

BELGIUM – Universiteit Gent

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¹ To update the agenda just click right on your moose

I. Your overall feeling after your semester abroad

GRADE : 4/5

=> 0 (I do not recommend this semester abroad to my best friend) – 5 (I totally recommend this semester to my best friend)

Overall, I enjoyed my semester abroad. The city is really nice, very beautiful, and the weather is not as bad as everybody say it is. Although some courses were intense, the university is really nice and very different than MOMA. It is a student city so there are plenty of things to do for students.

II. Before the travel

A. Preparation

1. Visa

A visa is only required if you are not part of the European Union. The university will require everyone to register to the migration office at the beginning of the stay, but everything will be explained once you get there.

2. The flight

I took a direct train from Montpellier to Brussels, then took another train from Brussels to Ghent. I chose this to avoid having any issues with luggages being overweight and everything. There are also direct flights from Béziers and Marseille. If you choose the plane, you will arrive in Charleroi, so you will have to take a flibus to Ghent.

3. My luggage

I was in Belgium during the second semester, so it was cold until April and then it started to get a bit warmer. The weather is a bit weird though because it changes a lot and can be quite random. Also, it is useful to take medicine as everyone got sick during the first month there.

If you are staying in the dorms, you should bring bed sheets and an extra blanket because it will be cold during the first few months.

You do not necessarily need to bring any kitchen utensils because the dorms organize this event at the beginning of the semester where exchange students can come and take what past students left.

4. Bank account

I have a bank account at Société Générale and I did not get a new one. From what they told me, we only get a limited amount of free withdrawals every months. To avoid any confusion I just withdrew money back in France. However, cash is not essential, except for laundry machines, because most of the places in Ghent do not accept cash, unless it is the exact amount required to be paid.

5. Insurance

I got the 'carte européenne d'assurance maladie', which is essential for insurance and to avoid any extra costs.

B. Housing

1. Where to live

I lived in the university dorms that were right next to my campus and about 20 minutes away by walk from the center. It is a nice area because there are a lot of bars, clubs, restaurants etc. around it. It is kind of a student area. You can choose to either have a studio, so you do not share anything but it is a bit expensive, either your own room and bathroom and share the kitchen, or share everything except your room. I had the second option and it costed 561 euros per month. The prices vary depending on the option you choose. If you decide to stay in the dorms, you must know that you will have to pay until the 15th of July, regardless of any circumstance.

The residence is an easy way to meet people and to connect more easily. They also organize events in it.

You can also decide to live closer to the center or elsewhere but it is hard to find affordable housing. There are other residences that are not part of the university that can sometimes be a bit cheaper, but often further from the campuses and the center.

2. Find a flat or a room

I found the dorms on the university website. They also provide websites to rent on the private market.

3. Cost

I paid 561 euros per month for a shared kitchen and private room & bathroom. A studio in the residence costs a bit more than 600 euros per month, and a private room with a shared kitchen & bathroom costs a bit more than 400 euros per months.

III. When I arrive at the university

A. Inscription at the university

Once you arrive at the university, there are a few events and conferences to present the university, to help students with administrative tasks like registering to the migrations office. You also need to complete documents to confirm the beginning of your stay and create your schedule. To do so, the university gives students about 2 weeks for them to attend all the classes they are considering, and to make up their minds about which class to keep and to leave out.

a lot events and parties organized by ESN (the Erasmus organization) are not free, you should buy before arriving in Ghent the ESN card. You will have many benefits like reductions on RyanAir, Flixbus, certain coffee shops and restaurants in Ghent, and reductions, sometimes even free entree, for ESN events. It is only 12 euros so it is worth it. You can find it online and pick it up at the ESN welcome event. Since

B. Information on the university

1. Class

Corporate Finance: This class was similar to the Finance course we had last semester at MOMA, but of course there were a lot of things that we did not cover. I found the class

interesting and the professor was clear. What I didn't like is that in the exercise sessions, the professor was going a bit fast and did not always leave us time to do the exercise beforehand. This class is good if you are ready to study regularly because it is intense, or else you will be lost for the exam. The final exam is an MCQ with a few theory questions, and mainly exercises, and a main exercise.

Economic Globalization: This course was really interesting and it developed my interest in economics. It is mainly theories about the evolution of globalization and how it influences trade and today's economies. It is useful to understand certain issues in the world. The professor was really nice, sometimes confusing in his explanations, but overall this course is really good. The final exam is composed of open questions to test your ability to explain the main concepts you learned during the year.

Economics of Migration: This course is the one that interested me the most because it was new and since I used to move a lot, it helped me understand many things. You learn about the different types of migrants that exist, the issues they may face, how countries deal with it etc. The professor is also good because she explained everything clearly, and this course had the most international students in it. For the final exam, you will have to make a 30-minute video about the migration patterns of a country or about a regulation that was set for migration, in addition to the final exam which consists in a short MCQ, definitions and open questions.

Econometrics: This course was quite hard because it is completely new and you are required to have a strong knowledge of the basics of statistics. But if you take the time to focus on the course, it is easy to understand. The hardest part, in my opinion, are the exercises and applications. For the assessment, you have to do a case study with a group where you will basically need to make a program with R, interpret the results and everything by following the course structure. This case study is needed for the final exam as during the exam, you will have to answer questions and interpret your results. Overall, this course is interesting, but it is hard.

Public management: I personally did not enjoy the course that much because I only took it because I needed to reach the required amount of credits. You learn about public organization and management, how it works and why it is important in society. The professor is alright. For the final exam, you will have to answer open questions to develop the different concepts you saw in class. This course is interesting if you want to work in public institutions or work in management.

Business Skills: This course is very similar to a lot of management courses in MOMA, and to the communications course we had in L1. It is basically about how to be a good leader, the different types of leaders there are and why they are important. This course is interesting if you want to acquire knowledge about leadership. The only reason that I would not recommend the course is that the professor requires everyone to buy her 50 euro book because the exam is based on the book, but the book is not entirely covered in the course. Other than that, it is easy to understand. The final exam is an MCQ with question about the course, the book, and small case studies.

2. Organization of the Class

The classes are organized very differently than in MOMA. In Ghent, all of the classes are recorded so not a lot of students attend them. This makes it harder to meet new people and it can be confusing at first. The professors do not usually interact a lot with the students, unless they are being asked questions. There are a lot of group projects and readings as well as articles to do at home. Usually, you can have access to all the material once the semester starts on the university platform, Ufora.

Most lectures last 3 hours. There are not really any TD. There are sometimes exercise sessions after the main course, making a class sometimes last 4 hours. However, these exercise sessions are not really useful because it is mainly the professor doing everything and there are not really any interactions.

3. List of courses and recommendation

If I could recommend courses, I would mostly recommend the courses of Economic Globalization and Economics of Migration because these are the ones I found the most interesting. Corporate Finance and Econometrics are good to but quite challenging.

I personally did not enjoy the courses of Public Management and Business Skills, but it is only my preference because I don't really like management and I am not interested in these fields.

4. Exam

Overall, I feel like the exams are harder than in MOMA because it is really focused on your ability to interpret and use the information you learned to apply it to certain contexts. Whereas in MOMA, professors often wanted to test whether you knew the information or not. Also, the sample exams in MOMA are literally the same as the final exam, not necessarily in Ghent.

Exams usually last 2 hours and are scheduled in June. You normally will not have two exams in the same day or two exams one day after another.

They are either MCQs or open questions. The MCQs do not have any negative points but they are harder and they are sometimes small case studies. For the open question, either you have to do an exercise or use your knowledge to interpret a situation.

Finally, most classes only have a final exam, and no continuous assessment, at least for the ones I chose.

IV. When I live there

A. Safety

The city is very safe, and way safer than Montpellier. Also, in the weekends, it tends to be emptier than the rest of the week because it is a student city and most of them leave for the weekend to their home town.

B. Phone and Internet

The dorms and university provide free Internet through Eduroam.

C. Events

To know about events you should follow the ESN Gent Instagram account as well as the VEK account (the equivalent of the BDE in MOMA). Through the ESN account, you can have access to whatsapp groups.

My suggestion is to enter all the groups, even if you don't plan on being active in them, just to be able to meet people more easily. People in these groups will often try at the beginning of the semester to organize events and small gatherings.

I also recommend to participate to as much ESN events as possible, even if you don't like them. That is what I did and how I met all the people I know there. The first few weeks are going to be the ones with the most events so it is important to be force yourself to go out and take part in as much activities as you can.

The only ESN events I would recommend to avoid are the trips. They are overpriced and not much happens. The transportation is not always included either. So if you want to travel, just go on your own.

Also, if you want to meet people, it is important for you to talk to go over to people first in the first two weeks of classes.

There will be a welcome day for the faculty you will study in. It is important to attend it because they will explain in detail how the university works, they will give you your student card and it will be the perfect opportunity to meet people you will study with.

Finally, the university residence has an Instagram account called Home Mundo, and they organize a few events every months in the residence, which are sometimes fun.

D. Sports

The ESN organization organizes a lot of sports events throughout the semester like football, volleyball and badminton. Most of them are free. Otherwise, there are a lot of gyms that offer reductions for students.

E. Eating

There is a university cafeteria in several campuses, and a lot of coffee shops that are good. Other than that, some grocery stores are quite affordable, like LIDL, ALDI, and Albert Heijn if you create an account to benefit from reductions.

For coffee shops there is Mayana, Aura Coffee, Gaya and le Bal Infernal. There are also Korean and Syrian places that are nice in the center.

F. Go to the university : bus, car, bike

The university was 5 minutes away from my residence so I just walked, but I also rented a bike through the university for 4 months, which was about 90 euros, plus a 120 euros deposit that I got back at the end of my stay. Most people in Ghent have bikes and it is very useful to go around the city.

You can also get a bus membership, but it is more expensive and I personally think the buses are less practical there. A single bus ticket is 3 euros.

G. Travels

I would recommend going to a few cities around Ghent like Ostende, Antwerp, Bruges, Liège. I personally think Brussels is overrated but it is still nice to go there once. For this you can take a train. For the trains in Belgium, you pay every month 4 euros to get cheaper train tickets on the app called SNCB. I would also recommend going to Amsterdam, especially for King's Day, by train or by FlixBus. You can also go to Paris by train or by bus. I also went to see a friend in Vienna by plane.

But taking the plane is more complicated because you have to go to Charleroi which is a bit far from Ghent, and there is no direct train to go there.

Since Belgium is in the center of Europe, you can basically travel anywhere easily.

H. Any other information you would have liked to know about

Ghent is in the Flemish part of Belgium so everyone speaks Dutch, but everyone also speaks English very well. Of course, I would recommend knowing the basics like hello, goodbye etc. There is also a lot of French influence so a lot of them will say bonjour, salut, merci...

To meet people, you must be outgoing because a lot of exchange students either came with someone they already knew or they will stay with people from their own country like Italians and Turkish. Also, Belgians are not always very open.

V. After your semester abroad

A. What are you planning to do?

Next year I am probably going to do a master's degree in Finance.

B. Did you apply for master?

I got accepted to the Finance & Green Finance master at MOMA.