

European studies placement report 2018 — University of Granada

Why you chose to study on the European Studies programme

I started at the university of Manchester in 2011 and did the foundation programme. When I first started at Manchester I was aware of the European studies programme but didn't know what it entailed. When I started in my first year of the Medicine programme I decided to sign up for European studies (Spanish). The reason I decided to do it was because I did Spanish up to A Level and didn't want to lose it. I also thought it would be a good opportunity to do something a bit different than medicine. I love Spanish as a language and I really enjoyed going to the classes. I had 3 really great teachers across the years and Ana Niño in particular is so helpful when you need anything sorted. The added element of having "European studies" to your degree just adds another string to your bow and makes you that little bit more different than everyone else. It has come in very helpful in hospital on occasion when Spanish patients have come in. Another reason, and one of the main reasons, why I decided to do European studies is that it makes it easier to work abroad. I hope in the future I could perhaps work in Spain or do some work with MSF in South America.

An overview of your experience of living and working in the placement hospital and its surrounding area

I decided to go to Granada as I did my APEP in 3rd year in Madrid. Granada is very different to Madrid. Granada is very small and can take about 15-20 minutes to walk from one side to the other. It is surrounded by a lot of green space and mountains for people interested in walking.

I lived in a flat just off gran via which is one of the main roads in Granada; we had the perfect location. When we first came to Granada we found an AirBnB for 2 weeks and this allowed us to find something whilst we were in Granada. This was very easy to do and I think this is the best way to do it. I think this because you can treat yourself to a nice AirBnB for two weeks (which is a nice treat after just finishing your exams) and then have a look around for something more permanent. It also gives you a chance to get a feel of the city and find out the best places to live.

When I was coming to Granada I was ready to pack light and to bring loads of shorts and T-shirts as I thought the weather was going to be great – This

couldn't be further from the truth. The best thing I brought with me was my coat! When we arrived in Granada it was absolutely freezing and my coat was a saviour. We then had a few weeks of sun and then torrential rain – constantly for 3 weeks. This was pretty irritating but make sure you are prepared. The Spanish have said that the weather this year has been pretty irregular and that this is not typical for Spain – So I hope you have more luck than we did! The weather then started to pick up in April and May and when it is hot, it is very hot.

When we arrived to Granada we were looking for things to do. Granada is a student city with a lot of things to do. We did a lot of things initially with a group called “Best Life Experience”, they organized a lot of activities and socials in the first few weeks when you arrived – we met quite a few people on these and I would recommend getting involved in their things. They also organize trips to different places which we also went on. The trips are very cheap and very well organized. We went to places such as Seville, Malaga, Cadiz (Carnival de Cadiz), Toledo, Las Alpujarras (A collection of little towns up in the mountain), Morocco and Cordoba. The trips usually last a day – leave early in the morning and make it back in the evening.

As I have said, Granada is a very small city and it is made up of certain areas. The centre is based around 3 main roads; Gran via de colon, reyes catolicos and recogidas. These areas are where you can go shopping and there are quite a lot of nice restaurants. Just off each of these areas there are small communities such as Realejo which is the Jewish quarter and Albacin which is the Arabic quarter. A lot of students live around the Pedro Antonio area of the city.

Granada is very famous for 2 things, the Alhambra and Tapas. The Alhambra is one of the most famous buildings in the world and everyone in Granada loves it. I would recommend booking tickets far in advance if you want to go as it has a 2/3 month waiting list. However, if you go onto <https://tickets.alhambra-patronato.es/en> at 12am, they often release a few extra tickets for the following day – This is how I got my tickets to get in. You can also enter the grounds of the Alhambra for free through La puerta de justicia. This is quite handy if you have guests and are unable to get tickets. Tickets cost about 14 pound and this gets you entry to Generalife (the gardens surrounding the Alhambra) and also into the palaces of the Alhambra. I would say seeing the palaces once is enough when you are here. The walk up to the Alhambra is very nice, but quite steep, so bear in mind if you have asthma or older people

with you.

With every drink you buy (including water!) you get free food. Most of my diet consisted of tapas when being in Granada. Here are some of the best tapas restaurants - there are a lot more to visit but these are some of my favourites:

- La pesoilla – we called this man the “wee man”- Really nice guy who runs the place by himself
- Bar Avila – Jamon asado – Best tapa in Granada
- Tomate
- El tabernaculo
- Quite a few different ones on Calle Navas
- Los arcos
- Bella Kurva
- Bar de Fede
- La bella y La bestia
- Las alpujarras
- Bar Poe
- Los diamantes
- El piano
- Biggies

Other good food places to go to:

- Café Alhambra – Their churros are the best in Granada
- Café futbol
- La Cueva – Do a really good menu del dia (Starter, main course, dessert, bread and drink)
- Dominos Buffet for 7 euro – Avenida de la construction
- Casa (maison) Luis – Really good fish restaurant

There are also loads of great places to visit in Granada and a few things you need to do before you leave. One of the main things to do is to go skiing and it is so easy to do when you are here. The first thing to do is to get yourself to the bus station and when you walk in you will see ticket machines in front of you – The bus leaves at 8am and only takes about 45 minutes to get up to the slopes. Try to bring as much skiing gear with you when you come over – youll need it in Granada aswell; believe me. Then when you get to the slopes go to a place called Intersport and from there you can rent ski equipment – Skis, poles and helmets. Don’t forget to bring passports as they need to see these in order to be able to rent things out. The skiing is amazing, pretty tough, but I had such a

good time doing it. We then got the bus back at 6.30pm. Another thing to do in Granada is to visit the Hassam baths. This was the best thing I done in my time in Granada. It is so relaxing and worth the money. It costs about £35 but you can get student deals as well for £25. I would also recommend doing a walking tour before Granada has a lot of other tourist sites including;

- Paseo de los tristes; A really nice walk along the foothills of the Alhambra with nice bars and a nice river.
- Sacromonte – Is a bit of a walk but a really nice route. It leads you up to las cuevas where some of the Gitano population live. They have built caves into the side of the mountains; really unique and you have to go visit
- Mirador de San Nicolas – the best view point of the Alhambra
- Alcaiceria – Just off plaza Bib-Rambla and has a lot of Moroccan style shops where you can get some gifts
- Calle Navas – Famous tapas street
- Parque de las ciencias – Quite a big science park and has a lot of interesting exhibitions. It has a really nice out doors area. It has a Butterfly house and a Biodome with different species of animals
- Avenida de la construction – This is the road on the way to virgin de las nieves and I love it. My favourite road in Granada and make sure to walk down the middle of it – has some interesting statues
- There are 2 main parks in Granada – Parque de Federico Garcia Lorca and Triunfo – These parks are not the best parks in the world but at least some green space
- Plaza de los toros – Really nice place for tapas and some times bull fights are on... If that's your thing.

The hospitals

The hospitals themselves are very accessible and easy to commute to; with the maximum being a 40 minute walk away (or you can get a bus). I was based at Virgen de las nieves and if you live anywhere in Granada this hospital is very easy to get to. I was also based at the private hospital, Vithas, which is a little further out and on the outskirts of Granada. However, I used to walk there and it wasn't that far. I didn't go to the other hospitals (PTS and Immaculata) however my housemate went to them and they are very easy to commute to.

On the first day you have to go to the medical school to register and get your student card from them. Make sure that you can completed everything before arriving as it will cause difficulties when you are in Granada and trying to

register on the first day. The medical school is located out near the PTS hospital and you can get there by bus quite easily. They give you a card which also has to be returned on the last day. Be vigilant when they give you your timetable and make sure the dates are correct as ours were wrong when we arrived and it took them quite a while to change everything. It can also be quite difficult to find the right people, so I would email before you arrive to ask where you need to go exactly.

Virgen de las nieves is a very big hospital located quite close to the centre and this is where we were all based, I would recommend getting a flat in the city centre and walking to the hospital; this means that if you are placed at PTS or Vithas you can be a bus to those hospitals easily. The working day normally starts at 8 or 8.15 which can be quite frustrating at times. However, they do finish at around lunchtime which is amazing as you get to enough the sun (if there is any). The frustrating thing about starting so early is that you go in for a meeting (which doesn't apply to you) or for a presentation (which isn't overly interesting) and then they go for breakfast for a long time; so you could have had a lot more time in bed! Some doctors don't go for breakfast and some don't make you go to the meetings, if this is the case you've got a great tutor!

Also, DO NOT bring loads of hospital clothes with you. Just bring a labcoat with you and some everyday clothes. They don't wear shirts and trousers or fancy dresses when in hospital – so save yourself some space in your suitcase!

What you have learnt on the placement with regard to any differences to UK hospitals and practice, the medical training programme, the contrasting medical cultures.

I have been to Spain before to complete a placement. I did my APEP, for 4 weeks, in Madrid and I was on surgery. When I was there I don't feel like I actually appreciated what the Spanish healthcare system was like but I fully understand it now. The hospitals here are very, very different to the hospitals we have at home. There are some aspects of the healthcare system which I think are better and others I think are worse.

One of the glaring differences is the approach to confidentiality. In England we really appreciate confidentiality and make sure that we maintain confidential for all patients. That doesn't happen in Spain. They approach this in a very different light and there is a lot of patient care discussions with many different

people. When they see a patient in a ward there are normally $\frac{3}{4}$ other patients in the room, in some cases with their family members, and serious discussions happen with all people present. I also saw cases when someone was being given bad news in one clinic room and we would walk into the room to use a piece of equipment that was there – with a very upset patient in the room and our patient being examined. Another obvious difference to England is the working life here. In Spain they work, as I have said, from 8 until around lunchtime. In the majority of cases they have a breakfast in between and perhaps another break. I also feel, that in comparison to home, they don't see anywhere near as many patients as we would at home. They do have "La Guardia" which is like a 24hr shift which they have to do a few times a month. In addition, their approach to hygiene in the hospitals is quite a culture shock. At home there are so many opportunities to wash your hands, clean equipment and put things in appropriate bins. It is very rare to find a sink in the patients room/ward or anywhere along the corridors. If you want to use a sink, you have to go into the patients bathroom and wash your hands. There is also sparse amounts of hand gel available. I was on cardiology for 4 weeks and in one of the rooms there was an empty hand sanitizer that wasn't replaced the whole time I was there. What you will also find in Spanish hospitals is that nurses do a lot of the jobs. On the wards, the nurses do so much, the doctors in Spain do very little of the jobs on the ward and they mostly examine and prescribe drugs for patients. Nurses do cannulas and take bloods here in Spain. It may sound very different to how we do things in the UK but in fact a lot of the things are very similar. I think I just had a culture shock when I came. I have a bit of a type A personality and the relaxed, "mañana mañana" lifestyle would irritate me quite a bit. It can just be very slow here and when certain jobs take a long time, when they really shouldn't, it just gets frustrating! I think I prefer working life in England and I feel that we get a lot more done.

However, what I think they do better than us in the NHS is that they manage to get investigations done a lot quicker. It is amazing how quickly patients can get CT scans done and echos. It's quite funny, because a doctor will just lift the phone and ask one of their friends to fit a patient into their schedule so that they get it done. There also seems to be a lot more consultants in Spain. I find that at home, if you want a consultant to see a patient it can be difficult as they are busy in clinics all day. But there are always consultants on the wards in Spain. The patients themselves are very respectful of the doctors and nurses. I feel that they appreciate the care they are given and do not take it for granted at all. They are very thankful for everything that is done for them. They are all prepared to wait for things to be done and understand that certain

patients get priority. I feel that this is sometimes lost at home and people often demand a lot of the healthcare system.

Their medical education system is also very different to ours. Here they do 5 years of medical school consisting of 4 years at the university in classes (with occasional days in hospital) and 1 year in hospital. The year they have in hospital consists of 2 weeks per rotation in which they are evaluated and this goes towards their overall mark. I found it amazing that they only have 1 year on placement. A girl that I lived with was telling me a story about how a final year student was asked to measure someone's heart rate and they were unsure of how to do it! The mark they receive at university is collated with a mark they receive from an exam that they do- the MIR. If you do not hear the MIR mentioned once a day; check that you are still in Spain. It is a 5-hour exam they do after they finish medical school. They are ranked against all of the other medical students in Spain and approximately 50% of people get jobs – This means that people many have to do the MIR multiple times. They finish medical school in May and the MIR is sat in January/February of the following year – They have around 8 months to prepare for the exam. I had an exam at the end of my cardiology rotation and it included some questions similar to what is in the MIR and they are relatively similar to the questions that we get at home.

After finishing medical school, they are then given a job. If you get a good mark overall, you will have a choice in what job you get. However, if you don't do so well, you will be given a job. The most competitive specialties are dermatology, neurology and cardiology. They then have 5 years of being a resident and then they become a consultant of the field they are in. This is a lot less time that what we have at home (2 years of foundation and sometimes up to 7 years of registrar training!) and they find it amazing that we have to train for so long.

How you have gained from this experience in terms of i) linguistic development, ii) inter-cultural understanding, and iii) in terms of your ideas and future plans.

In terms of linguistic development, I learned a lot in my time in Granada. However, be prepared as the south of Spain has a very strong and notoriously difficult to understand accent; so be prepared. We also attended language classes at Granada language school – This was very helpful. You also get up to £250 reimbursed from the Erasmus team which helps towards the cost of the

course. But they normally cost around that price.

Any practical issues that future students on this placement should know about.

- Sorting out the Erasmus form, was quite a difficult task. Im not exactly sure of what was wrong with it as I copied my friends, but she had difficulties organizing it with the European studies/Erasmus team
- Get payments late – Don't get all money from Erasmus when in Spain – May get it at the end of May/June
- Transfer of information form – sort this early – have to do it when in Spain but remember about delays in postage etc.