

Preparation

After the official nomination for an Erasmus Semester at the Universidade do Algarve the International Office in Faro will send you an email with a link to their online Application Form. The deadline to fill out this form is the 31. May for the winter semester and the 31. October for the summer semester. As you need to attach your first signed draft of the Learning Agreement as well as some other documents make sure you contact the responsible people at the Uni Bremen so that they have time to approve your choice of courses. Next you should have some patience as it takes quite a while (almost 2 months) till you receive the official acceptance as well as more information on the beginning of the program. You can always contact the UAlg's mobility office if you have some questions they usually answer very quickly. All the necessary information regarding application, arrival, etc. can also be found on the website: <https://www.ualg.pt/en/content/application-procedures-0>. When you leave make sure to take some passport photos with you as they will be needed for the bus pass and other things. I would also suggest you bring some sun screen from Germany as this is very (!) expensive in Portugal. I advise you to sign up for the ESN Group (you will receive information on that via email) where can choose to sign up for a ESN "buddy". I found the ESN "buddies" were really helpful especially in the beginning. Make sure you have a European Health card and contact your Insurance Company for further information on the coverage abroad. Faro has its own airport which is 20 minutes away from the city Centre. You can get there by bus (No. 16) or by taxi (ca. 12€) very easily.

Formalities in the Host Country

The UAlg's mobility office (Campus Gambelas) will send you a date for registration at which you have to be present at the UAlg so make sure you do not book your flights before you receive that information. For registration, you should have the original Learning Agreement with you. At the mobility office, you receive a welcome kit containing all the information for the Orientation Week and the planned activities. This also includes a SIM card and information on how to get getting a monthly bus ticket. The bus pass is needed if you are mainly studying on the Campus Gambelas and live in Faro City. It is about 32€ per month if you include the bus which goes to the beach. If you find accommodation at Faro Beach or in Gambelas you might also be able to share a ride to Campus Gambelas or use the bicycle. If you study in Campus da Penha and also live in Faro City the bus

pass might not be necessary. Regarding a Portuguese Bank account, I cannot give you any advice. I got myself a new Bank Account + credit card with which I can withdraw money free of charge worldwide. After you are done with all the courses and exams you must deregister at the mobility office to get the Confirmation of Study Period. On this occasion, you should also check if all the courses you attended and respective grades are listed in your Academic Services account. After that you're good to go.

General Information about the partner university

During the orientation week, there are lots of activities in which you can participate for example boat rides and trips to close by sights. If you register with the ESN Group on Facebook, you get all the information and you can always contact someone for help. If you signed up for an ESN "buddy" he/she will also help you with any question you have. The University offers a lot of different sport courses which includes water sports like diving, surfing, wind-surfing as well as all sorts of other sports. Every building on the Campus Gambelas has its own cafeteria where you can get sandwiches and warm food. There is also a main Mensa but my experiences with it were not very good. I really cannot recommend the vegetarian food there but maybe the meat dishes are more enjoyable.

Learning Agreement & Choice of Courses

You must send your first draft of the Learning Agreement with the Application Form (deadline 31. May). However, most likely you will have to make changes later. The schedules for the winter term were online only around July/August and therefore I had to base my first draft on the schedule from the previous year. After I got accepted I was informed which of my chosen courses would not take place. I was also told to check whether any of my courses are overlapping based on the new schedule. Changes of your Learning Agreement are usually possible until two weeks after the beginning of the courses. All my courses were taught in English and I had no difficulties to follow the lectures. However, I know from some friends that they had lectures in Portuguese even though it was stated that the course would be in English. The master programs Marine Biology and Marine and Coastal Systems are both taught exclusively in English. The available master programs can be found here: <https://www.ualg.pt/en/courses/all>. The undergraduate courses can be found here <https://www.ualg.pt/en/cursos/licenciatura>.

Accommodation

The mobility office advises you to book a Hostel for the first few days after your arrival. There are several good Hostels situated in the city centre. As they are usually quite full during the summertime make sure to book a few weeks in advance. From my own experience, I can recommend the Algarve Hostel which is situated in the city center close to the main bus station. In terms of finding an apartment/room this Facebook group proved to be quite useful for me: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/faroroomrental/?fref=ts>. Additionally, rooms are offered on blackboards in supermarkets and it's worth to have a look there. The ESN Group will also help you with the search for accommodation and often rooms are offered within the ESN Facebook group. If you cannot speak Portuguese or Spanish, your Erasmus Buddy can help you to contact the landlords/-ladies as some of them are not fluent in English.

Other

If you want to buy a bicycle, furniture, or anything else this group can be quite useful: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/533767656786369/>. If you want to explore Portugal a bit I can recommend to visit Lisbon and Porto. You can get from Faro to Lisbon quite easily by train (3 ½ hours). Trains are a good way of travelling as they are quite cheap. Porto is a bit further away from the Algarve but the trip is worth it. In the Algarve, there is a lot to see as well for example the famous limestone cliffs and small cities like Tavira, Lagos and Sagres. Close to Sagres you can visit the southwestern most point of mainland Europe on Cape Vincent. The best way to explore this part of Portugal is to hire a car for one or two days.

Arriving back home

After you arrive back in Bremen you must hand in the Confirmation of Study Period at the International Office. After this is approved you receive the link to the EU Survey which you have to complete and upload. You should also receive a link to the second OLS Language Assessment at some point. The results from the 2nd Language Assessment must be uploaded as well as the experience report. As I have not received my Transcript of Records yet I cannot say much on the process of acknowledgement. With the information

from the Transcript of Records your study coordinator creates the Certificate of Recognition. Both documents must be uploaded on the mobility online platform.

Fazit

The UAlg is a very good University for marine related studies and I can recommend to go to Faro if you interested in subjects like Marine Biology and Oceanography. The courses that I chose were more oceanography based and I got some good insights on subjects that are not available in this form in Bremen. The Erasmus exchange was very well organized and the support from both universities was generally good. The UAlg is very well prepared to welcome exchange students and offers as I mentioned above a lot of assistance. In total I had a very nice time in Faro and I really enjoyed to live there for half a year. For people who seek the vibe and diverse cultural activities of a big city Faro will not be the right choice. If you enjoy sunshine (cloudless sky nearly every day), living close to the sea, outdoor activities and the peace of a smaller town Faro will be just right for you.