

## **European Option Placement Report**

**January – May 2014**

**Granada, Spain**

### ***Reasons for choosing the European Option Programme***

I chose Manchester Medical School partly because of the fact that they offered the European Option Programme. I had studied Spanish for A level and I felt it would have been a waste to give up on the language after putting in so much effort for the exams. I also like working towards the skill of learning another language. I think it is a very useful tool for travelling and I like being able to interpret between two languages.

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

Granada is a beautiful, vibrant city. It has a vast history and multiple cultures are evident around every part of the city. It is relatively small in size and as such everything is within walking distance.

It is one of the biggest Erasmus cities, and as such there are many students who are there for either a semester or the whole year. Everyone is looking to get the best out of their time abroad, meaning there are loads of new people from all different cultures and backgrounds to meet. Furthermore, there are many Erasmus groups that you can join offering events, exertions and nights out.

### **Daily routine**

The day normally starts with people going to get fresh bread from one of the numerous bakeries lining the streets, and going back home to eat breakfast with their families. You can also see cute little children chomping on churros as they make their way to school around this time. People then head to work and stop again for a (sometimes) second breakfast at around 11. The working day ends at 3 where everyone will return home for the main meal of the day. Most of the shops close from around 2-5 for siesta. Although this can be hard to adjust to at first, shops stay open far later than they would in the UK once they re-open in the evening. In the evenings you will see everyone wandering the streets with their friends and family, and there is a very lively feel to the city at night. Especially when the weather warms up, the streets will be lined with people sitting out enjoying a drink with their free tapas. Tapas comes with every drink, and it is quite a shock when you get back to the UK and a small delicious plate of food is not brought over with your drink!

### **Accommodation**

There are websites that you can use to find somewhere to live, but most people use the flyers advertising free rooms that are posted around the city. Prices range from approximately €150-€450/month, although obviously the price reflects the quality and size of the apartment and the location.

We spent the first few days in a hostel whilst we were finding somewhere to live:

White Nest Hostel: <http://www.nesthostelsgranada.com/white/hostel-granada-white-nest-index-en.php>

If you do this it's worth bearing in mind that you should find somewhere with a kitchen that you're able to use, as eating out for every meal can be expensive. We also got Spanish phones early on so that we were able to call and arrange to view apartments...although it is immensely daunting at first trying to communicate in Spanish on the phone your first week abroad!

We viewed about 8 apartments all from flyers around the city and we ended up living in an apartment on Calle Carril del Picon. Our rent was €223.50 a month, not including bills. It was a 20-30minute walk to hospital, 10minute walk from the main street Calle Gran Vía de Colón, a 10minute walk from Parque Garcia Lorca (the nicest park in Granada) and a 2minute walk to Calle San Juan de Dios. I lived with one of the girls from Manchester, a Spanish student and an Italian student. The main thing we wanted from our accommodation was to live with a native Spanish speaker. Although we were able to do this, I'm not sure how much it helped as for it to be truly useful, you need to only speak Spanish at home, which myself and the other English girl did not do with each other. I'm not sure I would live with a Spanish family given my time again, as it's not really in the "Erasmus spirit"; however there is no denying that this would be best for improving your level of Spanish.

The main things you need to remember for accommodation in Granada are:

- Check that there is central heating. Granada is cold in the winter! Some buildings don't offer central heating and you will be cold if your flat is in one of these buildings. As most of the buildings in Granada are old, if you do have heating, it is likely to come on at a set time each day, at a set temperature, for a set period of time, none of which are you able to change
- Check that there is an oven: several flats did not have one and so it is worth bearing in mind when looking around
- As most students are there for a semester (6months) it is rare to find somewhere to rent for only the four months that you'll be there. This is unfortunately something that you may just have to deal with. Although you may be lucky and be able to find somewhere for just the time needed, it is unlikely from what we experienced
- Unless you bring them with you, you will need to buy bed sheets, pillows, and blankets. There are multiple shops to buy these from, you just need to look round to find the best price. We went to "Los Encantos del Hogar" on Calle de la Alhondiga and the guy in there was really helpful. I spent about 30€ on everything together
- Our gas came from gas canisters that you had to buy and replace yourself once the supply had run out. I had literally no idea how to do this when we moved in but luckily our housemate showed us how. There is a website where you can order the gas, but I know of several people that caught a guy on the street selling the filled canisters and got their gas that way

- If you want to live centrally, the best streets are around Calle San Juan de Dios and Plaza Trinidad. For me, our location was unrivaled and I loved living so centrally
- We had a contract, but most people don't have one and pay cash in hand. Check before you move in

### Food

There is a huge variety of cultures all stemming from the rich history the Granada has, meaning there is a wealth of different types of foods to try. There is also a big hippie culture, meaning that being a vegetarian, from my experience, was not difficult. The main restaurants that are vegetarian friendly are El Paprika, Mundo Manila, El Piano and Babel. Calle Elvira is one of the main tapas streets, and the Moorish influences are clear to see around the area. The area has lots of different restaurants with different tagines and flavours of tea on the menu: you have to sample to find the one you like best! The other main tapas area is around Plaza de Toros where El Nido de Buho is. This restaurant has the best value for money tapas: the drinks are about 2€, you get a plate of olives for the table the tapas are huge! Get there early though as it's always packed. I would also recommend Poë as the food is very tasty. Although as a veggie they only had two things to choose from, meat eaters have a bigger variety and (I was told) it was all delicious.

### Safety

I felt extremely safe walking around in Granada. There are people walking the streets all hours day and night, and I never found myself having to think about how I would be able to get home safely as I would in Manchester. In fact, when we were looking around apartments, we kept asking the tenants if the areas were safe. We were met with very confused expressions and we found ourselves having to explain that in Manchester it wasn't considered safe to walk by yourself at night! This is completely not the case in Granada and I felt very at ease.

### Working in Granada

There are two main hospitals in Granada: Hospital Universitario Virgen de las Nieves (which has a separate site trauma and rehabilitation hospital) and Hospital Universitario San Cecilio. They are both in close proximity to one another and both are about 20-30minutes walk from the centre of Granada.

The working environment is very laid back, with doctors of all grades calling each other on a first name basis and wearing very casual clothing (with lab coats on over the top). There doesn't seem to be a rushed culture of everything needing to be done 10minutes ago like we have in England. Doctors take their time with almost everything they do.

I had four placements in total. I liked having a placement per month as it meant I was able to see four different specialties that I enjoyed as a student at home, but from the perspective of a Spanish hospital.

### *Placement 1: Infectious diseases, Hospital Universitatio Virgen de las Nieves*

My first placement was on infectious diseases and there was a team consisting of the Jefe, two consultant equivalents, 1 registrar equivalent and 6 residentes. A typical day would include arriving at 9:30, starting to talk through the patients at 10:00, ward round 10:30-11:30 and then from 11:30-3:00 everyone would write notes and order/review tests. The range of diseases was fairly similar to what would be seen on an equivalent ward in the UK. However, when I was there was a flu outbreak (“gripe a”) and as such the ward was inundated with patients suffering from flu.

Because the team was so big, there was little chance to examine/take histories. I was not expected to go to any clinics, and there was no bedside teaching given on the ward. Although I was encouraged to take part on ward rounds and offer up my opinion along with the residentes, it was a big shock having just done student assistantship and finals, where a lot is expected of you, to then be on a ward where they expect you to know very little. Personally, if I had my time again, I would not choose this placement in particular, purely because they have so many residentes on the ward, the little teaching there is/signs to see/patients to take histories from is spread so thinly that it was not worth the amount of time I spent on the ward. However, the staff and patients were all very welcoming and the patients were all really interesting.

Additionally, very randomly, there was a “jail ward” attached to the infectious disease ward. I genuinely thought my Spanish was letting me down when I heard the words “You can’t go into the prison because of insurance purposes”. I just sort of went along with it, pretending I understood whatever word they had clearly meant instead of jail...until I saw the locked, heavy duty door with very strong looking guards outside it and realised I had heard correctly. Very bizarre!

### *Placement 2: Internal medicine, Hospital Universitatio Virgen de las Nieves*

This was the polar opposite of my first placement: the team I was with consisted of just one doctor, the consultant! He had no juniors and was not on the same team so to speak with his fellow consultants. The day started at 9:30, where the consultant would look through the notes and review any new patients that had been admitted through A+E. We would then go on the ward round with a nurse and examine all the patients. We had breakfast at 11:00 and would then go back to writing in the notes. The typical diseases were again similar to what would be seen on a general medical ward in the UK: diabetes, heart failure, pneumonia...etc. I saw a lot of interesting signs on this ward, and learnt a lot in terms of management and the differences between Spain and the UK.

### *Placement 3: Trauma and orthopaedics: Hospital Universitatio Virgen de las Nieves*

This placement consisted of going to both theatre and clinics. The day would again start at about 9:30 and would end around 3:00. I was able to scrub up for the majority of surgeries I was in, meaning not only was I able to assist in theatre, but I also able to get several UPSA’s signed off (this is rare and I would advise you to get your UPSA’s done before you get to Spain). The range of surgeries I saw was not very

varied, but they were very interesting and I was quizzed a lot on anatomy and pathophysiology. Again the team was really friendly and made me feel welcome. The clinic was very rushed, and we would see about 40 patients in a clinic. There was no real discussion with the patients and the doctor spent most of his time using the computer, reviewing tests, or talking me through different x-rays.

#### *Placement 4: Urgencias: Hospital Universitario San Cecilio*

The day started at 9:00 on this placement and would again end around 3:00. A+E is set up with patients being given a score of 1-5 by triage. Depending on your score you are then either sent to the polyclinic (minors equivalent) or “observaciones” (majors equivalent). Observaciones is further split into patients treated in chairs, patients treated in beds, and resus. I spent most of my time in the polyclinic where each room had a different specialty and the A+E doctors would rotate round.

Here is where healthcare was most similar to the UK: full histories and examinations were carried out and clinical signs were seen and investigated. However, the system is abused. Patients would come in as it was more convenient and they would get seen/treated quicker than if they were to go to the family doctor. The doctors would get truly frustrated when patients came in with neither an accident nor an emergency. One day there were two patients who had come in with a UTI and a patient who had come in with ear ache. There was also a patient who wanted investigating for hayfever. Despite this, I saw some true emergencies come in to the polyclinic. One girl who was discharged the previous day after have her appendix removed came in and couldn't move due to the agony she was in. Her CT scan showed her bowel had perforated and she was sent straight to theatre. Cases like this were rare, but you wonder how she got triaged into minors!

What did strike me as odd was the wide array of potentially dangerous drugs in non-locked, labeled boxes in every consultation room. The rooms are not locked when the rooms are unoccupied, meaning anyone can go in and take what they want, should they want to. I asked a consultant about this and he thought it was perfectly safe. It was a very different approach to what would happen in the UK.

Overall, I saw a wide variety of clinical conditions and each doctor I was with was really keen to teach and I learnt a lot on this placement. I would highly recommend it.

#### ***What you have learnt on the placement with regard to any differences to:***

##### ***i. UK hospitals and practice***

The healthcare system is similar to the UK in that it is a public health care system. However, the approach to healthcare is very different. My time in Spain has made me appreciate the NHS far more than I did before. I now understand a lot more as to why we practice medicine a certain way in the UK, and despite it not being perfect, I feel that it is preferable for patients to the way healthcare is practiced in Spain.

## ***ii. The medical training programme***

Medical school in Spain is 6 years long. The first five years are essentially an undergraduate course and there is far more emphasis on theory, physiology, pharmacology, anatomy..etc and very little training history taking, examinations, communications and breaking bad news. They also do very little skills and have no role in practical procedures as doctors such as taking blood, sighting cannulas, catheters...etc: these procedures are all done by the nurses.

The 6<sup>th</sup> year is for preparing for the Medico Interno Residente (MIR) exam. This exam gives you a score with which you are ranked against everyone else in Spain taking the exam. Job allocation is based on demand and scores, meaning the person with the highest score would get their pick of the specialty they want and where they want to train, with the person with the second highest score getting the next pick, and so on. Once they graduate from medical school, they go straight into residency training in their specialty, which normally lasts 4-5 years. They do rotate around other wards, but only for placements a month long. If they want to later do another speciality, they will need to redo the MIR.

## ***iii. The contrasting medical cultures***

The approach to healthcare is very different in Spain compared to the UK. They still practice medicine in a very paternalistic manner, with what the doctor saying being the right thing for the patient. There is no conversation as to what the patient might think, or what they would like. This was strange to adapt to throughout the four months, as a vital part of our training and our practice as doctors in the UK is to incorporate the patient into decisions for their healthcare.

There is also a huge emphasis on tests. Nearly every patient on internal medicine had a CT, despite what they may have come in with. Doctors are very quick to rush to tests, more often than not before they've taken a history from the patient further than the presenting complaint! The only placement I found this to be less true was on urgencias, where a good thorough history was taken for each patient.

There is also a severe lack of privacy for patients. In rooms of 2-3 patients, there are no curtains for when people are being examined. Furthermore, family members are informed about patients health without their consent. This for me meant that patient's dignity was compromised, something that is so integral to the way we practice medicine in the UK.

They additionally have no real system for breaking bad news or communicating information. I could see patients visibly confused when not understanding something a doctor has said, but won't say anything to clarify the situation. Patients and their family members are also told very bluntly about diagnosis such as cancer and HIV, frequently whilst in the corridor of wards where there are multiple other family members, other patients and other families. They also talk about patients in front of them like they're not there. Even worse, they discuss patients in front of

other patients with no attempt to conceal identity or keep anything confidential. I got a weird look on the first day when I asked where the confidential bin was as it didn't exist!

Another difference was hand hygiene. In infectious diseases, all the doctors were washing their hands between every patient. However, for every other placement, no one would wash their hands between examining patients, and hand gel was rarely used.

***How you have gained from this experience in terms of:***

***i. Linguistic development***

The Andulacian accent is frustrating to try and understand! They swallow the ends of their words and don't use S's, nor do they differentiate when speaking about singular or pleural conjugations of verbs. When we went to Madrid for the weekend, it was refreshing to be able to understand so much more than you could in Granada! Unfortunately, it is just something that you will need to get used to.

I wanted to do Spanish lessons as I felt it would enhance the Spanish I would pick up from merely living in Granada, but I know that others from Manchester chose not to do lessons. I did the CELE (course in Spanish as a foreign language) with the University's Centro de Lenguas Modernas (CLM) and it was 60hours in total with 3hours twice a week. Like Manchester you need 80% attendance to pass the course and you need to sit a final exam at the end of the course. You have to pay for the classes, of which levels 1-5 is 137€ and level 6-8 is 357€, but you can be reimbursed a certain amount by the Erasmus team at Manchester providing you can show them evidence of you course completion. I did a reading/writing/grammar test prior to starting so they could put me in the correct level. My class ended up having about 20 people in it, of which 7spoke English as their first language. The sheer size of the class, along with the fact that so many of us spoke English, made it difficult to get much from the lessons. I know that because of the money shortages, they had been firing teachers and as such putting more people in one class. However, this was not beneficial as a student.

Overall, my Spanish improved dramatically being in Spain and I was able to understand almost everything by the time we left. However, I still wouldn't say I was fluent as in order to do this I believe you need to be completely surrounded by only Spanish, and speaking English at all hinders this process. If you watch only Spanish TV, listen to Spanish radio, read magazines in Spanish...etc it helps obviously helps with vocabulary.

***ii. Inter-cultural understanding***

My consultant on A+E said "when you first meet a Spanish person, they are very harsh and not friendly. However, as they get to know you, they are very warm and friendly people". I would take this is be accurate. The Spanish can appear to have a

short temperament and would snap quite easily. However, I feel this is just the way they are and it is not them being rude, despite the fact that if someone was to talk to you like that in the UK it would be considered rude. I have learnt a lot about Spanish culture from living in Spain: they are very family orientated, which is lovely to see on a Sunday when everyone is walking around with their families and going to church to Sunday lunch. They also have multiple, traditional holidays throughout the year, where you see the richness of the culture and history coming through. The lifestyle is very laid back which is a welcome change coming straight out of finals. However, within this, queuing doesn't really exist (which is basically what we love to do in the UK) and no one is on time for anything!

### ***iii. In terms of your ideas and future plans***

I wouldn't say that I want to work in Spain in the future. Having been trained in the UK, I feel I am not used to a system of patient-centered care that does not really exist in Spain at the minute, and I don't feel like it will for many years. These four months have given me a greater appreciation for the NHS and I now understand the importance of certain aspects of our training, like communication skills, breaking bad news and learning the importance of a thorough history. I would still like to travel and perhaps go to South America in the future to use my Spanish in that way. I would also like to return to Granada again in the future as it was such a lovely city to live in, I'm sure it would offer a lot as a holiday location.

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

- **Beauracy:** this is a long-winded process! I would advise taking with copies of your passport and your EHIC card as you will need them for different tasks. Bear in mind it will take about a week to get all the paper work sorted for varies different things as there is a lot of going back, with every place having limited opening hours:
  - Oficina Central de Relaciones Internacionales: you need to go here to register with the University of Granada and get your student card (open 9:00-14:00)
  - Oficina de Movilidad in the Medical faculty: you need to register for you placements here (open 12:30-14:30)
  - Residente Comunitario card: as required by the government, you need this if you are in Spain for longer than 3months. You need to get this from the Registro Central de Extranjeros and prior to going you have to fill our a form

The form is available from:

[http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/ModelosSolicitudes/Mod\\_solicitud es2/18-Certificado\\_Residencia\\_comunitaria.pdf](http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/ModelosSolicitudes/Mod_solicitud es2/18-Certificado_Residencia_comunitaria.pdf).

Here is an instruction sheet on how to fill it in:

<http://internacional.ugr.es/pages/movilidad/estudiantes/entrantes/how tofillintheapplicationform>



With this form you also need to take a copy of your passport and EHIC card. They then give you something to take to a bank (which can be any bank) where you need to pay a fee of about 10€. Then you need to return to the Registro Central de Extranjeros with receipt of your payment and they will issue you the card

- **Weather:** It is cold up until about mid-April, so bring winter clothing with you. Unfortunately, it also rains quite a bit in the first few months. However, it is was around 28°C and sunny for the last few weeks we were there and it really is a beautiful city in the sunshine!
- **Clothes:** don't bring smart hospital clothes with you. You will waste you luggage allowance as the doctors literally wear jeans and t-shirts. However, do bring a lab coat, as you will be required to wear one. Additionally, bring a pair of comfortable shoes as you will be doing a lot of walking around the city
- **Buses:** as the city is so small, we didn't need to get the bus anywhere other than to the Estacion de autobuses and the airport in Granada. Buses 3 and 33 go to the bus station from Gran via, and the bus station is on Carretera de Jaén. The main bus company is ALSA
- **Flying:** Granada has its own airport, and there is a bus waiting outside the airport after every flight that takes you into the city centre. The bus cost 3€ and is run by Autocares J.Gonzalez (<http://www.autocaresjosegonzalez.com/index.php/en/services.html>). If you are coming from the airport and want to get off in the city centre, get off at "Parada Bus Urbano Gran Via de Colon". Alternatively, you can fly to Malaga and get an alsa bus to the bus station in Granada: <http://www.alsa.es/rutas/malaga-granada.htm>
- **Information:** the tourist office is located at the back of Plaza Nueva, the side away from Gran via. They have maps of Granada which are useful to get around with in the first few weeks. They also have maps of other cities that you may want to visit (<http://www.turgranada.es/pdf/espanyol/callejero.pdf>)
- **Money:** I didn't want to set up a Spanish bank account, and used a "cash passport" instead from travelex (<http://www.cashpassport.com/1/global-landing-page/>)
- **Gym:** I joined YO10 on Camino de Ronda which I think had a 30€ joining fee and was then 29€ each month for gym and classes. The gym is packed in the evenings and you end up waiting for machines, but if you go during siesta it's much quieter. Total core is a really good class, and if you like Pilates I would recommend that you try Mati's class: she's very entertaining! Exercise classes are also a really good way to help improve your listening and vocabulary in Spanish. YO10 does not have an outdoor pool, but O2 wellness centre Neptuno does, something to consider for when it get sunny
- **iPads:** if you log onto your university VPN on your iPad or computer, you can log onto any British website, like the BNF if you are revising for prescribing exam. Alternatively, it also allows you to watch British iPlayer
- **ESN card:** Erasmus student network (ESN) is the main Erasmus group and they have a card for 6€ which they sell at their office in Plaza Ciudad de los Cármenes from 9am-2om and then 5pm-8pm. ESN run salsa and flamenco classes each week, and an "insanity" workout at the O2 wellness centre Neptuno, which are

free with your card. They also organise excursions and organised trips. The card gets you certain discounts so ask them about these when you go to the office

***Any addresses, phone numbers and contacts that might be useful for future students***

**ESN office**

Centro Cívico Beiro (Sala Cercado de Cartuja)  
Plaza Ciudad de los Cármenes, 1, 18013  
<http://www.esngranada.org/>

**Oficina Central de Relaciones Internacionales**

University of Granada Complejo Administrativo Triunfo Avenida del Hospicio, 18071  
<http://internacional.ugr.es/pages/contacto>

**Oficina de Movilidad, Facultad de Medicina**

Avda. de Madrid, 1, 18071  
<http://www.ugr.es/~facmed/>

(Go up the stairs one floor and turn left at the top and go round a curve in the hallway. The office is on the left a few metres down)

Open 12:30-14:30

**Hospital Universitario San Cecilio**

Av Docor Oloriz, 16, 18012  
<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/servicioandaluzdesalud/hsc/web>

**Hospital Universitario Virgen de las Nieves**

<http://hvn.es/>  
Av de las Fuerzas Armadas, 2, 18014