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ESCP MIM Program Spring '17

School Introduction & Other Academic Information

There are a good number of interesting things to know about ESCP that I think will hopefully help you feel a little less anxious and a little more excited before going to ESCP Paris on exchange. These will definitely be on their website or in their Wiki page but I've chosen to highlight only those that really stood out to me as being relevant.

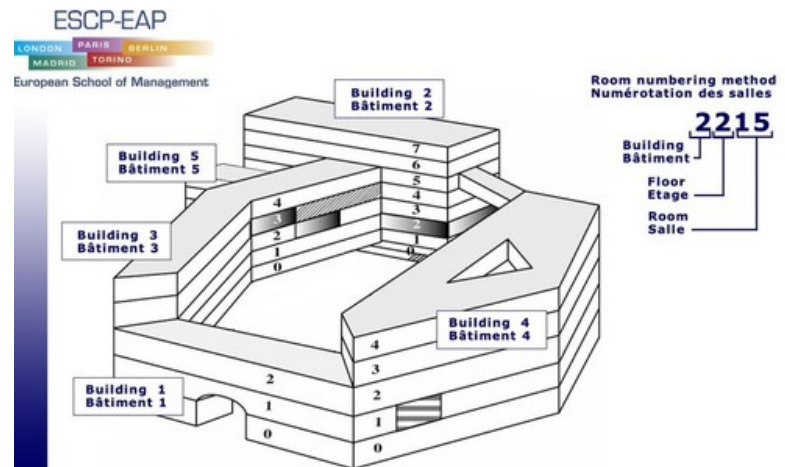
First, a lot of your friends and family will probably ask you what ESCP stands for. Yes, it's an acronym for a much longer and, thankfully, descriptive name of the school. ESCP stands for Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris. Now, although this is in French, the words "supérieure de commerce" sounds a lot like what it means in English and that to us, sheds light to the nature of ESCP as a business school. In fact, you are going to be one of the lucky few who'll have the privilege of attending the world's first business school. With nearly 200 years of history and experience that's allowed the school to perfect its craft, your time at ESCP will definitely be one of the most enriching and rewarding experiences of your student-life thus far.

Second, I say "a lucky few" because ESCP is extremely selective with who they choose to attend their program. To explain this, it's important to understand that ESCP is classified as a *grandes écoles*. *Grandes écoles* are different from regular schools in terms of prestige and exclusivity. Admission to any *grandes écoles* is extremely competitive and only the best of the best are welcomed. Unofficially, but generally accepted amongst ESCP students, ESCP only ranks 4th below HEC, École Polytechnique, and ESSEC. For students who enroll directly with the school, ESCP has an acceptance rate of somewhere between 10-20% while HEC 8%. However, I don't think the same strict standards apply for exchange students. Just know that you will be with very capable students and that being an ESCP student is something to be proud of.

Third, the program you'll be taking is called MIM which stands for Master in Management. ESCP offers most of its MIM Program courses in both French and English so don't expect to have a lot of French speaking classmates. Your classmates will either be from other partner universities of ESCP or ESCP students from either of their other 5 campuses Berlin, London, Madrid, Turin or Warsaw. Based on my experience, majority of the students on exchange are from the US. To a certain degree, whether your classmates are on exchange from other universities or from another ESCP campus influences how seriously they take their classes. Noticeably, those from other ESCP classes exert more effort to get a good grade. Student age ranges from 20 to early 30s.

Fourth, all exchange students are required to attend classes on various topics that fall under Europe Orientation. Some of the topics were on history, politics, culture, the French educational system, the European Union and doing business in Europe. Most of the exchange students hate having to attend this but I personally found some of the sessions informative. Attendance is mandatory and is 3 hours long once a week. At the end of the session, you will be tested on concepts from all of the sessions. Apart from this, all exchange students go through a campus-life orientation one week before regular class starts where all exchange students are given the opportunity to be introduced to each other, introduced to the different school orgs, the MIM program administrators and

coordinators, as well as a quick a tour of the small ESCP Paris campus. The campus is comprised of 5 buildings surrounding a courtyard. As on the image to the right, most classrooms are numbered with 4 digits. The first digit refers to the building number. The second digit refers to which floor it is located at. The last two digits are the classroom number. Other classrooms are named after the school's founders.



Fifth, ESCP offers various free french classes. One that most students take is the weekly course taught by a professional language teacher. During orientation week, you'll be asked to take a placement exam where your results will determine which class language-level you'll be taking the rest of the semester. One other way to learn french is a 30 minute one-on-one learn-what-you-want type of tutoring session. This is organized by one of the language orgs of the school and is run by ESCP students.

Sixth, MIM program students are allowed a maximum of 24 ECTS per semester. Classes available for exchange students are either worth 4 ECTS (30-hour courses) or 2 ECTS (15-hour courses). The list of courses available for exchange students are sent via email by the exchange program coordinator. ESCP coordinators are nowhere near as thorough as NCCU's but ESCP's student website has most if not all the information you'll need to register yourself to classes. In the event that you don't manage to get this done before flying out to Paris, there is still time to sort this out with the school during orientation week. The electives I took were Family Business, Design Thinking, Procurement Management and Negotiation. The required course on Europe Orientation also counts for credit.

Seventh, your ID number and student-website password are very important. You'll need these to log in to the school's interent, log in to your ESCP app and so forth. Your student ID will also be required to get into the school. Without it, you'll have to request for a temporary pass with the school concierge. Although it doesn't take too much time to do this, its more conveneint to have your ID as its how you pay for your food at the school cafeteria and café.

Eight, most of the time, the cafeteria cashier will not let you pay for your food in cash because the school subsidizes a large portion of student meals which they monitor using your ID. Food at the cafeteria costs less then half or a third of the price relative to food outside of the school. Chicken rice and a salad would probably cost around €3. Whereas outside, a sandwich would already cost €5. Because of this, there is always a long line to the cafeteria at noon. The cafeteria is only open until 14:00 or 15:00 while the café is open until 16:00. The school also gives exchange students 100 pages worth of free printing that's accessible with your ID.

Ninth, the ESCP app gives you easy access to your class schedule, the classroom where your classes will be held as well as whether or not your class has been cancelled or moved. Note that on several occasions, classes have been cancelled or moved to a different room with no other notification other than on the app which is why it's good to make it a habit of checking the app.

Life & Cultural Exchange

Ones that made the biggest impact on my life as an exchange student were the friends I made, how much I could afford, where I chose to stay and what I did outside of school.

There's a big difference between how NCCU takes care of its students versus the to-each-his-own style at ESCP. I found that it was also nearly impossible to get everything done alone which is why having friends who were genuinely willing to help made all the difference. However, what made my first few weeks in Paris truly overwhelming was not so much related to ESCP as compared to what I had to settle outside of school. Fortunately, I have good friends from NCCU who were originally from Paris that helped guide me through most of the hassle that comes with settling to a new city. With them I was able to get a sim card, a metro card, buy winter clothes, find different routes from the apartment to school and open a bank account. For other students, looking for a place to live would also be on this list but I'm very fortunate to have found a place before arriving Paris.

Aside from old friends that made my move more comfortable were new friends I made at school. Together, we found our place amongst all the other students at ESCP. It's difficult to put into words how being socially accepted is part of settling in but personally, I found that I could only truly start to focus on excelling academically after being aligned with the school socially. One of the ways that the school did to help move this along was through parties that "Shuffle" organized. Shuffle is a student-run org that plans get-togethers for exchange students. Minor meet ups are held at a bar inside school that opens at 19:00. While some of the bigger events that they held for us were an overnight trip to Loire Valley and an after-dinner cruise at the Seine. They also introduced us to other groups that we could join like sports orgs, wine-drinking orgs and the like. Outside of these organized events, groups naturally formed within the exchange student group. There were also interschool parties that allowed us to meet exchange students from HEC, ESSEC, and IESEG amongst others. At these parties, I noticed that it was quite common to be asked where you attended school.

Not meaning to sound insensitive, but it takes a lot of money to enjoy Paris for 5 months. Unlimited rides with the metro and bus costs €72/ month, a sim with Free Mobile costs \$30/ month (Free is the cheaper choice) my rent was €600/ month but this is relatively cheap as most of my other friends paid €800-€1,000 for their apartments. Minor expenses together with food will probably cost €900/ month however, this doesn't include travel, socializing, shows at the opera, Disneyland, wine, chocolate and all the other good luxurious things Paris/ Europe has to offer. Budget is definitely a factor to consider before choosing to come to Paris and attending ESCP.

Choosing where to live also made an impact on my experience because I noticed that different districts in Paris carry a different feel. For example, the 13th arrondissement is known to be where most of the Chinese community is. There, you'll find a lot of Chinese restaurants and groceries. In Opera were more Chinese, Korean and Japanese stores. Although I frequently visited Opera, I

lived about 6 metro stops away - Ile St. Louis, which is an island between Paris' left and right bank. Close to Notre Dame and 2km away from the Louvre, Ile St. Louis felt as if it were curated specially for tourists. Every corner of the place was beautiful, the island was its own little community with its own set of bakeries, souvenir shops and cafes. Ile St. Louis is amongst the safest and most beautiful places to live in Paris.

Relevant to culture, most French people are stiff with what they consider to be standard practice done in good taste. For example, one word that made the biggest difference in how people reacted towards me was *bonjour*. During orientation, we were all taught to always greet people *bonjour* before saying anything else or asking for something. This applied to buying bread at the bakery, speaking to the banker, sending mail at the post and so forth. Another thing that I noticed about business school students in Paris is their fondness for politics. Instead of the standard topics that I'm used to bringing up as small talk at parties, I found that they were more engaged talking about politics or current events than talking about TV shows and the latest movies.

Outside school, most exchange students spend their time travelling to neighboring countries. Ticket prices can be cheap if you plan ahead of time and book your plane and hotel tickets early. Amongst all the neighboring countries, you'll probably find the cheapest tickets going to Italy and London. Travelling is popular amongst exchange students and in some big classes, half of the students will probably be on their laptops on Sky Scanner or Eurostar looking for the next cheap flight/ train instead of listening to the professor.

Points to Remember

ESCP is located in the 11th arrondissement. It's along a big street called Avenue de la République. The metro stop closest to school is Rue Saint Maur. There are a lot of bus stops close to school and the quickest way to find out about all available routes from wherever you live to school is using Google Maps. In the event that you don't have access to internet, make sure to download an offline map of Paris. The Paris metro and bus system is fairly easy to navigate however, it's best to visit school before class starts to make sure that you don't get lost on your first day.

The campus is small but can be quite confusing when you're inside. Don't be afraid to ask for directions from any of the school staff or professors. I personally think they are friendlier than most students. Also, always keep an eye on your things, I've had friends who lost their phones inside school.

Everyone in school speaks English however, the staff at the café and cafeteria will treat you nicer if you speak French. Some easy words to remember are *un* for one, *café* for coffee and *chocolat chaud* for hot chocolate. Also make it a habit to say *s'il vous plait* and *merci*. It also helps to train your ear to recognize all the numbers in French. This is important when you're buying things at the grocery or at the boulangerie (bakery).

Learn to cook. Food in Paris can be expensive and you'll probably want to try fancy restaurants so on days where you don't have plans, eat in and save up. Another good way to save money is to bring your own bottle to school for water. There are a lot of water fountains in school where you can refill your bottle. Tap water is potable but different people have different opinions about how safe it really is. I drank from the tap and I'm fine.

Before deciding to watch a movie, wait for days when movie tickets are half the price. Movie theaters do this often. The same goes for tickets to Disneyland. Their website shows a schedule of when their tickets prices are cheapest and most expensive.

Opening a bank account and getting your ATM card is one of the most crucial things to do the moment you get to Paris. Some stores won't have change to break your €100 or even your €50 which means you'll have to carry a lot of smaller bills and coins. You also can't reload your metro card with cash.

Always bring your metro card and make sure it has your photo. If you forget to bring your metro card, buy a single-journey ticket. Although a lot of other people squeeze in with the person in front of them to get inside for free, metro guards randomly check people for their tickets and if you're caught without one, you'll be fined €50 or more.