

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE STUDENT REPORT

You can write the report either in English or Icelandic

Name of the University: Universidad de Navarra

Name of the student: Hrannar Árni Barkarson

Faculty: Economics department

Exchange semester: Fall and spring

Fall / Spring, 2014-2015

I GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

1. Describe the school and its surroundings – very short

The school was located at an excellent position and the surroundings beautiful. The areas surrounding the facilities were filled with trees and a mesmerizing grass field. The interior of the Economics department was very modern and comfortable.

2. Current faculty divisions and special areas.

They offer a wide variety of studies but I do not know much about them. They do have a special building for economic and law studies, a separate building for communication studies and another one for studies such as psychology, philosophy and similar studies. I believe that most language studies were taught at the main building.

3. number of exchange students

I don't have an exact number but the fall semester had more exchange students and it must have been around 100 exchange students, most of them in the Economics department. In the spring semester the number was a bit lower so I would assume around 80-90 students, and again most of them in the Economics department.

4. Study structure

Typical bachelor study structure were the courses have lectures for about 1-2 hours per week. Most of the courses had an assignment throughout the semester and then a final exam, so a pretty typical structure that can be found anywhere else in the world.

II PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Information before you left

- When did you receive the information package from the University?

I received basic information such as the dates of specific events through email before my arrival and I received the practical information a couple of days after I arrived. They dedicate 1-2 days for international students to get to know the area and ask questions about the facilities and the school.

- Any difficulties, such as communication or late responses?

It was difficult getting the basic information before I arrived, but that might have been due to summer vacations for the staff. But I received everything in time so it did not prove to be much trouble.

Academic Calendar – important dates

- Arrival date – introductory week: 28-31 of August 2014
- First day of the semester: 1st or 2nd of September, depends on the department
- Last day of classes: End of November, beginning of December. Depends on the department and the courses
- Examination period: End of November, beginning of December. Depends on the department and the courses. No idea about re-uptake exams.

Reception of incoming students – describe how you were welcomed

- Was the administration and faculty well prepared for your arrival?

Yes they were pretty well prepared and the construct sounded pleasing. However the follow-through was not that good. During orientation days it was all pretty good, just a bombardment of general and practical information but a good way to get to know the staff and the other students. There was a trip to San Sebastian on both semesters and on the first semester they just told us that this is San Sebastian and that we would be free to roam around the city. It did not sit well with the students that they were not being given a

tour of the city by someone who knows the city so it was basically just walking around the city without any guidance. It was better on the second semester as the student council gave us a tour of everything in San Sebastian and told us everything about the major cities and buildings in the city.

- Did the school's students participate in the reception of the exchange students?
The student council – which consists of only students – gave students the details that we needed and gave us the “tour” of San Sebastian. They did give a tour of Pamplona as well but I did not show up for that since I had arrived in Pamplona one week prior to the orientation days.

Housing

- Did you have housing at your disposal or did you have to find your own housing?
I found my apartment by myself. I'm not sure if the school helps with finding apartments in Pamplona but they do have student dorms at the campus. Most international students declined those apartments and wanted to be on their own. It was not difficult to find an apartment and many students arrive in Pamplona without an apartment because the Universidad de Navarra Facebook page is always posting information about available apartments or rooms.
- What support did you receive from the school in locating housing?
A friend of my father contacted a local renting agency that set up the apartment for me.
- Any special issues or good ideas for prospective students?
Try to find an apartment as soon as possible, preferably before May/June for a fall semester or October/November for spring semester since the best apartments go out fast. But for a single person who does not mind living with other international or Spanish students, the best option is to find the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/827337800627505/>) or type in UNAV International Students 2014-2015 on Facebook and ask to join. For most students going to Pamplona, the student council or Nachi de Lange (Head of the student council) will invite you to join this group or a new group that will be created for upcoming years.

Costs

- Describe the most important expenses such as rent, books, food, etc.
Rent is usually around 250-400 Euros for a single person living with 2-4 individuals. The prices depend on location, size of the apartment and how many rooms are there. I paid 600 for an apartment with 2 bedrooms and the location was a 20-minute walk from the school and 20-minute walk to the downtown, and only 2-5 minutes from the major discos. I did not buy any book for any course since the teachers do not pressure international students into buying the books, but if there is an interest to buy a book it could be around 80-100 Euros for a new book and considerably lower for a used book. The books can probably be purchased in the library, but it would be best to contact the school for those matters. It is however possible to rent a book, but as I stated earlier I have no idea how much that would cost. Food is relatively cheap at the school from an Icelandic standard, but much more expensive than it would be at a local store. The cheapest store is Día followed by Eroski or BM. These stores are located everywhere in the city. The variety is pretty bad although there is a huge Eroski store in Iturrama (which is the area where most of the international students live). The best variety is in Carrefour, which is located pretty close to the school (about a 15 minute walk) but far away from most apartments where students lived. The bus fare is 1.35 Euros for a single ticket but it is possible to buy a bus card which will cost 5 Euros upfront (since you have to buy the card for 5 Euros) and then it is possible to charge the card anywhere. The bus fare with a bus card is either 63 or 64 cents. Taxis are insanely cheap compared to Iceland but every time you take a taxi to either the airport or the train station, they will charge you extra (they press a button that says “Aeropuerto” which is the airport or “Renfe” which is the train station). Not sure how much extra they charge but I would assume around 2-4 euros. The bars are relatively cheap, sometimes it is possible to buy a large beer for 1-2 euros but at the major bars and discotecas, the prices are very high and some discotecas will charge you 10 Euros to get in but that comes with a free drink of your choosing, so usually people go for the strongest possible drink.

The International Office

- Who is responsible for incoming exchange students?
Depends on the department. Each department has their own international department and at the Economics facility there was a special department just for the students in the Economics department. They give the practical information about the school while the Student council gives information about the town and the nightlife to all the students.
- Did you get good service from the office?
Yes, they were always there and willing to help with everything.
- Do you receive all relevant information?
Yes I did, either from the school via email or through my exchange buddy that the school provided. I also got some information by talking directly to the people in the office.

Exchange promotion

- What kind of activity did you take part in to promote exchange to Iceland at your host university?
There was a day dedicated to the promotion of home universities. The school set up tables with general information such as brochures about the home school and the students from those schools stood there and answered any questions from interested students.

Social Activities

- How was your relationship with other students?
Like with any other school, the local students tend to mind their own business and do not try to reach out that much to the international students. I got to know a lot of people from all over the world who are full time students through my exchange buddy and once you get to know them, or the Spanish students, they tend to be very open. The Spanish students will on most occasions not try to spark a conversation with an exchange student.
- How was the relationship among the exchange students?
Very good. Most people are doing the exact same thing that is going to another country without knowing anyone and leaving their comfort zone. It was very easy for my part to get to know the other people since they will make or break your experience during an exchange semester.
- Is there a student organization, and if so, are the exchange students part of it?
Not the exchange students, but some exchange students took it upon themselves to plan meetings and activities without any help from the school or local students. But the student council organized events for international students such as trips to other towns, hikes and social events.
- Are there any special activities and gatherings for exchange students?
There are many planned trips and social events that the school plans and all of those were amazing.
- Did you participate actively in social activities?
I did my best to participate in all of them since the time spent with these people in these surroundings is short and the time will fly by. So my advice is to go to all the gatherings and meet as many people as possible because chance is that you will only meet about 5% of them again and never in the exact same situation.

Culture and Language

- Do you have any language problems with the faculty or other students?
Not with English. I took all my courses in English since I thought it would be a waste of time to take academic courses in Spanish since they would be way too difficult and it would not be beneficial to study business in Spanish since I will never use it again. Obviously it is not the same with the language since I tried my best to be able to speak it and understand it but the problem is that all the international students predominantly will speak English so English will be the language that most will master during an exchange semester.

- How are the possibilities to experience the country and the culture?
Pretty easy. The train system is fantastic but the airport in Pamplona does only fly to Madrid 4 times a day so getting out of Spain did sometimes take a long time and was in some cases expensive since I either had to take a train or a bus to Barcelona/Madrid or fly to Madrid just to get out of the country. The town also offers a lot of activities that interested people can attend, the student council usually informs students of these activities through Facebook.

Cultural and Social Effects from the Exchange Experience

- How do you think the exchange experience will affect you from a cultural and social point of view?
It broadens your mind and since you have so much time for leisure during an exchange semester, it facilitates getting to know the culture since you can spend more time on it to experience it first hand.
- How do you think the exchange experience influences your future career possibilities?
Obviously it helped me getting to know how business is conducted in other countries first hand and to understand what is expected in a business context in this country. It also gives an individual a huge confidence boost since it is a challenge to live in another country.

III ACADEMIC INFORMATION

The Teaching situation

- In which language are the courses taught?
Both English and Spanish. I only took English courses. Some courses are available both in English and Spanish.
- How would you evaluate the level of study in relationship to the level at RU?
I took undergraduate courses so it was all academic reading. Comparing it to the master at RU, which is more practical, is kind of irrelevant and I have no idea how the undergraduate courses are taught at RU since I did not take my BSc there. But they are quite strict on having everything as academic as possible. The only downside with the English classes was that some teachers were not that good in English so it was quite difficult to understand them. And due to this, some questions from the students were not answered since the teacher did not have enough knowledge of the English language to answer it.
- Is the teaching primarily practical or theoretical?
Very theoretical, in some courses they used cases but in most it was just theoretical.
- Are the professors using cases, group work or lectures (or a mix)?
A mixture of those. Some had cases and lectures, some had group work and lectures and some had cases and lectures. Depends mainly on the teacher. But there were about 1-2 courses that used all 3 criteria to evaluate the grade.
- How is the workload compared to that at RU?
Can't compare it directly since it was undergraduate in Pamplona but a master at RU, but the workload was pretty heavy towards the end and in some courses during mid semester but most courses were just a steady workload throughout the semester.
- How is the relationship between faculty and students?
Pretty good, just with most schools that offer exchange studies they tend to not care that much what international people are doing. But this is just because the courses are taught in English and exchange students comprise around 90% of the classrooms in English courses. I have no idea how it is with the Spanish courses but I heard they were much tougher since the standard is pretty high for local students.
- What is the relationship between the students in the classroom?
Pretty good, most of them are international students so they know each other from time spent out socializing or from other courses. The Spanish people tended just to hang on their own in the classes.

Required Literature

- Is the literature in English?
The textbooks and slides for English courses are in English but in Spanish for Spanish courses.
- Is the literature used for detailed knowledge or a broad overview?
Detailed knowledge, the courses were often very dry with academic knowledge.
- Is exam based on the literature or on the lectures?
Predominantly literatures, which is basically the foundation for the lectures. Some courses had questions on the final exam from the group works that we had to argue either for or against.

Exams

- What types of exams were you given?
Most of them were a combination of academic knowledge either through multiple choices or short essays. Some exams had a long question at the end that basically comprised of material from the book, lectures or group work. In some courses there was not a final exam and the final assignment was either a group work or an individual presentation.

Other

- Do students have easy access to the library and its resources?
Yes they have access to everything through their card that is issued by the school. It is impossible to enter any building on the campus without a card. The buildings closed at around 21:00 and were closed on weekends. They did open the main building during the exam period on Saturdays but only for a few hours.
- How is the access to the computers?
I did not try to access any computer at the school but they have 2 or 3 computer labs in the Economic department. I would think that students would need the same credentials to access the computers at the school as they use to access their university emails.
- How is IT used in the teaching or as a distributor of information?
They send out weekly brochures to the emails. I personally haven't read them but every once in a while they send students some updates or other general information through their school emails. Some teachers are pretty bad at uploading slides or other information onto the intra-net, but others uploaded everything.

Description of Courses

Please list all the courses you are taking in the form below:

- Name and code of the course
- Prerequisites, if any
- Exam form
- Comments: Relevance, Difficult/easy, Practical/theoretical, Enrolment problems

Example:

Course name:	Prereq.	Exam	Major at RU	Approved as (Common/elective/extra)
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First semester

Project management	None	Written	International Business	Elective
Quality management	None	Written	International Business	Elective
Strategic management	None	Written	International Business	Common
International trade	None	Written	International Business	Common
Services and applied marketing	None	Written	International Business	Common

Second semester

Sport and brands	None	Presentation	International Business	Elective
Operation management	None	Written	International Business	Common
Business policy	None	Written	International Business	Common

Please fill in all the courses you have taken

Any other experiences you would like to talk about?

I think everything was covered. The town is a bit small but very nice and everything is accessible by bike, bus or by walking. The only problem is that it is quite expensive to go to another country since you either have to fly to Madrid or take the train/bus to either Madrid or Barcelona. But it is very nice and easy to travel to Bilbao, San Sebastian, Zaragoza or France.

As stated above, the teachers did seem to have some difficulty understanding English. On most occasions they did fine during the lecture, but when a conversation went a bit off topic they were in no mans land. It might be due to the fact that they have their degrees in Spanish and are just trying their best to teach it in English.

And in relation to the point above, the Spanish people are not very good at English. So don't be surprised to have difficulty explaining your needs to Spanish people in English. But it puts an extra pressure on the exchange student to learn the local language and broaden their mindset.

Names and e-mails:

The International Exchange Office will appreciate if you will inform about your e-mail addresses, so that other students can contact you for more information.

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