Madrid
FINAL STUDY ABROAD REPORT

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Write a one page report assessing your experience abroad, in light of your academic and personal goals. Topics to consider:

Courses  Professors  Housing
Social Activities  City Life  Money Matters

2) Please indicate whether we can share your information with current BU Law students interested in participating in study abroad programs.

   a) Will you share your personal email address with students who request to contact former program participants?

      YES X  NO □

   b) Will you share your final study abroad report (with any indentifying information redacted) in a binder housed in the OGIP?

      YES X  NO □

Please write your Final Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER:

Universidad Pontifica Comillas ICAI ICADE, Fall 2014

I am very glad that I spent the past summer studying in Madrid. Not only did I enjoy it, but my experiences at ICADE and my Spanish-language skills have already become a centerpiece of my résumé and of the interviews I’ve had since I returned to the US, and they seem to make quite the impression. Obviously, I’m grateful for any way to make myself stand out in the job search, and so to me that itself is worth the price of admission.

The biggest question mark for me about this past semester is whether any of what I studied will ever be directly relevant to my work in the US. Without knowing exactly what I hope to do post-graduation, that’s hard to say, but it doesn’t seem likely that my knowledge of some of the specific details of the Spanish constitution will be coming up in a practice setting any time soon. That said, I think there’s a lot of value in having spent a semester immersed in a legal system so different from the American one, and with any luck, it will lead to some new insights now that I’m back at BU.
On a different note, I remain very glad that I studied abroad during the first semester of my 2L year. It did prevent me from doing some things: moot court wasn’t an option this year, for example, and I was unable to apply for Law Review because I wasn’t going to be on campus this past fall (for the record, no other journal had a problem with my studying abroad, and I’ll admit that the odds of my getting on Law Review in the first place were probably less than stellar). I believe that it is most common to study abroad during either the second semester of 2L or the first semester of 3L. I had two things in mind when choosing to study abroad during the fall of my 2L year: first, I wanted to give myself more time to react to my study abroad experience after returning to the US (that is, to give myself more time to adjust my future course selection), and second, I felt that it would be a good way to get a bit more distance from the madness of 1L and the rest of law school. Clearly, those are both very subjective reasons, and it doesn’t seem to me that there’s a bad time to study abroad if it is something someone is interested in.

I knew coming into law school that I was interested in a program like this, and in fact, BU’s study abroad programs were a big part of why I chose to come here for law school in the first place. And now, with my semester at ICADE behind me, I’m happy to say that I’m very satisfied with how it all worked out, and that I look forward to seeing how my experiences in Spain affect my studies and career going forward.
MID-SEMESTER STUDY ABROAD REPORT

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      YES  X  NO  □

Please write your Mid-Semester Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER:

Universidad Pontifica Comillas, ICADE, Fall 2014

When I decided to study at ICADE this semester, I didn’t realize how unusual my approach would be. While no one in Madrid has been anything but accommodating, it has certainly been apparent that in choosing to attend the regular law classes as opposed to the MIEBL program, I chose the road less traveled; in fact, I’m only aware of one other American law student who is doing anything similar this semester (there are plenty of other international students in the program, they’re just all European). What I’m doing really is completely separate: I have had absolutely no interaction with the MIEBL program or anyone in it (I believe there’s even another BU student taking those classes this semester, but we’ve yet to run into each other). I don’t regret that choice by any means, but it is a bit odd to me how separate the two options are, given that they both take place in the same building.

I knew before arriving that I would most likely be taking classes with students who weren’t as old as I am, but it’s still surprising to me how young some of the Spanish students seem. The European and American systems don’t line up exactly, but they’re basically
undergraduate-aged, so that, combined with the fact that I’m the only non-EU citizen in all but one of my classes, and the only non-Spaniard in one of them, means that I definitely stick out.

In terms of classes, I’m taking European Union Law, Spanish Civil Law, Spanish Constitutional Rights and Responsibilities, Comparative Contract Law and International Contracts, and the highest-level Spanish for Exchange Students class, with all but the contracts class taught completely in Spanish (for the record, ICADE offers a number of EU law classes in English, including some specifically geared towards exchange students). I’m not really sure how to best compare the difficulty of the classes at ICADE to my classes at BU, both because the method of teaching is so different here, and because I’m taking classes in my second language. As to the former, classes at ICADE are almost entirely lecture-based; while students may have to present on a topic at times, it’s always planned, and there is nothing close to an on call system. It seems to me that this stems at least in part from Spain being a civil law country; given the lack of case law and the pressure to memorize sections of the civil code, the system here just lends itself better to that approach. As to the latter, I’m glad I decided to take classes in Spanish, but it means I’ve got to work at things more than if they were taught in English, especially as the Professors aren’t cutting me any slack. The University highly encourages all international students to take one of their Spanish language classes, and I’m very glad that I did; it’s not a ton of extra work, and it is nice to have a professor to talk to solely about language issues. While it is probably the most difficult class for me conceptually, I’ve been particularly happy with my Spanish Civil Law class. It’s nice to have more than a super high-level understanding of how things work in non-common law countries.

Outside of the University, I love Madrid. It’s a fantastic city, and there’s always a ton going on. Though with that said, between journal duties, searching for a job, and taking care of class work and reading, I definitely have to make a concerted effort to go out. Housing-wise, I ended up finding a homestay with a Spanish woman through the University, and that’s worked out very well.
FINAL STUDY ABROAD REPORT

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- Courses
- Professors
- Housing
- Social Activities
- City Life
- Money Matters

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PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER:

ICADE Dual Degree Program (Masters in International and European Business Law)

Courses
During the second semester we had fewer classes. This system worked much better for me because we had on average 12 sessions of each class, as opposed to 4-8 as in the prior semester. I think the structure of having so many classes over the course of the year is essential to learning about such a new and large area of law, but I think it’s helpful for people to know that there are so many courses, as this means that there is more work throughout the semester as opposed to just an intense final exams period.

Overall, the program really gave a great overview of a wide array of topics of “EU Law.” Although there was still some sense among the students that lengths of classes and the priority given to certain classes might need to be re-adjusted, this problem only occurred with a few classes, and will surely be fixed as we made the Director of the program aware. For example, we
had an EU Regulations class for 12 sessions and our Accounting & Finance class was only 8 sessions. Given the level of complexity and the general lack of foundation knowledge in that area, many people in the program felt that the accounting course should have been longer than the regulations course.

**Social Activities**

Same comments as in mid-year report.

**Professors**
The professors from the second semester were all much better than first semester. They were very interactive, had us working on practical cases, and made sure to give us all of our assignments with plenty of advance notice. For one of our classes our professor even brought us into his law firm to meet his co-workers who gave a presentation on Corporate Social Responsibility. The Director of the program has been working very hard to collaborate with students and ensure that those professors that are good are being offered return positions.

**City Life**

The City is very affordable, and in a great location. Its surrounded by the mountains, making for easy weekend hiking if that’s your thing. It’s also very close to a lot of other cities, making quick daytrips easy to accomplish.

**Housing**

Same comments as in mid-year report.

**Money Matters**

Same comments as in mid-year report.
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Please write your Final Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER:

Michelle L. Iodice

Madrid ICADE, MIEBL (English Language, Fall Semester)
The English language MIEBL (Masters in International and European Business Law) program at ICADE (Universidad Pontificia Comillas) is a two semester pre-set curriculum. I completed one half of the curriculum, which includes 14 courses organized into 5 modules. Courses include: International Contracts, EU Direct Taxation, EU Mergers and Restructuring, Accounting and Finance for Lawyers, and various alternative dispute resolution classes. Classes ranged from 1 credit (4 2hr15min sessions) to 3 credits (12 2hr15min sessions). The semester went from August 26th to December 13th.

This program is extremely business-focused – so much so that a background in business or corporate law is a huge asset – although not required. Although most of the students were US law students (Fordham, DePaul, BU), students from China and Spain also attended the program. Professors did a good job of using the diversity to enrich discussions in class and highlight the need to understand cultural differences in business settings.

Professors taught using the US method, rather than the European “lecture” method, and students were evaluated on class participation, final examinations, and the occasional assignment or in-class presentations. The professors were generally associates and partners at law firms, including: Garrigues, Ashurst, Cuatrecasas, and Clifford Chance. These are all very important law firms in Spain. The professors also practiced in the fields they taught. In my opinion, this gave a real-world perspective to the material presented in the courses. The professors often included client anecdotes or explained how the concepts would be applied in an actual argument or defense. However, the fact that the professors were all working professionals meant that the schedule constantly shifted and rescheduling was fairly common.

One experience that I was particularly impressed with was the 1-week class trip to Brussels and Luxembourg organized by MIEBL. During this trip, the class visited the European Court of Justice, the European Parliament, and the European Council. These are the 3 major EU institutions, instrumental to the promulgation and enforcement of EU regulations and directives. The visits included private lectures and Q+A sessions so students were afforded an opportunity to ask about specific topics that interested them. The cost of this trip was only included in the tuition of the full-year degree seeking students. I paid an additional €350 to participate, but had the opportunity to write a short research paper instead.

Although my experience at ICADE was overall very positive, there is significant room for improvement in the program. MIEBL is only about 3 years old and so it still lacks some organization and professional polish. For instance, the program communicator told me the incorrect program start date and I almost missed my first week of classes. There have also been instances where professors have shown up late or not at all due to miscommunications between ICADE and the professors regarding scheduling. My schedule also constantly changed which made it extremely difficult to estimate my workload throughout the semester. Lastly, the courses did not always challenge me academically in the way that BU law classes do – although they
were just as much (if not more) work. Despite this, the program has a lot of potential; it’s a work in progress. I would still recommend it to BU students. ICade is a very reputable university.

Madrid is a great city to study abroad in. It is very easy to find housing, so students don’t need to reserve a spot in corporate housing or privately owned dormitories. You can find something easily within a week with a realtor (fee) or through websites like idealista.com. As recommended, a student can go to Madrid a week or 2 before the semester starts and find housing before classes begin. During my semester, I rented a small room in a shared apartment for less than €400/month, all expenses included. My roommates were mostly Erasmus students and are quite loud, which made studying very difficult at home. There are also no libraries to work at and ICade closes at 9:30pm. I had friends with great roommates who could easily study at home. I also have friends who lived in studios at €500-600/month and really like that as well.

Madrid is not too expensive. Some items like wine/beer, groceries, travel between EU Member States, and apartment rentals are extremely cheap in comparison to Boston. It is not uncommon to find a beer and tapa (small snack) for €1 or €2. Like Boston, Madrid has a huge student population and has many food/drink/entertainment options to accommodate them. Other items like taxis, formal eating out, clubbing, clothing, and American brands (Starbucks, etc.) can get expensive depending on where you go. It’s also important to take into account the exchange rate of 1 Euro to 1.38 USD. Your money just doesn’t go as far as it would in the US, but since Boston is so expensive – it doesn’t seem bad.

Madrid is a really fun city! It is customary for Spaniards to socialize outside the home, so there are SO many spots to eat or grab drinks and people really take the time to relax and enjoy life. There is also great nightlife and things stay open very late. You can choose between traditional Spanish bars, pubs, or nightclubs. There are also so many cultural things to do here – museums, exhibits, shows, etc. Although I had some opportunity to take advantage of Madrid and travel (especially during the beginning of the program), the program is a considerable amount of work and students will need to balance enjoying Madrid/Europe with MIEBL schoolwork. I held a BU Journal e-board position and worked on the publication of my note, and it was a lot. Many students also have internships for 15-20 hours each week so everyone in the program is really busy.

Lastly, I should note that Madrid (along with many other European cities) suffers from high unemployment and a struggling economy. This tension is palatable – I studied in Madrid 8 years ago, and the city just feels so different. In my opinion, there is more graffiti and the city is a lot dirtier. There are also more homeless people and gypsies, higher instances of pickpocketing, and more frequent strikes and protests. During my time in Madrid, the city’s trash workers went on strike and I saw at least 5 organized demonstrations or protests. I never felt in danger or scared, and I don’t think this is a reason not to go abroad. However, its not what I remember and not the idealized Europe that many people would think of. Just something to consider…
FINAL STUDY ABROAD REPORT

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Please write your Final Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER: ICADE Dual Degree Full Year Program

Courses: Courses are taught by practicing attorneys who teach usually about 4 2-hour classes on a topic related to the EU and business law. At times the schedule can be hectic and you have to juggle many different classes at the same time since they don’t run consecutively, but the program director knows this and is working to harmonize the schedule for next year.

Professors: By enlarge the professors are all practicing attorneys in Spain. They teach on the side because they want to and are more than happy to talk with students after class about a topic they are interested in or what it is like working in their field in Europe. For the most part they have all been great and the school listened to our feedback about professors we did not like and I have already been told that they will not be back next year.

Housing: Leave at least a week and a half to find housing since you need to set up a Spanish Bank account before you can rent an apartment. I recommend living in Malasafia if you want a more lively area with restaurants and bars, since the area right next to the university is more quiet and filled with undergraduates. There is literally almost no one in Madrid in August, so just be
ready for a slow process. Most landlords will not speak English but there are real estate agents who specialize in finding expats housing in Madrid who are a lot of help, although they charge 1 month rent for setting you up.

**Social Activities:** The school doesn’t plan much in the way of social activities but they are going to try more in the future. Many professors take us out for drinks after class and everyone is assigned a mentor who is a practicing attorney as and many of us spent time outside of class with them as well. It doesn’t really matter that the school doesn’t do much though because there is always something going on in Madrid. If you don’t speak Spanish well I really recommend doing an intercambio (exchanges) to meet new people and practice Spanish, it’s a great way to meet people outside of the school circle.

**Money Matters:** By enlarge things are much cheaper in Madrid, But since you will be in Europe a whole year and have spring break and several long weekends there is a huge incentive to travel a lot which can quickly get expensive. Flights are cheap if you book ahead of time and I’ve had a lot of fun at hostels that don’t charge too much every night, so you can still get a lot of traveling done on a budget.

The program is a great introduction to the current EU framework and how it affects businesses operating in Europe. If you stay on top of your work you will have plenty of time to travel around Europe and enjoy Spain. At times the workload is heavy, but the last 9 months were way more fun than anyone should have in law school.
MID-SEMESTER STUDY ABROAD REPORT

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   YES X   NO □

Please write your Mid-Semester Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER: Alex Nagorniy - ICADE Fall 2014 Semester

During the information session and my interview for the study abroad program in the Spring of 2014, Dean Riccardi informed me that studying law in Madrid would be somewhat different from going to school at BU Law. I have kept this warning in mind, and I believe that it has helped me tremendously during my first two months here.

When I arrived in Madrid, and during my first several days, I was most surprised by the inability of locals to speak English. Fortunately, I studied Spanish all through junior high school and high school so, combined with Google translate, I had built up a basic, but still useful vocabulary that I had put to immediate use. This fact still took some time getting used to. Many of my classmates in the MIEBL program (including my roommate who is also in my program) have never studied Spanish, however, and they continue to struggle to communicate with locals when doing grocery shopping or asking for directions. ICADE has enrolled us in Spanish language classes based on a placement exam we took this summer to help us learn the language. As one of my goals for participating in this program was to increase my Spanish proficiency, I feel that as of now my Spanish has drastically improved and I am very thankful for that.
Finding an apartment in Madrid was no trouble and I secured a room in a five-bedroom apartment that is 5 minutes away from school within 2 days of being here. The fact that the majority of the landlords did not speak English made things somewhat difficult but it was only a slight nuisance. There were many rooms available for rent at this time and everyone was able to find a place to live relatively quickly. The cost of living is cheaper than Boston and I have had plenty of time to explore the city and have done a fair bit of traveling as well.

Thus far the main difference between going to school in Madrid and my time at BU Law has been the organization of the curriculum. The Madrid program is composed of evening and night classes (4-9 pm) and the classes are done in blocks. Therefore, I have already completed five classes and am in the process of completing a sixth class this week. While the afternoon schedule has taken some getting used to, the main reason for this schedule is that the professors are attorneys that work in their respective fields during the day. The professors thus far have been fantastic. They have been very knowledgeable and able to stimulate interest in the subject matter. They are also very easily accessible and open to answering questions. Lastly, the subjects are well structured to first teach us about the structure of the European legal system as a foundation and then delve down into the specifics of individual fields. EU Trade Law, Corporate Engineering, and EU Tax law have been very informative and the professors, many of whom were educated in the US, have highlighted the differences between EU and US legal institutions. This was also one of my goals for coming to ICADE and it has exceeded expectations.

ICADE as an institution seems to be lacking a lot of basic resources that I took for granted and were otherwise an afterthought as a BU Law student, however. Our classes require us to have laptops in class but only have 4 outlets available for charging them and the power strips we purchased were either removed or stolen. The printing services are cumbersome because we cannot print from our own computers and have to bring our own paper. The library is not conducive to studying, as it is just a giant cafeteria with tables. Everything closes very early and the school is not open on Sundays and Saturday afternoons.

The one glaring thing that has been lacking in the MIEBL program is that there seems to be little support, no organization and an absence of communication of critical information. Spain on the whole seems to march to its own tune and ICADE is certainly in line with that. From the time I started receiving emails from ICADE in April of 2014, I noticed that things seemed disorganized. I never received the letters necessary to get my student visa and had to send several emails until I received all of the necessary documentation. Important requirements for obtaining the visa, enrolling in classes and the like were not communicated well and I had to figure them out for myself. When I finally came here, I realized that there were several email lists going around and certain students from the program were omitted from certain lists and thus did not have all of the necessary information. The schedule has been altered several times due to teacher availability but the changes were rarely communicated ahead of time. Exams were given to us in classes where we were previously told an exam would not be given. Class assignments and readings were assigned to us via dropbox and were often uploaded late by the administration or
deleted by students who accessed them because the assignor did not lock the documents. This led to many people not receiving the assignment and thus being unprepared for class. When we complained, it took almost a month to fix.

Nevertheless, I, like the others in my program, have quickly adjusted to the cultural differences and are well acclimated into the school cycle at this point. I have learned a great deal about the EU and the legal system abroad that will serve me well in my legal career. I have greatly enjoyed the program thus far and look forward to learning even more to expand my knowledge about the EU. I would highly recommend this program to students in subsequent years.
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PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER: ICADE, Fall 2014 Semester

As I had covered a substantial amount of my experiences about the ICADE study abroad program in the previous report, I will use this report to highlight new experiences as well as expand upon any previous experiences that mentioned earlier in greater detail. Please do not take what follows to suggest that I was at all unhappy with my experience. I truly believe that this semester abroad was one of the best things I have done in my academic and professional career and I would repeat the experience every single time, given the opportunity. What I am suggesting is ways that I believe that ICADE can make an already amazing, unbelievable experience even better.

An overall assessment of the professors and curriculum that ICADE prepared for us during this previous semester was stellar. In all, I had taken 31 ECTs, which amounted to 14 courses designed to firstly give students a broad overview of European law as a whole and then delve into greater detail about specifics. The professors were truly top notch and clearly experts in their respective fields. The majority of them were also practicing attorneys, so they were able to give us a real world glimpse into the issues, rather than the opinions set forth by academics.