

Instituto de Empresa Law School, Madrid, Spain

I studied abroad at Instituto de Empresa (IE) in Madrid, Spain during the Fall semester of my 2L year at Hastings. I found the program both intellectually and socially stimulating, and I highly recommend it to anyone looking to study abroad.

My experience began in the middle of September with the IE LAUNCH program, a two-week orientation for students to get to know one another and become familiar with working in teams. Classes were taught in a business school-like fashion, so teamwork became very important as the semester went on. The class was split into teams of 5-7 people, who we had to work with on assignments for every class. The professors assigned small written assignments for many classes each week. Doing every assignment alone would be nearly impossible, so we quickly learned to delegate work and trust in team members. The LAUNCH program also contained sessions on the customs of international legal practice in nations like China, India, and Brazil. Given the vast diversity of my classmates, this gave me very interesting background information on the legal systems in their countries.

Classes took place from October 1st to December 21st, which constituted the first of four semesters in a year-long International Business Law L.L.M. at IE. Accordingly, most of my 40 classmates had already graduated from law school and were practicing attorneys in their home countries. There were, however, 5 or 6 other exchange students like me that were only attending the first semester of classes. Students came from every corner of the world, from Singapore and Australia to Chile and Romania. I had always heard schools advertise the "diversity" of their student bodies but IE actually delivered on its promise. Class discussions were always interesting due to the diversity of experiences and practices

of my international classmates. I found their input especially relevant considering our coursework in international business.

During the semester, I took four classes: Economics, European Union Law I, Introduction to Civil Law Systems, and International Taxation. While this seems like a full course load by US standards, those enrolled in the full L.L.M. program took 8-9 different classes. The classes were quite difficult but we were not expected to memorize as much substantive law as one might be in a class at Hastings. Grading was done on a standard bell curve, which was a foreign concept to most of my classmates. Although a couple of my classes factored in participation, most of my grades were dependent on our final exams. Given IE's ranking as the best university in Spain and a top five business school in the world, my professors were extremely qualified in their fields. Instead of being academic professors like in the US, most were attorneys that gave us practical insight into their areas of expertise. For instance, my International Taxation professor was the former tax planner for David Beckham and other Spanish soccer players. Hearing tax planning techniques directly from a lawyer of that prominence was a rewarding experience and taught me things that I couldn't find in a textbook. Overall, the classes were of comparative difficulty to those at Hastings and were very academically stimulating.

Madrid was also a wonderful city and served as a great destination for study abroad. I found Spanish culture to be very relaxing and social, which helped ease any stress from my coursework. Many of my fellow classmates were Spanish and were happy take everyone out in the city to bars, restaurants, and soccer matches. The people of Madrid were also very friendly and I found the city to be even safer than San Francisco. Due to the city's size and location in the middle of Spain, I had easy access to transportation and

traveled on some weekends throughout Spain and Europe. I found Madrid to be an ideal study abroad destination and am considering looking for jobs there in the future.

Overall, I had an amazing experience studying abroad at IE and highly recommend it to other students. The semester gave me the unique chance to learn and get to know other law students from around the world. I made a lot of close friends who I know that I will keep in touch with, and potentially do business with, in the future. Although the classes are difficult for a study abroad program, the people and culture of Madrid easily made it worthwhile. After having such a great time over the semester, my only regret was not having signed up for the year-long L.L.M. program!