

# Student report

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**Name of university:** KEDGE Business School

**Name of the student:** Sigríður Þóra Jafetsdóttir

**Exchange semester:** Spring 2014

**Faculty:** Business

KEDGE is located in a University area in Marseille called Luminy. This area has several Universities as well as student housing. It's surrounded by a natural park, called the Calanques. Buses nr. 21 and 21S go from Rond-Pont-de-Prado directly to the school which can take around an hour. A monthly student bus pass costs 34.50 €, a single ride costs 1.50€. I could not find the figures for how many graduate and undergraduate students the school has. But I believe they take in about 250 exchange students in the spring semester, both in Bachelor and Master's program.

The application process was done online. On KEDGE's webpage ([www.kedgebs.com](http://www.kedgebs.com)) and it took about 30 minutes. In late October I received an acceptance letter by e-mail and mail. Once had been accepted I received an e-mail two weeks later with courses to choose from. Then I received another e-mail with an excel form I had to fill out with what courses I wanted. Because I am an Icelandic citizen, I did not need to get a visa to study in France. KEDGE is a business school so it specializes in that field and the courses I could take were mostly in that field.

I booked my flight once I got my letter of acceptance. The orientation program was scheduled from January 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>. So I booked a flight to Paris on January 7<sup>th</sup> through Icelandair. From Paris I took a train from Gare de Lyon (Paris) to Saint-Charles train station in Marseille. I bought the train ticket through [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com). The prices range from 25 to 90 euros one way. I booked mine very early so I got it for 25 euros. The train ride takes about 3 hours and 20 minutes.

I didn't notice an e-mail I had received in the beginning of December until two days before I left on January 7th. It was from the student association Interact, about a Facebook group for

all the exchange students with information about social activities during orientation. Through the Facebook group it was easy to see who would be living where you would and what would be going on once you got there. Also they organize pick-ups for students at the train station. I didn't arrange a pick-up until 2 days before leaving Iceland, which I thought would be too late. But the night before I left Iceland I received an e-mail about that they would be waiting for me at the train station, when I would get there.

I arrived in Marseille on January 7th around 6pm at the train station. There was problem as to finding who was there to pick me up, because all the Interact members wear yellow caps and the guy who picked me up had a huge sign. From there we found some other students and members of the Interact team. I went alone with one of the Interact members to my residence and they paid for my metro ticket. It was very easy to get there, because it's just off of La Canabiere, one of the city's most important streets.

January 8th was the first day of a three day Orientation program. First we had an introduction lecture and were given a program. Then we had to "check-in", there we were given our student ID, information package as well as a gift from the school. After that we had more lectures from various members of the faculty where they introduced themselves and their position within the school. Furthermore the school had gotten some banks and other companies to set up booths to introduce themselves to the students and to help them with applications for bank accounts. A couple of group photos were taken and then a welcome lunch in the cafeteria was offered. The Orientation program was very welcoming and it was easy to get to know people right away.



On day two we had more lectures. One was from our advisor, telling us about the rules of the school. Another was from the library, on who to use the online library. At 5pm there was a city tour that Interact had planned, that you had to sign up for. We walked around the city center, Vieux Port and the old city center.

One day three there were french workshops for those who needed french lessons. As I speak french quite well, I did not sign up. But at 1pm there was another city tour. This one was organized by the school and was by bus. We visited the Notre Dame de la Garde as well as other parts of Marseille.



I signed up for courses on different levels. So they started at different times. My first two weeks I only had two classes in each week. But after that they had all started. Each course is taught once a week for three hours with one 15 minute break. There are nine lectures for each course over the semester. The examination period is during week 10. My last lecture was on April 17<sup>th</sup> and last exam was May 15<sup>th</sup>. The examination period was from May 5<sup>th</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>. It was variable when your finals were. I was quite unlucky as I had four finals over two days and then my final one two days later. The final for French as a foreign language is however before the examination period so I had already finished that one before easter break.

KEDGE has two campuses, Luminy and Vaufrège. They are about three bus stops away from each other. At Vaufrège there is a student residence called Alotra and at Luminy it is called Les Estudines. I applied for student housing at both of these campuses, but I received a reply several weeks after I applied saying that it was fully booked. In that same e-mail they recommended a residence called Odalys, which I accepted. It was possible to choose between a

19m<sup>2</sup> studio apartment or a 24m<sup>2</sup> studio apartment. Also it was possible to share a bigger apartment. As I was coming by myself I didn't feel comfortable sharing an apartment for such a long time with someone I had never met. So I chose the 19m<sup>2</sup> studio. I received an e-mail from the residence once I had requested that it had been reserved for me. The rent was 490€ a month plus 40€ for electricity and heat. I had the choice to pay one month's rent as a deposit, if I could send them documents about my parents as well as some other document. Because I was very busy with school at the time and didn't feel like going through all that paper work, I decided to pay two months rent instead for the deposit. I had to pay the deposit when I got to the residence, as well as rent for January and 125€ registration fee. I was asked to pay the registration fee before I got to Marseille, but I couldn't do that as there are currency restrictions in Iceland, which prevent you from transferring money from Iceland, if you don't have a signed lease. I thought that this would be a problem for the residence as they did not have anything from me, apart from several e-mails, so I was worried that my apartment wasn't reserved. But when I got there everything was fine and they found my papers right away. The other residences are quite far from the city center. Alotra is known as the party dorm. It is quite dirty and old. However it is a very fun dorm and they had a lot of parties there over the course of the semester. Les Estudines is much newer and cleaner. But they don't have a common kitchen for parties.

I mostly made friends with people living in Odalys. We lived in the city center so it was easy to get people together to go out in the evenings. However if you prefer staying in student housing, I recommend Les Estudines. It's bigger and cleaner than Alotra. A downside to these accommodations is that you have to take the bus to get to a supermarket and to get downtown if you want to go out.

The downside to the residence where I was living is that it was quite far from the school. I had to take the metro nr.2 to Rond Point du Prado. And from there take the bus nr.21 to Luminy. This could take between 25 minutes up to one hour, depending on traffic. And as some teachers don't let you enter the classroom after class had started, I always left an hour before classes started.

The International office at KEDGE is called OIP (Office of International Partnerships) and Pierre Petrosino is in charge of students from Northern Europe. He is a really fun guy and very helpful. The office is located at the Student Services Office and the people are very welcoming and helpful.

I did not encounter any difficulty in meeting people or making friends. On the very first day Interact had arranged for us meet in the lobby at the residence to go all together to orientation. There I met all the exchange students living in the residence which were around 30 students from all over the world. Many of them had come together or had paired up with someone from their own country. I was the only one from Iceland but I didn't find it difficult as everyone was very nice and friendly. Once classes started I made even more friends. By the end of the semester it was very hard to say goodbye to all of the wonderful people I had met. We had all become very close, we did everything together and we didn't know if we would ever see each other again as many of them live very far away from Iceland. But we have agreed to try to maintain the friendship and keep in touch and many of them would like to visit Iceland one day.

There are many student associations at KEDGE and Erasmus students are welcome to join any one they want. The student association working for the exchange students is called Interact. They are very active in organizing events such as dinners at restaurants, movie nights and pub nights just to name a few. Interact also organizes several trips during the semester, and when I was there the trip was to London, Rome and Barcelona. I went on the trip to Rome and it was 149€, which included the bus trip there and back and accommodation. You could also choose certain activities which cost extra, which I did. I choose to go to the Vatican, the Coliseum and the Catacombs. The trip went well overall but I wouldn't recommend going on trips with Interact. They are extremely unorganized and a lot of our time in Rome was wasted because of how unorganized they were.



I speak French quite well and so I did not encounter any language problems. However the students and staff at KEDGE all speak good English (except for the cafeteria staff). Most of the French students that I met did not want to speak to me in French as they wanted to

practice their English and most of the exchange students didn't speak French. So I didn't get that many opportunities to practice my French, which was a shame.

Erasmus students are very active in travelling around and it is very easy to get from Marseille to everywhere in France and to fly to other cities. The trains are affordable if you book them in advance. Ryan Air also offers cheap flight from Marseille.

The experience I gained in Marseille has given me a lot. I'm more independent and more open. I have also gotten great insight into both French culture and other cultures around the world. It has also made me appreciate many things in Iceland. I have made friends all over the world. And I think that I have gained a competitive advantage over those who have not gone on exchange.

The school didn't ask me to promote exchange in Iceland. But there was however an event in the school for high school students that was promoting exchange. However I was not in Marseille at the time so I could not attend.

The courses offered at KEDGE are in what is called the CESEMED program (bachelor) and the courses are offered both in English and in French. There is however limited seats available in each class so I highly recommend to register as soon as they open for course selection in December. I recommend being active in checking availability on the schools website (CampusVirtuel) until you are satisfied with the courses.

I took six courses. Each course was different as the teachers were different and with their own teaching style. I had three French teachers, one from Brazil and one from Ireland. They were not professors so to speak but they had a lot of work experience. Some courses were harder than others, and five out of six had group work. The teacher work a lot with cases in classes and for group assignments as well. I was not used to this method of teaching so it took some getting used to. In one of my courses the teacher used the first half of the course to lecture and the second half was used for group work. In that course we had to finish the group work in class and upload it online by a certain time. All of our group work was accessible to the other students in the class. Which I found very strange and our grades were as well visible to the other students. The Erasmus students found this very strange and a bit uncomfortable. In another course the teacher sent us the grades of everyone in the class in an excel sheet. So everyone could see what everyone else got.

The workload differed from each course. In one course we had group work every week in class so we didn't need to do a lot of work outside of class. But in another we had to submit 4 very long reports on case studies over the semester. Overall I would say that the workload is less than in RU.

The relationship between faculty and students was overall good although some students in some courses were quite disrespectful as they would not stop talking during the class. This was especially the case with the French students. But this was not the case in all courses. The French students weren't very keen on getting to know the Erasmus students and just communicated with each other in class. Each class had no more than 60 students.

Students in KEDGE don't have to buy any books but they get access to all the books on an online library called ScholarVox, which they don't have to pay for. All of the literature is in English. There is mandatory attendance in KEDGE and you're only allowed to miss each class twice over the course of the semester without a valid reason or a doctor's note.

Classes are taught in the morning, afternoon and evening. Morning classes are from 8:30 until 11:45, afternoon classes start at 13:45 and go until 17:00, and evening classes are from 17:15 to 20:30. Everyone has a lunch break from 11:45 until 13:45. I had three morning classes, two afternoon classes and one evening class. But I had every Monday and Wednesday off. It is a very good idea to choose your courses by the times they are taught to have as many days off during the week to travel.

The exams that were given are a bit different than exams at RU. Two of my finals were just case studies and then long questions you had to respond to. But we also had the typical multiple choice questions and short answers. The finals were based on the lectures. In most finals you are allowed to have a bilingual dictionary. To pass the exam you have to get 10 out of 20.

There is a computer room in the school where students can work, print and scan. However you have to bring your own paper for the printer. If you don't have paper, you can get the BDE (Bureau Des Eleves) student association to print for you but it costs 10 cents per page. There is a photocopy machine in the Hub, but I just photocopied at the mall downtown for 10 cents per copy.

Description of courses:



<i>Course name:</i>	<i>Prereq.</i>	<i>Exam</i>	<i>Approved as</i>
<i>European Logistics Management B-CES-3-01-99-07-E</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Elective</i>
<i>French as a Foreign Language, Advanced B-ESC-3-08-94-02-F</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Elective</i>
<i>Sustainable Development B-CES-3-06-99-07-E</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Elective</i>
<i>Intercultural Management B-CES-1-03-99-04-E</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Elective</i>
<i>Operations Management B-CES-1-06-99-03-E</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Core Course</i>
<i>Organizational Behavior B-CES-3-03-99-12-E</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Core Course</i>

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Each course gives 5 ECTS Credits.

To sum everything up I would like to say that this experience is without a doubt the most amazing I have had in my life. I was very happy overall with Marseille. I met so many amazing people from all over the world and made so many memories. I would highly recommend Erasmus exchange. The only thing I regret is not being able to stay longer, so if you have the opportunity to do one year, I would recommend it. Because my semester went by quickly.

I hope that this report has been helpful. Feel free to contact me for further information. My email: [siggajafets@gmail.com](mailto:siggajafets@gmail.com)