

## Year 5 ES Study Abroad Placement

Granada, Andalucia, Spain

February – May 2014

## Introduction

I hope that whoever reads this report will have a greater understanding of the Year 5 placement and what it entails, because despite reading previous reports and information from Manchester and Granada, I had no idea what to expect when I arrived, perhaps unsurprisingly.

It is hard to plan for your study abroad, especially with exempting exams looming. It only dawned on me that I was going to Spain when I found out my results late January. Erasmus is a great experience; to be able to meet so many people and make friends from all corners of Europe is something I will always remember. I would gladly do this again. As a medical student however, as in Manchester, this experience is different, due to the nature of our studies, but I didn't let it prevent me from making the most of my time in Granada.

## Useful contacts

### The University of Manchester

**Mirka Tandyrak / Emma Hamilton**

European Studies Coordinators

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### Universidad de Granada

**Sonia-Chantal Gil Rodriguez**

Oficina de Movilidad, Facultad de Medicina

[medori@ugr.es](mailto:medori@ugr.es)

This lady is your point of call in Granada for any organisational issues with your placements. She will contact you regarding the rotations you would like to do.

### **Hospital Universitario Virgen de Las Nieves, *Calle Dr. Aziparte***

**Dr. Juan Jimenez Alonso**

Jefe de Servicio, Medicina Interna, 9a planta

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This doctor is the Departmental Head of Internal Medicine at HU Virgen de Las Nieves and will organise a specialist for you to shadow. During my time there, he arranged for me to be in clinic with a doctor, and when I wanted to go to the ward, he arranged that as well. When I had issues with my infectious diseases placement, he asked another doctor whether she could accommodate me.

### **Hospital Universitario San Cecilio, *Avenida de Madrid***

**Dr. Francisco Barrero Hernandez**

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**Dr. Angel Gomez Camello**

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### **Why I chose to study on the European Studies programme**

I originally applied to Manchester because of the European Studies (ES) programme. Having studied Spanish at AS-level, I was disappointed at having to drop it at A2 level for the more scientific subjects. At that time, I wasn't a keen linguist, but it was when I took my year out and went to South America that I really appreciated the ability to converse with different people and immerse myself in different culture. I thought ES would be a good way of keeping up with my Spanish. Also, to be able to graduate with MB ChB ES is a unique accomplishment; it's something (albeit minor) to talk about when it comes to interviews to make you stand out from the rest. For me, it was a means to an end: the opportunity to study abroad for 4 months in Spain was the goal;

to contrast differing health systems; and to improve my Spanish by immersing myself in the country.

When deciding to do ES you have to weigh the benefits versus the drawbacks; and the main drawback being that you do not do an elective (StEP), unless you're brave enough to do it in the OSS block. Having passed the exempting exam, I could and should have done it then, but that's easy to say in retrospect and finals fear having subsided!

### **The Year 5 placement - Madrid or Granada?**

As someone who never did a SSC abroad, the thought of spending 4 months abroad learning medicine was daunting. For the Spanish cohort, we have the somewhat limited choices of Madrid and Granada. For me, the decision was simple - Granada. There are a number of reasons for this; it is the top destination for Erasmus students; it is a small city (having studied in Manchester and raised in London, this was refreshing); it is cheaper; and the hospital placements offered were more interesting to me, namely infectious diseases. Both are good destinations, but I felt that if I wanted the true Erasmus experience, Granada would be the place to go. As a Latin American Spanish speaker, I am more used to the Andalusian accent down south (most people would be the opposite though). It is the more competitive of the two, as there are fewer spaces.

Having talked to fellow Manchester medics, the Erasmus experience is different in each city. In Madrid, you are more likely to encounter other Erasmus medical students on placement, as the teaching is more organised there. If you enjoy the large city life and exploring new places every day, it is the place to go to. The other medics I have talked to there have not regretted going there. In Granada, you are more likely to meet non-medics, and for me, immerse yourself in a more genuine experience as an Erasmus student, not as a medic. I did not meet any other Erasmus medics, as the ones in Granada have no clinical placements; they are mainly based in the faculty, whereas we are the opposite. The Spanish junior doctors I met were friendly and were willing to explain if I was not sure about something. They were more interested about non-medical topics however! What is common between the two cities is that you will no

doubt encounter Spanish paperwork and bureaucracy, when it comes to administrative work.

On a final note, it was refreshing to be able to walk almost everywhere in the city, even at 4 am after a night out without being worried about being attacked, and the community is close-knit; every day I would bump into another Erasmus student I had met previously.

## **Getting there and away**

If you're from London, it's easy to fly to Granada. British Airways have a direct flight to Granada airport from London City airport, and is around 60€ including baggage. The bus from Granada Airport to the city centre is 3€. If you are flying from Manchester or somewhere else, you will have to go to Malaga and take the coach to Granada, which is two hours away (15€ by ALSA, [www.alsa.es](http://www.alsa.es))

## **What to bring to Granada**

- Passport
- Passport photos
- EHIC card
- White coat (bata blanca - although you can obtain one in the lencerías in HUVN)
- Stethoscope (auriculares)
- Phone (Spanish SIM card - Yoigo is recommended)

## **Accommodation and life in Granada**

There are two ways of sorting out accommodation – online or in person. I did it the easy way (online), although you can probably find a better deal if you do it in person.

The majority of students stay in a hostel for the first few days and look for advertisements dotted around the city.

### Online

- [room-granada.com](http://room-granada.com)
- [erasmusu.com](http://erasmusu.com)
- Erasmus Granada facebook groups (they're always advertising)

### Key points

- Rent – 235€ excluding bills (can vary from 150€-350€)
- Butano – gas for water, cooking etc.
- Shops close between 2-5pm weekdays and all Sunday

For convenience, I decided to organise accommodation before I flew out. If you follow this, you should do it as soon as you've passed exempting, as demand increases at the start of the semester. This leaves little room for showcasing - the pictures of the apartment were sufficient enough. For me, the most important aspects were the location of the accommodation from the hospital, and whether there were any convenience stores nearby. I lived in La Cruz, near Plaza de Toros, which was 10 minutes away walking from the hospitals. The price per month was 235€ excluding bills (it was 210€ but for 5 months, you will find that landlords prefer students to stay until June, which is when the semester ends. Central heating was included for free.

If you don't mind staying in a hostel for a few days, you can find other students/landlords advertising across the city; it will be cheaper but for me it wasn't worth the effort.

## Advice

Try not to live with fellow Manchester medics - live with Erasmus students! It gives a better opportunity to enjoy the experience and excursions and you get to make friends from all across the world. I lived with an Italian, and two Bulgarians. Some people lived with native Spaniards and thus is a good way of improving your language skills.

Also, depending on where you live, you may have to deal with the concept of 'butano' – gas for the boiler and cooking. It costs 17.50€ and is delivered by the butanero on specific days; if you hear a random truck honking in your street during the day, it is to indicate that the butanero is there waiting for orders. All you have to do is shout butano and they will deliver it to you. Just thought to let you know, as it is an inconvenience to be out of butano on a day that they do not deliver (if this happens, you can obtain it at a petrol station but you need muscles and an empty canister to exchange).

## Registration (matricula)

The first week involved orientating myself to the city and completing the administrative formalities before starting clinical work; this bureaucratic process, called the matricula, involved going to the Facultad de Medicina's Mobility Office (Av. de Madrid, 12.30pm-2.30pm) and registering myself with them; then going to the University's Oficina de Relaciones Internacionales (Av. de Hospicio, 9am-3pm) and registering with them, obtaining my student card, going back to the Facultad to register with the Secretaria where you choose your 'course units' (although for us this is just to validate your matricula). Finally, I went back to the Mobility Office to complete the matricula. It sounds complicated and I didn't really understand the process; there probably was a more simple way to do it.

## Hospital practicalities

### Jargon

- Planta/sala = ward
- Turno = ward round
- Consulta (externa) = (outpatient) clinic
- De guardia = on-call
- Especialista = consultant
- MIR (medico interno residente) = junior doctor; also the name of the exam that final year medical students do nationwide to decide where they will work and in what speciality

I won't talk too much about the medical side of things, because I am sure other medics will have written about this.

There are two hospitals you may be based at, HU Virgen de las Nieves, and HU San Cecilio, 5 minutes away from each other. I didn't really understand why there are two, as they have the same specialities, but from what the MIRs (medico interno residente - FY equivalent) told me, San Cecillio is the older one and more associated with the University.

My first placement was meant to be in Infectious Diseases (5th floor) at HUVN, but there were too many doctors and too few patients, so I moved to Internal Medicine at the same hospital. This involved consultas and turnos. The head of department (jefe de servicio) assigned me a consultant; in my case, it was a specialist in autoimmune diseases with two MIRs. They were all friendly and made me feel at home; despite them not knowing what to do with you, they were all more than happy to explain what is happening. For the turno, I'd normally meet in the doctor's office between 9-10am, where the new patients (ingresos) and the results of any investigations would be discussed. The ward round itself can start invariably between 10-12am; it is then documented and typically that is when I left. For consultas, I'd go to the outpatients'



area at around 11am; as it was internal medicine, it was a bit of everything - mainly lymphadenopathy. The patients were either referred from the GP (medico de familiar; medico de cabecera), or from urgencias.

My second placement was in Neurology at HUSC; with two assigned doctors - one for consultas Monday, Wednesday am (general neurology), Thursday am (MS); and one for ward round Tuesday, Friday.

You'll find that the system of medicine in Spain is very different to the UK; expect to see a CT or XR being the first-line investigation of anything. Here, nurses do the basic procedures such as cannulas and venepuncture (a welcome change), however this does mean that U-PSAs will be difficult.

What I noticed was that there was always family members present during ward rounds (the Spanish culture); and also, a lack of privacy; I saw procedures such as catheterisation being performed in front of the entire ward without the curtain closed. Don't expect to see any SPIKES in place or beating round the bush; the Spanish give it straight.

### **Signing off / Medlea stuff etc.**

Granada will require you to fill in an attendance sheet, which has to be signed and stamped every day by the doctor you're shadowing. This can be cumbersome; I got it filled in every week instead. This has to be handed in to the ORI at the Faculty.

With regards to Erasmus specifically, you need to send a signed copy of the Learning Agreement to the coordinator in Manchester, and the Certificate of Attendance, which will be sent to you by the end of your final placement. This is required to receive the full entitlement of the Erasmus grant.

You are still required to be signed off on MedLea. This is something that is not written in the ES handbook nor communicated by them (no surprises there).

## Life in Granada; what to do, where to go...

In Granada itself there is so much to visit, not just the Alhambra. But after 4 months it can become too familiar (which is what I like). Andalusia is one of the largest regions in Spain, full of culture and amazing landscapes. Once you can understand their accent, it is an unforgettable experience. In my four months I visited the Sierra Nevada, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Las Alpujarras, Almuñecar, Cabo de Gata, Cordoba, Sevilla, Ronda, Malaga, Monachil...there are many places,

Granada is the most popular destination for Erasmus students; therefore, there are a lot of social groups to support you by organising gatherings and excursions. This is the best way to meet people from all across the world.

If you want to travel to other places for excursions or to see somewhere else (Granada is small!) there is the national bus service, ALSA, or you can use blablacar, an internet-based company where random people offer rides to places that they are driving to.

## Tapas bars and the nightlife

This is not an exhaustive list, but my friends and I often frequented these bars. Don't forget that in Granada the tapas are free!

- Nido del Buho, Calle Doctor Pareja Yebenés
- Babel World Fusion, Calle Elvira
- Poë, Calle Veronica de la Magdalena 40
- Om-Kalsoum, Calle Jardines 17
- Mariano el Pescador, Calle Doctor Fleming 8
- Casa Cubana de Nancy, Calle Azacayas

You'll probably discover the nightlife in Granada, but the most popular clubs with Erasmus and Spanish students include Camborio, Granada 10, Mae West, Campus,

Vogue. They are not different to the places you can encounter in Manchester (think Printworks, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Zoo.....)

## **Spanish lessons**

The Centro de Lenguas Modernas at the university offers Spanish lessons (prices dependent on your proficiency). You have to sit a level test before registering to demonstrate what level classes you will be in. Theoretically, as you will have a C1 (albeit in Medical Spanish) certificate, you will be in the more advanced classes (levels 6-9); but as you know, the standard of Spanish in ES classes can vary. Note that after level 6 the price increases dramatically. Manchester will cover 250€ upon production of an attendance certificate. In my opinion, it is worth it; the lessons I received not only helped with understanding the more complex grammar, but the culture and street Spanish. It is also a good way to meet other Erasmus students. The CLM do offer excursions as well, but they tend to be more overpriced than those provided by the Erasmus groups.

## **What now?**

I enjoyed every minute of my study abroad. Granada was the right decision for me. Admittedly, I was hesitant to go at first, especially as I forfeited the chance to do a StEP, but looking back, I have made many friends across Europe and Spain, who I will definitely keep in contact with. I have gained a perspective of how different public healthcare systems cater for the population. My Spanish has definitely improved in these 4 months through a mixture of conversing with locals and lessons at the CLM, much more so than three years in the Medical Spanish classes.

In terms of my future plans, this placement has opened up my eyes to the possibility of working outside the UK. However, I don't think Spain would be an option to me; apart from the salary being relatively poor, the system would require a huge adjustment to be accustomed to. Also, my Spanish wouldn't be good enough to communicate with

confidence to patients; most of the time I would be able to get the gist of what is being said, but I wouldn't be able to translate it word for word. As the Camara Medical Spanish certificate is not officially recognized, I plan to do the C1 DELE (the official exam) when I return to Manchester.

### **And finally**

The Spanish life is different to the British. They like to take their time and go with the flow; they never seem to be in a rush to anywhere. Perhaps it is the reason that they tend to live such long lives despite their diet of churros, olive oil, alongside smoking 20-day. For me, it took a while to embrace it - the easiest way to do it is to bin your watch, as the concept of 'en punto' doesn't exist. Expect to see empty streets from 2 - 5 pm as the majority of shops close for siesta time (and to avoid the blazing 34C heat).

My experience here has been unforgettable; more so than doing two hospital placements and a StEP if I weren't doing ES. I hope it's the same for you.