Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
The instructors were great, very helpful and accessible. I got to know the instructors far better than any professor I’ve had at UCSB

- Could you call them by their first names?
Yes

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
I’d say it was less formal, though the instructors are all incredibly knowledgeable and helpful.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
Yes, they do their best to be available as often as you need their help. If not in person, they are always available by phone and email.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
The courses were about the same difficulty level compared to UCSB.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
Yes the grading system was similar.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
There were a few assignments in the 2 biology courses, and then a mid term and final in both of them. A lot of the work for one of these classes is outdoor identification of plant families. For Agroecology there were a few assignments and a final. The independent research project was different because it was mainly your write-up and presentation of your data that you’re graded on. Spanish was both assignments and a final.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
All exams were written except half of the Spanish final was an oral presentation.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
No one had a problem with the exam schedule in my program, so I’m not sure how flexible it could be, though the instructors were generally very helpful when working with students.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
The professors were very helpful and very accessible for anything that you needed. Also, you have a specific advisor for your independent research project that works individually with you. Generally, I received a lot of academic support.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
Generally, yes but you’re in a situation where it is easy to do so.
- **Was classroom participation expected?**
Classes were only with your EAP group (about 30 people) so participation was expected.

- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?**
Part of the course work was fieldwork, visiting various farms for Agroecology, studying plants for biology, and your fieldwork for your project.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
At the Institute Biology classes are 8am-12pm and Spanish is from 3-5 Monday-Thursday. Agroecology takes up most of the day every Friday. There was an occasional night and Saturday lecture.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
The class culture was similar to here as it was all EAP students. It was very important to be on time as the classes were so small it was apparent if you didn’t attend or were late. Yes you could eat and drink in class.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
All courses were in English except for Spanish classes, which were only in Spanish.

- **What language did you take your courses in?**
English

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**

**Host University**

- **How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?**
The Monteverde Institute is relatively small but open to a lot of different people including Biologists, other college Study Abroad programs and some younger aged local kids. It is far smaller than UCSB, as it’s really only a one two story building.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
You aren’t with local students.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
The Monteverde Institute is about a 30-45 minute walk into the city of Santa Elena.

  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
There was a bus, but we always just walked or took cabs.

  - **Could students take cabs -cost?**
Yes, the cabs are very accessible, and people are very nice about calling one for you from their phone.
- How long would it take to get to the city center?
  In a cab it would take only about 10 minutes to get to the city center.

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
  No, it’s really not a big campus.

- Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
  No, you get readers from the instructors.

- Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
  Yes, but I would highly advise bringing your laptop as it’s far more convenient and it’s safe to do so.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
  There’s a small grocery store, gift shop, chocolate store and Cheese Factory. There’s also a bat exhibit that you get to visit.

**Housing**

- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
  For the majority of the trip, you’re in a dormitory-style living situation, but your housing is always taken care of for you.

- How close are they to campus?
  Your biology classes are taught in the same building that you live in, but your Spanish classes are about a 25-minute walk.

- How did you find your housing?
  It’s all taken care of for you.

- Where did you live and with whom?
  You live with everyone from your program at various locations based on the week

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
  No

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
  The rooms were a bit more basic, but had all the necessities.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
  All of that was included in the cost of the program

- How/who did you pay for housing?
  Through your EAP fees

**Food**
- What was the food like?
The food was very simple, but satisfying.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
Most of our meals are eaten as a group wherever you’re staying.

- How much was an average meal?
I didn’t go out to eat much, and the meals were included in our program so I’m not sure.

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Lunch was around noon and dinner was around six.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
No, just be sure to specify that you’re vegetarian to the program leaders.

Travel/Safety
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Yes, very safe.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?
Taxis are used a lot. There’s a bus system, but it’s easier to use the taxis.

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
Easy, there are many pretty inexpensive buses.

Host City/Country
- What was the weather like?
Depending on where we were the weather changed a lot. We went from being in very hot humid environment on Isla Violines, to dry heat in Santa Rosa, and the Monteverde was relatively mild climate. It got chilly at night, but most days I wore pants and a shirt. Towards the end of our program it was the rainy season, so it got a lot wetter and a little chillier.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
I’ve never been to a CA city like Monteverde.

- What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
Definitely going into the Cloud Forest Reserve. We also played soccer, went to the local farmers market, went Ziplining, and explored both the Orchid and Butterfly Gardens.

- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
There are many tourists in Monteverde, but leaving in June, we were gone before it was peak season.
Culture
- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
  - Time & punctuality
    People are relatively punctual, pretty similar to here
  - Eye contact & staring
    Everyone is really friendly, and waves and says hello on the street. I never felt uncomfortable with staring.
  - Relationships
    Some people are very public with relationships and PDA, but most are relatively private.
  - More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?
    The dress is a little more conservative, but because they’re use to tourists most things are acceptable. I wouldn’t wear heals and a tiny dress going out though, that would capture extra attention.
  - Alcohol consumption
    People go out and drink, but no one gets super drunk and makes a fool of themselves. It’s a small enough town that if you drink too much and do something stupid, everyone will find out about it.
  - What culture shock did you go through?
    I didn’t really go through culture shock
  - Other?

Banking
- Were credit cards widely accepted?
  Yes, but there’s always a fee so it’s easier to just get money out of an ATM and use that
  - Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
    No
  - If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM?
    Yes, your program leaders will show you all that when you get to Monteverde. Also, a lot of places in Monteverde accept US Dollars still
  - Were there ATMs on campus?
    No there were not.