## Accommodations

Exchange students were housed either in campus dorms or off-campus rental housing.

ALEGESSEC offered us 4 kinds of apartments to choose from (none of them is near campus though, but you can enjoy shuttle service). The price ranges from 500 to 750 euros per month before APL. They also provide CROUS meal sets at a super low price.

Since I passed the due date to submit my application, I was not assigned to any hall. ESSEC also has a partnership with a housing platform called Studapart and you can find plenty of housing information on it. I ended up living in Twenty Campus which is a student apartment in Cergy Prefecture. The cheapest single room costs 620 euros per month with a private bathroom and shared kitchen and living room.

# Course Registration

ESSEC arranged 5 rounds of online course enrollment for us and exchange students can access at the 1st or the 5th round. It's recommended to arrange the timetable on your own excel file first before registration since some courses are quite popular.

Exchange students also enjoy huge freedom to choose whatever courses they want (with only credit limitations). Compared to the few choices of Economics they offer, Finance, Management, and Marketing students have relatively more choices. Below I attached a brief view of the course catalog of Fall 2022.

# Teaching & Assessment Methods

Generally, each course only has one lecture per week which lasts for 3 hours. And none of the courses (in Economics and Finance) I took had a tutorial.

For some courses, it will be the instructor that teaches throughout the whole semester. For some of them, the professor will also invite guests from industry (usually banks) to give us lessons. Some courses also partner with online platforms so it's like real life practicing.

There are multiple teaching methods. For example, the International Contemporary Economics Topics I took was delivered by presentation every week and the Public Policy one was mainly by in class discussion. Be very careful about the exam schedule because some may not have finals in exam week.

Assessment methods vary with courses and are quite flexible, including presentation, homework, exams, etc. Above 10/20 is PASS.

## Sports & Recreation Facilities

ESSEC offers a variety of sports and recreational facilities to its students. These include a modern, multi-purpose sports and recreation center, two sports fields, two tennis courts, a pond, and a running track. The sports center also offers a range of activities and programs, such as fitness classes, martial arts, dance classes, and more.

Outside campus, there is also a fitness park where you pay to get access. Inside each student residence, there's always a mini gym with aerobic and weighting facilities. Below is the gym in Hauts-de-Cergy.



## Finance and Banking

The expenses largely depend on how much a student travels during exchange. For the whole semester I spent like 10K Euros because I traveled a lot. The main currency is Euro. I recommend a bank account in France if you don't have one either in HK or Europe. It made things much easier. For the first month, I mainly used 卓隼卡 from BoC and it just broke down a very few times in supermarket. I

then applied in BNP (next to campus) and the process took me 1 month or so. They gave students an 80 Euros deposit

## Clubs and Networking Opportunities

I joined many student clubs such as International Consulting, Trading Lab, and photography club. They arranged professional competitions as well as the weekly events. I met many local and non-local friends there.

ESSEC also provides sufficient career services. For example, there was a big career fair on campus that lasted for 1 week and recruiters came to the site so get your resume ready if you are considering a job in France.



## Health & Safety

Cergy is honestly not a safe place. On my arrival, I was suggested not to hang out around Cergy after 11 pm. Paris, in contrast, is much safer except for certain districts (the 19th arr, La Chapelle, Porte de Clignancourt, and Red Castle

ESSEC has free medical consultations with a doctor, as well as access to a range of health resources, such as information about healthy lifestyles, mental health support, and more. Non-European



students who do not benefit from student social cover need to buy a private insurance  
([www.expatriate-care.com](http://www.expatriate-care.com) as recommended by ESSEC)

## Food

Here comes the most exciting part! (joking) In Cergy, the highest ranking food you can enjoy is perhaps from Chinese market express. There is only one canteen on campus and they offer sandwiches and salads for lunch. There is also a Starbucks and a Crepe booth and the crepe is the cheapest. Around Les Trois Fontaine you can find a few sandwich restaurants, a few bistros, a sushi bar (just in front of campus), and a really good pastry. Most of the time, I went grocery shopping (Auchan) and cooked for myself.

## Transportation

The campus of ESSEC, Cergy is pretty small so basically I just walk to get to the place. From campus to school residence, students can either take the metro or the shuttle. To visit Paris, I will take the metro from the station, Cergy Prefecture, by rer A or L. The metro is every 20 minutes and takes half an hour to get to Petit Paris.

## Climate

The climate in Paris from September to December is generally mild and wet. Temperatures range from an average of 8°C (46°F) in December to an average of 13°C (55°F) in January. Rainfall is frequent throughout the season, with November and December being the wettest months. Snowfall is rare, but not unheard of.

## Communication

It is easy to communicate with professors using email. English can deal with most cases, especially when ESSEC is such a campus with 80% of its students are international. Things change a little bit when you go to Paris, waiters or bartenders are apparently less friendly to non-French speakers. But

overall I didn't experience any barriers or discrimination. As it always says, one more language is never a bad thing.

## Cautionary Measures

- Pay attention to the thieves! Be aware of your surroundings at all times, avoid large crowds and tourist attractions, not display signs of wealth such as expensive jewelry or electronics, carrying a copy of your passport or other forms of identification, and registering your trip with the local police.
- Study the metro map of Paris! Honestly speaking, the Paris metro is far from Hong Kong's and it's very likely that you still get lost on your 3rd or 4th week in Paris.
- Study the housing contract very carefully and keep everything in its original shape before you check out. I was charged 100 euros for a little piece of stain on the floor (which was probably left by the former tenant).

## Other Notes

- Plan your trip early if you want to travel around Europe. The flight and hotel prices vary a lot over time. If you're that kind of spontaneous person you may lose a lot.
- Make sure you check in online before you come to the airport. I was denied boarding because the airline (Vueling) was overbooking and I didn't get any refund so far.

## Part III – Checklist

- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Visa
- ☐ Birth certificate (for housing aid application)
- ☐ Cash (in Euro)
- ☐ Credit Card
- ☐ Chargers
- ☐ Adapters
- ☐ Laptop
- ☐ Suitcase in small (for short trips) and big sizes
- ☐ Umbrella
- ☐ Snippers
- ☐ Contacts
- ☐ Chinese sauces
- ☐ Lock

## PART IV – Useful Links and Contacts

- Visa application in HK:  
<https://hongkong.consulfrance.org/Applying-for-a-French-visa-in-Hong-Kong-and-Macau>
- Pre-visa application in mainland China:  
<https://link.zhihu.com/?target=https%3A//pastel.diplomatie.gouv.fr/etudesenfrance/dyn/public/authentication/login.html>
- Visa application:

<https://france-visas.gouv.fr/zh/web/france-visas>

- Course Catalog:

<https://app.awesome-table.com/-NEthuATgxoyzbFYkubS/view>

- ESSEC:

<https://www.essec.edu/en/>

- Global BBA:

[bba-globaleducation@essec.edu](mailto:bba-globaleducation@essec.edu)

- Emergancy Contact:

+33 (0)1 34 43 30 00