

a) Study program (including courses available for foreign students, content of the followed courses, level of study, would you recommend the courses to future students, way of examination, etc.)

The system in France is a little different from the system in Groningen. Students in France have a 'bundle of courses', for example: French law for 7 ects, which is divided in different courses such as introduction to law for 3 ects and jurisdictional organization for 4 ects. So it might look like you only have 3 courses but in fact it can be more.

I took the following courses:

- Droit civil des personnes et des biens
- Introduction au droit + organisation juridictionnelle
- Droit civil anglais : law of tort + law of property
- Cas pratique en droit civil anglais + langue orale spécialisée droit civil

Because of the bundle of courses I took 7 courses in total.

These were all bachelor courses because the semester for master students starts in October and has exams in late February which was not possible for me because the second semester in Groningen already starts in February. For the bachelor courses the exams were the week before the Christmas vacation and the week after the vacation.

The university told me there were a lot of courses in English and sent me a list with over 20 courses in English but in reality there were only 2 (droit civil anglais and cas pratique). Nevertheless you can still choose from a wide range of courses. I would recommend some first year courses since French law is very different from Dutch Law and in the second and third year courses they expect you to know the basis which can be difficult.

The French courses were really theoretical. They don't use books and you have lectures of 3 hours in which the professor talks and you basically have to write down everything. It can be a little hard in the beginning but it does really help with improving your French and within a few weeks you understand almost everything. I also always asked French students if they could send me their notes so that I was sure I knew the right thing.

The courses in English were more about improving the English skills of the students so we did a lot of presentations and speaking which is quite easy because in general, the English level of Dutch students is much higher than the level of the French students.

In general the level is a little lower, especially a big part of the courses in English were really easy, however the course on law of property could be compared to a course from the second year in Groningen. The French courses are not that difficult but it is really difficult to exactly understand what the professor means if you don't speak French fluently. Your French will improve really quickly but it still means that you have to study a lot to make sure you understand everything in the right way.

For most of the French courses I had oral exams because the professors thought it would be unfair to make me do written exams because of the language. The written exams can be difficult because of the difficult jurisdictional words. I was really happy with the oral exams because during the oral exam, if I had difficulties with formulating the answer, the professors would help me a little. In this way they could really see I studied hard and understood everything. The English courses had a written exam which was difficult, comparable to Dutch exams like civil law 2 and 3.

So in general the level is a bit lower but because of the French language it is still really hard. I would really recommend to take at least 'Introduction au Droit' and 'Organisation Juridictionnelle' so that you have the basis of French Law.

b) Language

I did the minor French at the University of Groningen and had a decent level of French. It was difficult in the beginning but after a few weeks you notice that you really improve and it gets easier and easier. The university also offered an intensive French course before the

semester started and also during the semester. I did take the intensive course before the semester but because the university in Groningen did not recognize/accept ECTS for the other French course I did not do this but if you want to improve it's a great way. This course was with all the Erasmus students and is a great way to make friends.

At the end of the semester I spoke French fluently but it was sometimes hard when I had to speak to, for example, the housing office or the bank. But in Le Havre there are tutors that can always help you and some people from the 3rd year courses in English sometimes helped me with technical stuff.

The French don't really speak English so it is necessary to have a decent level of French, but you don't have to speak it fluently, there is a lot of room to improve.

c) Finances and general matters

Living in France is really expensive. Fruit and vegetables are twice the price as in the Netherlands. Without housing I spent approximately €400-450 per month. Le Havre is not that big so you can walk most of the time or take the tram. Train tickets to Rouen or Paris can be bought cheap if you book in advance, or only 4 days before you go. I used the Erasmus grant to travel. It does not really cover the costs but it does help.

You do have to have some insurance, for health insurance there is no problem if you're from the EU but it can be expensive if you're not. There is also a weird housing kind of insurance, but you can get that at LCL bank if you open an account there. The university will help you with this.

d) Preparation and contact with faculty abroad

Before being accepted I emailed with the university a lot because I had questions about courses in English. They responded quite quick but as soon as I was accepted they were really hard to reach. In France they really like difficult administration so for one simple question you would receive emails from 5 different persons with 5 different forms all needing your passport and a photo.

Also the international office is closed from end May to end August. I still don't get why but this was horrible. I could not do anything in the vacation and they could not help me so I was stressed a lot. Because the office was closed I could not sign the learning agreement and select courses etc. This is really unpleasant but there's nothing to do so try to finish as much as possible before they close and just go to Le Havre as soon as they re-open again.

When I arrived they were helpful and helped me the first few days, along with assigned tutors. However they are not very well organized and don't know a lot. For questions about courses/exams I always went to my professor or the secretariat. For other questions I just asked the French students.

e) Housing

I stayed in a residence from the University. This was perfect because it was next to the university and it was a brand new building (Residence Duguay-Trouin). I had a small apartment with a bathroom and a kitchen and everything you need (bed, drawer, desk chair). I would really recommend to opt for university housing because it is easy and not too expensive (€365 for 18m²) and you can also get CAF, which is a payment that lowers your rent.

A room in a residence does mean you have to bring stuff for in the kitchen etc, but I bought it at a big supermarket and it was not that expensive.

You do have to fill out a lot of forms and a lot of paperwork to get into the housing, and that can be a lot of work and give you a headache but it is worth it.

f) guidance / reception at host university (introduction programme, social events, study programme, guidance, social care and help from host university)

The first day I had to go to the international office and they made sure you were enlisted at the university, and they gave to key to the room and helped with a lot. After that, the intensive French course began which was the whole week and the week after that. There I met a lot of other students. In the first week the international office also organized a day to see Le Havre and do nice things. This was really nice and helped with meeting people and making friends.

During the semester the international office organized some other activities such as bowling and lasergaming.

e) Others

First you need to know that France is really different from the Netherlands. In the Netherlands everything is quick, mostly digital and clear. In France the processes for everything are slow, you always have to fill in paper forms and give a copy of your passport and a picture. It can also be really vague. So be prepared to sit long hours filling out forms before you go. In the end it's not that bad but I was really overwhelmed by all of these forms in French that asked ridiculous things (like 3 paychecks of my father translated in French so that he could stand surety if I had a debt with my room). This can be very stressing and difficult. Most of these forms come from CROUS which is the housing agency. Just email them, even if they get crazy, and keep emailing because their answers can be short or not clear. They are not really willing to help, but just keep asking them even if they look annoyed.

Be prepared that a lot changes. I didn't know the dates of my exams until November and just when I had booked my ticket to the Netherlands they changed all the dates again.

In general: if you have a question, sent an email to the secretary or responsible person. If the answer is not clear, just go to the room of the person you need. In France, speaking person to person helps out a lot, they don't really like to use email or the computer.

In the end I can say that it was hard and after this I appreciate the international office in Groningen even more, but I had a great time. I now speak French fluently, had a lot of interesting courses and made a lot of friends!