**With a double click, you can edit the information above!**

**Studying Abroad Experience Report**

1. **Are we allowed to publish your report anonymously on our webpage (without your name and e-Mail)?**

[x] Yes [ ] No

1. **Are we allowed to forward your report and contact information to a Viadrina student on request?**

[x] Yes [ ] No

1. **Please confirm hereby that you did not mention names of a third party (lecturer, landlord, etc.)**

[x] Yes [ ] No – in this case, your report won‘t be published

1. **Please be aware that all the published photos in this report have to be taken by you and are not the property of a third party. By sending this report you are giving us the legal right of use for your pictures (if we publish the report). The copyrights still belong to you after all.**

[x] Yes, I confirm that all the photos are mine.

**We would appreciate it if you could include the following topics (the report should be at least two pages long, there is no maximum):**

* **Preparation:** Recommendations about preparing to leave, for example (if applicable) Visa, insurance, travel? How was the application process at the university abroad? Were there any introduction events? Were they obligatory and when did they take place? Was there a Buddy program or tutors?
* **Accommodation:** How did you find your accommodation? Any tips about mistakes that should be avoided? Were there any special student accommodations? The cost of rent? Which area of living would you recommend?
* **Studying at the university abroad:** How was the day to day life on campus? Was the attendance mandatory? Which courses did you take? Were you allowed to take courses from different faculties? Please attach links to the course list if possible. How did the exams take place? Were there any language courses? What is your overall opinion of the university in general? How well did the university take care of international/exchange students?
* **Day to day life and free time:** How high are the costs of living in total? How much money should be accessible monthly? How much does public transportation cost? What can an exchange student do in their free time? What did you do?
* **Conclusion:** worst and best experience
* **Suggestions/Feedback:** In your opinion, how can we improve our exchange program especially considering consulting, information, application process at the Viadrina? – This section is just for the department of international affairs of the Viadrina and will not be published.

**Preparation:**

Filled with euphoria and excitement reading the admission-acceptance email for the double-degree program offered by partner-university Toulouse Business School; Has entirely turned me blind; overseeing the most important part of the preparation: Do I need a Visa?

While It is indeed nothing a non-EU citizen would likely oversee. Somehow it never crossed my mind! I only wanted a new journey to begin. Luckily enough I have quickly picked up the pace to issue at the “Welcome Day” organized for the newcomers.

On November 3rd and 4th, the “Orientation Days” took place at the Downtown-Campus. Which is, in my opinion, highly informative as they are structured to equip the newcomers with all means of assistance, both, essential to-know academic and practical information to get through the debilitating bureaucratic administrative processes (housing, visa verification, bank accounts, etc.)

A week or so before the Orientation day, all students will get an e-mail from their corresponding Buddy. The email will contain essential information and links acting as a mini-guide to all about the university and get to the city from the Airport. I have had, personally, a great Buddy. A regular student from Korea who offered to pick me up from the airport, drop my bags at the residence and shortly tour me around the city to get familiar and feel settled in faster. Also stay in contact with your Buddy; they will help as much as possible to engage you in. I do give the Welcome Team of the year 2018/2019 my kind regards.

### Housing:

Finding accommodation can be challenging in Toulouse, being the center of aviation and spaceflight and other hi-tech industries. Can put the international students might find themselves competing against expats and young professionals leading to a rapid rise in rent.

Luckily enough; TBS is in agreement with a housing platform where landlords and private real estate companies can enlist their apartments. Once accepted by the university, you will be sent an email with personal code to register on the portal StudaPart and upload all possible necessary documents in your profile. The listening on the portal has gets verified and so deemed safe and not wrongly described nor a scam.

This is the hassle-free way to go. Which I went with after providing many landlords all needed documents but still a meeting in person is almost always required. Only few really accept Skype meetings but then they eventually, rationally, choose possible tenants who physically represented themselves

But there are still many alternatives. The following two websites, for instance, are the most popular for housing listening. Beside also eBay.

* <https://www.leboncoin.fr/>
* <http://www.lacartedescolocs.fr/>

There are also numerous Facebook groups with listening. Search for “colocation Toulouse” and a lot are easily found. Finally; get in contact with your Buddy and the International Student Support.

 I recommend finding accommodation near/in the city center as transportation is not available after certain hours also since the transportation network is well connected; you wouldn’t have trouble getting to the Bachelor Campus. You might have then to wake up a bit earlier but it’s better than missing many activities/parties because you would then have to pay for an Uber (cheaper than a Taxi) to get you home.

# State Housing Financial Assistance

While your budget might not meet the rent of accommodation that you would like make your new home for a short stay, don’t worry!

The French government may provide housing aid to eligible students given the apartment or a room in a flat is eligible for the CAF (Caisses d'Allocations Familiales) which is the organization responsible to refund a variable portion of the rent each month. The process can be tedious and does sometimes take a long processing time so make sure to be well informed in advance of all necessary documents and make double-check with the landlord if the accommodation you are about to rent is CAF applicable!

The CAF website offers an online simulation by which you can have an estimate of the amount of subsidy you would be refunded monthly.

For example; my monthly rent was 567 EUR and I got refunded 177 EUR monthly to my French bank account.

# Guarantor

A guarantor is a third-party who gives the landlord confidence that you are reliable and able to pay the monthly rent. If not, the Guarantor would be then responsible. Landlords almost always ask for one. Usually, the guarantor is a family member or a close relative, as well could be an organization. The guarantor’s income must be 3 to 4 times higher than the total monthly rent and is preferred to have their income domiciled in France as a matter of convenience. You can have a second guarantor if the first one does not earn enough.

Having covered the first option which mostly works for EU students and on the basis of these grounds. It’s indeed quite tricky to find accommodation in France without having a french guarantor and/or if you are an international student.

Luckily enough, there are multiple other options for the concerned group.

**1st Option: Garantie Visale**

Visale is a governmental service for those who have no possibility of having a French Guarantor.

“VISALE is a deposit given by [Action Logement](https://www.actionlogement.fr/) to the tenant who pays the rent and the rental charges of the principal residence in case of a payment default.”

The requirements are pretty straight forward but I advise visiting the official website and going through the application to be fully aware of it.

In a nutshell; below are some of the main criteria to have in mind.

This is the approach I had gone for. Applied for it using my German Residency Permit. Got then an approval after about two weeks. (I did not possess the French Visa then).

* You have to be between 18 to 30 years old, no matter your financial situation
* The rental price should not exceed 1300€ in France (excluded Paris) and 1500€ for Paris

### 2nd Option: Garantme

<https://www.garantme.fr/> offers a service by acting as your French Guarantor. Visit the website to learn more about the applicable criteria and fees.

* Insurance

It’s mandatory in France to provide to the landlord a Housing Insurance. It’s pretty straightforward. I have opted mine online for a 12month period online for an about one-time payment of 50 EUR.

However, if you are a member of the EU and still insured under family insurance it’s wiser to inform yourself first if your family insurance package includes can cover it.

Also, some of the French Banks offer free housing insurance if you open an account as a student by supplying your University Acceptance Letter which would also grant you other broad benefits like no fees..etc.

Therefore it’s advised to compare the Student Packages offered by different French banks and open an account before the mobility starts as it does really help to have a French Bank Account which will be used to pay rent and also receive the Housing Allowance.

* **Electricity/Water**

Now my experience with the Electricity and Water contracts was horrible. I have arrived at the Student Residence and everything seemed just perfect and advertised but guess not. Twentyfour hours later I had no water nor electricity and it turns out that I have to contact a company to have an inspection appointment, choose a tariff then get the services back on after several days. Note that the contact didn’t mention anything about extra costs and mentioned explicitly that electricity is inclusive but there was a very tricky clause.

TIP: Ask explicitly in advance if you will need to establish any new services contracts as a new tenant.

* **Transportation**

Toulouse itself is not really a huge city, despite inhibiting about 1.2 Million. Closing tightly to be the third most populated city in France taking over Lyon. The Public Transportations costs are considered to be one of the most affordable amongst all other French Cities; one more reason why the Pink City is constantly chosen the most student-favorable city.

The responsible agency “Tisséo“ offers two metro lines, trams and a comprehensive network of buses that can almost get you anywhere.

The Metro system is surprisingly advanced. The trains are neither run by conductors nor Engineers but by computers. Both Metro lines have an automatic driverless operation. In addition; each Metro stop has its own unique work of Arts that is mostly derived from Historical events. So pull your phone up and search a station name to get more familiar with the City history. **Personal Tip: It will come in handy in many ways. Believe me. Been there, did that.**

That brings us now to the transportation costs. As a student with a university student card or acceptance letter; you are entitled to acquire the carte Pastel for a monthly fee of only 10 EUR. Allowing you to use all means of transportation for an unlimited number of rides!

You can get your Carte Pastel immediately at one of the six main Tisséo Agencies. More up to date information, locations and working hours can be found here: <https://www.tisseo.fr/les-tarifs/revendeurs>)

Transportation Operation Hours:

Metro:

* **line A** ( Basso Cambo – Balma Gramont) and **line B** (Borderouge – Ramonville). These 2 lines work from 5 AM to midnight (1 AM the weekend).
* Bus: Most bus routes are not operated after 2100hrs.

Summarization/Personal experience and Tips: Traveling in Toulouse is easy as long as you inform yourself beforehand. I did not know a single French word by arrival. I have utilized the Mobile Application “Moovit” which provided by a step by step directions using any means of transportation. The application’s Live Directions with the “Get Off Notification” instructed me exactly at perfect timing where and when to get off and also alerted me of any service abruptions and suggested routing alternatives. To get to the Bachelor campus it took me an hour, take or give. **Good News** is that by now; TBS has its new public bus line on the campus that almost literally goes to every single direction in the city. Sadly I could only benefit from it only for two weeks before the end of my mobility; allowing me to ride one bus directly to the campus in less than thirty minutes.

# Toulouse Business School

Founded in 1903, holding the triple accreditation (AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS) for academic excellence and ranked among the top 5 Business Schools in France.

The third year of the Bachelor program consists of two Specialization Paths (SP) options, each made up of a total of 7 courses divided into two semesters. Also, three Cross-Functional Skills options each made up of two courses. One of each type must be selected by the nominated students on the basis of “First come, first serve”. Make sure to finish the registration and the completion of your online TBS profile once you get an email instructing accordingly.

As a Double Degree student I need 60 ECTS in both semesters. 50 ECTS Points were obtainable by passing courses and the remaining 10 points are to be granted after successful completion of 8 weeks internship, followed by an interview/questionnaire.

I have chosen the SP “International Administration” and the Cross-Functional skill as “Marketing” instead of my first enlisted priority choice, “Finance”. I did not really like Marketing and filled-in a request to switch classes but it was too late already. I would strongly advise choosing “Finance” as the two courses taught at TBS are highly similar to the course description of Corporate Finance and Kapitalmarkettheorie at the Vidadrina.

 I hated the fact that “Attendance is compulsory” for every class. I was at the campus almost daily from 8 AM to 15 PM. Occasionally even longer. TBS handed out a CHIP-Integrated Student ID which is used to badge in within the beginning ten minutes of each class, as well to get inside the campus in first place. So make sure to always have it on you or even a photo would suffice in the worst-case scenario.

I have attended the optional classes offered for the first two weeks of the semester. Lasting roughly only 10 days. This is **one** out of very few courses from which I actually learned quite some facts, history and politics about and around the French Business Culture. Even though it is just an optional course; It covered a lot about the different Cross-Culture approach Decision-Making models.

The class was lectured by Six Different Trainers (mostly from different backgrounds). Which I found extremely assistive aiding the delivery of the course objectives and emphasizing how cultures effects i.e Marketing or Negotiation.

**Highly recommend** is taking the French Language classes which run throughout the semester. Language is always *the* **key**. But apart from the known and the obvious. You will actually enjoy breaking the routine of the usual repetitive school work. In addition; get in contact with other students from other groups and opportunity to learn a foreign language in

The grading system varies module-wise. An exam total grade is almost mostly divided into percentages of the total grade utilizing different Teaching and Learning methods and different assessment methods, namely:

* Formative / Continuous assessment: e.x. in a shape of role-playing, a presentation, in-class participation or it could also be just a group project counting for the whole percentage which is for this part is usually 40%. But could also be 100%; absolutely no end exam but rather a constant group/individual projects wrapped up in one final single Report followed by a presentation.
* Summative / Final assessment: Accounts in most modules for 60%. If it’s only a written end exam. It could also be a mixture of an exam and a form of a report, essay or a Case Study.

It makes sense now why the attendance regulations, amongst many reasons, are set that way. The Bachelor Campus ha about 7 lecture halls and the regular lectures take place at the many small school-alike classes, each fitting circa. 35 Student. We got split up to Group A and B. Each had their own schedule. So make sure to attend all classes as you might be noted for your activity in the class or miss a class where small groups of 4-5 students are formed to work on a Case Study in-class or a role-play which both could be evaluated.

Having a comparison table and the corresponding syllabus of each module offered at the partner university helped me choose what best fits my interest. Please note that this table is intended only to help you identify of the modules at the Viadrina were equivalent to those of TBS during my mobility!

Hence it’s not conclusive and the accreditation could vary due to a possible change of a module syllabus.

Having had the opportunity over the years being a student of a very international-oriented various universities and the effect it has on one’s perspective and/or mindset. I really would like to end this here. I can’t really begin to write much in-depth about that “Personal Experience”. The term is broad.

Sharing my experience will not help you shape your experience in any way. Specifically when it comes to the Double-Degree at Toulouse; I heard some negative aspects before I went there. My “experience” was overall very positive despite having had a lot of downs and a personal family loss just the midset of the whole thing. I was supported by a professor at the time, who genuinely cared and listen, which helped me a lot. That is the type of “personal experience” that I had which hopefully clears it up that “experience” is certainly going to be different.