

Boston University School of Law

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# Boston University School of Law

## Study Abroad Final Reports



Universidad Pontificia Comillas (ICADE)

Madrid, Spain

Full-Year LL.M. Program

# FINAL STUDY ABROAD REPORT

## INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Please provide a written assessment of your experience abroad this past term in light of your academic and educational objectives. In particular, please touch on the following: your overall experience at the foreign institution, the quality of the faculty and the quality and availability of courses offered. Please also comment on other topics you feel might be helpful to future students, such as quality of life, financial, housing, social or other considerations that had an impact on your experience. Your report need not be longer than two pages.
- 2) Please indicate whether we can share your information with current BU Law students interested in participating in our study abroad programs.
  - a) Will you share your personal email address with students who request to contact former program participants?  
YES ☐  
NO ☐
  - b) Will you share your final study abroad report (with any identifying information redacted) in a binder housed in the OGIP?  
YES ☐  
NO ☐

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**Please write your Final Study Abroad Report below.**

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**Name:**

**Semester/Institution:** Universidad Pontificia Comillas (ICADE) – Full Year 2022-2023

## REPORT:

I attended the full year Master's in International and European Business Law (MIEBL) program at the Universidad Pontificia Comillas (ICADE) in Madrid, Spain. My decision to enroll in this program was based on two goals: firstly, to acquire valuable knowledge and skills to practice business law in the international context, and secondly, to enhance my Spanish speaking skills at a professional level. I am pleased to say that I succeeded in achieving both of these objectives.

The MIEBL program provides a comprehensive overview of legal practice in the international and European context. While my primary interest was in the international law part of the program, I also found the European law section to be valuable. Unlike US law school, this program comprises approximately 24 short courses, which are taught by different professors and require separate assignments and final exams. Although not difficult, they are time-consuming, with classes held from Monday to Friday for about 5 hours each day, followed by additional time spent studying, writing assignments, or working on the thesis. While the quality of the courses is adequate, they do not provide an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Nonetheless, the program offers US law students a solid foundation in international law and enables them to comprehend the legal frameworks outside of the US better.

Studying in Spain with Spanish students and professors made it easy for me to improve my Spanish speaking skills. While speaking Spanish is not mandatory, the program provides an opportunity to develop vocabulary and skills to discuss legal and business matters with confidence.

Apart from the academic benefits, the MIEBL program offers many other advantages. I had the chance to study with future attorneys from law schools in the US, as well as with students from various European countries. I have developed close friendships with brilliant law students from Spain, France, Italy, China, and beyond.

Living in Madrid during the program was a pleasant experience. The city offers lovely weather for most of the year, delicious and affordable food, and a lower cost of living compared to Boston. It is a safe and comfortable city to reside in, even if one does not speak Spanish. The only exception is the process of obtaining a visa and a residency permit, which can be time-consuming and bureaucratic. I recommend seeking specific assistance from the program directors and completing all paperwork as early as possible.

Overall, I recommend this program to incoming 3L students who have a job offer after graduation and are interested in international law. It offers a unique opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and skills, improve Spanish speaking skills, and form lasting friendships with students from different countries.

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YES
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YES

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**Name:**

**Semester/Institution: Full Year, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, ICADE 2020-2021**

## REPORT:

My time at ICADE was an ideal study abroad experience. I learned an immense amount of information on European business law while being immersed in Spanish culture and being taught by practicing attorneys about the area of law in which they actively practice. My initial goals for my time in Madrid, as iterated in my application statement, were to (1) deepen my understanding of international business contracts and trade regulation, (2) gain an EU perspective on legal and cultural aspects of international business law, and (3) restore my Spanish fluency.

As regards the first and second objectives, both were fulfilled through learning under the incredible faculty at ICADE. Every one of my professors throughout the year (meaning about 28 in all

considering we took 14 classes each semester), was a practicing attorney in the exact area of law which he or she taught. For example, for Capital Markets we had a senior associate and a partner at the largest law firm in Madrid co-teaching our class using their present experiences and recent cases as examples. For Industry Regulation, the professor was the general counsel of the largest water supply company to the region of Madrid. I truly felt that every professor was an expert in their field and was able to provide a robust European perspective to the area of law which they were teaching. One thing to note is that students in the MIEBL program do not choose their classes (regardless of semester or full year). There is a set program which every student takes (see bottom of report for list).

As regards my third goal, restoring my Spanish fluency, this was partially fulfilled. With the pandemic continuing on throughout my entire eight months in Madrid, casual conversation with locals in bars and restaurants was limited. As were language exchange meet up groups which are normally more active and can be found easily on Madrid exchange Facebook pages. However, I was able to speak Spanish with the doormen every day and in stores and restaurants. Overall, just hearing the language and speaking it whenever I could did restore a lot of my comfort in using the language, and I feel my fluency improved despite the inconsistency with which I was able to speak in Spanish.

Living in Madrid provides a pretty easy lifestyle. Everything you could ever want for entertainment outside of class exists within or right outside the city. However, given the high intensity of the academic programming at ICADE, free time is scarcer than I originally anticipated. But in your free time and during non-Covid times there are movies and plays held in Callao, fútbol games in the Santiago Bernabéu stadium, rowing and picnics in the Retiro, and countless museums to tour. I was fortunate that at least the latter (parks and museums) were open for me to visit during my time there despite the pandemic. There are also lot of underrated beautiful spots within the region of Madrid that I am happy I experienced in addition to the “classics” you find on TripAdvisor, etc. – Parque del Oeste (from which you can take a gondola into Casa de Campo), the “lake” at Casa de Campo, Escorial Palace and Palacio de Aranjuez (each about an hour outside of Madrid), and hiking at Manzanares el Real and at Cercedilla, all provide great afternoon or full day activities.

The classes offered in 2020-2021 were as follows, just to give an idea.

<b>FALL</b>	<b>SPRING</b>
Initiation (EU overview) course	EU Tax Law and International Tax Planning
International Affairs & Geostrategy	Tax Havens & State Aid
A weeklong trip to Brussels to visit the EU institutions	EU Insolvency Law
EU and International Trade Law	Tort, Liability, and Insurance Law
EU Corporate Law (EU M&A and Company Law)	EU Labor Law
International Contracts	EU Capital Markets & Securities Law
EU-Cross Border Financial Crime	EU Industry Regulation
EU Competition, IP & Trademark Law	EU Consumer Protection Law
Commercial & International Investment Arbitration	European Court of Justice
Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Legal Documents	Advanced Legal Writing
Accounting and Finance for Lawyers	Legal Ethics & Privilege
Negotiation Clinic	Due Diligence Clinic
	Hot Topic Seminars: (1) International Investments, (2) State Aid

## MID-YEAR STUDY ABROAD REPORT

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Please provide a written assessment of your experience abroad this past term in light of your academic and educational objectives. In particular, please touch on the following: your overall experience at the foreign institution, the quality of the faculty and the quality and availability of courses offered. Please also comment on other topics you feel might be helpful to future students, such as quality of life, financial, housing, social or other considerations that had an impact on your experience. Your report need not be longer than two pages.
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YES ☒  
NO ☐
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YES ☒  
NO ☐

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**Please write your Mid-Year Study Abroad Report below.**

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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester/Institution:** Full-year program/Universidad Pontificia Comillas ICADE

### REPORT:

In many ways, the Master's in International European Business Law (MIEBL) program at ICADE, has significantly shaped both the way I look at the world and the attorney I wish to be when I graduate. It has been an enriching and invigorating experience that I hope is not truly

"once-in-a-lifetime" and one that has shown me that, at least in my case, where you do something is just as, if not more, important than what that something is. At the same time, I can honestly state that this particular study abroad experience is not for everyone, as I am sure other students in the other programs will attest. Students looking into whether they should do a full year or a single semester abroad should take into consideration more than just the logistics of the transition. The quality of instruction at ICADE is, unfortunately, noticeably lacking in quality with that of Boston University both in terms of how the curriculum is structured and the teaching experience of the faculty.

The curriculum of ICADE is similar to that of most law schools in Europe, in that the classes are grouped into modules and taught over short intensive periods. Unless some sort of arrangement is made, all classes comprising the MIEBL program is set in stone. Some classes may only meet twice in a single week before concluding, while others meet eight or twelve times in a more spread out schedule. Undoubtedly, there are people who will benefit from the constant variation of their classes. However, due to the limited number of class meetings and the frequent change of professors, myself and – I dare say – all the students coming from U.S. schools had difficulty piecing together the material we learned into a coherent "map" of the law. Compare this with U.S. law schools, where students more thoroughly explore a single area of law per class over the course of several months, and the transition can be jarring.

The classes are organized this way mainly to accommodate the professors, who are mostly lawyers practicing in Spain or in the EU institutions. The benefit to this structure for students interested in practicing abroad is that opportunities to network with lawyers experienced in a particular area of law or working in a particular firm are plentiful. However, the drop-off in the quality of instruction is noticeable and at times frustrating, especially when the instructor's level of English prevents a satisfactory explanation of a vague concept.

I have yet to experience difficulties in reaching out to potential employers in the U.S. that I did not have while residing in Boston. I make it known to employers in New York, for example, that I am attending a university in Spain for the 3L year and emphasize my availability and willingness to speak with them at any time through phone or other means that works for

them. In the case that an in-person interview is requested, students need only communicate this to the professors and dean of the program, who is always available to speak with and is invested in the success and well-being of the class. It should be noted, however, that my experience here has strongly influenced both my personal and professional goals, and that my post-graduation plans now are primarily to work for a European law firm. As such, my time spent reaching out to potential employers in the U.S. is not nearly as much as that of most other third-year law students. Those set on practicing in the U.S. or those who do not have the resources to travel between the U.S. and Europe for interviews should take into account that there are likely to be obstacles that I have not encountered due to my shifting my focus to working in Europe.

For those students who are interested in working in Spain after graduating and view a study-abroad program as an opportunity to establish oneself in Spain while in school, there are a few things to consider. While, Spain is a developed country with one of the biggest and fastest growing economies in the European Union, unemployment rates are high. As such, employers are generally hesitant to provide a job to a foreigner that could have gone to a Spanish or EU citizen. In addition, English fluency levels in Spain are generally lower than most other EU Member States, so professional fluency in Spanish is required for those seeking internships and employment. Only students fluent in Spanish have secured internships from my class. Finally, it should be noted that starting salaries for lawyers in Spain are substantially lower than what one would find in the U.S. or in other parts of Europe. While the cost of living is also low even in Madrid, and one could live a high quality of life in Spain on such a salary, students with significant loan debts should take this into consideration.

# 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

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YES ☐ NO ☐

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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

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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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YES ☐ Yes NO ☐

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### 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 Malasaña 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.