

Study Abroad Experience Report

I am happy for my experience report to be viewed by other students interested in studying abroad, as detailed in the guidelines (**please tick to confirm**)

Name:	Joel Medcraft
Degree Programme	International Business
Host Institution(s) and country:	KEDGE, Bordeaux
Academic Year of Exchange	2019

When did you go on your exchange? (please tick)

- International Business Part B Semester 2
- Part I (full year)
- Part I (6+6)
- MSc International Management Semester 2

Please sum up your overall experience in a couple of sentences:

Both KEDGE as an institution, and Bordeaux as a city, I would rate very highly. There was a variation of modules to choose from, and though the schedule took time to get used to (sometimes I had classes from 8am to 6pm), my academic experience was good. I had to change a few modules as they required previous mathematical knowledge which had not been covered at all at Loughborough, and I did a degree in English so they were unsuitable for me. The process for changing them was easy though. I preferred the format of teaching as assessments were more lightly weighted by frequent, requiring me to be engaged constantly but also not feeling a lot of pressure. The classes were also much more interactive than at Loughborough. I am not sure how the grading system works as I received a lot of 'C' grades, which seemed to be above average compared to my peers. It is definitely a shame that Loughborough do not recognise language modules for credits, as it discourages students to try and learn the language of their host country. I also had deadlines that hung over from Semester 1 at Loughborough that I had to finish at the beginning of my exchange

which was not a good experience, so I would advise deadlines to be moved to pre-Christmas.

The city was beautiful and a nice size, with three different tram lines able to take you anywhere in the city. After having to change my accommodation a few times (I used private landlords), my apartment was in the city centre, only a 20 minute tram journey away from school. Most students lived in the city centre, and those that didn't regretted it. The night life was good and it is a very busy city which I enjoyed, and I made friends with a lot of sociable people so I was always busy, which was good since I lived alone. I played rugby for a local semi-professional team as well as the University team, where we reached the semi-finals of the French national universities competition. This was a great experience and also allowed me to meet a lot of people who I have remained in contact with. My social circle at school was mainly international students who spoke good English, but all of the people I played rugby with were French. Having this mix of friends from different cultures was something I really enjoyed, and my experience in Bordeaux was completely different to living in Loughborough. This is something that I wanted to take from the experience – getting out of my comfort zone and experiencing different cultures, and I am pleased I did it. Bordeaux is also a city where food and drink are a big part of the Southern French culture, and meal times became big social occasions which was good. In the second half of my exchange the weather was also really nice, so we frequently went to the beach in big groups or went to bars and restaurants along the river. There is a lot to do in Bordeaux, especially when the weather is good. Often people stay to the city-side of the river, but there are plenty of parks and restaurants on the other side too. The city is young and busy but the buildings and churches give it a contrasting historical feel, which creates a unique vibe that I enjoyed.

For someone wanting to go to Kedge in Bordeaux I would definitely recommend it. Expect the beginning to be difficult as you adjust to a new routine in a new city without knowing anyone, but I would encourage you to get as busy as possible as quickly as possible. There are a lot of integration events organised for the international students early, and the exchange student community at KEDGE is really tight-knit, which is great. I would definitely encourage doing sport out there, rugby was great for me as not only was I playing at a high level and bettering myself, the social side of sport is also great and allows you to fully experience the city with French people who know the area well. There didn't seem to be many exchange students in the sports teams at KEDGE, yet sport is a huge part of the culture there, so I would recommend it to get the full experience. Go and watch Bordeaux FC and the rugby team, as the atmosphere at both stadiums is amazing. I would definitely recommend living in the city centre as you can get to anywhere easily, and it is a much better place to live than the outskirts where the school is. Everyone I knew who didn't live in the city centre wished that they did. I was there between January and May, which I thought was a good amount of time as I fully experienced the city and my workload was nicely spread out which allowed me to play a lot of rugby. February to June might be even better so you get to enjoy the summer-time climate for longer. I'd say to eat out at as many restaurants as possible, and the best bar is a rooftop one called Mama Shelter!