

Exchange Report

Top-up Spring
Semester 2022



Matylda Marta Labeda

maty0064@stud.kea.dk 

matylda.labeda@gmail.com 



Host Institution: La Salle URL

Contact Person: Liliana Rocio López Suárez

 liliana.lopez@salle.url.edu

Table of Contents

Top-up Spring
Semester 2022

Introduction	2
Experiences at the host university	2
Social and cultural experiences	4
Practical experiences	5
Conclusion	5

June 3rd, 2022

Introduction

I'm an international student from Poland studying in Denmark. From the very beginning of my studies, I knew I would like to take advantage of any possible opportunity to travel - Erasmus exchange was a perfect solution, although it had to be postponed for two years because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. That means I was able to participate in it during the Spring semester of Design & Business Top-up, Communication Design and Media specialization (semester 2 of the Top-up, semester 6 of the bachelor programme.)

I wanted to go to Spain because I am fond of its culture and language. I ended up going to Barcelona as there were no courses offered in English in other cities.

Although the exchange coordinator Hanne Vang Hansen was very kind and reliable in terms of answering questions I must admit I was quite disappointed with the application process as even though I put a lot of effort into my application and applied fast, I only got to the school of my third choice after being recommended not to go for my initial choices because of competition. Later, I got to know that there were still spots as people cancelled their exchanges, hence I would have appreciated being informed about the possibility of switching schools.

My expectations were to meet new people, change the environment, practice Spanish and participate in more outside of school activities.

Experiences at the host university

The courses I took at my host university: Digital marketing strategies, marketing services in a digital era, Sports media and PR, New product and service development, Modern social thought and methods and Foreign language (Spanish).

June 3rd, 2022

The host school was not very helpful in settling the exchange students. We had an introduction day, but many things were left unsaid and there was no integration in-between students prepared. One has to figure out everything herself/himself.

The style of teaching definitely varies from what I have experienced in Denmark. In the beginning, I felt a little as if I was back in high school, although later I appreciated the more theoretical approach as it made me feel like I was provided valuable knowledge.

A quick heads-up: group projects can go terribly wrong as many people do not put any effort in, so if possible I would recommend getting in groups with people you like working with already.

Something to keep in mind is that there is a lot of work and projects going on simultaneously. Usually, at KEA all the subjects combine into one or two big projects per semester, whereas here, each course has its separate deadlines and schedules, so do not expect to only go out, there is also a lot of school work to do.

I can highly recommend my marketing and sports teachers - Dawn Karen Hiscock and Christopher Kennett (both of them are British). What I found very rewarding is teachers using their own network to provide students with one-of-a-kind experiences and project collaborations (e.g.: there were projects made with brands such as Red Bull, Media Markt, or Desigual).

I really liked the marketing services class, I believe there were many valid points made and useful for the future theories introduced (e.g.: bachelor thesis).

Unfortunately, I found the digital marketing class quite outdated and often misleading, even though it was taught by a young teacher.

One piece of advice that I could give is to take classes that subjects interest you, even if the industry/field does not match one's interest (e.g.: I enjoyed Sports media class a lot, even though I am not interested in Sports, and would prefer it to be about the fashion industry).

June 3rd, 2022

Social and cultural experiences

It is hard for me to elaborate on social experiences abroad, as it is my 3rd time changing an international learning environment. I would say that a good mindset would be not expecting to make friends right away - things take time, it is often hard, and you really have to put yourself out there and take initiative to meet new people.

As for culture, I found Spanish people kind and open, but as it always tends to be they stick with whom they know already, hence I mainly got closer with other exchange students.

Another thing is language - if it is possible I recommend taking Spanish classes during the exchange as it is easy to practice on an everyday basis, I already had elementary Spanish skills and had no problem using the language on every occasion. Important: in Barcelona, the most common language is Catalan which is surprisingly different from Spanish (a mix of Spanish and French), and of course everyone understands Spanish, but often city signs or menus are in Catalan.

One last thing - the weather. When coming to Spain I expected the weather to be quite warm and sunny from the beginning, but we have actually experienced a slight anomaly, and the weather has been awful for 3 months, so I would say incoming students have to be prepared for all circumstances.

Spain is a great place to eat out. I recommend everyone to take advantage of the lunch offers (menu del dia), with which you can get two courses, a drink and a dessert or coffee for around 10 euros.

One thing to keep in mind is that many places (shops and restaurants) close in the afternoon and open back up in the evening.

I highly recommend downloading the Erasmus Bcn app that offers many one or few days' trips around Spain (or abroad) for a very good price. It is a great way to see places outside the city and meet new people.

June 3rd, 2022

Practical experiences

I travelled to Spain by plane (it takes approx. 3 hours from Denmark). The easiest way to get from the El Prat airport to the city is by taking an Aerobus that takes you directly to the centre (Plaza España, Plaza de Cataluña).

When it comes to accommodation, it was quite hard finding a nice place although not as hard as in Copenhagen. The same goes with the prices, a lot depends on the standard of the flat (which the average is already a lot lower than in Denmark). The prices of apartments/rooms for rent vary from 500 to 1400 euros. It is nearly impossible to find a nice place for a price of the Erasmus grant.

I stayed in an apartment rented from a private person and I would recommend it. It was important for me to live alone after my experiences, although many people decide to move in with other students as it is way cheaper. There are many housing/student agencies that can help you find a place, but personally, I would recommend looking for private landlords - although the price might seem higher, there are no hidden costs such as agency fees (which can be very high) and deposit scams.

Important: Although Barcelona is a beautiful city, it can feel quite unsafe especially for a girl when it gets dark. I would not recommend living in the Latin quarter: El Raval, Barri Gotic (even though they are great place to walk through during the day).

The average cost of weekly groceries was around 30/40 euros for me.

Conclusion

I am satisfied with my exchange. I wish there were more activities organized by the host school because that would have made making friends and settling in a way easier. On the professional side, I got to know some great professors and networked quite a lot, so I am happy with that.

Last words for the incoming students: exchange and studies abroad are overall great experiences, but especially if it is your first time, be aware that it can also feel lonely.