

Personal Report

Autonomous University of Barcelona, winter semester 2017/18, 1 Semester International Business Administration, Fachbereich 3, Frankfurt

Language

Which language did you use? How did you communicate with your fellow students?

My courses were taught in English but I also improved my Spanish outside of uni. At uni, I communicated with my friends and other students in English but practiced my Spanish by talking to people in the library, at service centers and the Mensa.

Accommodation

Did the host university arrange for accommodation?

Yes, in a dormitory.

How high were your overall monthly costs for accommodation (in Euro)?

470€

How would you describe the quality of your accommodation?

Bad.

How well was the accommodation situated? How long did it take you on average to reach the partner university (in minutes)?

My accommodation was located close to the center of Barcelona (5 min by metro to Placa Catalunya). However, it took almost an hour to get to uni since UAB is not in Barcelona itself.

Which web sites, forums, facebookpages, contacts, etc. can you recommend for looking for accommodation?

pisocompartido, idealista; I recommend looking for accommodation in Spanish

Where have you been accommodated (name of dormitory, location, part of town, etc.)? And how would you describe the surroundings of your accommodation (shopping facilities, distance to the city center, nightlife, etc?)

I lived in a room in a shared flat with two other flat mates close to Placa Espanya in Barcelona. I was well-connected to the city center and it was even possible to walk there in 20-25 min. Everything needed - supermarkets, bakeries, pharmacy, fruit stores - were located in short walking distance. Also, bars and restaurants can be found around the corner.

Arrival at the Partner University and Orientation

Which is the best arrival time?

at least 1-2 weeks before the start of the semester since it takes a while to find accommodation

How did you organize your arrival? Was the extent of the orientation program sufficient? What activities can you recommend? Were all important questions answered? What did you have to find out yourself? How fast were you able to get in contact with the domestic students? How were the services for exchange students?

The orientation program at UAB was not very well-organized since information were provided while we also had to attend the courses since the important information regarding the courses itself were given in the first lessons.

I did barely talk to domestic students but if, they were kind and helpful. It is quite difficult to use services at the university if you do not speak Spanish since people working at offices, in the library or the Mensa do not necessarily speak English. Also, the sign at university are in Catalan and not even in Castellano.

Living Abroad

Compared to Frankfurt, how high was the cost of living abroad?

Higher, it cost about 150%

What additional expenses did you have during your semester abroad? How far were you able to travel with your semester ticket? How was your student life off-campus? How were the mensas/ student cafeterias? What types of meals were served? How much did the meals cost? How were the libraries? Was their use free? Did the university provide computer workplaces/ computer pools? Was Wi-Fi available on-campus? Were you able to use study rooms? Were you able to rent separate rooms for studying? Did the university provide a sports program? Was this free of charge?

There exists no student fare for public transportation in Barcelona which made the ticket rather expensive. Since the university is not located in the city, it is even more expensive. The meals served at the cafeteria were rather unhealthy (pizza, fries, burger,) and expensive, especially sandwiches. I almost never bought food there. The library for the faculty of business and economics does not have a nice atmosphere for studying but the one for the faculty of translation is modern and well-equipped and can be used by any student. Also, it is possible to use rooms for studying in groups. The Wi-Fi was free and worked inside the buildings. I did not inform myself about the sports program provided by the university since I did not want to stay there after classes and it takes a long while to get there. It was not free of charge but cheaper for students living at vila universitaria at the university.

Studying at the Host University

How would you describe the academic standard of classes compared to Frankfurt?

A little easier.

Did you experience any difference in teaching methods/ class structure? Which were the difference regarding your expectations and your experiences at the partner university? What surprised you, what should newly arriving students know? How were the student services? Was the fact, that you were an exchange student taken into account (by professors or other staff)? If so, how? How were difficulties, which you or other exchange students may have met, handled by the partner university?

Classes were more focused on applying the theory taught in the lectures. We had to hand in essays, homework, case studies and were examined in mid-term exams. Therefore, the workload throughout the semester was higher than in Frankfurt but the examinations were not too hard to handle. Generally, the professors did not treat exchange students differently. One teacher was very helpful by reassuring that we understood the vocabulary used in class. However, one teacher only provided solutions in Catalan although the course was taught in English and gave additional classes most exchange students could not attend since we had other classes at the same time. We complained several times but he did not care at all which made it harder for us to learn the material.

Final Remarks

What should future exchange students know/ do/ avoid? How would you overall rate your exchange experience? In what ways have you benefitted academically, personally, linguistically for your future career?

Future students should know that it can be very difficult to find accommodation in Barcelona. It took me over two weeks to find my final room and could only move in after one month which was very stressful. Hence, I did barley enjoy my first month. After a though and difficult start I met great people and made wonderful experience. It was sometimes challenging, especially in the beginning but this made me more confident for the future. Also, I actively practiced my Spanish, apart from my English skills, and improved it. However, you have to be open and use the language as much as possible as the main language I used at university and when talking to friends and other students was English.