

Erasmus Experience Report

Winter Semester 2024/2025

Aix-Marseille University, Aix-en-Provence, France

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Preparation for the Semester Abroad

My Erasmus exchange journey at Aix-Marseille University began with my nomination by Ms. Schätz - Al Mahamid in March. Following this, I officially applied to the university via their online portal in April and made my initial course selection in May, based on the available course information.

I also applied for accommodation support through the French student housing provider, Les Crous, via the university's mediation system. This process proved to be particularly time-consuming and complex due to bureaucratic challenges. It took nearly three months of persistent email and phone communication to finally secure a studio apartment in a student residence in Aix-en-Provence. Based on my experience, I highly recommend future exchange students to begin their housing applications as early as April or May.

Initially, I had chosen my courses based on the university's published offerings. However, shortly after submission in May, the course selection was unexpectedly changed by the university. This forced me to revise my choices, and I opted for the Faculty of Economics and Management at the campus in Aix-en-Provence, where more English-taught courses were available compared to the Marseille campus, which predominantly offered courses in French.

Unfortunately, due to ongoing changes in course offerings, I was unable to finalize my Learning Agreement before arriving in France. Despite multiple attempts, the agreement could not be confirmed in advance, which made the start of my semester in September more complex.

Academic Journey

Upon arrival, I faced another unexpected change: several of the English courses I had selected were reduced from 5 ECTS to 4 ECTS credits, which jeopardized my ability to meet the required 30 ECTS. I was initially forced to attend French-taught classes to fill the gap, despite my original plan to study entirely in English. This was quite a challenge and required flexibility and resilience.

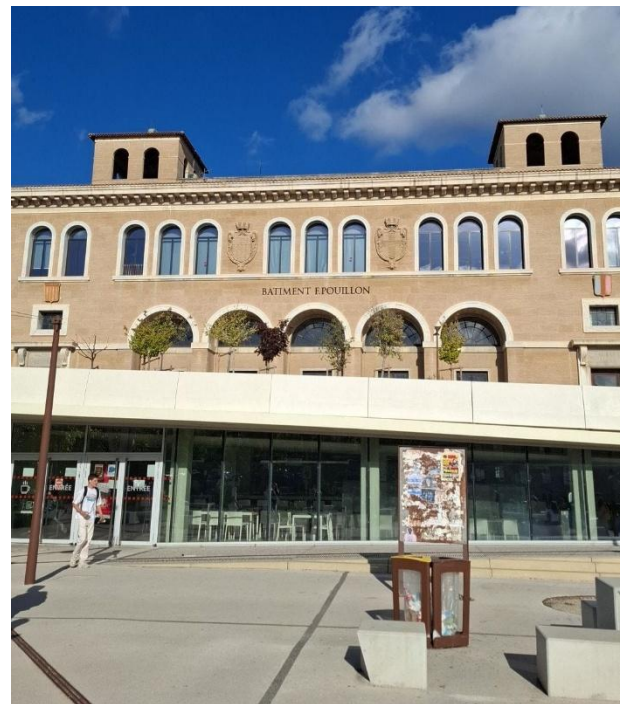
Fortunately, after three weeks, the university responded to student feedback and restored the ECTS values of certain courses. This allowed me to restructure my schedule and reach the 30 ECTS requirement with English-taught courses only. With the support of Ms. Schätz - Al Mahamid, who offered me a very helpful Teams call to navigate this situation, I was finally able to finalize my Learning Agreement in coordination with both universities.

The courses I eventually enrolled in were part of the third-year international program in Economics and Management (L3 IPEM). The academic content was both engaging and appropriately demanding. Among the courses I took, I found Advanced Statistics particularly interesting. The course offered in-depth analytical tools and practical applications that greatly enhanced my understanding of data analysis within the context of international economics and management. It was both challenging and rewarding, and it remains one of the highlights of my academic experience during the semester abroad. Mid-term exams took place in late October and early November, while final assessments were held in December. While the mid-term exams included

both written exams and presentations, depending on the course, the final examinations were completely in written format.

The professors were supportive, organized, and offered clear guidance throughout the semester. The faculty building itself was quite old, though I learned that a new and modern building is scheduled for completion in 2026. The nearby student canteen, managed by Les Crous, offered affordable and decent food and served as a pleasant place to take breaks.

A highlight of my academic experience was the opportunity to study in several of the modern university libraries, including those on the main campus, which housed faculties such as Arts, Letters, Law and Political Science.



Student Life and Cultural Experience

Student life in Aix-en-Provence was vibrant and dynamic. The Erasmus Student Network and the university organized numerous cultural and recreational events, such as city tours, wine tastings, French sports like boules or rugby, and even a hike to the iconic Mont Sainte-Victoire. These events helped to foster new friendships and provided deeper insight into French culture and local life.

I also had the chance to visit Marseille multiple times. While Aix-en-Provence is a small, cozy, and picturesque student city with a distinctly Provençal charm and a wealthier atmosphere, Marseille offered a stark contrast with its large scale, multicultural vibe, and historical landmarks. During my visits, I explored the Old Port, the impressive Basilique Notre-Dame de la Garde, and enjoyed a few refreshing swims at Marseille's beaches. I also visited the Marseille campus of Aix-Marseille University. Although its central location near Saint-Charles Station is practical, it felt less safe and

welcoming compared to the campus in Aix-en-Provence, which I would recommend for future exchange students.



Reflections and Personal Growth

Overall, my Erasmus semester in Aix-en-Provence was an unforgettable and deeply formative experience. Despite the various academic and administrative challenges, ranging from housing struggles to course selection changes, it was a period marked by personal growth, adaptability, and resilience.

Academically, I expanded my knowledge in international economics, improved both my English and French language skills, and gained first-hand insight into the quite demanding French higher education system. On a personal level, I forged meaningful friendships with fellow students from across Europe, experienced the rich culture and lifestyle of southern France, and significantly strengthened my ability to adapt to new environments and overcome unforeseen challenges.

I am grateful for the invaluable support I received from Hochschule Trier, especially from Ms. Schätz - Al Mahamid, and I am proud of how I navigated the ups and downs of this exchange. This semester has left a lasting impression on me, and I will always look back on it as one of the most enriching experiences of my academic journey.

Should you have any questions regarding my experience, feel free to contact me by email: **oskarschneider@gmx.de**