EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE DOUBLE DEGREE* (*BUT WE WERE AFRAID TO ASK)

A BRIEF GUIDE TO MAKE IT THROUGH YOUR DOUBLE DEGREE IN LIÈGE

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INTRODUCTION

So, here we are. You have chosen Liège for your double degree and in a few months you're going to leave. A few days before your flight, you start wondering whether you made the right choice, realising that you know nothing about the city you're going to spend one year in, the Belgian university system, the seven political parties supporting the current Belgian government, and the loads of paperwork to do before and after your departure. **NO WORRIES!** This brief guide will try* to put some order in this mess and make your life as a double degree student easier!

*Please note that there's no guarantee it will succeed.
SOME INITIAL TIPS

FINDING YOUR WAY

It's perfectly normal to get lost at the beginning. You'll probably spend the first weeks trying to keep up with a new context, a new (at least for someone) language and so on.

It takes time to find your way and you should not worry if the first days (or weeks) are tough: that's part of the challenge of the double degree.

AT THE BEGINNING EVERYTHING MAY SEEM DIFFICULT. ACTUALLY IT IS. BUT DON'T WORRY, IT IS PERFECTLY NORMAL TO NEED SOME TIME TO GET ACQUAINTED TO A NEW PLACE

BE CURIOUS AND TRY TO INTERACT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (THERE ARE A LOT!). IT'S THE BEST WAY TO FIT IN THE NEW CONTEXT!

FUNDING

Life in Liège is relatively affordable, but you may use some help. There are two main alternative opportunities for funding:

1. A Department grant for double degree students, which is established each year depending on budget.

2. The Erasmus+ grant, for which you may consider to apply following the ordinary procedure, by choosing ULg as your destination (https://www.unict.it/it/internazionale/erasmus). In this case you'll be at the same time a double degree and Erasmus+ student.

Whether you apply for an Erasmus+ grant or not, check the website of the ESN Liège (https://www.esnuliege.be/) to know about events and advice for international students!
GETTING STARTED

1 BEFORE LEAVING

Make sure to have all the travel documents and to complete all the administrative procedures for your enrollment before leaving. Once you are sure, check again: there is always a certificate or document you missed. If you are an EU citizen your ID card/passport and national health insurance might be sufficient for your stay. Otherwise, you might have a look at the website of the Belgian Immigration Office (https://dofi.ibz.be/en).

2 HOW TO REACH LIÈGE

The easiest way to reach Liège from Catania is by flight. You can either choose to land in Brussels (Zaventem) Airport or in Brussels South Charleroi Airport. Liège is at less than one hour from the first one and almost an hour and a half from Charleroi by train (you can buy train tickets online on the website of SNCB (https://www.belgiantrain.be/en).

3 THE WEBSITE(S)

It’s better to get acquainted with the websites of ULg and the Department of Law, Political Science and Criminology (https://www.uliege.be/cms/c_8699436/en/uliege). There you can find useful info about courses, the university system, the syllabuses and the thousands of events organised at ULg. Moreover, as soon as you have your credentials, you should get acquainted with myULiège student portal.
THE BELGIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

If you got used to the Italian university system, you’d better forget everything you learned. The "Belgian way" is slightly different as you will see below.

THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The Belgian academic year is structured in 2 terms:

- Autumn (from mid-September to December)
- Spring (from mid-February to mid-May)


THE EXAM SESSION

If you're used to the length and "relative freedom" of Italian exam sessions, you'd better re-adapt the way in which you study for exams. At ULg there are only 2 exam sessions:

1. The first session is in January for the exams of the first term and in May/June for the exams of the second term.
2. The second session is in August/September for the exams of both the first and second term.

NOTE: IN PRINCIPLE, YOU SHOULD TAKE ALL THE EXAMS.
There is only 1 ATTEMPT FOR EACH SESSION IN THE DATES ESTABLISHED BY THE APPARITORAT (STUDENT OFFICE). IF YOU FAIL AN EXAM IN THE FIRST SESSION (JAN OR MAY/JUN), YOU CAN RE-TRY ONLY IN THE SECOND SESSION (AUG/SEPT).


**LOST IN CONVERSION**

**THE GRADING SYSTEM**

Differently from Italian grades, Belgian grades are assigned on a scale of 20 (with the passing score of 10/20 at least). Also the distribution of these grades is different (as you can see here: https://www.enseignement.uliege.be/cms/c_9148651/en/exams/-/-incoming-exchange-student). All these differences are taken into account at the moment of converting grades into the Italian system. Therefore, don't worry too much about this issue. Moreover, consider that since the Belgian system is quite different it is not rare at all to perform differently!

Just make sure to know all the "practical info" about grading and conversion before your start, which are detailed in the DD convention. Bear in mind that taking a double degree is already a challenge, so don't be too hard yourself about your results!

**ORGANISATION IS THE KEY!**

You may happen to have a lot of exams in a row. Since you should, in principle, take all the exams and you cannot repeat one you already passed, organisation is the key! Keep in mind that you have only a few weeks (the "blocus") between the end of your courses and the exam session, so that you'd better organise your study already from the beginning of the academic year.

**REMEMBER: THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY TO WORK THINGS OUT. IF YOU CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE WHO CAN, SO DON'T HESITATE TO ASK TO AND DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES, UNIVERSITY STAFF AND PROFESSORS!**
Sart Tilman Campus
That's where you'll attend your courses. It's a bit far from the city centre, but it is easy to reach by bus (lines 48 and 58) in about 20-30 minutes (https://www.campus.uliege.be/cms/c_1754746/fr/localisation-d-un-batiment).

ULg Central Bulding
That's the central building where most of the offices and study halls are located. You might want to spend some time there if you plan to grab a beer or have a walk in the centre after studying.

Complexe Opéra ULg
Here you find a large study hall, a student centre and the university press shop (a second one is in Sart Tilman).

Guillemins Train Station
This is the main train station in Liège. It's easy to reach from the centre (a few minutes by bus and 20-30 minutes by walk). At the ground floor there's the Espace TEC, where you can buy bus tickets and make a (very cheap) monthly subscription (https://www.letec.be/#/).

Carré
This is the heart of Liège nightlife. Literally a "square", you can find here pubs for every taste.

Parc de la Boverie
An oasis of peace in the middle of the city, where you can spend the (rare) sunny days of spring.
As a double degree student at ULg you'll have to write your thesis according to its standards. This implies an early planning: in principle, you'll have to deliver your "project de mémoire" by 15 Oct and, in any case, a "projet de plan" by 31 Dec. This means that you'd better start to think about it as soon as possible (for more info on deadlines: https://www.droit.uliege.be/cms/c_3570137/fr/droit-travaux-et-tfe-en-sciences-politiques).

The jury is composed by a "promoteur" (which will be your supervisor at ULg) and two "lecteurs": one at ULg and one at UniCt (which is usually your supervisor at UniCt). All the members of the jury will help you during your research and will evaluate your thesis after the défense.

Although there will be just 1 thesis (called "mémoire" or "TFE") for both ULg and UniCt, since you will spend your final year in Liège you should abide by ULg standards to write your it (check the "Règlement des TFE"). In brief, it is a rather concise research work (up to 25,000 words for the DD) which should be "defended" in front of the jury in Liège and discussed in front of the appropriate commission in Catania. The "défense du mémoire" in Liège, indeed, is a veritable exam, which may take place in June (1st session) or August/September (2nd session) and which requires you to defend your research on the ground of the choice you made, the methodology adopted and so on. As for UniCt you should follow the ordinary procedures for the graduation exam (check here the deadlines: http://www.dsps.unict.it/en/courses/lm-62/graduation-exams).