

Exchange report - IESEG School of Management in Paris, France

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This exchange report is written towards prospective students who are considering studying at IESEG School of Management in Paris, France. My personal experiences in Paris and IESEG are shared in this report as objective as possible in order to help prospective students in getting some feel of what it would be like to live and study there. As this report is comprehensive, the index is provided below with page numbers for each topic. Some of the underlined key words are clickable links that lead to related webpages for more info.

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1. Paris, France

I wished to study in Paris because of my love of wine, food, and art. I wish to work in wine or food industry after graduation. I have previously been to many cities in France and experienced great wine and food there. In Paris, there is the bonus feature of great art.

a. Museums and monuments

EU citizens/residents under 26 are entitled to free entries at national museums. I recommend you take advantage of the opportunity. Some museums are also free of charge for students under 26 regardless of nationality. If you are older, you can take advantage of free entries on the 1st Sunday of the month. (More info: ParisInfo.com)

My personal favorites are "Musée national de l'Orangerie" where you find yourself in two massive oval rooms with gigantic paintings of Water Lilies by Claude Monet and "Musée d'Orsay" where you can enjoy Vincent van Gogh's famous paintings and the Gates of Hell sculpture by Rodin.

b. Wine

If you are studying in the fall semester, you are in luck. During "the wine festival" in September to beginning of October, you can buy great wine for great prices. It is not like at home in Sweden. You will see pricing such as buy 3 get 3 free at Auchan, the grocery store close to school. Another grocery store Monoprix have great prices as well. I bought about 20 bottles which were transported by bus back to Sweden when my boyfriend came (he is a musician and has a tour bus).

My personal favorite is red wine from [Châteauneuf-du-Pape](#) region. It is one of the most expensive but it is worth every penny. My second favorite is red wine from [Bordeaux](#) which is less expensive but still premium quality.

c. Food

The food is generally great everywhere. But customer service is in need of improvement. It is often that you encounter rude waitstaff especially if you do not speak French. My favorite French restaurant is [Le Campanella](#) close to the Eiffel tower. Great food, good price, and service is good as well.

I ate more Japanese food than French food in Paris (I am Japanese and I need my fix). There are several authentic Japanese restaurants close to Louvre Museum, by metro station [Pyramides](#). Japanese customer service is one of the world's best. You will not be disappointed. I believe [Sanukiya](#) is the best Japanese restaurant in Paris, where they make their own udon noodles. Their Bukkake Tempura Udon (Fried Shrimp and Veggies on noodles, with sauce to pour) is my favorite. Shrimp tempura are huge! If you like ramen noodles than udon noodles, go to [Kotteri Ramen Naritake](#). There is usually a long line but it's worth it. My favorite is miso ramen noodles.

2. Location

IESEG School of Management is not located in the city of Paris. It is actually in the city of [La Défense](#) which is outside of Paris over the Seine River to the West. It is part of the Paris Metropolitan Area in the Île-de-France region, but not in the city of Paris.

There are several buildings where classes are held. The main campus is located inside the [La Grande Arche](#). Be sure to check the location of your class before leaving home. Sometimes other buildings are not easy to find.

3. Transportation

(Useful link: ParisByTrain.com)

a. Punctuality and the RATP app

The subway (“metro”), bus, and commute rail (called “RER”) run regularly but not on time. Do not rely on the timetable or the metro app (called RATP) and always get there early. Keep a small map of metro in your pocket at all times (you get one for free at most stations) as it is a complicated system. I had a downloaded pdf map on my phone (as the RATP app isn’t so reliable and it crashes sometimes) but I always resulted in the small paper map because it was easier to see in its entirety.

b. Five Zones in Paris region

La Défense is in the zone 3 of the five different metro zones. The center of Paris is the zone 1. There are different prices for tickets/weekly pass/monthly pass depending on what type of transportation and which zone(s) you travel (To be honest, I have not fully understood how the pricing of different zones work because I have not taken many subways as I lived close to school). ATTENTION: Keep your ticket while traveling! You need to feed the ticket or scan the pass in order to get in AND also to get out (but you do not need to feed/scan to get out at some metro stations).

c. “T+ tickets”

During your first week, I recommend getting a pack of 10 tickets (14.50 euros) called “carnet” which is much cheaper than buying an individual ticket each time (1.90 euros). Those one-time use tickets are called T+ tickets. It works in the zones 1 and 2 for the duration of 90 minutes. ATTENTION: Stay underground when you change trains. Once you go outside, you cannot use the same ticket although it is within the 90 min. frame. That means you cannot take a metro and a bus with 1 ticket. You need two. So I usually stuck with one type of transportation. Buses are the exception in terms of changing above ground. You can ride multiple busses under the 90 min. I have read somewhere that it can be only used on 2 busses but I have used one ticket for 3 busses.

d. Special rules at La Défense

Due to the location of the campus in zone 3, you need to purchase another type of ticket to travel from school. You can use those T+ ticket to travel via metro from Paris zones 1 or 2 and get out at La Défense (although it is in the zone 3) because you do not need to feed your ticket to get out if you take the metro exit (Do not take the RER exit). But, apparently, you need a different type of ticket in order to enter the RER or metro from La Défense station. I have never done it before, so I cannot tell you how much and how it works. I think you can also buy a pack of 10 La Défense tickets.

e. Navigo card (You should get it)

If you do not live in the walking distance to school, you should get a “Navigo” card and charge it monthly. It is kind of like Swedish SL pass but with your photo on it. It is free of charge to create it if you are a resident of the Paris Metropolitan Area in the Île-de-France region. Bring your ID and a proof of your residency to the metro service counter. They will take a photo of you there. Not all stations have service offices and they have different hours. So check before going there. (La Défense one is closed on Sat. and Sun., and they usually have a long line, so I went to the one at Pont de Neuilly. They told me the person who can create a pass is not there yet and told me to come back at 10pm... So I did. It was annoying to go back again, but there was no line).

You charge your Navigo card at the machines available at metro and RER stations. You can charge either weekly (€ 22.15) or monthly (€ 73).

ATTENTION: You cannot start your month (or week) whenever you want (It is not like at home in Sweden). It is always from the 1st of the month for the monthly pass or from Monday until Sunday for the weekly pass. For instance, if you charge the pass for a week on Friday, you can start using it from Monday the following week. You can, though, charge the weekly pass up until Thursday of that current week (but that would be the waste of money since you would be using it only from Thur-Sun. of that week).

I suggested earlier to buy the 10 paper tickets during your first week (mentioned above). Another alternative is buying a weekly pass until it is the 1st of the month, and change it to the monthly pass. Just be aware of when your month and week starts.

Although you might not need monthly pass, I still suggest getting a Navigo card because it is free to create and sometimes you might want to charge it weekly when you have a guest. It is worth it if you are taking two trips to the airport, e.g., picking up a guest and riding the train back with her, because a trip to the CDG airport from La Défense costs about €12 one way. (2 trips approx. €24 > the weekly pass € 22.15).

f. For your visitors

Your guest can buy either "Paris Visite" pass (Expensive!), "Ticket Mobilis," or create "Navigo Découverte" (ParisByTrain.com). Ticket Mobiles is cheaper than Paris Visite but it does not include access to and from airport. I think Navigo is the best choice if your guest arrive in good time to charge it (Thursday midnight for the current week). The difference between a normal Navigo pass for a resident (explained above) and Navigo Découverte is the €5 fee for a card and you need to bring a passport size photo. Discuss with your guest about these alternatives in advance.

4. Housing

I found my own apartment at Lodgis.com. There was an agency fee but I wanted to be sure that I had a place to stay before arriving to Paris and they had the cheapest agency fees. I also looked other agencies but did not choose them because of several reasons. EntreeParis did not have apartments close to school and replies were slow (it is though a Swedish agency recommended by SBS students. It might worth checking it out.) ParisAttitude's agency fee was too expensive and they seemed rather unprofessional/unreliable (They wanted me to sign the contract as soon as possible). In contrast, my agent Akemi Hirano ([Click here](#) and search for her name) at Lodgis was very good. She always replied fast and answered many questions in details and with great patience. [The Apartment](#) had 6 rooms including 3 bedrooms, living room, kitchen/dining room, and study room. It was 20 min. walk from school. I shared the apartment with 3 other girls from Stockholm University. We paid €2495 per month including water and internet (Make sure you choose an apartment with internet. It is apparently difficult to fix it yourself according to my agent). Electricity was extra and was deducted from our security deposit which came up to about €200 per month. We did not have to contact electric service ourselves. It was already set up for us by the landlord. The landlord was nice. We had major problems twice with internet for a long period of time which was irritating, but she refunded the money for the internet for those months with internet malfunction.

I asked school for help for the housing but did not get much help. Since I have a dog (I took him with me to Paris), I contacted them in advance if there is anything available. The email correspondences were slow and I often had to wait weeks for their replies. Then I was only given one choice in the suburb in a shared house (owned by a private landlord)

for 8 students and I had to share a bedroom with another person. I thought it was too crowded and not as private. I did not contact them further as a result.

5. IESEG School of Management - Overall reflection and experiences

a. Orientation Week

It was rather unorganized, took hours, and everything was running late. We had to check in three times: at the door, to pick up a bag with orientation materials in it, and to pick up a school ID card. It could have been more efficient if those had been done all at once. They did not have time for questions and they kept saying they would take questions later (and even told us not to ask questions and just listen). We almost never had a chance to ask questions (which resulted in many of us approaching them afterwards... I personally feel that took more of their time and it was not an efficient use of their time). It was annoying that they told us to come on time, but they were almost always late. Apparently, it is okay for them to be late, but not students. It is a cultural thing (explained later).

b. Registration

It was an absolute chaos in terms of the course registration. I expected some changes but the selections of courses changed dramatically to my surprise. More than half of the courses I chose previously in the initial learning agreement had disappeared. I could not take some of the "surviving" courses due to conflict between those courses which survived for the initial course offer. And to make the matter worse, we were given ONLY 24 hours to find replacement courses and register all the courses online. I could not wait for the approval from SBS, so I just chose some random courses that sounded good. I was upset because I did not have time to read the courses description thoroughly to see if I really wanted them.

We could add and drop courses a week after that 24-hour-online-registration process, but ONLY by paper forms that we leave with the only ONE ADMIN PERSON, Elena (which you can imagine, it took a long time for her to process all of our forms, and some mistakes were made). And there was NO GUARANTEE that we could add or drop the courses we wished. I wondered, what the point was for the add and drop. ATTENTION: Make sure you register for 30 credits (not counting your French class) by the add-drop deadline. There will be no changes allowed afterwards.

c. Getting randomly kicked-out from courses

They "randomly" kicked us out from some of the courses we were registered due to the amount of students (i.e., too many students). It appears to be that they have not planned in advance how many students they would accept per class. The random kick out continued about a month after the registration. What would happen if a student chose IESEG because of specific courses offered? The admin person Elena was not so helpful. I complained that I got kicked out from a course that I really wanted and it was one of the reasons why I chose IESEG. She replied annoyingly, "Just pick something else". There was nothing else I wanted. So I just picked a course that fits my schedule but I was not interested at all in that course. To make the matter worse, I got kicked out from a course that starts in 1 business day. So again, I did not have time to consult with SBS about the replacement course. It was a gamble choosing a random course, but it was lucky approved later by SBS.

It seems like they give French students priority because we found out that random kick-out is partially due to French students who register a week or two later than international students. There were apparently acceptable amount of international students in each class

until French students registered and classes became too full as a result. I could not help to wonder why they do not do the registration at the same time for all students to make it fair for all types of students and also eliminate extra work for staff.

d. No drop-out nor add by your own will

The changes were not allowed after the first week of school. We were not allowed to change anything, neither add nor drop. It seemed unfair that they could drop us randomly from registered courses but we could not do that ourselves. For example, a friend wanted to drop-out from her French class in the beginning of the semester because she thought it took too much time from other studies, and she could give her place to someone who actually wanted it. The change was not allowed and she would receive the grade F although she had not attended the course after she decided to drop out. This system was also illogical.

e. Administrative department

The administrative department was catastrophic. They had bad organization and communications skills. We got different information from different people. It was hard to know what the right information was, so we asked as many people as possible and tried to draw our own conclusion. The admin staff did not answer many of my emails. As I mentioned previously, I wanted help with the housing but never really got the help I needed, due to the slow communication and ignored emails. Some people took it personally when confronted with issues. For example, when I emailed a staff in the admin department and begged me to keep me in a class I really wanted (because I got a warning email that there might be a random kick-out), he seemed to be angry in his reply that I used "capital and bold letters". I did not understand why. Apparently, it is ok for them to use those type of letters in the emails in order to highlight the important points but it is considered rude if students do so. It did not seem fair to me. It must be a cultural thing.

f. Academic calendar and exam dates

The academic calendar was not planned in good time. The start and end dates of school changed when we got there. We wondered why they could not give us the right info in advance. My guess is that it probably was not planned. The final exam dates were not published until 3 weeks (or 4 weeks for some courses) before the exam date. It resulted in expensive flight tickets home for some students (it is especially expensive in December). Again, they give priority to French students. Their exam dates were published before ones for international students, who need to buy flight tickets in advance to avoid high prices. The re-exams are held in the next semester if you were to fail some courses. That means international students who stay only one semester must choose not to take the re-exam (therefore fail the course) or take a flight back to Paris just to take an re-exam.

g. Language skills

The English skills of most of the staff at school were acceptable except for some of them who spoke bad English or no English at all. Some of them did not really make an effort to speak English to help us. They did not have patients either with my bad French in my effort to communicate. People who spoke French got better treatment.

The English language skills of professors were mostly great as most of the professors were not French. On the other hand, a couple of French professors had really thick accent and few levels of vocabulary in English, unfortunately. Students were often confused with instructions given by those French teachers due to their language incompetence.

The English skills of students were great except for French students interns of academic writing skills. It showed in great variations when working with them on group projects and the most of their work needed to be edited heavily.

6. IESEG School of Management - Courses

My overall experiences in terms of courses at IESEG were great. There were many interesting courses and professors were inspiring, experienced, educated, and competent. But the negative aspects were schedule of intensive courses and excessive group projects.

a. Professors

Most professors were great and they are guest professors from all over the world with extensive experiences in their fields. I felt that there is a big difference in learning from such professionals, in comparison to researchers at a university who are required to teach some courses in order to keep their positions.

My favorite professors include Rodolphe Dutel who taught Personal Branding and Efficiency, Jonas Debrulle who taught A to Z of Entrepreneurship, and Valon Murtezaj who taught International Negotiation and Diplomacy.

b. Intensive courses

There are intensive and extensive courses at IESEG. An intensive course is 5 days long which starts on Monday and ends on Friday with an exam and/or a final assignment (individual essay or a group project). We often got Friday off if there was a final essay instead of an exam. It starts at 8:00am and ends at 12:20pm. It is tough for those who are not morning people to have an approx. 4 hours lecture every morning (you get a break or two). It seemed like that professors did not understand the extent of work we had per course and it created a snowball effect of a lot of work as the semester continued. Each course consisted of at least one project and one exam or a final essay instead. But 80% of the courses required more work than that. There were a couple of courses which we had an assignment everyday (individual and/or group). Attendance (and participation) was part of the grades (up to 20%). Most of the courses required two group projects and a final exam. Sometimes we got an extra week or two to finish a project. It was not necessarily positive because we would be working on the project (that is more extensive due to the extra time given) from the week before, during the week when a new course would start. I had 3 or 4 ongoing projects at all times which made me exhausted during my entire stay in Paris. Most of my weekends were dedicated to finishing the projects.

c. Extensive courses

Extensive courses stretch over the entire semester. There are in the afternoon or in the evening (so that they won't clash with intensive courses in the morning). Some of them have midterm exams (but mine did not). There are final exams at the end of the semester. I did not have final exams but instead, I had group projects. I had two extensive courses. One of them required 2 group projects with presentation for each. For the other course, there were a presentation and a report on the same subject.

d. Two ECT credits per course

Most of the courses worth 2 ECT credits each. That means I had to take 15 courses to make up 30 credits (required by Stockholm University). I took 13 intensive courses and 2 extensive courses. My pre-intermediate French class (3 credits) did not count towards the required 30 credits, but I took it anyway. Therefore, I ended up with 33 credits.

e. Books

None of my courses required books although there were some recommended books. I believe it is due to most of the courses being intensive courses. It is impossible to read books for each 5-day-course. Instead, all the information was based on lecture and lecture

slides (A few professors though did not want to share slides). I guess that is why there are not many books at the library and opening hours are very poor.

f. Group projects

Group projects are what I did not like the most at IESEG. There were too many projects due, it became quantity over quality. It created the negative environment that effected the entire study experience. We did not have time to produce projects of quality as there were several projects due every week. It also created some slackers and free-loaders. In other words, when you have too many jobs than what you can handle, you choose either to do mediocre jobs on all of them, or to do some projects but forget about others. There were many students who chose the latter. It was frustrating to ask grown young adults to do their jobs repeatedly and failing to motivate them most of the time. Therefore I ended up doing most of the projects all by myself because it is, at the end of the day, my grade and my learning experience. I was stressed the entire time and was completely exhausted at the end of the semester. I believe this system in IESEG benefit free-loaders and slackers.

Here are some honest tips when you are choosing your group mates. Choose wisely, otherwise you end up doing everything by yourself. I do not like to generalize, but I decided to write about certain nationalities in this section as I have worked with students from all sorts of nationalities in multiple occasions throughout the semester and had both good and bad experiences. Please read this section not as a generalized opinion towards certain nationalities but only as my honest personal experiences with certain people that I actually worked with. So here it goes. French students were stubborn and do not put much work into their studies in comparison to international students (although there was though two exceptions but only two, I might add). It was hard to work with them in group projects because most of them were slackers and they could not take constructive criticism although they contributed little in the projects. They took it personally, fought for that their opinions/ideas were good, and were reluctant to changes. However, they liked to take credits on someone else's work. For example, I had a great idea for a group project which we ended up using as we all agreed that it was a great idea. When I pointed it out that was my idea and also I had written a lot on the project, therefore others should contribute more, they acted like we came up with the idea together and they did just as much work as I did. It was very weird and rude because it was not true. Not to mention their English were not even close to the academic level we would expect. Students from other French speaking countries were even worse. Most of them were free loaders. I have worked with several of them in different occasions but none of them contributed as they should. There was one girl who wrote 0 words in our essay although I have complained many times to contribute. She promised that she would but she never did. I gave up after multiple times asking her and wrote everything myself. Students from India who I worked with were also free loaders and slackers. The little work they contributed were not useable as they did not seem to understand the contents of the courses. The rest of them simply did not do anything and disappear from conversations. After those experiences, I started to avoid having above mentioned nationalities in my group projects. It was a shame that I had to do so but I did it for my own benefits to avoid stress and more work. Again, those stories above are facts from my personal experiences on certain occasions.

g. Grades

The grades matter to me although the grades do not transfer from IESEG to SU and it is just a credit transfer (pass or fail). I believe they show my learning outcomes and they are something I can be proud of. Therefore it disappoints me that IESEG does not have transparent grading criteria. Grades are awarded from 1 to 20 points. 10 is the lowest you could have to pass a course. If I understood my French professor correctly, 18-20 is A,

15-17 is B, 13-14 is C, 11-12 is D, 10-11 is E, and 0-9 is F. However, the perceptions of how those points are awarded REALLY varied depending on professors. French professors tend to be harsh on grades compared to international ones although students performed great. One of the professors even admitted that French teachers do not like giving high grades just because. If all students do exceptionally, they do not get 20 points, weirdly. Instead, professors mark the students down. To give some examples, I never received 18-20 from French professors although I believe I did just as good as in other courses which I received between 18-20 points. Grades should not reflect culture or personal feelings. Therefore I believe their grading criteria need improvement. Additionally, too many percentages of grades were dedicated to group work. It was 30-100% depending on a course but on average it was 40-60% of your grade. In other words, your grades depend more on other people than yourself. That is why it is crucial that you choose your group mates wisely as mentioned above.

h. Course Ranking

Here are the ranking of the courses I took with pros and cons provided. The courses were mostly good but there were a couple of courses which were below the standards of what I expected in the academic setting. The quality of education varied depending on professors. Most of my professors were great as mentioned, but some of my friends stated that most of their courses were rubbish. I guess I was lucky. Additionally, the structures of the courses, assessment criteria, amount of work varied tremendously per course. I believe IESEG is in need for some quality control for the structures of courses (assignments, projects, exams) and overall standard of professors.

1. Personal Branding and Efficiency (Professor: Rodolphe Dutel)

Pros: Practical and up to date knowledge by a successful and inspiring professional in his field. There were fairly easy (but highly relevant) assignments instead of an exam.

Cons: The professor did not choose to share the slides.

2. A to Z of Entrepreneurship (Professor: Jonas Debrulle)

Pros: A great introductory course on entrepreneurship taught by a very competent professor. The exam was easy if you paid attention in class.

Cons: 2 group projects AND the exam.

3. International Negotiation and Diplomacy (Professor: Valon Murtezaj)

Pros: Interesting class that is not offered at SU. Practical knowledge taught by a successful professional in his field. There was a final essay instead of an exam.

Cons: There is too many in-class negotiation exercises.

4. Food and Agribusiness Marketing (Professor: Peter Batt)

Pros: The professor was interesting and passionate He is highly experienced in food and wine business. Interesting class that is not offered at SU.

Cons: The professor was harsh when grading. There were a difficult exam and an extensive final essay that require a lot of research. *Lots of work for a 2 credit class.* There were many French students who chatted during class most of the time and continue doing so although I asked them to stop The professor did little to discipline them.

5. Human Resource Development (Professor: Janice Byrne)

Pros: The professor was passionate, inspiring, and competent. There were interesting topics. There were group projects instead of an exam.

Cons: We were not allowed to choose our own group. There were too many academic articles to read. Overall it was a lot of work for a 2 credit class.

6. Import-Export: Selling and Negotiating (Professor: Jean-Robert Faure)

Pros: The professor was experienced, pedagogical, and very kind in helping students individually. There was a highly interesting pair project (with 2 students) instead of an exam. The knowledge was practical if you are interested in import-export.

Cons: The professor was often late and he does not reply to emails.

7. Product Innovation (Professor: Laurence Verdickt)

Pros: The professor was highly experienced with the impressive background (She is the one who launched mentor gums). Her slides were comprehensive with interesting.

Cons: There was a group assignment due everyday. Too much work.

8. Managing the Net I: Understanding Online Business (Professor: Francesco Bolici)

Pros: The topic was interesting and some were very practical. The professor handled French students well who chatted during class (which happened a lot).

Cons: The punishment system for late students applies to all members in the project group, i.e., if one member is late, 20% (it could have been 10%) was taken away from the grades of all members. There was an assignment everyday. Too much work.

9. Structures and Organizational Design In International Contexts (Professor: Andrea Martone)

Pros: The professor was highly competent and pedagogical. He gave us time to work on group projects during class, therefore we did not have to meet outside of class.

Cons: It is a Master level class which can be difficult for some students.

10. Organization and Management: Think Differently To Build A New World (Professor: Sonia Desmarchelier)

Pros: The professor was passionate, positive, inspiring, and kind. The topics were interesting, up-to-date, and holistic.

Cons: There were too many students (8) in a project group which resulted in many free-loaders. We were not allowed to choose our own group mates. There was too much time spent on students sharing their experiences and opinions (it was great, but it could have been shorter and the time could have been spent on more academic topics). There could be more than one right answer on the final exam which consisted of multiple choice questions. It defeats the purpose of MCQ which elimination process can be used.

11. Global Brand Management (Professor: Stéphane Lautissier)

Pros: The topics were very interesting. The final group project was highly practical and could be used in a real marketing campaign.

Cons: There was too much information crammed in a course. It would be better if it was a two-week course (i.e., in two modules). The instructions for assignments were not clear enough. The exam was diffused and there were mistakes. There could be more than one right answer for some specified questions in the final exam which consisted of multiple choice questions. It defeats the purpose of MCQ which elimination process can be used. There were small daily assignments by a group and/or individually, a final presentation by a group, AND an exam. It was too much work for a 2-credit-course.

12. Omnichannel Marketing Strategy (Professor: Yvon Moysan)

Pros: The topics were interesting. The grade is based on two group projects and presentations, and individual participation in class (No attendance needed). No exam.

Cons: There were too many time spent on students' opinions and watching videos. It would have been nice to hear more from the professor. The instruction for the projects were unclear. There were many French students who chatted during class most of the time and continue doing so although the professor asked them to stop repeatedly.

13. Fundamentals of Management 1 - Organizational Behavior (Professor: Sheila Alibay)

Pros: The professor was nice and patient with our questions. There were some assignments instead of an exam.

Cons: The professor was harsh when grading. She seems like she lacked in confidence when teaching. The assignments were too much for a 2-credit-course.

14. High Technology Marketing (Professor: Piet Vanden Abeele)

Pros: The professor was passionate.

Cons: There were TWO group projects/presentations AND a difficult exam. It was too much work for a 2-credit-course especially at the end of the semester with deadlines of other courses piling up. We were NOT allowed to choose our own group mates. There were many words in the slides but it was hard to understand.

15. International Dimension of Consumer Behavior (Professor: Jorge Wise)

Pros: It was one of a few courses available during the French holiday week.

Cons: There was a couple of assignment due everyday, a group project, and two essays, AND a final take-home exam with unclear instructions. It was way too much work for a 2-credit-course. A group project consisted of making a collage (arts and crafts) which was held during the most of one day lecture. We had to buy our own materials (a huge paper, scissors, tape, glue, magazines to cut photos from). It could have been done easier, faster, and cheaper on powerpoint on our computers instead. The professor was biased and arrogant. He did not like some students and showed it by ridiculing them when they answer questions incorrectly. He did not like students asking questions. He took it personally as though we questioned his intelligence (although we simply wanted further explanations on some concepts). The course materials and examples were outdated and from the 90's. Some theories and concepts contradicted from ones we learned in other classes at IESEG. The slides were diffused and hard to understand. The course, overall, was not up to the standard of master level course.

i. Exams

Exams are organized by the administration department. Thus, professors have no idea when and where the exams are (except for intensive courses, it is sometime on Friday morning). They are strict with start time of the exam. If you are late to the exam, you will not be allowed to take it and receive "no attendance". If you do not show up to the exam, you will fail the course, regardless if you have participated in/submitted other activities.

7. Culture clash

The first impressions of French people were rude and arrogant. However, it can be simply a culture clash. I had a hard time at first, but it got easier as I started to understand their culture. It can be irritating to deal with their rudeness and arrogance but that is how it is in a country that appreciates the mixture of hierarchy, structure, and individualism. I suggest looking into the theory by Geert Hofstede, called Dimensions of National Culture, in order to understand the cultural differences more. This theory was in fact brought up several times in management classes at IESEG.

a. Attitudes

Expect some attitudes from staff at school, French professors, French students, and French people in general.

The administration department does not seem to be willing to help students. I have heard them say, "It is not my job." They do not seem to take responsibility when they do something wrong. It is due to their hierarchical structured culture and individualistic identity. They do not think outside of the box and are not flexible. It is not necessarily negative because it protects their structured society. However, since they are independent individuals, subordinates do whatever they want although they are supposed to respect hierarchy, i.e., boss's orders. It manifested in a strange way when four IESEG students walked into the bank to open bank accounts. Four of us got four different accounts and apartment insurance combinations although the instructions were clear that we each will get a student account. However it is the boss who takes responsibility for their mistakes. Professors and students are not equal because professors are above students in the school hierarchy. Professors have favorite students and are not shy showing it. They sometimes treat students as children who do not know anything (yet) and mooching off of their parents.

French people are generally rude to you, especially if you do not speak French. They believe you should speak their language in their country. They are very proud of their language, history, and culture, they feel no need to make an effort to study the international language. Of course there are exceptions such as people at IESEG.

Additionally, their idea of equality gets in the way of customer service. In other words, customers are NOT king because we are all equal. For example, customers need to suck up to the servers at restaurants and bakeries. When customers walk in, they have to smile and say, "Bonjour, Madame/Monsieur" in order to get a good service. It seems obscure in our perspectives and culture but the customer who is asking for a favor is the one who needs to be nice in France (although s/he is paying for the service). According to one of the professor at IESEG, this comes from the idea of equality the French have been fighting for since the revolution. In their perspective, paying for the service does not necessarily give the customers hierarchy above the servers.

b. Punctuality

Professors grill students for being late and sometimes kick them out from lectures. But when they are late, it is ok and they do not apologize. French people generally do not come on time. I had professors who were late 20 minutes in several occasions. It would be unacceptable in Sweden but it is normal in France. Also, the International Club who organized several activities (for international students) were always late.

There is a saying called "politeness of being 15 min. late" in France. It is kind of like how Swedish people make excuses when they are late by saying jokingly "Fint folk kommer sent" (although Swedes are rarely late). But apply this to the entire country, and quite OFTEN. You get the idea. My Swedish roommate had the hard time dealing with French punctuality. I, on the other hand, was fine with it as I lived in Los Angeles where people are always late.

But I recommend coming on time to lectures, because as I said, it is not okay if students come late. Sometimes you do not get attendance points if you are late (attendance is part of your grade most of the time). Again, do NOT be late for exams. They are really strict and you will not be able to take an exam if you are late.

Reflection/Conclusion

I liked most of the professors and courses at IESEG School of Management but I disliked their dysfunctional administration department and how the course registration worked as mentioned above. I chose the school because it had a very high rating and the exchange reports written by past students were good. Now I reflect on my own experiences at IESEG, I strongly feel that rating is not everything and the past exchange reports might not have been in details as they should have been. That is why I wrote this comprehensive report in attempt to help prospective students who are thinking about going to IESEG.

I am reluctant to recommend this school to prospective students due to the reasons previously discussed. A good school should not simply be about certain good professors and courses but also about other factors that are important such as overall quality standard of courses and professors, and competence and efficiency of administration. However, perhaps, what I put importance on might not be of an importance to other students. I might appear highly critical to some people. It is due to great experiences I had in schools with high educational standards in Japan, the U.S., and Sweden. When your expectation is high, you are easily disappointed.

Nevertheless, I had an overall good experience living and studying in Paris. Although I was dissatisfied with the school in some degree, I got to enjoy the Parisian life. I believe that I improved as an individual by learning new things both in and outside of school. I am thankful of the opportunity and I recommend going abroad to experience the entirely different perspective. What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.