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# Madrid

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## Introduction

Before saying anything else let me just say that traveling to Madrid and study abroad has been one of my best decisions. Heaps of challenges I will not lie, but what a city and what an experience. I would not change it for anything.

When I heard in first semester that studying abroad was a possibility I was hooked immediately. Opposite many other students from my class I was not sure in which direction I want to go with this education and therefore I thought third semester would be a good time to study abroad to try something different and hopefully come back with a more clear vision. I chose Madrid mainly because of the country and culture and because I have a desire for learning fluent Spanish.

Before going abroad and study it is really important you make it clear to yourself what are your expectations and what you want to do with the semester when you are away from KEA. It will not be the same as you are used to, so I think it is a good idea to set a personal goal in order to get the best out of your stay. Some of my goals were: learning Spanish, get an international network and hopefully finding out what I want to do with this education.

I came to Madrid one month before the semester started in August. The reason why was because I did not have a place to live and I had booked a Spanish course for two weeks. I am one of those, it is going to be alright persons, but it will benefit you to do some research before. Especially finding a place to stay can be frustrating and if you arrive just before the semester starts thousands of students will be in the same situation and it can be difficult to find something for a fair price. If you do not speak Spanish then do not go. You can of course but it requires more of you. Find a language school and take some intensive courses helped me a lot. You will find friends fast and everything is easier when you speak just a little Spanish.

## Experience at the host University



Asta (another student from KEA) contacted me and said she was going to study in Madrid as well. We decided to meet the day before school started and then go together the first day. It was a chaotic first day and we felt immediately the Spanish system. It was nice to have her there so we could laugh at it. Not sure that has been the case if I was alone. Before your exchange you choose your subject but when you get there you can change them. And that was what I did. You can choose every subject from first to eight semesters but there is a limited selection of options in English. I ended up with the safest choice in English and tried to take advice from the local students when I should choose. I did not like any of my subjects sad enough.

### Skema – Madrid efterår 2017

- Concrete construction
- English for professional
- Dibujo detalles (detail drawings)
- Interiorismo
- Spanish
- BIM
- City walk history of Madrid

#### **Mandag:**

12:30 – ENGLISH FOR PROFESS(S1.S2)

18:30 – DIBU.DETALLES 1(P1.G2)

#### **Tirsdag:**

08:30 – CONS.ESTRUC.HORM(P1.A1) – engelsk

15:30 – SPANISH COURSE

#### **Onsdag:**

08:30 – CONS.ESTRUC.HORM(P1.A1) – engelsk

12:30 – ENGLISH.FOR.PROFESS(S1.S2)

#### **Torsdag:**

12:30 – INTERIORISMO(P0.P4)

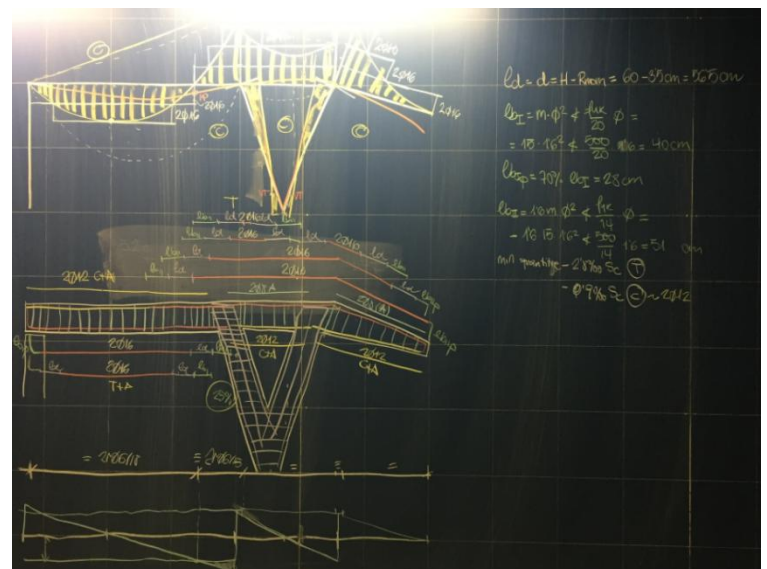
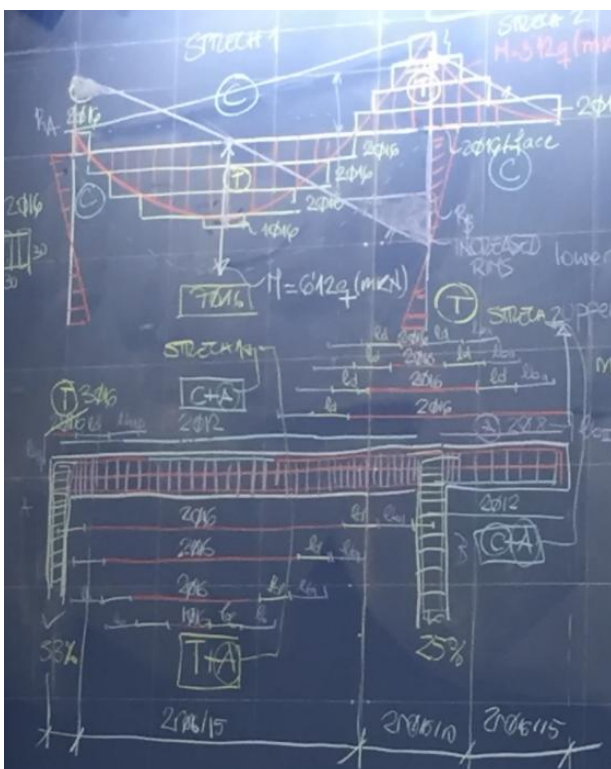
15:30 – SPANISH COURSE

#### **Fredag:**

10:30 – INTROD.BIM.MODELADO(P2.I3)

12:30 – INTERIORISMO(P0.P4)

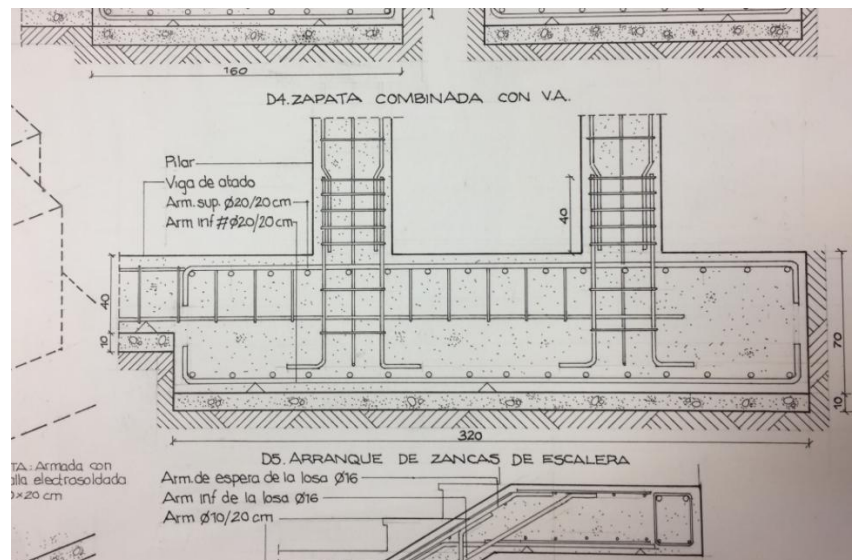
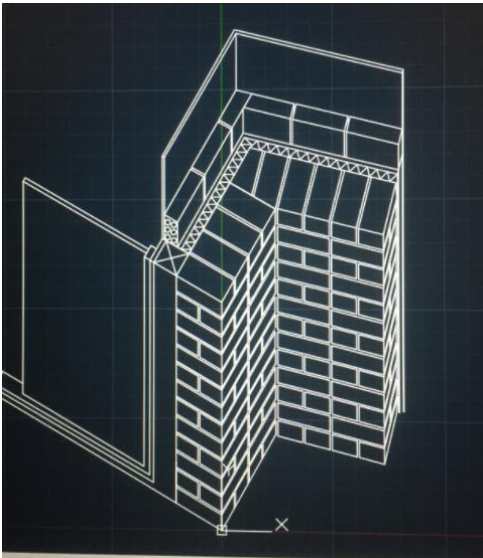
School every day and gaps between classes. Far from the most optimal schedule you can have. But again, I had to accept my Spanish was not good enough to follow classes so this was the best I could get. Concrete construction was interesting in some aspects and it was funny to see how big a difference there is from Denmark. But I found it really difficult. It is all about graphs and making calculation of bending moments in beams and slabs and finding out which type of reinforcement and where to place it. Also the level just increased week after week. We had around five exams and a presentation in this subject. If you do not like physics, do not take this subject. Here are some photos attached so you have an idea of what it was about:



English reminded me a little bit of communication at KEA and you learn some good techniques when speaking in public and presentation techniques as well. But you will be the best in class because the Spanish students are so bad at English in general.

Dibujo detalles is another tough one. If you want to draw with hand take this but it requires a lot of work and it only gives you 3 points. It was one class a week for three hours and in the end of every class you delivered what you had made. But because of my lacking Spanish I missed some of the theory prior exercise and I always had the feeling I was behind in the class. Photos attached:





Then there was interiorismo. Do not take this subject despite everyone will advise you to do. It is so abstract and creative and I had no idea what was going on. A lot of group work high expectations and the two worst teachers in my opinion.

Spanish was not a success either and that was mainly because there were so many students in the class you never really spoke. Take a private Spanish school even though it is more expensive or sign up for one of the sport teams and mingle with the locals.

BIM was Revit where you create your own project and learn some tools and so.

The last subject was three city walks about the history of Madrid and following you had to write 20 pages about a proposal for a city and then present it with a 15 min oral presentation.

It is mainly lectures but sometimes you have class exercise as well. Some subjects have written midterm exams and other have oral presentations. But every subject is hard work and I felt there simply was too much which resulted in, I had to down prior my Spanish. Do not go to Madrid because of the school. I will later talk about why you should choose Madrid but this semester has convinced me that KEA is actually a pretty good school. Again, make it clear to yourself what your goal is with the semester before you choose subjects. Another advice is to find someone who studies at UPM before you arrive they can tell you which subject they like, which one is easy, difficult and so on. I came in contact with Sara Garcia through Sophia and she was so helpful.

## Practical experience

You are going to need a stay to place while you are in Madrid. I did not want to find something before I came because I was afraid of being scammed and I did not know where could be nice to live. So what I did was I booked Airbnb different places the first month more or less until I found the right place. Then I could try living in different areas of the city and meet people which are always good when you are alone. If the location and the possibility of having ten roommates do not bother you, it should not be a problem and you will probably could do it for a cheap price. But I had made it clear to myself I want to stay as central as possible in order to enjoy the city most. To be honest I think I was quit lucky. I texted/called (in Spanish) about thirty people and I got one answer. That was the one I ended up living in. Together with an Indian architecture and a Spanish guy in the neighborhood Lavapiés which is a pretty cool area. I pay around 350€ all included. My room is not the best but I definitely pay for the location. I would not pay more than 400€ a month for a room in Madrid and if you have time to find something it should not be a problem. Just remember a week before the semester starts it will be chaotic and you will enjoy having found something before that. I used the website idealista.com but Facebook and citylife Madrid is also an option. Airbnb is good alternative until you found something cheaper. Most of the Spanish students live home with their parents, so do not expect any help from them. Madrid is all about being out and socializes with people so the less you spent on the rent the more you have to go out. In general it is much cheaper going out for dinner and drinks then Copenhagen. Especially in la Latina and Lavapiés you have the possibility of eating cheap with the locals. Just go from place to place order a beer and you will get free tapas. Another great cheap thing is Wednesday cinema in Madrid, which means you can go to the cinema for only 4€. Never have a seen so many films. If you want to go the gym then Basic Fit is the cheapest option. I paid 20€ a month and it was a great center. If you like to run, I recommend going to Casa de Campo. It is a huge park and there are so many good routes and beautiful nature. It is impossible to run in the city because there are so many people 24/7.

Here is a small list of some good places to know:

- Cine princesa (plaza de España)
- Takos Al Pastor. 1€ tacos - the best

- El brillante, Bocadillos with the locals
- El Chapandaz – drinks and fun
- Casa Mingo – best chorizo in town
- La azotea roof top terrace – cool but expensive

## **Social and cultural experience**

Madrid is known for the city that never sleeps. I can confirm that. There is part opportunities every day and even finding food at 4am should not be a problem. If you plan to go to Madrid before the semester start CityLife is a good option to start making friends. They have a big office at Gran Vía and can also help you with setting up a bank account, a Spanish telephone number and many more practice stuff. Furthermore they host an event everyday seven days a week, where you can go on trips, meet and talk with people from around the world and parties with good student prices. When the semester starts you will find plenty of friends and especially all the Erasmus students are good at organizing trips and parties. In general there is happening a lot in Madrid that appeals to the younger crowd and especially students. For me the best thing about Madrid is to go out and enjoy the city. There are always people on the streets and you do not have to spend a fortune to have fun.

I would not say there has been a big cultural adaption for me. Of course they eat at 10pm but that just makes the day longer so why complain. Perhaps the most enjoying, at least in the beginning, is the saying you probably have heard, “mañana mañana”. People here have a different relation to the clock and even the professors can easily be 15-30 min late for the lectures. When you get used to it I kind of liked it but just keep in mind at the beginning that they are not rude, it is just how it is in Spain. Also the whole administration part of the school was not the best. It took a while before I was in the system and could see homework and if you ask I teacher weather you have an exam, sometimes they will say no and then two weeks after you have. You adapt quickly and after that you will appreciate KEA.



## Conclusion

I love Madrid. As simple as that. Actually I have been so happy for my stay and the city that I am taking a leap of absence, so I can extend my stay with further six months. Professional ways the semester has not been optimal. But I have had so many personal experiences and learned a lot in much other aspect. Hopefully will my Spanish be good enough after New Year so I can choose some more interesting subjects.

Do not choose Madrid because of the professional in my opinion. Choose Madrid because it is the best city in the world. It will make it so much easier for you if you speak Spanish and you will gain so much more from your stay. Both social because the local will accept you immediately but also school ways when you have more options of selecting subjects.

