

Double degree with Wrocław University of Science and Technology and École Centrale de Nantes

What does the Double Degree programme entail?

The Double Degree programme is a student exchange programme that differs from Erasmus as it typically lasts longer, usually 2 years, and results in obtaining two diplomas: one from the home university (Wrocław University of Science and Technology in this case) and one from the foreign university. During the exchange, we have the opportunity to feel like full-time students of the host university, as we study under the same conditions as local students. Usually, as was the case for me, the Double Degree programme also includes an internship in the country we are visiting, allowing us to gain practical experience and learn about the work culture in that country.

How does studying in France differ from studying in Poland?

During the programme, I studied at École Centrale de Nantes, a significantly smaller university than Wrocław University of Science and Technology (with around 2,000 students), which creates a completely different atmosphere. The students are much more engaged in the university life and various events organized there, not necessarily related solely to academics. There are numerous interest groups where students gather to play football, organize skiing trips, or have barbecues. It gives the impression that practically everyone is involved in some group, making the university feel very vibrant. The teaching methods are completely different, with professors knowing their students, and the classes being more interactive compared to what I experienced in Poland. French students ask a lot of questions and are not afraid to express constructive opinions about the classes. During my stay in France, I studied alongside students from the Ingénieur Généraliste programme (Engineering programme), which doesn't have an equivalent in Poland. These are master's level studies that usually last for 3 years (I studied with the first-year students initially and then with the final year students). The first year is common for all students and usually covers the basics of various engineering subjects (similar to the first year of engineering studies in Poland, but at a higher level). Then, in the second and third years, students choose their specialization (e.g., mathematics, robotics, environmental engineering, etc.).

Why is it worth participating in the Double Degree programme?

For me, it was a highly valuable experience. I had the opportunity to see what it's like to study at one of the top universities in France, experience a different approach to teaching, and broaden my horizons in the field I was studying. I made significant progress in my French language skills and can now use it fluently in academic, professional, and everyday life contexts. I gained a good understanding of the culture and way of life in France, and had the chance to work in two French companies as part of internships, acquiring practical experience. During my studies, I also met many interesting people from France and around the world. At the end of the programme, I received two diplomas from two universities, which greatly helps in the job market.

Is it difficult to get into the Double Degree programme?

The Double Degree programme is not as popular in Poland as it is in other countries (partly because studying abroad is mandatory for every French student, and students from other countries want the opportunity to study at a good foreign university). Therefore, it is even more worthwhile to take advantage of it. One needs to check the specific requirements of the target university (such as

proficiency in French beyond English and grade point average), and generally, there aren't many applicants from Poland.

When can you apply for the Double Degree programme?

I went on the exchange after completing my 4th year of studies at Wrocław University of Science and Technology, which means after the first semester of master's studies. This is usually the preferred option for students from Wrocław. The recruitment process usually starts in the first half of the summer semester, but it's worth exploring various scholarship programmes earlier, as the application process for them often precedes the recruitment for the exchange. Therefore, I think it's a good idea to start considering the programme towards the end of undergraduate studies.

Is proficiency in English sufficient, or do you need to know the language of the country of study as well?

It depends on the language in which the classes are conducted. In my case, all the classes were in French, so proficiency in French was essential. However, it doesn't mean that you need to have a very high level of French proficiency. After the first month at the new university, there is a significant improvement in our language skills, especially when we study in the language of the host country. Initially, I had some difficulties understanding the classes, but after the first month (or two), everything becomes clear, and communication becomes fluent. I observed similar progress in case of other students participating in the programme.

How to prepare for the Double Degree programme?

I believe the best approach is to review the offerings of universities that have Double Degree agreements with Wrocław University of Science and Technology, see what study programmes they offer, choose what interests us the most, and contact the coordinator of the Double Degree programme at Wrocław University of Science and Technology (Ms. Ewa Mroczek at the International Relations Office, as well as the Erasmus Coordinator at the Faculty). The structure of the programme can vary significantly depending on the country and university, so it's a good idea to try to establish contact with students who have participated in the programme at the specific university to learn more about the details. It's important to choose a programme at the host university that aligns with the curriculum at Wrocław University of Science and Technology, as otherwise, there may be difficulties with credit recognition upon returning. In the Double Degree programme, students typically study for 4 years at their home university and 2 years at the host university, which extends the duration of studies by one year. Often, the host university (as was the case for me) requires us to maintain active student status at the home university throughout the entire stay abroad. To meet this requirement, I took a dean's leave at Wrocław University of Science and Technology during my stay in France and defended my thesis a year later than it would have been according to the regular schedule. You should choose the best solution in advance with the vice-dean for student affairs at your faculty.

Michał Osman

Faculty of Fundamental Problems of Technology WUST- Big Data Analytics