A Study Abroad Survival Guide
University of Rhode Island
French International Engineering Program

Composed December 2016
by Angela Reisch

Any questions about the content of this survival guide can be directed to:
Professor Lars Erickson
Advisor of the FIEP
lars@uri.edu
Table of Contents

Part 1: Junior Year and the Departure Preparation .......................................................... 4
  Scholarships ................................................................................................................... 4
  Paperwork ..................................................................................................................... 4
  Passport ....................................................................................................................... 4
  Applying to UTC .......................................................................................................... 4
  Visa .............................................................................................................................. 4
  URI Office of International Education ......................................................................... 5
Choosing Classes ............................................................................................................. 6
Housing .......................................................................................................................... 7
Packing ............................................................................................................................ 7

Part 2: Semester at UTC .................................................................................................... 8
Getting to UTC ............................................................................................................... 8
The Buddy Program – ESN ........................................................................................... 8
Compiègne – Getting to Know la Ville ........................................................................... 8
The Pic’asso .................................................................................................................... 10
Summer Immersion Course ......................................................................................... 10
UTC Buildings and Class Registration ...................................................................... 10
Phone Plans .................................................................................................................. 11
Bank Accounts ............................................................................................................. 11
OFII Visa Paperwork ..................................................................................................... 12
If You Get Sick ............................................................................................................... 12
Course Transfers .......................................................................................................... 12
Travel ............................................................................................................................. 12
  Trains .......................................................................................................................... 12
  Planes ......................................................................................................................... 12
  Buses .......................................................................................................................... 13
  BlaBla Car .................................................................................................................. 13
  Luggage ...................................................................................................................... 13
Maps ............................................................................................................................... 13
Visiting Paris .................................................................................................................. 13
Inter-semester Week ...................................................................................................... 13

Part 3: Internship Semester ............................................................................................ 14
Finding an Internship ..................................................................................................... 14
Part 1: Junior Year and the Departure Preparation

Scholarships
Some scholarships to make a note of:

- **Beatrice S. Demers Foreign Language Fellows Program:** Rhode Island residents and anyone who is a student at a Rhode Island college or university who wishes to pursue foreign language study. Preference will be given to applicants from the University of Rhode Island who meet qualifications. Deadline: January of the year before you go abroad. Includes 2 letters of recommendation.

- **Benjamin A Gilman Scholarship:** The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program provides awards for U.S. undergraduate students who are receiving Federal Pell Grant funding at a two-year or four-year college or university to participate in study abroad programs worldwide. Awards from $3,000 to $5,000.

Make sure to occasionally check the OIE scholarship website (http://www.uri.edu/international/scholarships.html) and the IEP specific scholarship website (http://www.uri.edu/iep/scholarships.html) as there are very often new scholarships posted for which you all could be eligible.

Paperwork

**Passport**
You will need a **valid passport**. Consult [http://travel.state.gov/passport/](http://travel.state.gov/passport/) for application information. Current cost is $110. If you already have a passport be aware that it must be valid for at least three months after the last day of your stay in France. This should be completed during winter break or earlier as it can take several months for all of the paperwork to be processed and for you to receive your passport. You must have a valid passport to bring to the Consulate in order to obtain your visas.

**Applying to UTC**
The application to UTC is due to your FIEP advisor at the beginning of **February** and includes a one page application, a copy of your resume/CV in French, and a list of potential courses that you plan to take. The courses you list on your application do not necessarily need to be the courses that you will definitively take at UTC, but it is a good idea to consult the course catalog since you will need to complete your prior approval form soon after.

**Visa**
Study in France for a period over three months requires a **visa**. Read carefully the pages at the site of the French Consulate in Boston: [http://www.consulfrance-boston.org/spip.php?article2293](http://www.consulfrance-boston.org/spip.php?article2293)

Note that the required first step is registration with CampusFrance. Begin the process AT LEAST two months prior to your departure. You must have your passport in hand and go in **person** to submit your visa application. If you are planning on doing both the semester of study and the six-month internship, you must apply for the “Studies for more than 6 months” visa.
Note that even with the internship part, your whole stay is considered studies because the internship is a required part of your studies and your internship stipend is not considered salary. Current fee is $134.

URI Office of International Education

Outlined below are the different tasks you must complete, however you can also view all of this information and the submission deadlines at http://www.uri.edu/international/studyabroad/paperwork.html

**Note! If documentation listed below is not submitted to the URI Office of International Education by the deadlines, students may not be enrolled for their study abroad program.**

1. **Submit a copy of your admission letter.** Participants should always retain originals.

2. **Complete the Office of International Education Abroad Prior Approval Form:** The Education Abroad Prior Approval Form assures students that they will receive transfer credit upon successful completion of an approved study abroad and/or exchange program.

   Students enrolled in the IEP must submit two Prior Approval Forms. One form containing their engineering courses approved and signed by the Dean of the College of Engineering and one containing their general electives and language courses approved and signed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

3. **Pay the URI Off-Campus Registration Fee:** The Off-Campus Registration (OCS999) Fee is used to register students while on study abroad. This non-refundable fee maintains your matriculation as a full-time student at URI. In addition, it allows you to qualify for financial aid and maintain health insurance coverage during your program abroad, as well as to transfer the credits earned abroad back to URI.

   **OCS 999 Instructions**
   - Make checks payable to URI. Be sure to include your name and URI ID number on the memo line of the check ($483 per semester/$255 summer or J-Term - subject to change).
   - Bring the OCS Fee to the Office of International Education. This fee will be submitted to Enrollment Services once the Prior-Approval Form has been completed.

4. **Proof of enrollment in a Travel Medical Evacuation and Repatriation Plan:** The University of Rhode Island requires that Education Abroad participants obtain medical evacuation and repatriation insurance for the duration of the overseas program. You will
be expected to enroll in the URI authorized Travel Medical Evacuation and Repatriation Plan if your program provider does not provide travel medical evacuation and repatriation coverage that complies with the URI Office of Risk Management’s regulations. Participants uncertain if their program provider automatically enrolls them in a plan should consult their URI Education Abroad Advisor. The cost is approximately $500 for the URI plan.

Learn more about the HTH Worldwide Insurance Services coverage, estimated costs, and find a link to the self-enrollment portal via the URI Office of Risk Management's International Travel Insurance page (http://web.uri.edu/riskmanagement/international-travel-insurance/).

A copy of the study abroad participant's ID card or certificate letter from the insurance company must be submitted to the Office of International Education. Documents presented should include the participant's name and list policy coverage dates that demonstrates enrollment and coverage for the duration of the education abroad program.

5. Financial Aid: If using Financial Aid bring the completed form(s) below and along with a copy of a brochure and/or acceptance letter from the study abroad program, which itemizes the costs of the program as well as indicate the start and end dates of the program bring it to Enrollment Services-Financial Aid in Green Hall.

Choosing Classes

Courses at UTC are called UVs. A sample of the course catalog can be found at https://www.utc.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/SITE-UTC/documents/Documentations/CatalogueUV_Inge_2015-2016_web.pdf.

Trone Commun refers to the first two years of general studies that students at UTC take. After that, the courses are broken down by engineering major. TSH courses are general education classes. When you are looking at a course description, one important aspect is the “Niveau conseillé.” This refers to which semester students should be in in order to take the class. They will be listed as GX04 for example, where X is the type of engineering, and the number is the semester. You should take classes that are either GX03, GX04, or GX05. On the left next to the course description, it states which semester the course is offered, and how many hours per week. C stands for “course” and this represents a time when all students taking this course will meet. TD stands for “travaux dirigés” which is kind of like a recitation. TP stands for “travaux pratiques” and represents a lab time. Depending on the class size, there will be multiple TD and TP sections throughout the week. Most engineering labs run on a biweekly basis (half the class conducts the lab on week A, the other half on week B). Also, most labs are conducted in groups. I recommend taking a class with a lab since the group work will be easier with the help of French students who are familiar with the program.
If you are trying to choose your classes based on the schedule to make sure they do not occur at the same time, you can consult the “emploi du temps.” Here is an example from the Fall 2016 semester [http://wwwetu.utc.fr/info/edt/A16/](http://wwwetu.utc.fr/info/edt/A16/). You can consult this document before you complete your prior approval form, but it is not guaranteed that the classes will run on the same schedule as the previous year. (Although it does often happen). On the sheet, there will be the same course number listed multiple times, but followed by different letters based on whether it is a Course, TD, or TP. The C represents any time that you definitely will have to attend the class. Unfortunately you do not get a choice which TD or TP section you will end up in.

You can also search for an updated “calendrier universitaire” to find out when the semester starts and when the holidays are.

Once you arrive at UTC and have access to your UTC online account, you can consult [https://assos.utc.fr/uvweb/](https://assos.utc.fr/uvweb/) to read student reviews of each course.

If you do not need a specific engineering course in order to graduate, you might consider taking a unique class offered at UTC and transferring it as an independent study credit.

**Housing**

One option for housing is to live in one of the dorms or résidence universitaire which are part of the CROUS. This is a government organization that provides affordable housing for students. You will probably receive the housing application from a UTC representative around the beginning of June, which is very late, but do not worry. After you complete the application and send it back with your deposit, you probably will not hear back from the office or receive any sort of confirmation before your arrival. The recommended residences are either Residence Roberval or Residence du Parc. Residence Roberval is in a more convenient location near the main UTC building and the centre ville. It includes a single room, a private bathroom, a mini fridge, and shared kitchens with ovens, microwaves, and stoves. Residence du Parc is located near the other UTC building Pierre Guillaumat, which is about a 10-15 minute bus ride from the centre ville and main UTC building. Residence du Parc has singles rooms that include a private bathroom, a mini fridge, a sink, and a stove top (no oven). These rooms are also bigger than the rooms in Roberval. Each dorm has a laundry room. If you are living in a CROUS residence, you must move in on a **weekday before 4 pm**, since the office is not open on the weekends and you will not be able to check in.

Another option for housing is to find your own accommodations. If you would like to find a shared apartment, there is a Facebook group where UTC students post openings and look for roommates [https://www.facebook.com/groups/hometu.compi/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/hometu.compi/). You can also look on [www.leboncoin.fr](http://www.leboncoin.fr), which is like the French version of craigslist.

**Packing**

A few things that you might not consider to keep in mind while packing:
• An Ethernet cord – there is no wifi in the CROUS residences. Even if you plan to buy a wifi adapter, it is good to have the cord for when you first arrive. (You will not be able to access the internet until you receive your UTC account to log in).
• A pocket French/English dictionary, if you have one – you will be allowed to use one during your exams, but not electronic versions
• Presents – this definitely isn’t necessary, but a great tip. When you meet people and they have birthdays/parties, having something small to give them from the US can be a cool gift.

Part 2: Semester at UTC

Getting to UTC

Taxi
As part of the foreign student information provided by UTC is the name of a taxi driver that you can arrange to pick you up at the airport at a specific time. He charges a flat rate of 80€ to drive from Charles de Gaulle airport to Compiègne. The ride takes about 50 minutes. While this option is more expensive, it is the easiest.

Train
The first step is to take the metro to the Gare de Nord train station. The line is called the “RER B” and is represented by a blue color on the map. This line goes to Gare du Nord without having to change lines, and costs 10€. Once at Gare du Nord, you must buy a ticket for Compiègne (approximately 15€). Follow the signs for the “Grandes Lignes.” You probably won’t see Compiègne on the “Departing Trains” boards in the station since it is not usually the last stop. The ticket purchase can be done at one of the yellow ticket machines (the blue ones are for the metro) or at a ticket window. If you do not see any ticket windows, try taking the escalators up to floor 0. The underground area can be a bit confusing since there are so many metro lines, and it is easier to get your bearings on the main floor where you can see all of the train lines. Once the train arrives you can board and wait for the departure. Once you arrive in Compiègne, you can take a taxi to your residence. The train station is on the opposite side of the river, and is a bit far to walk with your luggage.

The Buddy Program – ESN
One of the student organizations at UTC is called Esperanto. This group plans activities for French and international students as well as organizes the Buddy Program. Before your arrival in France, you should receive an email inviting you to sign up to receive a buddy. You will be paired up with a French student that will help you with any questions you have about your classes as well as being one of your first friends.

Compiègne – Getting to Know la Ville

Buses
The buses in Compiègne are free and easy to use. The map can be found at https://www.oise-mobilite.fr/presentation/?rub_code=1011&part_id=5 under “lignes urbaines” and the timetable is at https://www.oise-mobilite.fr/presentation/?rub_code=1040&part_id=5. There are different bus lines and schedules for Sundays, and on Sundays the bus costs 2€.
Both UTC buildings are located on the green line #5. The main building Benjamin Franklin is in the upper right corner at “Roger Couttolenc” or “Port a Bateaux” and the other UTC building PIERRE GUILLAUMAT is located at the lower left corner at “Edmond Rostand” or “Centre de Recherches.” Also in the lower left is the UTC Centre de Recherches where the laboratories are located.

La Centre Ville
Compiègne is located on the Oise river. On the map below, you can see the main UTC building Benjamin Franklin, the train station, and the centre ville highlighted in tan. The centre ville is where you will find the shops, restaurants, town hall, and the palace. You will get a chance to get to know the town and tour the palace during the summer immersion course, otherwise I recommend walking around on your own. The palace is one of the old hunting palaces from the era of Napoléon, and is free to enter if you are under 26.
The Pic’asso
Pic’asso is the name of the bar that is owned and operated by UTC students. It is located on the lower level of the Benjamin Franklin building. They only sell beer, all drinks are less than 2€, you must pay with your UTC badge, and it is only open on weekdays during the semester. During the day, the bar serves as a café where you can buy snacks and coffee while socializing or studying.

Summer Immersion Course
The summer immersion course is a four week session that occurs in August before the semester starts. This course is a great way to become acquainted with the city and meet the other international students while improving your French. In order to receive French credits for this course at URI, you must send your FIEP advisor a copy of the certificate that you receive after completing it.

UTC Buildings and Class Registration
The main building for UTC is the Centre Benjamin Franklin or BF, close to the centre ville. This is where the majority of your classes will take place. BF is composed of 5 different “towers” that are connected by bridges and labeled A-F. If you see on your class schedule a letter F followed a letter A though B, then by a number, this means your class will take place in this building. If the classroom begins with an R, this means your class will take place in Pierre Guillaumat.

Class registration will take place in the week after the immersion program and before classes start. During course registration, you will be in one of the classrooms in BF depending on your major. You will write down on a specific sheet of paper the courses that you wish to take. You will then sit down with an advisor that will look at the list with you. You will then go to someone in the corner on a laptop that will type in the courses for you and tell you if there are any open seats available. If there are no scheduling conflicts, then you are all set. Also during this time you will take a picture for your UTC ID badge, and you will pay for the required health insurance.

If you end up registering for any classes that you did not get prior approval for, you will need to contact the respective department chairs to try to get them approved.
Phone Plans
If you want to continue using your American phone in France you will first need to have it unlocked by your carrier. This will allow you to purchase a new SIM card with a French company that will work in your phone.

If you have T-Mobile, they offer unlimited data in most European countries. In this case you might want to consider keeping your T-Mobile phone plan and buying a cheap flip phone with a French number so that potential employers will be able to contact you.

Most phone companies do not allow you to purchase a phone plan (forfait) with a credit card. If you want to pay with a credit card you must buy a “pay as you go” plan that is more expensive. The only phone company that will allow you to open a plan with a credit card is called “Free” and it can only be done in person at one of their stores. (They do not currently have any stores in Compiègne, so you would have to go to Paris). Most phone plans require you to pay via direct charges to your bank account monthly. If you do not yet have a bank account set up, you can purchase a prepaid month, and then sign up for the plan afterwards. The main companies are called Orange, Bouygues, Free, and SFR.

Bank Accounts
You will need to open a bank account in order to receive direct deposit payments for your internship, and also pay for a phone plan. Most companies will not offer any other payment methods besides direct deposit.

In order to open a bank account, you must schedule in advance a meeting with a counselor and provide proof of your residence. You can obtain this from your landlord and bring it to your meeting. UTC often will have a deal with one of the banks in town that will start you off with some amount of money when you open an account. In 2015 it was Société Générale. French bank accounts are not centralized; you will be dealing with this one specific person for any questions and concerns that you have. Once you move for your internship, you will have to set up a meeting with a different branch in your new city in order to transfer your account.

Once you set up your bank account, you will want to transfer money into it. There are multiple options to do this. If you want to be able to send a wire transfer directly from your American account to your French account you will probably need to have someone else’s name on the account with yours, so that they will be able to physically go to the bank in the US to send the transfer. Another option is to write yourself a check from your American account and deposit it in your French account. This process takes a bit longer than a direct wire transfer.

If you want to try to avoid some of the fees and complete the transfer online, you can set up two PayPal accounts: one American, one French. You can then transfer money from your American PayPal account to your French one, and then withdraw the money into your French bank account.

You will need to consider how you will close your bank account before leaving France. It is probable that you will still be waiting for your last paycheck from your employer before you have to leave. Talk with your bank in advance of this date and see if you can complete the
closure paperwork before your departure, and then close the account once you have transferred all of the money out.

**OFII Visa Paperwork**
You must complete some paperwork upon your arrival in France in order to validate your visa. UTC will set up a workshop and assign you a time to see the medical professional, as well as complete the paperwork and send it in for you. Read your emails and pay attention to any deadlines. Some of the paperwork that you use to get your visa will also be used for the OFII, so you need to keep and and bring it to France. While you need need of the visa paperwork, it is a good idea to bring it in case you want to extend your visa.

**If You Get Sick**
It can be scary to get sick and need medical professionals in a different country, but don’t be afraid as there are many resources to help you. There is a free nurse at UTC that is located in the parking garage level of building C. They can give you a free consultation, and a list of doctors in Compiègne, but are not able to prescribe any medication. Going to the doctor in France is different than in the US. Often, the doctor will have an office inside an office building that includes their desk as well as the examination area without any reception area. You should make an appointment in advance by calling ahead. A general office visit costs 23€ flat. During the visit, the doctor will give you a reimbursement form that can be filled out and filed either with your French insurance or your American insurance. You can take any prescriptions you receive directly to the pharmacy to be filled. The general emergency number in Europe is **112**.

**Course Transfers**
UTC uses the ECTS grading system, which is common in France. This means that a certain letter grade you receive at UTC will not be the same at URI. Passing grades at UTC are A, B, C, and D. The letter grades are not transferred to URI; it will only appear as a “Pass” on your transcript. The failed classes will simply not be transferred.

**Travel**

**Trains**
I highly recommend buying a “Carte Jeune” upon your arrival in France. This pass costs 50€ and allows you to get between 25% and 50% discounts on the trains (depending on the peak hours). It lasts for a year and will quickly add up. You can buy it at the counter at the train station. For buying train tickets, the Captain Train website is a good alternative to the SNCF, which is not always the most user friendly.

**Planes**
Charles de Gaulle Airport and Orly Airport are both accessible on the RER B metro line in Paris. There are special metro tickets that you must buy in order to access the airports and they cost between 10€ and 12€.
The Beauvais Airport is closer to Compiègne, and accessible by a bus that costs 2€, but does not run very frequently, so pay attention when you schedule flights at this airport. This bus runs from the Compiègne train station to the Beauvais bus station, so then you must take a local bus from the Beauvais train station (just down the street) to the airport.
A good website for finding cheap flights is [www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com)
Buses
Traveling by bus is a cheap way to get around France. There are often overnight buses that travel to the cities that are farther away, allowing you the maximum time at your destination for the lowest cost of lodging. A good website to compare the prices and times of different bus companies is www.busradar.com.

BlaBla Car
BlaBlaCar is a ride-sharing app where users post routes that they plan to drive on specific days, and how many seats they have open in their car. This is a cheaper and easier way to get to the airport, and anywhere else that you would like to go.

Luggage
Most trains do not care about the size or weight of your luggage (unless you are taking Ouigo). Pay attention to what it says when you are buying a ticket. If you are intending to purchase a travel backpack, the sporting goods store Decathlon has cheap ones. There is one near Compiègne that you can get to on the bus. Most airline tickets that you will buy will not include a checked bag, and there are size restrictions on the carry-on luggage.

Maps
Travelling can be even more challenging when you don’t have internet access in the country that you are visiting. A great option is to download an offline map of the place you are visiting that will be accessible on your phone even if you don’t have data. If your phone has GPS capabilities, these will work even without an internet connection. An example of this type of application is called Maps.Me for android phones.

Visiting Paris
One of the great things about Compiègne is its proximity to Paris. It takes about 1 hour to arrive at the Gare du Nord from the Compiègne train station.

Once you arrive in Paris, there is a great app you can download for navigating the metro called “Visit Paris by Metro” by RATP. It analyzes your current location and allows you to input the destination and will direct you on which lines to take. When buying metro tickets it is often the best option to buy a t+ carnet, which gives you a discount on 10 tickets, and there is a further discount for being “jeune.” A carnet of 10 jeune tickets costs approximately 15€.

Another great thing about Paris is the number of museums. As a young resident in France (less than 26), all of the museums in Paris (including the Arc de Triomph and the Catedral Notre Dame, but unfortunately not the Eiffel Tower) are free upon showing your visa. This also applies to young people from all EU countries.

Inter-semester Week
In the week that follows the end of the semester, many UTC student organizations plan trips to different locations. Some to look out for include the engineers without borders trip, the skiing trip in the Alps, and the surfing trip. Registration for these trips will take place during the semester.
Part 3: Internship Semester

Finding an Internship
The first step to finding an internship is to create a resume/CV and a cover letter in French. Check out the FIEP Sakai site for some good examples. Next, you should search for companies that you are interested in. Once you apply for an internship, let your FIEP advisor know, so that he/she can help you via any contacts they might have at the company. UTC also hosts a career fair that takes place in the middle of October, which is a great way to find internships. There is even a UTC advisor whose sole job is to help international students at UTC find internships. UTC has an internship database, Demeter, which lists a number of great opportunities. You must approach finding an internship with the same professionalism you would in finding a job. Make sure companies can contact you easily and check and respond to emails promptly.

What the Heck is a Convention de Stage?
Since the internship is part of a course that you will be enrolled in at UTC, you will be required to complete a Convention de Stage. This is a contract between you, the company, and UTC that outlines your internship agreement. You will complete it with the internship adviser at UTC and then mail it to the company. You will be officially enrolled in a course called TN09 or TN10 at UTC during your internship. This course has a few requirements throughout the semester including a midterm progress report and a research paper that you will present at the end of your internship. While it is not technically required to complete the requirements for this course (it will not be transferred to URI) it is a good idea to do so if you plan to return to France for a Master’s, PhD, or to work in the future.

Finding a Place to Live
For your internship, you will almost certainly move to a new part of France. In your new city, you can continue living in a CROUS residence if you so choose, or you can search for an apartment on your own. Some good websites to search for listings are www.leboncoin.fr, www.appartager.com, and www.lacartedescolocs.fr. You might consider moving to a city that has a university because it is easier to meet other students, and you can attend some of the university events to make friends.

FRN 315/316
FRN 315 and FRN 315 are the two courses that you will receive credit for at URI as part of your internship. In order to receive these credits, you must complete 10, 2 page essays that you will send to your FIEP advisor, as well as creating an IEP Poster, and doing one high school outreach presentation on the IEP upon your return to URI. For the reports, you will recount events related to your learning (cultural, linguistic, technical, or professional), commenting on your progress and recording positive and negative events that you experience. For the poster presentation, the template will be provided. You will need to take pictures for the poster presentation, preferably of you doing something in France. You will complete the poster presentation around the end of your internship. The high school outreach can be at the high school you graduated from or at one close to URI. The IEP office will arrange the details of the visit and someone from the IEP will accompany you.
Registering for Spring and Fall Classes
You will need to be registered for the spring semester during your internship. Log into the URIAbroad site and register as Spring 2017 Off-Campus Study (OCS) participants. You will also need to get your adviser hold lifted in order to register.

Also, don’t forget to think about your return to URI! You will need to register for your fall classes while you are in France.