

Name of the University: Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Names of the students: Inga Lilja Pálsdóttir
Exchange semester: Fall 2009

I GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Univesitat de Pompeu Fabra (UPF) is a public university. The University has buildings scattered across Barcelona, mainly between les Rambles and Marina Avenue. The most important buildings are those of Ciutadella Campus, which concentrates the largest library of the University (Dipòsit de les Aigües), Roger de Llúria, and Jaume I buildings. As of 2007, the university had 8,500 students and 1,008 lecturers. Out of the 8,500 students, 1,200 studied Law, 900 studied Business Sciences, 820 studied Business Management and Administration and 770 studied Economics. Other relevant studies are Audiovisual Communication, Journalism, Political Sciences, Humanities and Labor Economics.

II PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Information before you left

- I received a few emails about the introduction week and subjects I could choose.

Academic Calendar

- I arrived around the 12th of September and the Introduction Week started on the 14th.
- The first date of the semester was the 21st of September.
- The last days of classes were on the 27th of November.
- The examination period was from the 1st of December to the 23rd of December.

Reception

- The Introduction Week plus one big dinner at a restaurant was basically all the school did for us. I was very disappointed about the Introduction Week as we did not really get to know the other students. They arranged some lectures about Barcelona, the school, etc. Then we had a treasure hunt at school where we finally got to know a few students in our teams. The dinner was nice but you just sat next to your treasure hunt team so you did not get to know all the other teams. Where I am from the introduction weeks are always all about getting to know each other and breaking the ice. I think the objective of the introduction week at UPF was about introducing us to the school.

Housing

- Accommodation is something you have to find yourself. You have a lot of exchange students sharing apartments which they've found through Facebook or online homepages. As I was only going to stay in Barcelona for approx. 3 months I decided to find a room before my arrival at a student residence, even though this would be more expensive. I did not want to waste my short time there on apartment hunting and decided to book a room at Recidencia Melon District, which is near the Marina metro station. The rent was high (€700/month) but I could walk to school, the rooms were well equipped and the service there is relatively good. The residence is brand new and is really fancy with 4 swimming pools on the roofs, flat screen TVs and the safety is high 24/7.

Costs

- Barcelona is an expensive city. The most expensive things are rent, groceries, phone credits and leisure activities. I would say that these are much higher than in Iceland. I only had to buy one book for Spanish which was at a reasonable price. The good thing is that exchange students are good at doing cheap activities, such as meeting at the cheapest bar in Barcelona, eating home with friends, etc.

The International Office

- OMA is the name of the international office at UPF. It is open from 10 to 15 during weekdays and is located at the Ciutadella campus. The people working there are difficult to understand sometimes when communicating in English but they are all very helpful. The OMA office regularly sends emails with important information and is keen to answer quickly as well to relevant questions.

Social Activities

- There are a lot of activities going on for exchange students in Barcelona. There are different promoters from Facebook and agencies like ESN that arrange trips and events. At the same time the school's Language Office arranges some trips for students to practice their Catalan or Spanish with local students. Additionally, other exchange students also take the initiative to arrange activities where everybody is invited.
- Barcelona is the most popular destination for exchange students so you meet a lot of people from around the world. The most common age for the exchange students are 19-22.

Culture and Language

- Many people speak English in Barcelona so the language was usually not a problem. Catalan is the official language in Barcelona so it was limited how much I got to practice my Spanish. There is a lot of cultural things to explore in Barcelona, however, due to the fact that Barcelona is such an international city I do think that I experienced more an international culture rather than a Spanish culture.

III ACADEMIC INFORMATION

The Teaching situation

- All of the courses I chose were taught in English at the Ciutadella campus. However, the choice of courses taught in English was not big and some of the professors were almost impossible to understand orally and written. The vast majority of the courses offered are concerning economics.
- Most of the courses are only 4,8 ECTS (the Spanish lectures were only 3 ECTS) but the workload did not correlate at all to the credits. For each course you have several presentations, assignments, midterms and exams and at least 5 hours lectures a week. Apart from that you have a big amount of reading due for each class. Most of my fellow students who took 6 courses in order to get as close to 30 ECTS as possible had to drop courses as it was impossible for them to keep up with lectures, readings and assignments.
- Before arriving I had signed up for 4 courses: Spanish, Business Creation, International Economic History and Organizational Behavior. However, after the Introduction Week OMA informed us that the school had decided that no exchange students were allowed in the Organizational class and that it was only for permanent students. When we wanted to sign up for other classes we were told that they were all full. This put us in a very bad situation but taught us that you should always expect the unexpected.
- Business Creation was a very practical course while International Economic History was a very theoretical course. Both of the courses had a lot of group work and case studies. International Economic History was the course I enjoyed the least. For each of the course we had to read several hundred of pages written with a very heavy vocabulary which made it very difficult to understand and extremely uninteresting to read. One of the professors who carried out most of the lectures hardly spoke English which made it even more difficult for us to understand the different theories of the course. Business Creation was much better as the teacher spoke good English and had a lot of practical knowledge to share with us. Also the literature used was much more up to date and interesting to read. The Spanish courses were very good as well. The teacher did a lot in order to make the lectures fun and interactive. All of the work was individual and we used a very common Spanish book called AULA.
- The teachers interacted with us through Aula Global which is the school's intranet. The Aula Global was difficult to understand at first but you get used to it.
- The classes taught in English classes consist of approx. 90% exchange students. As a master student I had to take courses which my university back home would give me credits for. The courses taught at master level at UPF are also open for undergraduates. This somehow meant that in most classes most of the student actually were undergraduates.

Exams

- The International Economic History exam was written and was basically a few essay questions concerning the whole curriculum
- The Business Creation exam was a small quiz with open- and closed-ended questions. Wrong answers in the closed-ended questions gave minus points.
- The Spanish written exam was about grammar and had a essay question. The oral exam was just a small talk exam in pairs with the teacher.

Other

- The library is easy to access and very popular to study in. There are several computers, printers and scanners. You need a copy card in order to print and photocopy.
- All teachers use PowerPoint to teach with. Not all teachers are willing to upload their lectures online.

<i>Course name:</i>	<i>Prereq.</i>	<i>Exam</i>	<i>Major at RU</i>	<i>Approved as</i> <i>(Common/elective/extra)</i>
<i>Business Creation</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Elective</i>
<i>International Economic History</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Elective</i>
<i>Spanish (Level 1)</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Written/Oral</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Elective</i>

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