

France

ACADEMIE DE REIMS



Assistantship

Accommodation

Location(s) – Romilly-sur-Seine (1 1/2hr drive south of Reims), and Reims.

Price of rent - 115 p/m staying in the school in Romilly. Can be around 150 p/m for schools in Reims, foyers (18-25 accom) can be around 200-250 p/m after CAF (benefits without the Jeremy Kyle appearance).

Price of monthly bills – Only have to pay for phone credit, using 10euro every fortnight. Some people get their own 3G internet dongles because the school's internet is limited, i.e. no Facebook, porn etc. They can cost 20-40euro p/m.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Bills are almost always included in school accommodation, not sure about the price in foyers.

Travel

Trains are the easiest way to get from town to town. Buy an SNCF 12-25 railcard, 49euro can get you 1/2 price fares for a year, it paid itself off in a month!

Local – Tramway and buses in Reims, generally cheap and you can buy monthly tickets to use both, around 30euro p/m. Romilly-sur-Seine is on the Paris train line and is only one hour away, Troyes is twenty minutes the other way by train. Reims – Paris is 45minutes on TGV. Costs 20 euros to go on that route. Return ticket between Reims and Romilly costs around 60euro with railcard.

National – All major routes across France spills out from Paris' various train stations, keep your wits about you as you could easily get your pocket picked! The trains are very good when they're not on strike.

International – Eurostar from Paris Nord, but I suggest renting cars if a big group of you are planning trips around the continent. No airport in Reims as well so trains/cars are the way forward.

Always shop around for train tickets, www.voyages-sncf.com will show you the timetables. The train network is nationalised in France so it's all run by the SNCF.



Tourism

Where to go – Reims has a lot of things to see: the Cathedral, the many Champagne houses, the museum of the Surrender in WW2, Stade Auguste Delaune to watch Stade de Reims football.

What to see – Cathedral light show on the weekends is a sight to behold. There are many big name Champagne brands based in Reims, all based around the city centre. The museum of the surrender is near the main train station and is good if you're into your modern history.

Costs – Cathedral is free, the Champagne houses are 10-15 euro for students (with free tasting!) and the surrender museum is free for students. Student tickets are 5-10 euros for the football.

Social/Night life

There is a main strip of bars in the city centre, some are bar-clubs, but mostly bars which open til around 12-1am on the weekend. Europe is pricey for drinks so expect 4-7euros per pint and around 6euros upwards for spirits. Look out for happy hour bars.

As an assistant I spend a few days with the other assistants (around 70 in all) in seminars and stayed at a hostel together so getting settled was very easy and I also contacted some of them on Facebook before we got to Reims.

There are a few nightclubs but they're quite expensive, drinks average at 9euros each and entry can be as much as 15 euros.

If you're going for a night out in France then pre-drinks are a must as you'll save a shed load of money. I can pre-drink for 3 euros (no, I'm not a lightweight) instead of paying 20-25euros for what I'd have drunk if I'd have gone straight to a bar.

Miscellaneous

For cheap accommodation I suggest the CIS de Champagne hostel, rooms range from 20-35 euros p/n but it's in the city centre and is open 24hrs. Breakfast included.

There's no late night Chick-o-land in Reims so if you're hungry at 2am, I'd suggest stocking up on crisps at home!

Taxis are quite expensive in France so walk or take public transport where possible.

If you're Erasmus or on an assistantship on the year abroad then the first few days are like fresher's week, so be out there as much as possible, meeting people and whatnot, but don't be too quick to judge people, particularly the Americans, they're quite loud but they're nice people when you get to know them!



Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

15-23. Interesting, I worked in two schools, one was 15-18 (quite academic), the other 15-23 (more vocational). It seems scary teaching people who are older than you but as long as you take a fresh approach to teaching and aren't a doormat then you'll be fine.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

Contracted 12hours p/w, maybe 2hours p/w preparation.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

The Reims education authority held two days of seminars to help with the teaching side of things and to get some admin out of the way. Once you get going with the teaching it's fine, there will be awkward silences so you've got to provoke the students to talk, show them things and ask for their opinions etc.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

For boys, it's always about football, they absolutely love it. For girls, popular culture does the trick. Use powerpoints, music, videos and other media to show them things, they respond a lot better to that than being talked at or reading textbooks all day long. Prepare lots of small tasks that last 15mins max, you'll be teaching classes of upto 15, generally 8-10.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

I met up with the other assistants at the weekend and in the holidays, I think you've got to make a group of friends on the year abroad to meet up with regularly, particularly if you're in a remote area, you need to live for the weekend.

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

You get paid. You get some solid work experience to go on your CV and for the first time you have real responsibility and power compared to that Saturday job you had at Tesco. You'll earn plenty to travel around with your new friends in the holidays, and you're not overworked by the schools.

France

BESANCON



Teaching Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – Lycée Ledoux, one house for 5 available.

(Lycee Pergaud was also available for other assistants and rent was free – Accommodation was allocated not chosen).

Price of rent - 75 euros for assistants working in that school and 105 euros for assistants working in other schools.

Travel

Local – Very good local bus service (also was reimbursed for half of monthly bus ticket as the school I was working for – lycee Pasteur, did not provide accommodation).

National – Good train links – TGV or slower cheaper trains available to Paris, Strasbourg, Dijon, Lyon etc. 12-25 card available which makes it a lot cheaper too.

International – No local airport! Also it is surprising difficult to get to Genève on the train considering its proximity (3 changes), so would recommend Eurostar and TGV, or flying to Paris and TGV to get there from England.

Tourism

Where to go – East of France so can visit Germany or Switzerland relatively easily. Also a lot of Beautiful places in the region to visit, Arbois, Ornans, Pontalier, Jura mountains (good for cross country skiing).

What to see – In Besancon there is the Citadel, Horlogerie, boat trip around the town. In the region there are also cheese makers, caves, Arbois wine festival in February, Christmas market etc.

Costs – For students cost can be reduced if you get the Avantage Jeune card (which I strongly recommend) This gives you discounts in shops and also a booklet of vouchers for get reduced entry to many tourist attractions/concerts/leisure activities throughout the year.



Social/Night life

Not the best night life in the world but definitely still a lot to do. There is a choice of bars including an Irish pub, bars for live music, the University bar etc. which are in general reasonably priced. Also the night clubs include, 'Style' and 'Building' in the centre of town and there are more further out of town as well. All in all not a bad night out!

Miscellaneous

It is a small city but not too small, you won't feel lost or overwhelmed here. It is a lovely place to live and surrounded by lots of beautiful country side.

It is possible to get involved in Orchestras or sports.

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

I was given 15 students in every class. Students at Lycee Pasteur generally had a good level of English and were well behaved and dedicated students (most, not all!)

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

12 hours per week plus lesson preparations

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

Minimal teacher training, which wasn't overly helpful, but the British council website gives lots of lesson plan ideas.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

Group work, games, debates, popular culture activities, creative activities but it all depended on the group. What never worked well was going in and asking the whole class what they thought about something, got a far better response when they were able to discuss in groups before they share their ideas.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

This was hard but not impossible. Don't expect too much from the teachers as they have busy lives and therefore don't necessarily have much time for the assistants out of work. The university bar and Erasmus nights are good ways to meet people!

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

Definitely!

France

BÉZIERS (Montpellier academy)



Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – An apartment in the Lycée where I work.

Price of rent - € 160 a month.

Price of monthly bills – Included.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Included in rent.

Travel

Local – There is a great great local bus service, only 50c a journey which takes you all around the town. Anywhere in the region is only €1.50 by bus which is great too.

National – There is a train station that has a direct line to Paris and Lille so is very practical.

International – There is an airport which does flights to London Luton and Bristol and various other international airports. Flights are with ryan air and are so cheap. In off peak times they are often €10.

Tourism

Where to go – Beziers has lots of interesting landmarks and is very beautiful in the centre. There is Valras Plage which is 30 mins away by bus and only costs 50c and it is a beautiful Mediterranean beach and has lots of restaurants and bars. Montpellier, Narbonne and Carcassonne are all in easy reach by train or bus and are really interesting.

What to see – You can do touristy things such as the cathedral St Nazere, the bull fighting arena, Plateau des poets and other historical monuments.



Social/Night life

Social life – In the first month I went along to the university and gave my number to some of the students to try and make friends with people the same age as me. It worked and now I have a strong group of friends with whom I eat with a couple of times a week and go out with. I also joined a choir which is a community one so is free.

Night life – There are lots of clubs and bars in Bézier and the surrounding area however my friends refuse to go anywhere but circus as apparently the others are a bit dodgy. However you have to drive there as it is quite far out of town so it is good to make friends who have cars.

The bars are really good and often have themed nights.

Miscellaneous

Everyone says that Bézier is unsafe and when I arrived every teacher made a big deal out of insisting that I did not go to certain areas and did not go out of the Lycée by myself when its dark. However you very quickly realise the areas not to go and as long as you use your common sense there is no problem.

I wouldn't walk on my own in the dark in a big town in England so as long as you don't draw attention to yourself you should be fine. I haven't really felt unsafe but I haven't put myself in a position to be. Again having friends with cars helps!

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

I work in a Lycée General and Professional where the majority of my students are 17-24. It has its advantages and disadvantages but the pros definitely outweigh the cons. I have a really good relationship with the majority of my students.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

I do 13h paid (I have been asked to do 1 hour extra paid) and I probably spend about 3-4 hours preparing, but it depends on the week because some of my teachers prepare lessons for me if there is something specific they want me to do.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

We had a training day but it had nothing to do with teaching, more the bureaucracy. My first lessons were fine as they were introductions etc.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

They have really enjoyed doing interview style lessons and starting or finishing with a game.

France

LE HAVRE



Assistant in 2 colleges

Accommodation

Location(s) – I live in a flat owned by one of the schools with the spanish assistant.

It's right next door to one school and about a 15 min walk away from the other.

Price of rent - 150 euros a month.

Price of monthly bills – Bills included! (but internet/tv/phone is 31.70 a month which we split the cost of).

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – See above.

Travel

Local – The bus service is pretty good, one bus every 10 mins, but less frequent at weekends and the last bus from town is at like 9pm which is a bit rubbish. There is a 'midnight bus' but it stops at 22.15...weird.

National – SNCF is awesome. 2 hr direct train to Paris and 1 hr to Rouen.

International – There is an airport but it's tiny so doesn't offer many locations to fly to! You can take an overnight boat from Le Havre to Portsmouth though which is only around £36.50 return!

Tourism

Where to go – Le Havre itself is under construction til december 2012 as they're building a tramway through the city centre so it's a bit of an eyesore! But the beach by Sainte Adresse is lovely and the surrounding areas of le havre are gorgeous- harfleur's sunday market is really good, etretat and deauville are beautiful and of course visiting Rouen is also a must!

What to see – See above!! Le Havre does have a museum and modern art gallery, but I haven't visited them!!

Costs – Fairly cheap as a city- you can get a set meal in a restaurant for about 17 euros (dependent on what time of day you want to eat).



Social/Night life

Not the best night life ever....I'm still discovering it, and as far as I'm aware there are about 4 clubs. Club 'del rio' (under the 'volcan'- a massive theatre/monument) is my favourite at the moment, but one vodka and coke was 8 euros so I'd advise a lot of pre-drinking! There is a v popular bar called Black Café which is always full of young people, and an Australian themed one called Wallaby's which is also worth a visit.

If you want a laugh go to Music Bar on wed/thurs/sun for karaoke. Everyone there is old (haha) but it makes for a hilarious night- I sang Barbie Girl and danced the macarena with a group of middle-aged Frenchies, and loved it.

Miscellaneous

On Tuesday nights in Le Havre at 7.30-10pm there is a 'languages café' at café Victor, rue victor hugo. There are tables assigned for French, English, Spanish and German, and you just go along, sit at a table and have a chat- they LOVE native English people, plus it's fab to practice a bit of french!

Basically, I'd advise you get as involved as possible- say YES to EVERYTHING (well, within reason).

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

College, so 11-15

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

Throughout the year the british council organise training days for all the assistants which are a great way of making friends as well as very helpful for teaching tips. Teaching may seem daunting at first but it's really not as scary as you might think.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

Anything active, lots of role play for the younger classes, and songs for the older ones where they have to fill in blanks. Basically, just get them to talk.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

Haha! So far, I have no actual french friends But I've bonded well with the staff at both schools.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

Umm.....ask me in a few months time? Haha! So far, I have no actual french friends But I've bonded well with the staff at both schools.

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

It's just a great opportunity for anyone even slightly considering a career in teaching, plus I think you get more involved in the culture than at university where there is definitely a tendency to stick with the Erasmus crew. It's also INCREDIBLY well paid!!

France

LILLE



Teaching Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – Vieux Lille (the nicest place to live in the whole city: cobbled streets, safe, and walking distance to all the shops and clubs... but pricey!)

Price of rent – 645 euro / month.

Price of monthly bills – 60 euro / month.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – I organised the electric, internet and phones. Just had to phone edf and give them the details and they set up a direct debit for electric. Internet and phones you have to trail around the shops, and it is a long, slow process! Internet and cable tv plus free landline calls to England = 30 euro / month.

Travel

Local – I live 10 minutes walk to Lille Flandres station, where you can get a train to wherever locally including Belgium easily. Lille also has a metro.

National – Easy enough to get trains to wherever in France from Lille Flandres and out into Belgium, although it is really worth buying a carte 12-25 (like a student railcard) for 49 euro, you make this back so quickly as French trains can be pricey and you often get up to half price tickets.

International – Lille Europe, one of 2 central stations, has a Eurostar terminal so it's easy to get back to England, but to fly anywhere you have to get a train to Paris then fly (although this isn't hard, book in advance to keep costs down.)



Tourism

Where to go – Lille is a beautiful city with lots to offer – lots of museums and beautiful buildings. Vieux Lille is the nicest area to walk around, visit a park and have a coffee.

What to see – Palais Beaux-Arts is a must see, which is a really nice art museum. You definitely have to go to Vieux Lille and visit the vintage and boutique type shops. The Wazemmes market on Sunday is worth a visit too.

Costs – Pretty low, student entry to Beaux Arts is about 4 euro.

Social/Night life

Rue Solferino and Rue Massena are the two roads (they run into each other) that you must go to as Lille is one of the best cities for student nightlife.

Lots of bars and a few clubs to choose from, and the streets get pretty busy with students on Friday and Saturday nights. My favourite bar is called La Plage and is a fake beach theme, it's fantastic, and costs 7 euro for a cocktail but they're pretty strong and so worth it, they set the bar on fire and also your mouth after shots if you wish... Beware clubs though, occasionally they won't let you in if you're English (I don't personally really find it a problem) but drinks are ridiculous = 8euro for a single in club Smile.

All the assistants in the area tend to go out together a few times a week here. We have dinner and wine in Vieux Lille then head down to Rue Solferino, but we've also been to the zoo and had house parties.

Miscellaneous

All the assistants are lovely and we get on really well but make sure to join a club to make French friends.

Finding accommodation was an absolute nightmare and we only found our apartment thanks to a French friend. Get in as early as possible if you want a private rented apartment like ours. If you want to do a colocation then you have more options – look on apartager.fr and lebencoin.fr for people offering rooms. I also know a few assistants who live in 'Bethanie' which is a bit like halls but for all young people, and is right by the station. Be prepared that landlords can (and did for us) ask for your parents passports, bills and payslips!

Also bring lots of warm clothes – it gets freezing at Winter!



Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

Anywhere between 15-24, but officially a lycee. I found it really hard at first, some students gave me real attitude and I had to throw one out of my class but you learn how to deal with it and I don't mind now. It's all about getting the activities right for the group.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

15

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

I had a couple of hours of presenting myself to the class but this was pretty much it as far as training went. We have 3 days (atleast) of entire academie training where all the teachers get together to discuss teaching techniques. This is vaguely helpful. I was really nervous teaching for the first time, and had some bad students, but you get the hang of it.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

In particularly rowdy classes don't let them work in pairs or groups but give them writing tasks instead.

How did you integrate with other native speakers? With the teachers I spoke French and I have a couple of French friends but I must make more because this is so crucial. I am going to join a pilates class.

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

Yes

France

LILLE



Erasmus student – studying maths at Lille 1

Accommodation

Location(s) – I'm living in the Cité Scientifique which is very close to my classes: Résidence Bachelard is the closest to the Maths building (all of about 30 seconds).

Price of rent – 205€ per month, all included.

Price of monthly bills – N/A

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – The accommodation is a bit interesting, there were cockroaches to start with which was not the best welcome but things have sorted out now. There is a service called Wifirst which is 14,99€/month but it can be very slow, some people offer a router share which might be cheaper and faster.

The rooms are either traditional or renovated, the renovated rooms having a kitchenette (2 hot plates, sink, washbasin), a desk, wardrobe or bed. The bathrooms are communal between about 20.

Travel

Local – The métro is the best way to get around and costs 1,40€ per trip but the best thing to do is get a Viva card which allows you to buy cheaper tickets. You can apply for this at République Beaux-Arts métro station.

National – SNCF, which is quite expensive if not bought in advance but very fast! Eurolines is a coach service with both national and international travel. It's cheap, but takes a while.

International – Eurostar or Eurolines. There is an airport in Lille (Lesquins) but you can't fly to the UK and the Eurostar is so much easier.

LILLE



Tourism

Where to go – The centre of Lille is really beautiful and worth checking out. Lille is also close to Paris, Brussels etc etc. The Erasmus society organise trips to cities (Amsterdam, Paris, Brussels, Bruges etc etc) and it's the cheapest way to visit other cities.

What to see – There is a free zoo at the Citadelle which is actually pretty good.

Costs – As with the rest of France, on the first Sunday of the month all museums are free.

Social/Night life

Rue Solférino is the place most people go and there are numerous clubs there, including Smile, Network (sometimes funny letting people in) etc etc. But there are quite a few bars. It's expensive compared to Jesters, expect to pay about 5€ a drink but it's not so bad.

In terms of getting home the métro finishes at 00h30 but on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays there is a night bus which leaves from Rue Solferino (opposite the Pizza Hut takeaway) and also Lille Flandres. It leaves every half hour and it's the cost of a métro ticket.

Miscellaneous

There is a house called La Maison Bleue which is in Wazemmes and is the "hub" of the Erasmus students; about 10 or so people live there in fairly sizeable rooms and with the CAF (French social security grant), the rent is only slightly more than the rent in Cité Scientifique. Definitely something to look at if you're looking to live nearer the centre although be advised the area is slightly rough.



Your Placement

University: Lille 1

Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

Intensive course the week before classes, extensive course throughout the term.

What sort of modules did/could you take?

I'm taking M31 Algebre Linéaire, M32 Calcul differentielle, M33 Intégration and L'histoire des grands problèmes de science. The last module is interesting and good for improving French.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

There are continuous exams, which are part of contrôle continue. If you pass these or your average of these is better than your final exam they count for 50% of the mark. If not, they don't. Watch out for exams on Saturdays!

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

The system is a bit different; the first thing to note is that you can register from the day you arrive in the International student office. The sooner you do this, the sooner you get your student card.

Was there sufficient pastoral support? Where could you find this?

Marie-Francoise Barne, the co-ordinator was very helpful and willing to help in all circumstances.

How did you integrate with other native students?

Quite well, they are all very friendly! It's useful to go to lunch with them.

Why would you recommend a University placement?

Because you continue to learn and the Erasmus student network is great!

France

LISIEUX



Language Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – I Lived in a “Foyer des Jeunes Travailleurs” which I would definitely recommend as it was really easy to make friends the same age as me and speak French all the time!

Price of rent – 345 euros a month, but with CAF it’s a lot cheaper. The people who work at the foyer can help you fill in your CAF forms.

Price of monthly bills – Nothing – everything (including internet) was included in the rent.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – A bit like a cross between halls of residence and a youth hostel. Electricity and internet is included in rent and there is a phone downstairs. Everyone has their own room and ensuite then there is a communal area downstairs with a kitchen, tv, pool table, vending machines and mini-football, as well as a restaurant where I ate most evenings as most people tend to do this and its reasonably cheap. There is also a laundry on the first floor and there is someone downstairs in the office 24/7. It’s a lovely location too – right next to the river but only a 5 minute walk from town centre.

Travel

Local – Buses were regular and easy to use – Busvert for other towns in Normandy and Lexobus for Lisieux specifically.

National – Train station was about a fifteen minute walk from my accommodation and from there it takes ½ hour to get to Caen, about 20 minutes to the beaches of Deauville and Trouville and 1½ hours to Paris. 1½ hours in the opposite direction to Paris is Cherbourg.

International – Airports in Paris (Charles de Gaulle can be reached by train and flies to London Luton, I’m not sure if Beauvais or Orly Ouest can be reached by train, but Orly Ouest flies to Southampton). Deauville now also has a small airport apparently which flies to London City airport. Otherwise you can get a train to Caen and then the Busvert to Ouistreham ferry port (just over an hour including the train) and from there Brittany Ferries cross to Portsmouth. I used this option a lot as although it takes 6 hours, it’s really cheap for a foot passenger.

LISIEUX



Tourism

Where to go – Caen (quite a big town compared to Lisieux, good for shopping), Bayeux (see the Bayeux tapestry), Cherbourg, Paris (obviously), Deauville and Trouville are lovely beaches. Honfleur is a beautiful town, and Etretat beach is also stunning.

What to see – In Lisieux, the Basilique de Saint Therese is beautiful. It's quite modern for a cathedral but stunning. Saint Therese came from this town so there are lots of things to do related to her, Les jardins d'evêque are lovely too, especially when it's warm. Swimming pool, 2 cinemas, a theatre and quite a few restaurants.

Costs – Fairly cheap as Lisieux is not a particularly touristy area. I would advise getting a 12-25 railcard because you make your money back really fast and it gets you quite a big reduction on train tickets.

Social/Night life

The foyer was brilliant because all the people living there were under 30 (most were around my age) and almost all of them were French.

The bar Le Grillon is a popular hang out but Lisieux doesn't really have any night clubs – if this is your kind of thing I'd go to Caen or Paris. If you do go out in the evening, don't dress how you would to go to jesters or somewhere!! You will be judged and stared at. The foyer also arranged themed evenings and bbqs which was good.



Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

I was in 2 primary schools working with children aged between 5 and 11. I really enjoyed it but I would advise you to be prepared – it's horrible if you run out of things to do before the end of the session. Speak English all the time so the children hear it a lot and they really enjoyed games.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

12 hours teaching, about 6 preparation.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

Yes, we had 2 induction days which were in Caen and gave us good ideas about how to teach. It was a bit daunting and you have to be a bit strict because the children can mess you around at the beginning but at the end I loved it.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

Games, particularly if they were competitive in 2 teams.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

It was very easy given where I was living, and the headteachers and staff at the school were brilliant too.

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

It was nice to do something different, other than be stuck in a lecture theatre! And it was nice to be paid! The children are (generally) enthusiastic and by the end didn't want me to leave. I also enjoyed trying to think up activities I knew they would enjoy, and being able to teach a range of ages.

France

LYON



English Language Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – The school provided me with accommodation; I live with 4 other assistants in school dormitories. It is extremely basic, for example there is no toilet seat (apparently the toilet is not compatible with any toilet seats). Although the rent is really cheap, I am looking at moving into the centre as I am about a half an hour bus ride out.

Price of rent – 50 euros in my school. The other places I look at have varied between 350-400euros a month, but this includes bills.

Travel

Local – Really good transport links. There are frequent buses, trams and metros which cover the whole of the city and most of the surrounding areas. They run until half midnight and start again at half 5 which means it can be a very long night if you dont want to get a taxi.

National – There are 2 train stations in Lyon which have links with all the major towns. I can get to Paris in 2 and a half hours and Lille in 3 hours.

International – Easy links to the airport from the train stations. I have found that planes from Geneva (around a 2 hour train ride away) are generally cheaper and (major bonus) fly directly to Soton.

Tourism

Where to go – There are so many things to see in Lyon: the old town, la parc tete d'or, the cathedral, musee des beaux arts, croix-rousse.

What to see – There is a light festival which takes place in Lyon on the weekend on the 7th of December which is meant to be stunning.



Social/Night life

There is always something happening in Lyon, it is such a young person's city. There are loads of restaurants, bars, clubs, theatres and you can find live music in at least 3 or 4 bars in the city every weekend. I went to quite a lot of house parties, these are good places to make contacts with other French people.

Eating out is cheaper at lunch where you can get really good deals on set menus.

Miscellaneous

As Lyon is such a large city it is quite possible you will be placed outside of the city centre so be prepared to commute either in or out of the city to get to your school.

There are lots of English-speaking people in Lyon so if you are looking to avoid that then this is not the best place to come. On the other hand, there are so many students (French and anglophone) that it is easy to meet people in general.

Be very wary of people, guys in particular, looking for english lessons as it is not true in a lot of cases. If you do meet up with someone for english classes, make sure it is in a public place and that your friends/housemates know where you are.

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

13-20 year olds. Daunting with the older students at first as I was unsure about whether they would respect my authority. However, aside from students skipping classes, I haven't had any major issues.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

My timetable was split across 2 weeks so I would work 20 hours one week including prep time and 7 the next week as I would usually repeat lessons that had gone well the previous week so didn't need to prepare.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

No. The teaching aspect has been fun so far, basically anything that interests you about your culture is likely to interest them as well. I did feel somewhat thrown in at the deep end to begin with as there were several issues regarding timetables etc and no-one seemed willing to find out what was going on.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

A mixture of games + more serious topics worked well. I studied children in need last week with them which seemed to go quite well.

France

MONTBÉLIARD

Franche-Comté (near Belfort and Besançon)



Language Assistant

Accommodation

Location(s) – I lived in an apartment allocated to assistants in a school, different to the school I worked in.

Price of rent – 53€ a month! (It was very cheap).

Price of monthly bills – Only had to pay for internet - 49€ a month. Gas/electric included.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – My accommodation was organised by my supervisor at the school that I worked in. I lived with one other English language assistant, although there was space for 4 more in the flat. It was very basic, a room with a bed, sink, desk and chair, and then there was a kitchen in the corridor. There were two shared showers and toilets for the flat. The shared areas were cleaned about twice a week, by one of the school cleaners. Bedding was provided and washed for us, but we had to hand wash our own clothes as there was no laundry facility.

We did not have the option of installing a modem, so no wifi! But I bought a dongle (mobile internet) contract. My phone was on pay as go, although credit can expire in France, so ended up spending about 15€ a month.

Travel

Local – Good bus service. Monthly bus pass for under 26s was €7.50 a month. I used it to travel to the school I worked in.

National – Montbéliard train station is on major routes to Besançon (1h) Strasbourg (1h30), Lyon (3hs) and Paris (normally about 4 hours, but a new line is opening in December so it will be 2h30). Under 25s railcard was € 42 last year, and gets you quite good discounts on rail fares.

International – Closest airport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg. Cheap flights to many European cities. Takes an hour to reach by road, more like 2 by train.

MONTBÉLIARD



Tourism

Where to go – Not much locally, except the Peugeot Museum, since it's the home of Peugeot cars! One of the best Christmas markets in the area during December though. As good as Strasbourg I would say. Strasbourg, Dijon, Colmar and Besancon aren't that far away and really beautiful places to visit. Also about ½ hour from Switzerland and 1 hour from Germany.

What to see – Christmas markets in all the above mentioned cities are good, given this area is quite close to Germany. There's lots of beautiful countryside around too if you like walking..

Costs – Mostly just the costs of rail fares. Franche-Comté has a scheme for under 26s, you buy a card for €8 from the Bureau d'Information Jeunesse (Youth Information Service) and then it gives you loads of discounts and often free entry to local attractions.

Social/Night life

There were only about 3 bars in Montbéliard, with sporadic opening times! Most of the time us assistants organised to meet up together at someone's flat. Belfort is only 15 mins on the train and is a bit bigger has more of a nightlife. There's a pretty good cinema and bowling at Audincourt (a suburb of Montbéliard). Besancon's night life is better, given that it's a bigger city.

It's quite easy to get a list of societies and sports clubs from Tourist Information.

I joined a church in Montbéliard and met quite a lot of students my age through their youth group as well as families who invited me to their houses for meals.

Miscellaneous

I think it's probably fair to say that it can be hard to get to know natives well, since other people who come from other countries are often friendlier! But if you're open and not afraid to be persistent in striking up conversation with work colleagues and people you meet socially at sports clubs, language lessons etc then you'll be fine!

They seem a lot more friendly once you get to know them a bit better.



Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

15-18s mostly. I was in a school of about 500 students (quite small) and there were mostly well behaved and friendly. Overall I had a good experience.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

12 teaching, plus about 4/5 hours private lessons. Probably about 12 hours preparation too.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

Sussex Uni held a one week course for language assistants in June that I went to. There were two training days for assistants in Besançon. The first was useful for meeting other assistants and finding out about admin things to do with arriving in France. There were some good seminars with ideas for teaching. I enjoyed teaching, and I worked with groups of about 12 students at a time, so had to be creative in how to get and keep their attention while working on their speaking skills.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

Role play tasks like speed meeting to find a housemate, going shopping. Use of songs to provoke discussion on a certain topic. Games like bingo for number practice. Showing clips of Mr Bean and getting them to guess and describe what's going to happen next – that sort of thing

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

I ate lunch in the canteen with other staff – good food, pretty cheap. But was a chance to chat in French. Sometimes they went out together for a meal in the evening and I joined them.

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

Yes. Financially it's good pay and for secondary level assistants accommodation is usually organised or provided. You also get at 3 x 2 weeks holiday in the placement, good for travelling! Also good for testing whether you'll like teaching, without having the full responsibility of full-time teachers.

France

PARIS



University

Accommodation

Location(s) – I think it needs to be made clear that you're never going to be able to find the perfect apartment in Paris. It simply doesn't exist. You need to be willing to compromise on a lot of things in order to find somewhere. You can't be picky about location or about amenities and you cannot expect to find anywhere cheaper than around 500€/month.

Price of rent – 500€/month excluding bills for a 9m² apartment with no shower and a toilet that didn't work on the corridor. Also lived in a building with prostitutes.

Price of monthly bills – Around 50€.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – No organisation. Just contacted EDF and SFR who are the main providers in France and got a quote.

Travel

Local – Metro stations/bus/RER/tram. Paris has excellent public transport system. I would be happy to provide a quick explanation of each area, especially relating to accommodation.

National – TGV is your only option really. I used "covoiturage" (car sharing) a few times too as it is cheap... but awkward.

International – Airport Charles de Gaulle/Orly both of which fly to Southampton. Eurolines for buses to London which are very cheap. Eurostar is what I used most often as it is cheap if you book it in advance and obviously very convenient. You can also take as much luggage as you can carry.

PARIS



Tourism

Where to go – Apart from the obvious tourist attractions, there are also some lesser known places. For example the hammams are amazing, especially the one at the grande mosquée de Paris; some excellent cafés around Montmatre (which is especially great on a Sunday). Parc la Vilette is good for people who are interested in technology (google image serch it!), Parc Monceau, the Catacombs, Ile Saint-Louis is an absolute gem . Canal St Martin is beautiful. Eating out is great in Paris, go to the Quartier Latin (mo St Michel) for loads of amazing restaurants that propose a 3 course meal for 15€!

Avoid Barbes-Rocheouart/Chateau Rouge/anywhere north of Gare du Nord on line 4 whenever you possibly can, as you get harassed/grabbed/hit on a lot. Avoid Strasbourg-Saint Denis (where I lived!) as it is the area famous for prostitution and drug abuse.

Costs – Paris is a beautiful city so you can do a lot for free if you know where to go! Get in with the Locals so you can find out.

Social/Night life

There are a lot of ERASMUS soirées so definitely get involved with them. Mix Club (mo Montparnasse-Bienvenüe) is really great. My favourite was probably Six-Seven or Queen which were both on the Champs-Élysées so obviously you have to be prepared to pay those prices.

Night life in Paris is VERY expensive, expect to pay around 50-60€ per night.

Miscellaneous

The most important problem is accommodation. It is virtually impossible to find anywhere to live, and that is no exaggeration. I know someone who managed to get a place in halls of residence but these are highly competitive. On the plus side these are extremely reasonable quality-price. It completely depends on what you're willing to compromise on as to where you should look for accommodation. There are many dangerous areas in Paris where one should probably avoid looking for accommodation, but to be honest it's probably the easiest thing to compromise on. The cheapest areas are anything in the banlieues and on the very outskirts of Paris as these areas honestly tend to be quite dangerous. I would avoid anywhere north of Réaumur-Sébastopol on line 4 as these areas tend to be quite dangerous. Anywhere on line 14 is pretty good, my first apartment was at Guy Moquet and the area was wonderful, however it was extraordinarily expensive and therefore I had to find something more modest. There is a housing crisis in Paris at the moment and it's only set to get worse, so be prepared-you are going to have the most stressful time of your life trying to find somewhere to live and you will have to compromise a lot. I used the internet to find my accommodation, sites such as: <http://www.clickflatshare.com/Paris/>, <http://www.appartager.fr/>, <http://www.pap.fr/>. Do not waste your time looking at studios in privately owned halls unless you can pay the entire year up front or if you have someone who could be your guarantor in France because they do not accept English guarantors.

I would be more than happy to go into more detail on this if you'd like, just contact your Academic President at mfl@susu.org to put you in touch!



Your Placement

University:

Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

Not that I was aware of.

What sort of modules did/could you take? Any specific recommendations?

I took translation classes and science du langage. Definitely do not take the Francais comme langue etrangere classes as they are aimed at absolute beginners.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

We were assessed primarily by devoirs sur tables which are in class examinations. Attendance was also compulsory and if you missed more than 3 lectures you automatically fail the unit.

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

Paris 8 is a very frustrating place to study. Normally even the teachers don't know how many credits their classes are worth so you have to be organised from early on in case you need to pick up some extra credit. I think for each discipline there is an ERASMUS co-ordinator who are usually difficult to get in contact with but if you manage to I imagine they would be very useful.

Was there sufficient pastoral support? Where could you find this?

No. There is none.

How did you integrate with other native students?

Obviously meeting people through class, people in your French-English translation classes are probably the people most interested in being your friend, if not, it's a quite a cold university and you really do need to make the effort in order to make friends. I didn't make any friends at university, I joined a French-English conversation exchange program on facebook and I made friends through my housemate.

Why would you recommend a University placement?

I wouldn't.

France

PARIS



Universite Paris 8 study placement

Accommodation

Location(s) – Pantin, currently lodging with a couple, moving into University halls in January.

Price of rent – 450 euros per month, halls will be 320.

Price of monthly bills – 0 (rent is ttc)

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Paris is very very hard to organise accommodation in. I recommend going before or applying to the university residence early. This is, unless you have around 800 euros a month to spend in which case you should be okay to find a pleasant studio. I have had to stay in the banlieues, which are not frankly pleasant places at all, and dangerous to walk around at night especially if you are a girl. All my gas, electric telephone is sorted with the couple I lodge with, expect long waits if you have to move into a studio or are going into a new lodging with a friend. That's just France, they don't do much in a hurry. Similarly, mobile phones be careful to send ID to your prepaid provider, or they cancel your number. Contracts, similar to England, are better value and can be cancelled if you prove to them you are leaving the country, however you need a bank account (takes ages).

Travel

Local – The Paris metro is certainly easier and cheaper than the underground in London, however you get what you pay for and it regularly stops for no apparent reason., making me late and often missing lectures as there is only one metro line from Paris to St Denis, where the university is located.

National – TGV is fantastic, I have personally found it cheaper to pay in pounds with raileurope and book in advance, but for weekends away its great, you can get to most places for £40 return if you book over 2 weeks in advance and they average about 150mph!

International – Paris and Lille are probably the most accessible places to be on your year abroad as they are on the Eurostar, which again is so easy and not too expensive if booked well in advance. You can also do a rewards program which gives you £30 back for every £300 you spend with them (every little helps!) Paris is also well connected with airports but be wary of Ryanairs Beauvais flights, the airport is miles away and its around 20 euros each way on the coach to centre of Paris.

PARIS



Tourism

Where to go – Louvre, Catacombs, Eiffel tower, Sacre Coeur, Montmatre, Arc de triomphe, Champs Elysee, Musee d’Orsay, Le Bourget apt, Notre dame....

What to see – My favourite thing to do is go up the arc de triomphe, the view is stunning, includes the Eiffel tower and its free!

Costs – For under 25s most tourist attractions in Paris are free on production of ID. This, in a city where a pint is 8 euros is a huge bonus.

Social/Night life

Okay, well first thing is the noctilien(night bus) is very unreliable, so ideally you want to be in a big group splitting a taxi(paris is quite small so taxis aren’t too expensive), be willing to walk or get on the last metro of the night/first metro of the morning home.

There are some really great nights to be had bar crawling around Chatelet/Rue du Lappe in Bastille but generally going to a bar will be expensive. 9 euros for a pint of beer is not uncommon; try and search out the happy hours and drink cocktails(lots around chatelet and rue du lappe), as they mix them strong; more bang for your buck.

Clubs are varied, there are some great big electro/house clubs like Showcase and Social club, but entry is pricy; around 15 euros so make sure you get your moneys worth and be really up for a great night. The organised Erasmus nights tend to be crowded, but a great place to meet people in a similar situation to yourself at the beginning of the year. You can also find clubs such as Le tigre which play classic 60s/70s rock and indie/swing, which is great for something different but many clubs, this one included are very picky about your dress, especially on busier nights like Saturdays.

Miscellaneous

Paris is a lot smaller than London but suffers in many ways because of it as there is such a high demand for well located property. If you have parents that are going to support you financially, the reality is you will probably have an amazing year. If you locate yourself in the centre/south of the city, and didn’t have to worry too much about money, the mix of people that you meet and the culture is probably unrivalled by any other city in France. However, the banlieues can be very oppressive places, so I would recommend that if you do have to live there try and get in the University residence(not easy in itself) as then at least you are living with plenty of other people so can go out, go shopping and generally stick together.

My general advice would therefore be, if you are well off, go for Paris. It will be better than anywhere else by a long way. If you will not have much supplement to your student loan and Erasmus grant, perhaps look to stay somewhere cheaper and find a friend in Paris to visit so you can experience it.



Your Placement

University:

Were there any language courses available? If so, give details.

Yes two week at start of semester, I thought it would be useful for grammar, it wasn't, but it was a very nice introduction to my time in Paris.

What sort of modules did/could you take? Any specific recommendations?

The modules can take are very open, my advice is don't be afraid to experiment, there is no set requirements from the university so take what you want to take. If you find the class too hard after two weeks; switch, they are very relaxed about that.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

Mainly exams, apart from 2 modules with one teacher who gives homework each week. Workload is generally lighter than at university in England

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

Administration is a bit of a mess in general in France. Each time you have a question there is usually a queue outside every office for at least 45 minutes as their opening hours are so short. This does calm down after a few weeks, but you just have to build time into your day for it.

Was there sufficient pastoral support? Where could you find this?

The Erasmus a Paris leaders are fantastic, really friendly and great people. They would im sure be willing to help with any issues, but they are not well versed on university procedures.

How did you integrate with other native students?

Not well, the fact that everyone comes from colleges around Paris means university in France can be very cliquey. This doesn't bother me too much as everyone on Erasmus communicates in French. The lesson I have made a lot of friends in is a drama module, so I would suggest maybe taking something that will force you to be communicative like this would be useful.

Why would you recommend a University placement?

Moneywise and workwise, the British council assistants generally seem to have a better deal. However, university has been good fun so far and is definitely better for practicing your language. In Paris, there are also two companies you can work for, babylangues and babyspeaking teaching English to kids in addition to your university course. Most people I know who are native English speakers in Paris are doing this, and it's a great way to see both ways of doing a year abroad. It also pays around 12 euros an hour, which helps!

France

PARIS



Universite Paris 8 study placement

Accommodation

Location(s) – 14th arrondissement, Paris.

Price of rent – 800 including bills.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Landlord – through craigslist, not sure about bills.

Travel

Local – Navigo, 62 euros a month for Zone 1 and 2.

National – haven't yet.

International – Eurostar and flying by easyjet.

Tourism

Where to go – Montmartre, saint michel and saint germain, 16th.

What to see – Arc de triomphe, notre dame, sacre Coeur, Eiffel tower etc.

Costs – for under 26 tourism is basically free in Paris, apart from Eiffel tower.

Social/Night life

Going out is very expensive in Paris. Ludicrously so. Shots and a mixer is nothing less than 10 euros. Places are really nice, but pre-drinking is just cheaper. Wine is the cheapest thing out here, cheaper than in England, except in bars/clubs/restaurants



Miscellaneous

Everyone is in a rush in Paris. I'm from London so I'm used to it, but there is not social cohesion on the transport. You don't wait for others, people give up their chairs less. Its completely different.

Your Placement

University:

Where did you work? How did you organise your work placement?

I actually got quite lucky placement, I am working for a company which is the French version of the company my dad works for, so I definitely feel lucky there, so if you have contacts then definitely use them

What were your main responsibilities?

I am assistant product manager in the marketing apartment in a publishing company. My biggest task is on Mondays and Tuesdays I am required to update the sales for all the current partworks in sale and then help my superiors tell the manufacturer how many of the next issues are needed. I also all the subscriptions for the current partworks, as well as choosing the towns when new partworks should be tested and then sorting out their sales checks and poster campaigns

How many hours a week did you work? How much were you paid?

My official contract hours are 35 hours a week, but French culture is not to have such little hours. I would say I work 40 hours a week and I receive 900 euros a month, before tax which is amazing for a stagiaire

Did you receive any training or pastoral support whilst working? Please give details.

Most of my work gets verified by my superiors as it is important as the sales updates are seen by the company directors. I was not giving a training week, but when I have needed to do a task I have been explained there and then and been told I can ask questions if I'm not sure

How did you integrate with native speakers?

My whole working days is speaking French, I don't think I have had one conversation in English at work so far. Every lunch me and some of my French colleagues have lunch in the kitchen, another opportunity for me to integrate

Why would you recommend a work placement?

The main benefit must be the fact that it is the best for your languages year abroad-wise: students hang out with other erasmus students, teachers have only 12 hours and teaching English, work placements you can't not speak the language. Money is also a big plus, most stagiaires won't get as much as an english assistant but its still very helpful, especially in big cities. It is also very impressive on the CV - I am looking forward to seeing '9 months spent as assistant product manager in marketing in Paris' on my cv.

France

ROUEN



Assistantship

Accommodation

Location(s) – The city centre of Rouen, next to Place Saint Marc.

Price of rent – 400 euros/month.

Price of monthly bills – 40 euros/month.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Done myself.

Travel

Local – Trams, city buses, trains.

National – TGVs.

International – High speed trains.

Tourism

Where to go – Honfleur, Paris.

What to see – Le Gros Horloge, the cathedral, the Joan of Arc church, the haunted courtyard, the gardens, several museums and galleries, many shopping centres.

Costs – Most tourist activities free to students/EU citizens under 26.



Social/Night life

Please write all you can about how/where you socialised, general costs/advice/recommendations
Lots of excellent international restaurants. Clubbing very expensive and doesn't get busy til very late.
Quite a lot of choice of clubs.

Miscellaneous

What other information/recommendations/stories/experiences can you offer relating to the city you stayed in on your year abroad?

Try not to live alone. Live ideally with French people found on colocation sites as you will have all bills sorted out for you, and it is generally a less lonely place to live.

Your Placement

Assistantship:

What age group did you work with? How did you find this experience?

I worked with 11-16 year olds. I found the experience challenging, and the other teachers were not always pleasant people to work with.

How many hours a week did you work? (Teaching hours and preparation time)

12 hours teaching, around 3-4 hours preparation.

Did you receive teacher training? How did you find teaching for the first time?

I received training from the local Academie however teachers had set ideas of what I wanted to do with the kids and it wasn't always rewarding.

Any advice or tips on the types of activities your classes responded well to?

Games, and activities that generally didn't put people on the spot.

How did you integrate with other native speakers?

It was quite hard to find people, but by clubbing together with other English assistants you will have a better chance of finding people.

Why would you recommend an Assistantship placement?

If you want to earn a lot of money, and have lots of time off, do assistantship.

France

STRASBOURG



University Study

Accommodation

Location(s) – University Halls Résidence Paul Appell, across the road from the central campus, a restaurant, laundrette and communal rooms (e.g. gym, TV room) are all available.

Price of rent – 229,55€ for an ensuite room plus 10€ a month for internet connection.

Price of monthly bills – Included in rent.

Organisation of accommodation/gas/electricity/internet/phones – Internet LAN connection, communal kitchen with 4 hobs but several good value university restaurants.

Travel

Local – City not too big for walking, many people use bikes (hire scheme available) or buses and trams.

National – Trains, young person's railcard available.

International – Eurostar, train, plane (closest low-cost flights from Karlsruhe or Basel).

Tourism

Where to go – Old Town in the busy centre for the cathedral and shopping, Petite France for a taste of the history of Strasbourg and Alsace, European buildings, tour of the city by boat, several big parks including the Orangerie where there is also a bowling alley, many cinemas, theatres and museums, ice-skating, local lake with a man-made beach reachable by tram, many restaurants, bars and clubs, from the end of November throughout December there are the famous Christmas markets

Costs – Free to look inside the cathedral and a few euros to climb up it, often free tours around the European Parliament, tour by boat is around 10€ but a trip for Erasmus students was free.

STRASBOURG



Social/Night life

Erasmus students are the friendliest and there is a good Erasmus society in Strasbourg which organises nights out and there are reduced costs on entry and drinks if you buy their membership card, drinks can be quite expensive but there are lots of student nights, setting up tandems and making an effort to talk to French people in classes is the best way to speak French as there are quite a lot of Erasmus students in the halls.

Miscellaneous

Strasbourg is a beautiful city with lots going on and you shouldn't be put off because it is so close to Germany as everyone here speaks French, the proximity to Germany is great for those who also study German and want to go on some weekend trips over the border, getting back to the UK is slightly awkward as there are very few flights from Strasbourg Airport and Air France are expensive – there is a bus from Strasbourg to Karlsruhe Airport for 18€ and flights with Ryanair are cheap, trains to Basel Airport are also a possibility and flights to the UK are with EasyJet.



Your Placement

University:

Were there any language courses available?

Strasbourg has a huge variety of languages on offer, many can be started from scratch, the German department is quite good and there are several French as a Foreign Language courses; the university-run course offers credits

What sort of modules did/could you take?

Any specific recommendations I was advised to take second-year German but the level is by no means beyond me, German Civilisation is also taught in German, I am taking second-year linguistics which is French/English phonetics this semester, a FLE writing course (these are very popular, you have to get in there quickly as I didn't get a place in the oral class this semester) and I have started beginners Spanish too.

How were you assessed and what sort of level of assessment was expected from you?

Assessment is quite similar to Southampton, there are sometimes mid-semester tests or mocks and then an end of semester exam, there is regular homework but this amounts to very little.

How did the university system work in your city? Were there points that confused you/how did you resolve them?

The system is quite confusing – using the Guide Pédagogique you must take a majority of modules from LEA but you may also choose other modules, such as those from Langues Vivantes - to sign up to a course you must go to the secretary of each department, but in the first couple of weeks you may attend classes before subscribing so as to get an idea of what they are like, there is a lot of paperwork to fill in and it is quite daunting at first but stick at it and everything gets sorted out!

Was there sufficient pastoral support? Where could you find this?

Any course related questions will probably need to be answered by the secretary but there is an LEA Erasmus coordinator who also has an assistant – the assistant is very helpful and will answer general queries.

How did you integrate with other native students?

As above: in classes and tandems (there is a network called Spiral which allows you to apply online for tandems) but you can also sign up for sports (you can do a maximum of 5 for a small annual fee, but again there is a fair bit of admin!)