Country: UK; Program: Univ Sussex; Summer 2010
AND
Country: Spain; Program: Autonomous Univ of Barcelona; Term & Year Abroad: Year 2010-2011

Gender: Female  Major/Minor: Communication Studies, Spanish Minor

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
Summer Program: Excellent! I still talk to them.
Year Program: Less involved, laid back, not easy to meet up with for office hours, but very understanding.

- Could you call them by their first names?
Some

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
No

- Were they available for help during office hours?
Summer: yes
Year: no (some professors do not even know where their office is, quite Spanish, but that did not bother me!)

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
Summer: a little less difficult
Year: Not difficult, but hard to understand at times.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
No

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
Summer: assignments, presentations and finals
Year: mostly just finals, final projects, no reading

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
Written and oral (presentation)

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
Quite flexible

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
YES. However, my program director for the year in Barcelona, Gemma de Blas, is a saint. She has a solution for everything. And although it was very difficult to find classes for my major, she helped me all the way through until something worked out.

- Was classroom participation expected?
  Summer: Yes, there are only about 8 students in classroom.
  Year: Not often, but there is some group work.

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
  Summer: Accelerated because the courses were only four weeks long.
  Year: Little reading, no sections, lenient when it came to due dates

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?
  Summer: Yes. For perhaps an hour and a half to two hours, or 2.5 hours
  Year: Yes. For an hour and a half

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?
  Summer: It was VERY important to be punctual.
  Year: Not being punctual was frowned upon, but most students were in class before the professor. Eating or drinking in class was seen as very disrespectful, even stretching one's arms.

Language
- In which languages were the courses offered?
  Summer: English
  Year: Mostly Catalan, Castellano. I took one course in English

- What language did you take your courses in?
  Castellano, and one Catalan. It was frustrating because sometimes the professors would switch back and forth.

- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.
  It has always been difficult for me to follow with reading texts in Castellano. I had to look up many words and read diligently in order to grasp a new concept. The professors are very understanding when it comes to Castellano being a second language. But they wanted to make sure that we had any final work that we turned in corrected and to be in perfect Castellano. I was never afraid to speak up in class. Students are pretty understanding.

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?
  Summer- No uni students on campus in the summer time, smaller than UCSB, central campus with buildings.
  Year- a little smaller than UCSB. Same sized campus, central campus. UAB was difficult to get to; it was a 30 min walk to the train, on top of that a 30 minute train ride.
- Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?
  Summer: off/on campus
  Year: At home in their pueblos. Moving out of the family home during college is not a frequently practiced custom.

- If not located in the city center,
  ▪ How far or close is it to the city?
    Summer: 20 minute bus ride
    Year: 30-40 minute train ride
  ▪ What type of public transportation could you take – cost?
    Year: train, though an unlimited train pass for a month is around 70 euro, which is far too expensive
  ▪ Could students take cabs -cost?
    No!
  ▪ How long would it take to get to the city center?
    Year: 30 to 40 minutes, sometimes more than and hour if there is a strike

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
  Summer: Not that I knew of
  Year: I believe so

- Is there a bookstore on campus?  Where did you get your books?
  Summer: yes
  Year: yes. Only one class required that I buy a book for 15 euro...neato!

- Is there a computer lab on campus?  Or, should students bring laptops?
  Summer: yes, yes
  Year: yes, yes
  - What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
    The university food at both campuses was awesome! At the one in Barcelona for less than 5 euro you get the menu del día which is the cheapest lunch I have ever paid for in Barcelona!

Housing
- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
  Summer: campus housing only
  Year: campus housing, find your own apartment

  - How close are they to campus?
    7 minute walk

  - How did you find your housing?
    Spanish version of Craig’s list
    - Where did you live and with whom?
      In the best neighborhood in Barcelona, GRACIA! With a Spanish lady and Italian guy, both great people

  - If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
Summer: the dorms were nice, but I paid extra to have a room with my own bathroom. Living there in Stanmer Court is not worth it! I advise students to live in the normal cheaper housing.
Year: my room was soooo teeeeeeeny! But it was 200 dollars cheaper a month (utilities included) to live in Barcelona.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
No, typical rent was around 400 dollars, utilities included, and wifi!

- How/who did you pay for housing?
I paid my roommate every month, and she paid the landlord.

Food
- What was the food like?
Summer: English food is crap!
Year: Awesome! Not very healthy, but smaller portions. No such thing as going out to eat and getting a nice salad

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
both: at home, or cafeteria

- How much was an average meal?
Summer: 3-7 pounds
Year: 5-9 euro

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Year: 10pm for dinner, as for lunch, it appears that there isn’t a set lunch. Just a coffee or a beer with a cigarette.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
Summer: no
Year: YES, but there are lots of patatas bravas

Travel/Safety
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
Awesome and amazing in both cities

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Yes safe all of the time. Just never put your wallet in your back pocket, always have your hands on your purse, never leave a purse open. Pick-pocketers are professionals! It’s never you against one person trying to steal from you; they work in packs and use other people to distract you. Always eat with your purse in your lap.
- **Describe the public transportation in your host country?**
The best metro! Easy to get around, it’s air conditioned, and it is never shut down for construction.

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?**
Easy! But Ryanair is tricky. Plan ahead, plan ahead, plan ahead....never wait till the last minute to book things.

**Host City/Country**
- **What was the weather like?**
  Summer: sunny but mostly overcast
  Year: beautiful mostly year round, cold in winter, enough for a coat

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**
  Summer: Brighton is the San Francisco of the UK
  Year: Barcelona is so much more awesome than any city in California (that I have seen)

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
  Summer: ride around on the bus, go out at night at the clubs on Brighton Beach,
  Year: drink in the park, talk to locals, drink in a bar, talk to locals, wander around and look at street art

- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?**
  Summer: Brighton is touristy but mostly for British tourists, some Spanish and French people
  Year: Barcelona is VERY international. I met so many different people from all over the world!

**Culture**
- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality**
    Depends on the person, I’m late a lot when it comes to meeting up with friends, but not all Spanish people like being late!
  - **Eye contact & staring-- you can stare for hours...it’s great**
  - **Relationships**
    Some guys are creepy, a lot of cat calls, but lots of them are very sweet, endearing, and they worship you! They like hooking up, but nothing serious most of the time. They just like having a night of fun! Always bring a condom...and use it if you need to!
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
    Doesn’t matter! That is one thing I loved the most, you can dress all grungy punk, and then there are some girls who wear heels to school. Either way no one really cares it seems. But if you wear pajamas to school, or sweat pants, or velour pants you will get looks and not good ones, because let’s face it, even in SB it looks sloppy!
  - **Alcohol consumption**
    In Brighton, it’s encouraged to go out and get a drink with friends
    In Barcelona, the same, except I never remember seeing any locals blacked out acting like fools, so don’t get too drunk!
What culture shock did you go through?
I did not like living in a big city. I felt like I was living in a hole with all of the tall buildings. In Brighton I didn’t want to have any American friends. I was a self-loathing American which is so lame. American people are great, there are people out there in Europe for the same reasons you are, and chances are, you will get along and have things in common!

Other?

**Banking**
- Were credit cards widely accepted?
  Not really, best to have cash/ learn places where credits cards are accepted.

  - 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?
    Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?
    Barclay’s is free withdrawals for Bank of America.

  - Were there ATMs on campus?

Yes