

Reflective Learning Diary of Study Abroad
Sorbonne Université, Paris, France
G107 Mathematics (MMath) with Study Abroad - 2025/26
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Contents

Motivation and Takeaways

Application:

- Learning Agreement/Modules
- Accommodation
- Visa and Phone Number
- Transport
- Application Timetable

Once you're there:

- Campus
- Food
- Classes
- Assessments, Exams, and Grades
- Sports and Societies
- Event dates
- Things I got up to/Recommendations.

Motivation and Takeaways

Since thinking about university, I have always wanted to do a year abroad. I have French nationality but have never lived in France, so I knew that that's where I wanted to apply. Out of the three cities, Paris was the clear choice for me, having spent multiple weeks here during the 2024 Olympics as a volunteer, and enjoying the experience so much.

Before moving here I was a bit apprehensive about how different the teaching would be, and also how difficult it would be to pick up French terms for concepts I have already encountered at Warwick. Another worry was the fact that I would be joining a year group in 3rd year, and how difficult it would be to make friends as a result. The teaching itself is similar to Warwick, with less lecture hours but more overall contact hours. As for the French vocabulary, I did not find it to be a problem at all, much of it is very similar. There would be the occasional definition where I would wonder what was being talked about until the lecturer recalled the definition and I made the connection to the English term. My biggest struggle was definitely with the amount of assessments we were given, especially knowing that I am on the G107 course where my year abroad counts towards my final degree grade.

Now that the academic side of my year abroad has ended, I have been able to enjoy exploring Paris. I would definitely recommend extending your stay into the summer to make the most of it after what will be an intense year.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to study at such another prestigious university and am very proud of myself for everything I have achieved this year, whether personally, academically, or through sport.

I would recommend doing a year abroad at Sorbonne Université, and Paris is a wonderful city.

Application

Learning Agreement / Modules

One of the documents that you need to fill in is called the Learning Agreement. This contains your module choices for Sorbonne, and is due at the end of May.

To choose your modules, I would recommend looking at this website:

https://www.licence.math.upmc.fr/offre_de_formation/parcours_monodisciplinaire/

As an L3 Erasmus student you have 3 options of classes you can take:

- Only L3 classes
- A combination of L2 and L3 classes
- A combination of L3 and M1 classes

I originally wanted to take a combination of L2, L3, and M1 classes but was informed that this is not possible.

This significantly delayed the completion of my Learning Agreement as I had to rethink my modules.

If you choose to follow the exact L3 (3rd year) course structure (found in the link above), which offers very little choice to Sorbonne students, then this is straightforward and you will not have any timetable clashes. I, however, was not interested in all of these topics, and wanted to take some L2 classes as well. The class timetable for Semester 1 is published very late, for me it was 31st August for L3 and 3rd September for L2. This was only a few days before the start of lectures on 8th September. This means that you don't have access to the timetable when submitting your module choices, and it is very likely that you will end up with clashes and will have to change some modules on arrival.

Accommodation

The deadline to apply for accommodation through Sorbonne (CROUS or CIUP) was at the end of June. Try to get your Learning Agreement sent in a while before its deadline as you need your acceptance letter from Sorbonne to be able to apply for accommodation. If your Learning Agreement is rejected, you want to give yourself enough time to choose new modules and get it signed off.

I chose to apply for a CROUS accommodation rather than the CIUP (Cité internationale universitaire de Paris) for a few reasons. There was a chance of being located more centrally with CROUS, all of the CROUS options were studios whereas CIUP were shared accommodations, CROUS was cheaper, and I was worried that people in the latter would resort to speaking English, whereas I wanted to speak French. I was very lucky to get a CROUS studio in the 12th arrondissement. The confirmation came through on 3rd July. They do not have enough accommodation for all Erasmus students so you may have to source your own accommodation.

On arrival I was given a choice between a smaller or larger studio. I chose the smaller (14.5m²) as the rent was proportional to the room size, and it was plenty.

I sorted the insurance for my accommodation in mid-August through La MAE.

Unfortunately, I believe that from 1st July 2026 onwards, the only non-EU students who are eligible for the APL (Aides Personnelles au Logement) are those fitting the low-income criteria. These are government housing benefits distributed by the CAF (Caisse d'Allocations Familiales) which help multiple people including students reduce their monthly rent. I was already lucky to have a cheap accommodation (372 €/month) and on top of this the government paid 122 € of my rent directly to the CROUS every month! Definitely look into whether you will be eligible for the APL as it makes a huge difference.

Visa and Phone Number

I have French nationality so cannot give any sort of insight into visas and insurance. The process was relatively straightforward for me, the only extra document I sorted out on arrival, which took a bit of time, was to obtain my Carte Vitale for health insurance.

Something to note is that I decided not to get a French phone number. I have a good contract which lets me use my data abroad in the exact same way as when I'm in the UK. Using my roaming meant that I could switch which French network provider I was connected to whenever I wanted. This is great when service for certain providers is patchier in some areas

Transport

I would highly recommend getting the Passe Navigo imagine R. This costs 401,30 € for the year and gives unlimited travel across the Île-de-France region which corresponds to the Paris zones 1-5. This means that both Paris CDG and Orly airports are included, whereas a single ticket costs a special fare of 14 €.

Apply for the pass as soon as you have all the necessary documents so that you can start using it when you move in. Once the application is accepted, they have 10 working days to send you the card. If they don't by the 11th day, you can go to a physical office to claim it directly. The main thing slowing down my application was that I only found out my studio number on the day that I moved in, and this was required as part of my address so that they could put it in the correct letter box.

You also need to submit a certificat de scolarité, carte étudiante, or certificat d'inscription, to prove that you are a student. You will receive your physical certificats de scolarité and carte étudiante during the first week on campus. To apply earlier, I think I sent my acceptance letter as proof and this was accepted. You can also view your certificat de scolarité online:

<https://mondossierweb.paris-sorbonne.fr/mondossierweb/>

My accommodation was not located on a direct metro or bus line to campus. This meant that taking public transport would take 25 minutes, and walking would also take 25 minutes. I love to cycle so I bought an old bike at a bike sale when I arrived. This gave me the fastest possible commuting time of 10 minutes. Many people cycle to campus and there are many cycle paths and bike racks in Paris.

Application Timeline

Here was my application timeline to give you a rough idea:

- 31 May - Sorbonne online application process deadline (Learning Agreement, transcript, cover letter, CV)
- 27 June - Deadline to apply for accommodation through Sorbonne (CROUS or Cité U)
- 3 July - Accommodation confirmed
- 3 July - Erasmus application approved (late due to issues with Learning Agreement)
- 18 August - Accommodation insured
- 31 August - L3 timetable published
- 1 September - Move in
- 3 September - L2 timetable published
- 4 September - Erasmus welcome on campus
- 8 September - Lectures start

Once you're there

Campus

For maths, you will be located on the science campus located at 4 Place Jussieu in the 5th arrondissement of Paris.

The science campus is referred to as "Jussieu" or "Campus Pierre et Marie Curie". It used to be part of L'université Pierre-et-Marie-Curie, also known as UPMC or Paris VI which taught science and medicine. On

1st January 2018, they merged with l'université Paris IV which is the faculté des Lettres of Sorbonne Université (the “famous” Sorbonne), to form the 3 faculties of a new entity “Sorbonne Université”. The naming convention of Paris universities is quite confusing, with 4 universities using the name Sorbonne: Sorbonne Université, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord.

There are 2 entrances to the campus. If you travel by metro then you will arrive at the station Jussieu on the 7 and 10 metro lines which drops you off right in front of the main entrance on the south side. There is also an entrance on the north side of campus along the Seine. As I was cycling and coming from the north, this was much quicker for me.

Food

For lunch, I highly recommend the CROUS canteen on campus. I ate here every day as a 3 course meal only costs 3,30€. Since May 2026, the meals now only cost 1€ for all students, so it's even more worth it. There are multiple different meal options every day. You will see 2 queues forming outside the building. The left queue is for the “pôle viande” and the right queue is for the pôles “pizza, végétarien, poisson”. Every day the right queue has 1 or 2 pizza options and vegetarian options. There is a hidden queue on the right once you step inside the building. This takes you to the downstairs canteen for the “pôle grillade”. Every day they serve a meat with a side of chips as the main dish. Also, for one day a week, they only serve vegetarian options in all of the pôles.

If you want a change from the canteen food, I would also recommend La Clap which is right outside of campus and serves cheap burgers and chips. After sports clubs in the evening, my team and I would very often eat at one of the fast food places outside of campus (Five Pizza, OBTB, Restaurant Istanbul). There is a lovely restaurant just down the street called L'Arbre à Cannelle which I loved for galettes and crêpes.

Classes

If you take a standard workload of 60 credits for the year (1 European credit = 2 Warwick credits), then you have 30 credits per semester. A standard module is worth 6 credits so you will have 5 a term. You may also find some 3-credit modules.

There are 3 types of classes you will encounter:

- CM (Cours Magistral) = lecture
- TD (Travaux Dirigés) = problem classes
- TP (Travaux Pratiques) = labs

The workload for Semestre 1 is typically split up in the following way for each module per week:

- One 2h CM (typically without break)
- Two 1h30 TDs

Each module therefore has 5 contact hours a week, so be prepared for your timetable to be significantly fuller than at Warwick, with 25 hours a week.

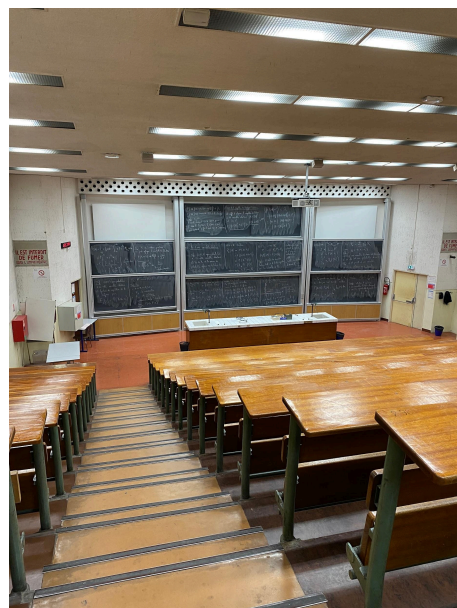


In Semestre 2, the L3 TDs last 1h45.

No CM, TD, or TP is recorded so I highly recommend attending. Out of the nine standard 6-credits modules I took, they all provided lecture notes, however, for two of them, I preferred to take my own notes as either the lecture notes contained a lot more information than the lectures, or the lectures didn't follow the order of the notes.

The lectures are very similar in style to those at Warwick, with lecturers writing on blackboards in large lecture theatres.

When you arrive in September you will have to resubmit your module choices in an email to the year-abroad coordinator. Here you will be able to see the timetable to make your choices. If it is a large module, then you will be able to pick between 2 different lecture slots (A or B), and many different TD classes (usually 5 to 8 different options). This is quite useful as you are able to personalise your timetable whereas Sorbonne students are just given their classes. If you have chosen L2 and L3 or L3 and M1 modules then you will probably find that timetable clashes actually narrow down your class options to 1 or 2 possibilities anyway (you don't want clashes). I would recommend drawing out multiple timetables with all the different options as soon as timetables are released to try and figure out your best combo early on.



Picking your own TD class also means that if you don't particularly like your teacher or the way they choose to run the TD, you can simply just send an email and change group. The one downside to picking and choosing your own classes is that everyone else in a TD class is always together. So for example, in the TD 8 class, those 30 students are together for all the TDs of their 5 modules. If you have a different TD group for every module, then you do end up being a bit of an outsider that sees this specific group of people only twice a week. For this reason I found it hard to make friends with the people in my classes. I'd therefore suggest that if you have the choice between two TD groups, to pick the one that you already have a class with for another module. Having said that, I think it's more important to prioritise having a good timetable with no clashes than trying to stay with the same group.

TDs consist of classes of 20-30 students. About every 2 weeks a new problem sheet will be released on the moodle page for each module. Different teachers (chargé de TD) will have slightly different approaches, but the large majority of them use the TD time to write the answers to the problem sheets on the board. By the end of the semester these felt like they dragged on quite a bit as it was always just 1h30 of writing to copy down the answers (and 1h45 in Semestre 2!). I do recommend pushing through and attending the TDs to get the solutions, as the large majority of lecturers do not give out the corrections on moodle.

I took the UL3MA201 Projet module which ran in the second semester. Sorbonne L3 students received info about the project in December, which I did not receive. They got told the title of the different project options, and had to submit their top 4 choices. When the start of Semestre 2 came around in January and I had to resubmit my modules for the term, I was told that the Projet module was at max capacity and that I couldn't take it! However, I advocated for myself, saying that I had made this choice since submitting my Learning Agreement in May, and they managed to find me a space.

Assessments, Exams, and Grades

The assessment system at Sorbonne is quite different to Warwick's. There is no time to fall behind on content, you have to stay on it and I personally found it quite intense as someone who was quite used to Warwick's system.

There are 3 types of assessment:

- CC (contrôle continu) = in-class test during a TD
- Partiel = midterm in a lecture theatre
- Examen = final exam in a lecture theatre

Here is a rough structure of the academic year for most modules:

Start of September - Semestre 1 starts

First week of October - CC 1

Last week of October - 1 week off to study

First week of November - 1 week of midterms

First week of December - CC 2

End of December/Start of January - 2 weeks off to study

First two weeks of January - 2 weeks of final exams

Third week of January - Semestre 2 starts

Second week of February - CC 1

First week of March - 1 week off to study

Second week of March - 1 week of midterms

Second week of April - CC 2

Last two weeks of April - 2 weeks off to study

First two weeks of May - 2 weeks of just TDs and TPs

Last two weeks of May - 2 weeks of final exams

Last two weeks of June - 2 weeks of resits (Semestre 1 and 2) if necessary

In red I have highlighted the assessment periods. There are a lot, you will have some form of assessment every month.

Additionally, the breaks are much fewer and much shorter than at Warwick, and during each break, you will need to use that time to revise for an assessment the following week. There are a total of 6 weeks off between the start of September and the end of May.

CC: CC 1 and 2 are each out of 10 to give a total score out of 20

P: Partiels are out of 30

F: Examens finals are out of 50

Your final grade for a module is calculated from 2 "règles du max":

Written grade, $E = \max(F+P, 8F/5)$ out of 80

Final grade, $N = \max(E+CC, 10E/8)$ out of 100

Essentially this means that your final exam grade always counts. Then if your midterm grade was better they will count it, and if your in-class tests were better then they will count. They are only counted if they improve your grade. This is a nice system as it removed a bit of the pressure if ever one of the smaller tests didn't go as well since you could always completely overrule that with a better final exam result.

Another strange thing is the distribution of grades. To pass a module you must get 50/100. However, the averages for modules in France tend to also be around this grade. For example, in four of my modules the averages were: 55, 44, 57, 53. This means a very large proportion of the cohort actually fails each module.

Sports and societies

We are very lucky in Warwick to have such a large number and range of societies and sports clubs to join. It is a bit different at Sorbonne.

Sports activities are offered by the Département des Activités Physiques et Sportives (DAPS) which is shared by all Sorbonne faculties and is conveniently located on the Jussieu campus! You may also see the acronym, Association Sportive de Sorbonne Université Sciences Ingénierie et Médecine (ASSUSIM).

The DAPS offers around 50 different sports at various different skill levels. 30 of these sports offer the chance to compete.

At Warwick I have been a part of the Warwick Devils cheerleading competition teams, so one of the first things I looked into when finding out that I could apply to Sorbonne was whether or not they had a competitive cheer team! I made the team and we competed at 4 different competitions throughout the year (2 of which we won!!). I thoroughly enjoyed my year as part of this team, and it really shaped my year abroad experience. All of the friends I made were through this as I found it hard to connect with people on my course. Without a sports team my year would have been incredibly isolating so I highly recommend joining a sports club!

Unlike the sports clubs, societies here are really lacking. I would recommend checking out some of Parismus' (Paris-Erasmus) events. They do cheap student nights out in bars, walking tours around the city, museum trips, and national and European trips. I mostly went to their nights out but wish I had made more of an effort to go on the walking tours. You could also check out the two BDEs (Bureau des Étudiants) présent on campus. These organisations are present in almost all French universities and organise nights out, galas, outings, etc. One of my regrets is not checking these out enough as I think it would have been a good place to meet people and make friends at the start of the year!

If you enjoy running and Parkrun in the UK, I suggest checking out the unofficial Parkrun event called "Le Parcrun" organised every Saturday at 9:00 in the Bois de Boulogne. They are a very lovely group of people and always get a hot drink and pastries after the run!

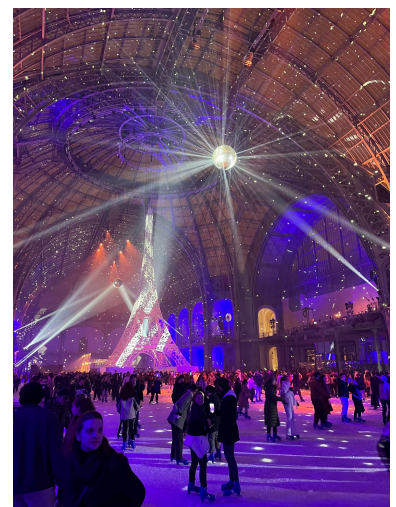
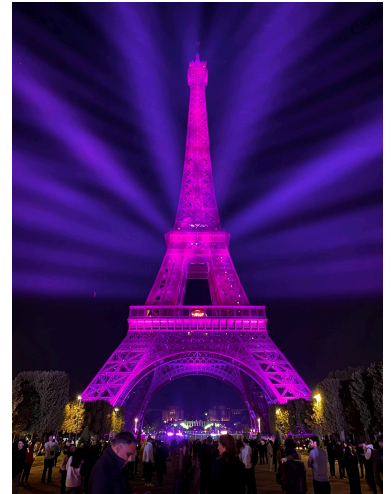
Event dates

Early September: the structures allowing people to swim in the Seine were kept for an extra month.

20/21st September: Journées Européennes du Patrimoine. Many museums, monuments, and government buildings open their doors for free. One that I visited was the Palais du Luxembourg/Sénat. I highly recommend visiting the buildings which are usually shut to the public such as this one.

30th September: Eiffel Tower lights up in pink to mark the start of Octobre Rose, the breast cancer awareness campaign.

Mid November: Start of the Christmas markets.



Mid December-Early January: Le Grand Palais des Glaces. The inside of the grand Palais turns into the largest indoor ice skating rink in the world! I highly recommend this, the decorations and lights were beautiful! I suggest going in the evening when there is a DJ, but book early!

Late March: Go see the largest cherry blossom in Paris in full bloom in the Jardin de Plantes.

Mid April: Watch the Paris marathon

Mid May: Bal de l'amour. Open-air celebration of LGBTQ+ love.

Mid May: Eurovision screening at Place de La Bastille.

Early June: sign up for and go collect your Pass Jeunes. It is a booklet of vouchers giving you free access to many things to do in Paris from June to September.

Early June: Nuit Blanche. Many art installations and museums open throughout the evening until around 2:00.

Mid June: Fête de La Musique. Organised music and concerts in the streets

End of June: Paris Pride. Unfortunately pride was cancelled this year due to the record-breaking heatwave in Paris.

Things I got up to/Recommendations

Monuments/buildings:

Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, Palais du Luxembourg, Top of the Arc de Triomphe, Petit Palais, Sainte Chapelle, Sacré-Cœur, Monnaie de Paris, Panthéon, Tour Montparnasse (now closed for renovations), Palais Garnier, Bourse de Commerce, Château de Vincennes

Parks:

Jardin des plantes, Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, Parc de Bagatelle, Jardin du Luxembourg, La Coulée Verte, Lac Daumesnil

Theatre/shows/cinema:

Comedy show at Le Point Virgule, Film at Le Grande Rex (Salle Le Grand Large), Show at Théâtre du Lido, Ballet at the Opéra Bastille

Study spaces:

Salle Ovale Bibliothèque Richelieu, Hubsy Coworking Cafés, Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand

Extra:

Rock climbing in an ancient church at Climbing District Saint-Lazare

