

# Semester Abroad Student Experience Report

## **Preparation (planning, organisation and application at the host institution)**

Preparation was facilitated by the International Student Office (ISO) and the Department Coordinator. The process was organized well – instructions were given with enough time to prepare for the requirements and resources were made available to keep track of the requirement and timeline (e.g. website for information and forms, checklist, email instructions and reminders). Both the Department Coordinator and the ISO were available to answer questions. The Department Coordinator was especially helpful in informing us about the Erasmus+ grant available.

There were clarifications as to some items in the application form and the Department Coordinator provided the needed guidance. He pointed us to the ISO should there be items that the department was not sure of.

Ample time should be provided for the approvals of the application. Depending on the availability of the signatories, it may take time to have the forms signed.

## **Travel and arrival**

Travel arrangement and getting around Lisbon was fairly easy. It is a big city and mobility/accessibility was not an issue. Instructions were given by the host university for first day. Its mobility office (?) reached out about orientation week but we got the information a week prior to arrival when we've already booked our flights.

The metro/trains and buses were adequate. Bicycles and motorbikes were available for rent but take note that the city is hilly so cycling can be a bit of a challenge. Did not have good experience with the taxi but Uber is available and fairly cheap. Depending on the number of passengers, fare can be equal to taking the buses/trains.

## **Accommodation**

I participated in the course with three other classmates and we agreed to look for a flat together. It was a bit of a challenge to look for a flat that can accommodate all of us. The mobility office provided us with some websites where we can look for accommodation. It's good to start early as they get booked quite fast.

Location matters and we were quite lucky our flat was walking distance to the university (20 min) as well as the city centre (30 min). Heating is fairly uncommon so it can get quite chilly inside the flat in the winter – bundling up inside the flat seems to solve this issue. There are quite a number of flats that are newly refurbished and housed in old buildings so there may be some issues as to electrical loads and other matters related to the age of the building.

### **Studying at the host university (courses, academic performance/credits, support, credit transfer)**

The courses were a good mix of lectures and practical application. I appreciated the introduction to different tools/applications one may encounter in this field of study. The lecturers/professors are well-versed in their fields. Most can be reached via email for questions/clarifications but some you need to visit in their offices to meet. There was a good mix of industry and academe in the way the courses were delivered. There was a good variety of modules covered.

Organisation and scheduling can be improved. For the semester in Lisbon, we were given the schedule for the first half of the semester then some changes were not communicated in a timely manner and resulted in confusion. There were also glitches in the online system that the university uses to manage communication and materials distribution. The assignments were a good demonstration of the application of the subject matter learned in class. Good organisation in this area would have resulted in better appreciation and understanding of the subject matter.

The university was prompt in marking the assignments and projects. Two weeks out of the semester, we got our grades for almost all of the modules we had.

### **Everyday life and leisure time**

Lisbon struck me as a mix of big city conveniences and small town laidback atmosphere; a vibrant city. Supermarkets and stores for one's needs are accessible and prices are reasonable. There were various entertainment options: cinemas and theatres, museums and gardens, beaches and trails, gyms and parks, bars and cafes, restaurants among others. English is fairly spoken. Public transport is satisfactory; it may be delayed at times so plan accordingly.

### **General experience, credit transfer, conclusion (tips for other students, DOs and DONTs)**

Explore the city and meet people. People in the university and out on the streets are quite friendly and helpful. Soak in the culture. Lisbon has quite a number of festivals and events especially in the month of June, so take part.

Other parts of Portugal are accessible from Lisbon. Do try to explore the rest of the country. Enjoy the experience in and outside of campus.