Visa Application:

This can change from year to year and depends on what passport/citizenship you hold so make sure you look up the visa details on the French Embassy website. But in terms of my experience, as an Australian citizen, you have to apply in Sydney regardless of where you live. When I booked my interview with the Embassy to submit my forms, the wait list was 2 months so it’s important to do this as soon as you find out you were accepted to HEC. The application process is rather lengthy and you need to have pretty much done everything before you apply including booking flights, securing accommodation etc etc. Once you have had your interview, provided you had all the right details/documents the process is pretty straight forward.

Enrolment Procedure and recommended subjects:

This was not an easy process. Fortunately all the exchange students going to HEC from around the world had started up a group email and this is actually how we got most of our information, from what others had managed to find out. First there was a booklet of all the subjects, who teaches them etc. Then we were given the timetable on an excel sheet that spanned about 13 worksheets, and given that class times vary significantly this took a lot of time to go through and plan the workload. Finally there was another excel sheet that showed which subjects clashed (you are not allowed to enrol in two subjects that have a clash).

The enrolment opens on a certain date and goes for about 4 days. All the exchange students experienced a lot of technical difficulties meaning some weren’t able to enrol till the last day after a lot of to and fro with HEC. Don’t worry however, as long as you enrol it’s ok as it’s not on a first come first serve basis. When enrolling put more subjects than you want to do on your list and you’ll be allocated to some of them, the offers don’t seem to relate in anyway to your preferences though so make sure you only put subjects you actually want to do. A few days after enrolment closes subjects were offered and then you had a couple of days to email in with any changes/additions you wanted to make. This bit is on a first come first served basis. I waited a day whilst waiting for a response about something and by the time I emailed in the subjects I wanted to add were all full.

The subjects I did were:

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<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Excel Modelling</td>
<td>Herve is a genius when it comes to excel. I would highly recommend if your excel skills are good but you want to learn a few extra things not found on help functions. Warning though, this is an advanced class and he won’t slow down for you. Also, be prepared to have to translate a few things in the homework. Lecturer: Herve Thierez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business in a Political Age</td>
<td>Brilliant! This was actually my last minute throw in subject and I am so glad I did it. The class is taught in a very engaging way by a lecturer with an insane amount of ‘world’ experience. Particularly useful if you want a global view. DO THIS SUBJECT! Lecturer: Mark Kennedy</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Affairs Strategy</td>
<td>A great subject if you want to learn a little more about how the EU functions. I probably wouldn’t do this and Geopolitics together though as there is quite a bit of overlap. Lecturer: Alberto Alemanno</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geopolitics</td>
<td>This subject will get you thinking a lot about countries you may not know a lot about. There is quite a bit of crossover with European Affairs Strategy so probably wouldn’t do both. The main focus in this subject was America, EU and the Middle East. Do not expect anything on Asia or Australia. Lecturer: Jeremy Ghez</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Negotiations</td>
<td>Steve was good but I wasn’t a fan of his assessment structure and found it quite biased against exchange students. If grades are what you are after then I would probably do this subject with one of the other two lecturers. Lecturer: Steve Weiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Facets of European Marketing and Strategy</td>
<td>This is an interesting subject but contrary to the title it’s not just ‘European’, it’s more of a general Marketing and Strategy subject. Lecturer: Vincent Dessain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web 2.0 Marketing</td>
<td>This is an interesting subject to really get you thinking about social media and is useful even if you do not work or want to work in a marketing function. It also had the heaviest workload for assignments with two being major group work assignments. I also scored a free Lecturer: Kristine de Valck</td>
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ticket to Disneyland Paris because of this subject which was pretty cool.

Other than the subjects I did I heard Luxury Strategy was really good and people strongly disliked Organisational Design and Advanced Corporate Finance, mostly because of the lecturers.

**Workload at exchange school:**
This will depend largely on the subjects you choose. The workload for most of the individual subjects is very light with a large percentage of marks being placed on ‘participation’, which oddly doesn’t seem to correlate to actual ‘attendance’. Overall though the workload is pretty light compared to AGSM.

**Accommodation options:**
We did not have the option to live on campus and if you do have that option just remember that campus is one and a half hours out of Paris on a good day and the town of Jouy en Josas where the uni is, is tiny.

I lived in Paris near the Arc de Triomphe with a fellow AGSM exchanger and also a girl from Thunderbird in the US who approached us from the group emails exchange students were sending around. We found our apartment on [www.paristay.com](http://www.paristay.com). If you live in Paris you can expect to be paying 1,000 euros+ per month for a furnished apartment. Most places also charge a once off ‘agency fee’ of around 1,000 – 1,500 euros plus you will need to take out renters insurance which is around 160 euros. Also, be very careful if you want your bond back. In France mostly the bond money goes straight to the owner. The owner of our place tried to do the dodgy on us at the end with holding 1,000 euros of the deposit without providing any reason other than ‘some residents objected to the comings and goings’. might I add we did not have any parties and had no complaints during our stay from anyone. When this happens there’s not a lot the agency can do. Fortunately I was in France for a couple of weeks after and was able to lodge a complaint with the Police and visit the rental tribunal which was enough to scare the owner into returning the remainder of our bond.

In terms of location, I would recommend trying to find somewhere close to the RER C line as this is the main line you take out to Versaille and then change to go to Jouy or somewhere near the Arc de Triomphe so you can get the RER A to La Defense and then the line 2 to Versaille from there. Do not underestimate how long it will take to get to uni, from the Arc de Triomphe, it’s just under an hour and a half if you do not have to wait anywhere for trains but most times it takes closer to 2 hours.

**Campus Facilities**
The campus is located outside of Paris, a couple of stops from Versailles. It is also very difficult to find on your first day so make sure you leave plenty of time, it took us 3 hours the first day and we had to phone a buddy to come find us and take us up to the campus in the end.

You can either walk up or take the bus up. The campus itself has a cafeteria with cheap subsidised food the quality of which varies from day to day. You’ll be able to find all the study related stuff you need on campus (except stationary...which I’d recommend you bring from Australia) and there is a gym but I didn’t use it.

**Careers Services:**
As an exchange student you have almost full access to the careers service at HEC. They have some fantastic tips on CV’s etc. and are very active in organising recruitment events, having companies come on campus to talk, case study prep. etc. If you want to meet up with anyone in careers services, go knock on a door though as the generic careers email does not get replied to very often if at all.

**Student life:**
Student life is what you make it. It is difficult if you’re in Paris to be able to get out to Jouy to participate in club activities, particularly when they’re held at night or in the afternoon when your 8am class finished at 10am. We did however have a great bunch of exchange students and we had a group set up on Facebook where people would post what they were doing and people could join as they pleased.

**Things AGSM MBA students should consider/be aware of when applying to this school for exchange:**
It’s EXPENSIVE!!!!!! Both in accommodation and cost of living.

Also, invest in a pick pocket proof bag before you go (i.e. more fool proof than just a zip up bag), always hold onto your bag tight whilst on the metro and never carry all your credit cards or more than 100 euros on you unless you absolutely have to. They have a special pick pocket police force in Paris for a reason, they’re the guys with backpacks who you often see sprinting around the metro stations.
Highlight:
- The good cheap wine. 4 euros will get you a really nice bottle at the supermarket and a glass of wine is cheaper than coffee at the cafes.
- The food with fresh food markets everywhere.
- The cheese. My new favourite is Mont d’or, it looks mouldy, smells off and tastes like heaven.
- Experiencing a little of what it’s like to live in Paris.