

Personal Report

University of Granada, Summer Semester 2019, 1 Semester Soziale Arbeit und Gesundheit, Fachbereich 4

Language

Which language did you use? How did you communicate with your fellow students?

At the University of Granada all classes are taught in Spanish! There is hardly any use of English. All texts and assignments are therefore also in Spanish. When I arrived, I had a certificate of B2, but I was actually still on the edge between B1 and B2. Nevertheless, it was possible to follow the classes. Until the end I did not understand everything, but the most important information. This is also due to the Andalusian accent which is a quite fast and "slurred" Spanish. Depending on the origin of people, they tend to talk very fast and miss out all "s" at the end of the words. Still within a month I customized myself and could follow the class well. The classes are quite big (20-70 students), so it is recommendable to sit in the front. I could considerably improve my Spanish language skills, verbally and in written form. With my fellow students I talked in Spanish. I can imagine that one could also hand in assignments in English, but I took it as a good practice to improve my Spanish.

Accommodation

Did the host university arrange for accommodation?

No, unfortunately not.

How high were your overall monthly costs for accommodation (in Euro)?

220 – 240€

How would you describe the quality of your accommodation?

Very good.

How well was the accommodation situated? How long did it take you on average to reach the partner university (in minutes)?

My accommodation was situated right in the center of Granada. The area is called Camino de Ronda, which is very recommendable, as it is not so touristic, very local apartment-houses and close to the old town center and surrounded by a lot of shops, supermarkets and bars. Still it is a quiet surrounding (depending on the street) and there is a park and the mountains nearby. To the faculty of social work I walked 15-18 mins, which is good. In Granada one walks a lot.

Which web sites, forums, facebookpages, contacts, etc. can you recommend for looking for accommodation?

Searching for flats in Granada is quite easy. The prices are comparable with the prices of student flats (student dormitory) in Frankfurt. It is easy to find a room, but if you are looking for something particular it is recommendable to start searching and contacting people one month before. For example, I wanted to live with people who would talk Spanish. The websites I can recommend are two Facebook groups: PISOS GRANADA or PISOS EN GRANADA! There are a lot of offers. Additionally, there is a website called Idealista. In General, I can only recommend private rents, not through an agency. The three pages offer both. Therefore, look for privately rented rooms (habitación privada/ casero particular). Don't agree on anything before you haven't seen it. Always ask for pictures and prices (175-300 Euros all inclusive). If you like it, you might be able to reserve a room and arrange a visit once here in Granada.

Where have you been accommodated (name of dormitory, location, part of town, etc.)? And how would you describe the surroundings of your accommodation (shopping facilities, distance to the city center, nightlife, etc.?)

My accommodation (shared flat with three other Spanish students) was located in Caminode Ronda, close to the park Federico García Lorca and close to the bar-street: Pedro Antonio. The address is: Calle Lope de Vega 3, 2D. It is a quiet location and very close to several supermarkets, fruit shops, close shops, cash machines (Calle Recogidas) and some bars, clubs and fast food places (Calle Pedro Antonio). To the old town center of Granada it's about 10 mins walking, to the cathedral 7 mins. The park is at 5 mins by foot. There is a bus and metro station (that connects you with the bus terminal and other destinations. But normally, all that is less than 40 mins one normally walks in Granada. I thought of getting a bike, but I decided not to, because of the small streets, pedestrians and one-way streets of where I lived. Otherwise the hot air in summer. I felt more relaxed just walking. The night life is also well reachable from this area: tapas-bars, restaurants, clubs etc.

Arrival at the Partner University and Orientation

Which is the best arrival time?

One week before the semester start is the best time to arrive in Granada. Most Erasmus students book a hostel for the first week until they find an accommodation. Like that you will have enough time to look at the rooms which you already had contacted or search again from here and be able to orientate yourself a bit. Granada is a small city, but one always needs a little time to settle down. In my case I arrived 3-4 days before because my semesters were overlapping, which caused a lot of stress. My arrival time was also ok, but I looked at the rooms meanwhile the orientation days took place and only moved into the reserved room afterwards and I had already been in Granada before, so kind of new my way around. People who still had not found a room when the semester had started, were quite stressed, as living in a hostel normally doesn't allow that much privacy or calmness.

How did you organize your arrival? Was the extent of the orientation program sufficient? What activities can you recommend? Were all important questions answered? What did you have to find out yourself? How fast were you able to get in contact with the domestic students? How were the services for exchange students?

The overlapping semesters were the most stressful part of all. It is recommendable to organize your room in FFM and in Granada beforehand! Once in Granada I looked at three rooms and decided for the one I had reserved. The orientation program of the UGR was sufficient, although a lot of information (faculties, libraries, student card, health, registration), so one should pay attention. It was a bit confusing, because the first introduction was in a different faculty with all Erasmus students mixed, so a big hall with a lot of foreign faces. The second introduction was clearer and at the faculty of social work, but with a professor we never saw again. The person who most helped us is Samuel of the IO in Granada. The contact with Spanish students was difficult, I always had to make the first step and it only held during class. It is good to sit next to a native speaker in class. There are 3 Erasmus networks: ENS, best life, but I preferred to get to know people through dancing/ interests

Living Abroad

Compared to Frankfurt, how high was the cost of living abroad?

Similar to Frankfurt.

What additional expenses did you have during your semester abroad? How far were you able to travel with your semester ticket? How was your student life off-campus? How were the mensas/ student cafeterias? What types of meals were served? How much did the meals cost? How were the libraries? Was their use free? Did the university provide computer workplaces/ computer pools? Was Wi-Fi available on-campus? Were you able to use study rooms? Were you able to rent separate rooms for studying? Did the university provide a sports program? Was this free of charge?

In total I spend about the same as in FFM, although it is generally cheaper in the south of Spain. Additional expenses were traveling through Andalucía and other cities, entrance fees to the Arabic palaces (ca. 14 euro) and beach-days (ca. 15 euro). I saved money as I don't drink alcohol and avoid clubs with entrance fees. The two Mensa offer a menu of 2-3 plates with bread and fruit for 3,5 Euro. It's recommendable, tasty and filling. Additional vegetarian meals only 2x a week. Nice coffee places close by. The libraries are usually quite small and sticky. At the beginning I stood in a group learning room, but it was very loud, so I moved to the library. Recommendable libraries are in the faculty of social politics and natural science. I could also study at home. PC pools and Wi-Fi is available at Uni and works well. The sports program of the CAD UGR is varied, but expensive. I can recommend dance - (e.g. flamenco) and art classes by the Casa de Porras and free yoga at the civic centers.

Studying at the Host University

How would you describe the academic standard of classes compared to Frankfurt?

Much more challenging.

Did you experience any difference in teaching methods/ class structure? Which were the difference regarding your expectations and your experiences at the partner university? What surprised you, what should newly arriving students know? How were the student services? Was the fact, that you were an exchange student taken into account (by professors or other staff)? If so, how? How were difficulties, which you or other exchange students may have met, handled by the partner university?

I expected a relaxed semester, it was the opposite though. The educational system in Spain is very strict and school-like. I had 2 very stressful semesters, because I still had to finish papers for FFM and collect 30 ECTS points in Granada (5 courses). During the semester I did not have time for Spanish classes. Some courses have 2-3 professors and each one expects capacities. There was a lot to read, write and hand-in every week. The academic quality is less, but the work amount double or triple. The final notes consist of various works, which in FFM would only be one. Lectures, hand-ins and exams all at the same time. I aimed for good grades, so I spent a lot of time studying, also because all is in Spanish. It is only recommendable, if you really want to study in Spanish, are interested in the courses (as was I) and motivated. If so, it is definitively manageable and possible to receive good grades!! Main difficulties were to hand in the works on time, but the Profs are flexible.

Final Remarks

What should future exchange students know/ do/ avoid? How would you overall rate your exchange experience? In what ways have you benefitted academically, personally, linguistically for your future career?

The UGR has a good reputation. Still I cannot really recommend studying there, as the educational system is so strict. For Spanish students the work amount is normal, I felt to be one of the few that protest. For me it was an interesting experience to see the differences of the educational systems. I thought that the German one was strict. In comparison, I appreciate the FFM system of less tasks, but better quality. Apart from all the stress, I learned a lot! Not only Spanish, but I also adopted critical perspectives on society and can implement them in social work. I have participated more in classes than in Germany. For me it proves the effort I can make and I am proud of the results. Reflectively I learn not to stress myself that much and I will give myself more time to relax and enjoy, however the workload may be. Luckily, I will spend the whole summer in the south to enjoy the area, culture and people. In the end it is all possible and if you want to do it, you will be able to! :)