

Exchange Report

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Introduction

Hi, I'm Isabella, a student in KEA from Finland, who went on an exchange (3 semester) to ESDi in Sabadell, Spain in January 2022 to June 2022. I study in KEA multimedia design, and on my exchange I chose mostly graphic design courses.

My expectations before starting the school was thinking that the school will be easy-going. This was however not the case. They expect a lot from you, even as an exchange student, which is good if you want to advance your skills. For me, seeing as I came to Spain to really further my skills in design, and not to party, it was perfect. I really felt under pressure sometimes with having to work on the side (I work remotely as a web-designer for a danish company), but now when school is over, I can see that I have developed my skills with graphic design.



Barcelona



Experiences at the host university

I chose to have 8 different courses on my exchange, which were: Communication, Materials & Technology 1, Photography, Computing 2, Projects 1, Representation Drawing, Design Theory & History 2 & Profession Ethics.

Communication:

In communication we learned about semiotics, which is the study of the use of symbolic communication. We learned how you communicate with design, and why you should therefore be mindful when creating something, since for eg. a colour can mean different things in different countries.

This course was a lot of theory, and not a lot of practical teaching. The teacher held long lectures about how you can interpret design, but I would have enjoyed to have projects during the course, to learn it on a deeper level.

Experiences at the host university

Materials & Technology 1 (graphics):

This course was about typography and how to study it, and use it as a graphic designer. We had 2 big projects during this course, where we could work on it in class, while the teacher came around giving feedback and helping us. I really enjoyed this class, because it helped me to create better designs, when I now know the history and techniques of typography. The teacher Ines was also such a great teacher, really giving the student a lot of attention and feedback. I recommend this class if you want to learn more about typography.

Photography:

In photography we had a mix of theory with application. In school you can borrow cameras and try out different techniques. The class was interesting and I learned a lot about lightning when taking photos, outdoor/ indoor photography and human/object photography.



Photography class

Experiences at the host university

Computing 2 (graphics):

During this course, we were taught Figma, on a deep level. Before I came here, we had worked with Figma a little bit at KEA. But here we went to a whole deeper level, getting to really understand how to build great prototypes in it. We had one big project for the course, but it was divided into smaller tasks that we had to hand in. Our big project was to come up with a new app or website for a company (imaginary). We had to create sitemap, wireframes, user flows, concept paper & the clickable prototype. If you want to work as a web designer, I recommend this course.

Projects 1 (graphics):

Projects 1 was my favourite subject in ESDi. Here we dove into graphic design, and we had to deliver 5 different projects during the course. You worked during class on your projects, and got feedback from the teacher. This was a more practical course, and not a lot of theory. The teacher Lalo is a talented graphic designer and he gave really great feedback and help during the course. If you want to become a better graphic designer, this is the course for that!

A project in Projects 1, where we had to create an artist brand with ourselves as the artist. Here I am a 70's style bohemian singer.



Experiences at the host university

Representation Drawing:

In this course we were taught how to draw like a designer. How to sketch quickly many different ideas, and how to look at objects from a designer's point of view. We had a new project every 2 weeks. This course was beneficial for being a graphic designer, and to learn how to also draw non-digitally.

Design Theory & History 2:

I thought that I wouldn't like this class, since in high-school I hated history. But this class I actually really enjoyed, because it was about design history (and not war history, which so much history is about). It is extremely beneficial to know the history of design, and what choices you make, actually can be linked to a certain style in history, and that might convey a hidden message. I feel this class really taught me a lot, and the teacher, Jeffrey, is so enthusiastic about this subject so it was easy to listen to him. During this course we had to write an essay, hold a 10 minute presentation about a subject and also write an exam.

Representation drawing class



Experiences at the host university

Profession ethics:

This course was about how to be an ethical designer. The course was a lot about sustainable design, and how we are the future of sustainability, since bad designs are a leading cause of pollution in the world. This course is more for product designers, but it is still beneficial for all people in the design field. I really learned a lot about upcycling, biodesign, biomimicry and circular design. During this course we had to deliver a project every week, instead of a big project at the end. But we had time during class to do the homework, so in the end, if you join every class you won't have that much homework.

Social and cultural experiences

I feel the easiest way to get friends is through school. When we arrived, ESDi arranged an exchange student day, so that we all could get to know each other. I feel this was a really great start, so that when school started, you had already made some friends.

I chose to live in Sabadell, because I didn't want to commute everyday to school, and also because I had a part-time job on the side, so I needed to be somewhere where I could concentrate. I liked living in Sabadell, it gives you a more authentic spanish lifestyle. I didn't know any Spanish before I got here, but because they don't really speak English in Sabadell, I have naturally learned the basics and can manage to talk to people in the street or in stores.



Social and cultural experiences

Sabadell is also a more quiet town, than lively Barcelona, so if you want a more peaceful lifestyle, I would recommend Sabadell. I also have felt very safe here, living alone as a woman. I also joined in Sabadell a dance studio, to dance popping.
(<https://lasoulsabadell.com/dance-center>) That was also a great experience to meet other people, and to also learn Spanish since the class was just in Spanish.

The great thing about living in Sabadell is that it's very close to Barcelona, so during weekends I could travel to Barcelona, and also experience the big city life, with beaches, cool restaurants and beautiful architecture. During my stay I also travelled to other regions, like Alicante and Ibiza. I really can recommend travelling by the company Vueling. They have cheap flights, and it's sometimes cheaper to fly to nearby islands than to take a train to another city.



Sabadell



Ibiza



Alicante

Practical experiences

I travelled to Barcelona before school started, and stayed at a hostel. When I arrived, I didn't have a place to stay yet, because I thought it's easier to find it while I am in Spain. I used the app Idealista to find an apartment, and the first showing I had was an apartment in Sabadell. I really liked it and moved in after 5 days in Barcelona.

I would recommend saving money before going on the exchange. Even though Spain is cheaper than Denmark, there still are more adventures here, while you are on an exchange that you want to take part of.

Conclusion

I was pleasantly surprised with how good the school was. It is a well-known design school and I really got inspired and learned so many things as a designer. I am also very happy with the courses I chose, because my goal was to become a better graphic designer. I also loved that most assignments were done individually, because it really allowed me to learn programs like Illustrator, Indesign, Photoshop & Figma better, because I couldn't rely on anyone else. I also preferred to work alone, because I got projects that I could add to my portfolio that only represented my own designs and ideas.

Overall I really recommend coming on this exchange if you want to become a better designer. There was some hiccups, like sometimes teachers are very late to class, but other than that, I am very happy with my choice and I think you will be too, if you choose ESDi.