

'Minor French'

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Hello, I am Caya and I am a third year bachelor student doing the Sustainable Chemistry and Energy track. For my minor I wanted to do something else than chemistry, just to have some variety during my studies. Next to that I actually wanted to postpone my bachelor for a year, since I had no idea yet what to do after the bachelor. Therefore I looked around and finally decided to a French minor next to a chemistry minor.

I wanted to do the minor French because I just really wanted to be able to speak another language. I went to Brussel last year to teach and I hitchhiked in France where I found out that it was hard for me to make myself understandable, since not a lot of people there spoke English and my French was not that great. I wanted to change this.

To get to know more about this minor I went to the academic advisor for the languages, her name is Deirdre Harmsen. Normally it is not possible for studies in the FSE such as Chemistry to follow a minor outside of the faculty. This goes especially for languages as a minor, since normally you have to follow a second year course but this is just not practical for a language. The academic advisor told me she thought it was possible and redirected me to the board of examiners.

The board of examiners of chemistry told me that I could only do the French minor as an extracurricular, because of the fact that they are mostly first year courses. Then I applied for the minor via the page of language proficiency of the faculty of arts on the RUG site. On that page, a description of what to do next and what to hand in is available. I filled in the form, handed in my grade list from my chemistry courses and had to show that I have had French in high school. Since the courses were not mandatory for me, I could only do them when there were places available. Therefore I had to wait to get a green light. It took a long time for them to come back to me (two weeks before the start of the year), but finally decided that I was allowed to do French as a minor since I planned on doing all the 30 ECTS. So they made an exception. I am currently doing one first year course per period each being a bit higher difficulty, which is 5 ECTS, so to do the entire minor it will take me 1.5 years.

You have two levels in the study French, basic and plus. For basic you do not need to have had French in high school. For plus you do need to have had French and have passed the final exam in high school at VWO level. I went to do plus, since I have had French.

I did not have a lot of expectations for the minor, mainly that I was going to learn the language, but I did not know if it was going to be in the same way as in high school. I expected that I would have to do a lot of writing and talking, which actually turns out to be true. I did not expect to be fluent in French after this, that was not my intention by taking this minor. But I should be at level C1 once I finish, which is actually close to fluent. It is a bit more work than I expected, because you have obligated lectures (which I knew of), but you also have to write a portfolio and the learning of the words takes me longer than I expected beforehand. You also have a bit of overlap with the other chemistry courses, but it is doable. I am actually surprised about how good I have become in French already.

The way of teaching in this minor goes as follows, you actually sit in a classroom with around 15 people and each week we get a chapter with a theme. Coupled to that theme are certain words and grammar that we have to learn. We also learn a bit of culture, like typical French art and their artists,

history, background information on the language institute of France, etc. It goes according to the book, but sometimes a bit of actuality is included in for example the debates we sometimes have to hold, like the burning down of the Notre Dame. The exams consist of writing a letter about an article in which we have to give opinion (50%) and talking in the form of making a movie, doing a debate, etc. (50%).

There were some things that were maybe useful to know before I started this minor. All the lectures are actually in French and since I did not have French between high school and my second year of my bachelor it was kind of hard to keep up in the beginning. It would have been helpful to catch up a bit beforehand. Also try to reach out to the board of examiners earlier than I did, since I was informed quite late that I could actually follow the minor.

I do recommend doing a minor or just something on the side like French, it is fun to do something completely different from chemistry and you actually get to know some different kinds of people. You would be surprised by the difference between beta and alfa people. I hope this information will help you to choose something you like and just do not be afraid to go out of your comfort zone and choose something completely different.