

# laSalle

UNIVERSIDAD RAMON LLULL



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## **Introduction**

Hello there! My name is Jakub and I decided to do my exchange in Barcelona, Spain at La Salle Ramon Llull University. The exchange took place in my 5th semester at KEA and lasted around 5 months, from September 2022 until January 2023.

At KEA I've been studying Business Economics & IT, therefore the choice of subjects at my host university aligned with the area I have been interested in.

### **1. Classes I was attending at LaSalle**

The classes were as follows:

#### **1. AD014 - Principles of Finance**

This course provides an overview of the fundamentals of finance, exploring the key concepts of time value of money and risk to help understand the major determinants of value creation. It shows both theoretical and real-world examples; the main objective of the course is to provide students with a strong foundation in finance, which can be scaled up in future finance courses or in real job situations.

#### **2. AD015 - Cross-Cultural Management**

The aim of this course is to explore how diversity and cultural factors influence management across national borders. The concept of culture as an important component of the business environment is

explored. Emphasis is placed on the changing role of national culture amidst accelerated globalising processes. Then it shifts to the influence of national culture on the internal structure and behaviour of organisations from different countries without falling prey to reductionism and stereotypes.

### **3. AD040 - International Business**

The course is an introduction to the complexities of international business. Covers a range of subjects; the various political, economic, cultural, and legal differences in the countries around the world, world trade, international monetary and economic issues systems, and an examination of global strategies when entering a foreign market and managing global operations.

### **4. AD042 - Sales Management**

It is a course that helps students develop the skills required to sell a product, service or themselves as a matter of fact at job interviews. The course provides students with the basic sales dialogues required to fulfil such a function in a company although it also provides students with a model and practice to develop their sales negotiations skills, which are often vital to securing a sale under the right conditions.

### **5. AD101 - Online Consumer Behaviour**

Consumer Behavior embraces the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. It also takes on how having things affects our lives, how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves, and each other, especially in the canon of social media and the digital age.

### **AD200 - International economy and the digital era**

This is a course about the causes and consequences of economic globalisation. It explores how tumbling transport and communication costs, digitalisation, and trade and financial liberalisation have driven the integration of international economies in recent decades, contributing to increased global prosperity, new market opportunities and the diffusion of ideas, but also to greater inequality and new political and social challenges.

#### **1. How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?**

The school provided me with the information of what courses are available and what is the way I can assign to the ones I want. The choice was further assessed and students were assigned to particular classes on a 'first come-first take' basis. The process was not perfect, because there was no way of seeing if the course (or a different hour slot) can be still joined or not, since we just received an excel file, had

to send it back and were waiting for the answer from the contact person if our choice was accepted or if we need to implement changes. The process was too long and introduced a lot of doubts regarding the choice of subjects and possibility of planning the schedule.

Regarding settling in, the university organised an introductory meeting presenting the information about the campus, students clubs, holidays schedule, Spanish ID obtaining process, and the like.

Apart from that, anyone who needed help could reach out to the coordinators, however I cannot tell how helpful it was, since I arrived one month before the semester started, so until that moment I was already very well settled in the city.

## **2.What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?**

The most rewarding and interesting classes were Cross Cultural Management and International Economy and the digital era. Mostly due to my personal interest in these subjects, but also because the teacher of both courses - Cem Ucansu - was always very well prepared and made the classes informative and entertaining. It was a very interesting and fun learning experience that allowed me to gain a lot of knowledge.

### **3. What classes/study experiences did you find least Relevant or least valuable to you? Why?**

I can enlist Principles of Finance taught by Jose Antonio Lanau Alvarez and International Business taught by Hugo Zarco.

The first class was an interesting topic, however the approach and attitude of the teacher made it difficult to grasp the knowledge in a proper way and further enjoy the class. The way of teaching and treating students was unpleasant at times and decreased the motivation substantially. The latter was another subject that seemed as an interesting one before starting the semester. In this case however, the issues arose with the way classes were conducted and delivery of information. It was hard to focus and follow the expectations of the teacher, which were not always properly explained. Moreover, there were situations where we were given wrong or inconsistent information and it made it hard to approach the class with the same enthusiasm as beforehand.

#### **4. What classes would you advise other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?**

I can definitely recommend Cross Cultural Management and International Economy and the digital era taught by the professor Cem Ucansu. I wouldn't recommend Principle of Finance and International Business with professors mentioned beforehand. It was a hard journey that provided a lot of mixed feelings and experiences.

#### **Social and cultural experiences**

##### **1. What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?**

There were not so many challenges in my situation. I arrived one month before the semester started and had more than enough time to calmly settle with finding a flat as well as figuring out a new way of living in Barcelona. Having lived in Copenhagen, I have already learned how to live in an international environment and what are my social and cultural differences and how to address them. Therefore I did not experience cultural shock, instead, I just embraced Spanishness and it simply became a part of my daily routine without any issues.



However, I definitely recommend learning at least basic phrases in Spanish in order to feel better in e.g., shops, where not everybody speaks English. In my experience, if a person makes an effort to respect and familiarise oneself with a country's culture the integration process is way less challenging and becomes an interesting adventure.

**a. How helpful was the receiving school in this process?**

Not so much. There were not organised any integration activities especially for incoming students that would allow us to familiarise ourselves with the university or the culture present there. Apart from telling us to create a common Whatsapp group I cannot really recall any kind of further help in settling in and supporting the integration process into university or city culture.

**b. What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?**

It was definitely building very close relationships with people from Spain and Colombia that became a crucial part of my life. Our relationship allowed me to experience life in Barcelona from a standpoint of a local as well as practise my Spanish. I was a part of a day to day life of my very close people there and we were simply living the best way that I would have never imagined is possible. We were partying, relaxing, going to restaurants, meeting with their family and friends, cooking, going shopping, and much more

together. We were simply living in the typical local way and it was a truly magical time. I was also sharing my own experience and way of living and such a process of exchanging perspectives allowed me and them to develop a lot as young people willing to discover more and more.

**c. What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?**

In order to feel comfortable and familiar with the city, it is really nice to arrive at least 2 weeks before the studies start. In such a way, it is easier to slowly and calmly settle down and adjust life routine to the new situation. It also helps with discovering the city and building a strong basis for simply getting what is best from the future adventure, without the need to improvise or living in a rush from the very beginning. In my case, it also allowed me to find amazing people that became the most important part of life and made me feel included in the culture, which is also crucial. Mainly due to the fact that living abroad while living alone can be quite difficult, therefore building a network of people that can share their time makes it much easier.

Be open minded and ready for experiencing new things and do not hesitate to try out something new and jump into the unknown.

Use the time during the exchange wisely and enjoy as much as you can. Half a year might sound long, but it passes in a blink of an eye.

For me, as a traveller and a person that loves to just hit the road and experience life, people around are the most important, because they help us to settle down and find different ways of spending time that we maybe never thought about previously. Moreover, they can be very supportive and we can do the same for them, which can lead to building stronger relationships and introducing a lot of calmness in actions, because it is easier to enjoy the time with like-minded people.

## **Practical experiences**

### **1. How was the application process?**

The application process was quite simple and smooth. I knew what is required from me and what I have to do in order to apply and be accepted.

#### **a. What did KEA help you with?**

KEA helped with filing all the required documents and choice of subjects, as well as provided with valuable information about the exchange process itself, which helped me to prepare myself properly.

#### **b. What help did you receive from your school abroad?**

Limited information about how to get Spanish ID, rules of stay and similar information that can be also easily found online on the government or travellers websites. In general the university was not very active in the lives of exchange students apart from the place of meeting and studies.

## **2. Did you have any practical difficulties settling down at your destination?**

Not really. As I mentioned previously, coming to Barcelona in advance allowed me to settle down with accommodation, a way of living and building strong relationships that had been a part of my life from the very beginning. Also, based on previous travelling experience or even the fact of moving to Denmark to study, I was aware of my needs and the general experience of moving abroad, therefore I was properly prepared and calm before coming. Even if some difficult situation arose, I could approach it properly, be it by myself or with the help of people around.

### **a. How helpful was the receiving school in this process?**

Didn't really use their help.

### **3. Where did you live?**

I was living in Gracia, which in my personal opinion that is also shared by a lot of people I have met, is one of the best (if not the best) neighbourhood for a student/young person that seeks to enjoy the real beauty of Barcelona that is not overwhelmed by a huge and constant inflow of tourists. It is a very lovely and calm neighbourhood that is very well connected with the entire city, therefore if somebody looks for a more active experience, such as coming back home at 6 am, there is no problem with doing so.

Gracia is very calm and feels very local. Has a lot of great squares and charming streets with cafes and restaurants serving delicious food and coffee. I have visited many other neighbourhoods, however I always felt that Gracia is the place to be and enjoy life as it comes.

#### **a. Was it difficult to find accommodation?**

It was not very complicated. I did the research and asked friends about ways of finding accommodation in Barcelona.

I was given a lot of websites and found Facebook groups where I could contact people offering a place to stay. It definitely requires a lot of patience and carefulness, since in such situations, there are

some people that want to simply scam newcomers and do not really care about anything else.

All in all, it is definitely manageable with a little bit of effort.

### **b. Was it expensive?**

It was not very expensive, I would say that the average price for the kind of accommodation. I was living in a room in a shared flat in a good location that was close to the metro and buses as well as for example Sagrada Familia and other worth-seeing places.

### **4. What kind of expenses did you have in general?**

Of course the main part of my expenses were food spendings, but with responsible planning it is very affordable to prepare proper meals and not starve. The rest consisted of restaurants and trying out local food as well as going out to the bars, football matches, music concerts and the like.

Moreover, I was sightseeing a lot, therefore museum/landmarks costs were also included in my budgeting, however I must admit that there are really a lot of places in Barcelona that are for free and are truly beautiful and are not very often mentioned by various kinds of guide websites. During my stay, I was lucky enough that public transportation became 50% cheaper (20 euros instead of 40 euros for a 3 month ticket), therefore I saved some money on monthly tickets.

**a. Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?**

In general I spent more than planned, but not due to the fact of miscalculations or unexpectedly higher prices there, but because I discovered much more in Barcelona that I knew before coming. Especially thanks to my close ones that made me a part of their lives, showed me around and showed me how to live without spending much, where not to overpay and helped me with trying out more things than tourists usually do not really do or think about.

**Conclusion**

Professionally my expectations were satisfying and I enjoyed studying at LaSalle, mostly due to some of the classes that were enjoyable and people I met there. It was a nice experience.

Regarding personal journey. In the past I have been to Spain a few times, lived in Malaga for a month during high-school exchange, so I had some kind of knowledge about what to expect and how it is going to be. However the way I lived here went beyond my expectation and I integrated with the Spanish culture the most I could. I became a part of the day to day routine and values that people share while living there their entire lives. I could see how the culture is built and works in a natural way from families, through young people, older ones and within a professional environment. It

was one hell of an experience that made me love Spain even more. I know I was lucky to be able to create such a way of living there, but sometimes we all need some luck. I believe that Spain is definitely a place where it can be found.



