

Note on the non-degree mobility at Sorbonne Law School

The Sorbonne Law School includes since 2009 all Law departments of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne university: undergraduate department, Public Law department, Private Law department, International, European and Comparative Law department; Economic and Social Administration Institute: <http://www.univ-paris1.fr/ufr/eds/>

14 000 students are enrolled at Sorbonne Law that also counts 1 100 PhD students, 180 full time Professors and the following 3 labs :

IRJS: <http://irjs.univ-paris1.fr/>

IREDIÉS: <https://www.univ-paris1.fr/unites-de-recherche/iredies/>

ISPJS: <https://www.univ-paris1.fr/unites-de-recherche/isjps/>

Sorbonne Law also counts 45 annual visiting scholars, 300 non-degree exchange students, 600 students enrolled in double degree programs, 60 Erasmus and 65 international bilateral agreements.

Outgoing students

Each incoming and outgoing non-degree exchange student needs to have its learning agreement signed by a Sorbonne Law Professor acting as a coordinator (there is one for each department of specialty). You may access the coordinators' working hours by clicking [here](#).

The Office of the four coordinators is in the Pantheon Center (Department of External Relation Office 311B) where the administration for non-degree mobility contact: dre.eds@univ-paris1.fr works from Monday to Friday (9:30am – 5.30pm). The coordinators oversee the selection the outgoing students and then, later on, of signing a final learning agreement which must also be approved by the host institution.

Selection of the outgoing students is based on grade point average for the last 3 years, proficiency in the required language and the student's motivation. During this selection, performed exclusively by coordinators, language skills are looked at carefully. After selection, the coordinators from Sorbonne Law generally insist that the choice and number of courses at the host institution have a close connection to courses that would

have been taken at Paris1 (the student must prove that connection before selection). After signing the learning agreement, the coordinator remains in contact with the student abroad in order, for instance, to decide whether to accept or refuse the changes made to the original agreement (in terms of chosen courses) or the demand to stay an extra semester (with the consent of the host institution). In the end, when Sorbonne law receives the grades from abroad, it is the coordinators duty to translate the foreign grades into French grades (on a scale to 0-20).

The possibility to extend the stay is a current request, either coming from the students we host, or from those we send abroad. We generally decline such requests from Sorbonne law's outgoing students, unless it is seriously motivated, and the host institution is offering equivalent courses over the two semesters. Sorbonne law usually accepts requests to host incoming students for another semester if the sending institution is willing to provide reciprocal treatment.

Incoming students

The coordinators take care of incoming students that are to be welcomed, oriented and advised, one by one. They vividly recommend the students to enroll in the orientation program (welcoming week's contact for registration: international-welcome@univ-paris1.fr). They will advise the student and help complete the learning agreement according to the requirements: up to 30 credits ECTS per semester, which in general includes 3 to 5 legal courses (4 credits each), with or without corresponding seminars (4 credits each), and 1 introduction to French law and methodology seminar (2 credits with a grade) taught during the welcoming week before the semester starts.

The coordinators generally serve as a liaison between students and Professors, but also between students and administrative staff working for the different law departments. Coordinators do not collect students' grades, nor are they responsible for sending their transcripts. This task remains exclusively in the hands of the administration (Department of external relations, OFFICE 311 B in the Pantheon Center, 3rd Floor, Cujas Aisle. Contact: dre.eds@univ-paris1.fr). The exams usually take place before the end of the semester (January and May).

1. Orientation week

Each semester, the Sorbonne's External Relations Department organizes an integration week. This is held during the week before classes begin. Enrolled students can attend French language classes and get 2 ECTS credits during this integration week. During this week, students may attend a welcome meeting set up by the Paris 1 International Relations Service and an information meeting organized by the External Relations Department. The latter will provide students with all the information they need about the courses' enrolment process.

2. Methodology course

The Methodology course during the orientation week aims at introducing the French legal system, with its unique features, to the incoming exchange students. During that course students are given the tools to understand the types of assignments they will be given and to familiarize with the main types of exercises they will have to deal with in the seminars. This recommended course about legal methods, given before the semester starts, counts for 2 credits: it represents 8 hours and is graded. The course is named “Introduction to French law”. This introductory course and the complementary language course given during the orientation week (French for foreigners) remain a necessity for students who are not fluent and who want to have access to seminars (“travaux dirigés”).

3. Available courses

The list of courses open to incoming exchange student is [online](#) and updated. It shows the available courses during both semesters with the corresponding credits. It is not current in French universities for the Professors to provide a syllabus for their course. Therefore, few of them will be found online or made available during the semester. But the Professors will provide all necessary information to the students directly and during class.

Teaching materials at the university of Paris 1 are organized by each Professor to suit the class format and the purpose they serve. The lectures serve to give the students a large overview of the subject. The students rely primarily on the lectures note presented by the Professor and on a bibliography of recommended readings, Professors present or hand out at the beginning of each semester. During semester, professors may refer to certain articles or books that students are encouraged to research and read in addition to their regular work. Other materials may also be found on the EPI (students interactive blackboard) where some professors provide additional course notes or make their lectures available via podcast.

4. Seminars

Students may attend certain listed seminars: the work and assignments help the student to get a better understanding of the large lecture corresponding to the seminars. They will be asked to work on case studies or essays, read many decisions, and prepare each seminar, every week. Although seminars attendance is mandatory, the student must primarily rely on the lecture notes presented in class by the Professor in preparation for their final exam. The workload is important but the teacher in charge of the seminar is asked to grade the student considering that the student is part of an exchange program. A grade for a law course + seminar counts for 8 credits instead of 4 credits. The credits are specific to the non-degree exchange programs (including Erasmus).

5. Workload

Students must discipline themselves from the start. Non-degree students will only have to take the mid-exams (“partiels”) if they are enrolled in a seminar (which is not mandatory). The “cours magistraux” (lectures) don’t require any reading before class, students are invited to listen to the teachers and take notes (they can be up to 300 students into the lecture hall). Although attendance isn’t mandatory, the “travaux dirigés” (small section class) help to focus on certain key aspects of the “cours magistraux”. A booklet with materials considered to be essential will be handed to each student. The booklet is generally organized in two sections corresponding to chapters of the lecture (“cours magistral”). Each section includes the assignment (cases studies, questions or suggested essay topics or case commentary) and the work to be prepared by the student prior to each session. For some of these assignments (such as oral presentations) students are recommended to make additional research at Cujas (university law library), where its comprehensive online catalogue allow students to access online legal periodicals.

During their semester at the Sorbonne law School, non-degree students may also elect to enroll in listed lectures given by our visiting scholars (1 credit per lecture, up to 8 credits maximum). Students enrolled in these lectures may improve their academic results and get a chance to study in foreign languages (mainly in English).

The small section teachers (chargé de “travaux dirigés”) are usually junior Professors or carefully chosen students in their last year of doctoral thesis. The materials will be debated during the seminars and homework is systematically assigned for those small section classes, not all “cours magistraux”. Not all “cours magistraux” have a seminar. As far as non-degree students are concerned, the list of classes (with or without) seminars is provided online.

Classes without seminars only have a final examination at the end of the semester.

6. Interactive educational platform

The External Relations Department has created in 2020, a dedicated interactive educational platform for the Sorbonne Law School’s incoming exchange students. It’s called “[*Pôle des Relations Extérieures EDS*](#)”.

It provides our exchange students with all the required information relating to their mobility, such the coordinators’ duty hours, the legal methodology courses of the integration week, the guide for international students, the courses’ schedule, the websites where they can attend online legal conferences, learning agreement, ect...

It is regularly upadtaed by both the administrative team and the coordinators.

7. Grading system

The translation of the grades is one of the most recurrent issues common to all universities. Because of the lack of official specific tools to help with fair translations, we use a common frame of reference (European grading scales).

The Sorbonne Law School does not rank students and doesn't have an official document to provide. At Paris 1 and in the Law field, most students graduate with a final result between 10 and 12, but grading for exchange and LLM students tends to be more generous.

In France, grades are given on a scale of 0 to 20, 20 being the highest grade, an equivalent to Excellent (E) or A+. Hence, a 18 is reserved for the truly exceptional students, and grades typically range from 8 to 15, 15 being in itself a remarkable achievement. Moreover, the French grading system has three levels of honors. At the University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, their grade equivalents are as follows:

Mention Très Bien (summa cum laude) starts at a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 16 out of 20.

Mention Bien (magna cum laude) starts at a GPA of 14 out of 20.

Mention Assez-Bien (cum laude) which starts at a GPA of 12 out of 20.

Students at the University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne may need a higher GPA to obtain the same level of honors as a student at some other French or Foreign universities. This difference should be kept in mind especially when evaluating the transcripts of Sorbonne Law students.

Moreover, professors at the Sorbonne Law school have a strict grading approach. They generally grade most students at 13 or below, and rarely give grades higher than a 15. This demanding grading approach reflects the faculty's high academic standards, as well as its commitment to the University's prestige. Hence, maintaining a high GPA at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne is much harder than at most other universities. Aware of this idiosyncrasy, French employers hire students from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne even though their GPA is several points below that of their colleagues at other French universities.

Students across French universities should be compared based on their honors and their ranking within their class. A Mention Très Bien (summa cum laude) presents a truly exceptional achievement, a seldom occurrence in the University of Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne). Therefore, the top 2 to 3 % of a class typically obtain the Mention Bien (magna cum laude). In certain years, as much as the top 5 % of a class have the Mention Bien. Hence, students who have obtained a Mention Bien (magna cum laude) in an academic year should be considered excellent. The top 10 % thus attain the Mention Assez-Bien, a commendable achievement.

Further, a GPA of 12 or above ranks a student among the top 20 to 25 % of their class. Students having a GPA between 12 and 13 are thus serious, meticulous, and very good students. Almost half of our Law students maintain a GPA between 10 and 12. The GPA of the rest is below the average passing grade of 10. These percentages may slightly vary depending on whether the grades were received in the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth year of Law School. In an LLM program, higher grades are usually easier to obtain since professors assume that students have mastered their studies in their home countries and have not yet learned French legal methods. Thus, they grade less rigorously for any methodological or language mistakes and focus on whether the student has displayed a proficient level of substantive knowledge.

8. Exams calendar

Early exams are a common request on the part of students. However, no early examination can be given except if the student's sending institution has raised the issue before arrival of the student. Sorbonne Law will ask the sending institution to provide a compelling explanation before arrival of the student. The examination period is given in our academic calendar.

The French academic calendar runs from the first week of September to mid-January, and then from the end of January through mid-June. Students usually take finals around mid-December or early in January (semester 1) and early in May (second semester) if students fail, they retake the same finals in June.

Incoming exchange students have the possibility to ask the teachers of the courses in which they are enrolled to plan for them a derogatory examination. It consists in an oral examination instead of a written one. The teacher may accept or refuse to grant this request.

9. ECTS

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a tool which enables students to collect credits for learning achieved through higher education. ECTS credits are based on the workload students need to achieve expected learning outcomes.

At Paris I Panthéon--Sorbonne University, all our marks are out of 20. For information, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne stands amongst one the most difficult grading systems in France. It is important to notice that a 10/20 is a good grade, and that it stands for the passing grade.

The credit part refers to the number of European credits the course provides. It is based on the 30 credits per semester system that French students must pass to validate one semester. It does not refer to the number of hours taken for one course.

One class of 20 hours assesses 8 credits: therefore 1 credit in a typical classroom involves 2 hours 30 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instructions. The Sorbonne Law system involves accomplishing 60 credits throughout the year. Besides each student must have a learning agreement signed by 3 parties (Home Institution, host institution, student); it details the list of courses the students are taking for both semesters. In general, the class meets 3 times per week at the minimum, and each class lasts at least 120 minutes (2 hours). The classes begin in September and end around mid-March at the latest.

Each course has an exam which is either written (3 hours) or oral (30 minutes of preparation and 30 minutes interview), and the grade for each class takes in consideration class preparation and participation.

10. Transcripts of records

The transcripts of records will be sent by email to every incoming exchange student by the administrative team of the External Relations Department. It may also be sent to the home university following student request.