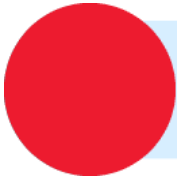




# Exchange Experience Reports

## Pontificia Comillas, Spain



### Host University Evaluation

#### Reports

**Name:** Kristina B. **Term Abroad:** F'10 **Faculty:** Arts ..... 1

**Name:** Maissa B. **Term Abroad:** W'19 **Faculty:** Management ..... 6

**Name:** Kristina B. **Term Abroad:** F'10 **Faculty:** Arts

#### Academic life

**How easy was it to figure out your course selection at your host university?**

Super simple!

Relatively straightforward

Pretty difficult to navigate

It was complicated and frustrating

**What did the process look like? Was it easy to register in your preferred classes?**

Comillas really made sure your course selection was as easy as possible. If you read the emails, they send you, you will have no problem registering for classes for your preferred classes. They first send you an email to your McGill email telling you they have created a Comillas email account, and then ALL OTHER EMAILS will be sent to the Comillas one. Make sure to check that account regularly. The problem with Comillas is that they only put ONE person in charge to help international students, so sometimes registration issues can be challenging but they always get solved by the university. In mid-July, they actually send a word document with ALL courses that will be available with the times and dates for their academic year (which is very different from McGill, as McGill's classes are available in April rather than July). Within that document, they specify which classes are for international students only (but you can still register for non-international student classes) and what language the class will be taught in. They also send you a step by step PDF file on how to register for classes on their equivalent system of Minerva. This is the time to get your classes approved in McGill's course equivalency system (if they aren't already). In essence, you will have no problem with course registration if you keep up with your emails.



# Exchange Experience Reports

## Pontificia Comillas, Spain

**Were your courses as academically rigorous as your McGill courses?**

- Yes, they were as rigorous as my McGill courses
- They were similarly rigorous to my McGill courses
- No, they weren't as rigorous as my McGill courses

**How did the teaching quality at your host university compare to what you're used to at McGill?**

- It was better!
- Pretty similar
- It was much worse

**What were the main evaluation methods in your courses?**

Most classes I had (which were all international-student classes) had no midterm, however you did have to submit an essay (usually worth 30%) and you had a final exam (between 50-70%) during exam period. Some classes will require you to do a group presentation (can count up to 20-30%). The professors however were very clearly in their grading method, so if you follow the instructions of the assignments you shouldn't worry too much.

**How would you describe the evaluation and grading methods at your host university? Please select as many adjectives as applies!**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Unfair                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transparent                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Complicated                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Easy to understand | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult to understand       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Similar methods to McGill     | <input type="checkbox"/> Different methods from McGill |

### Student Life

**Were you satisfied by the welcome and orientation services provided to you by your host university?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very satisfied, everything was clear                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pretty satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was able to figure things out, but it took some time | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty confusing            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very confusing, I was lost                             |  |

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## ***Exchange Experience Reports***

### ***Pontificia Comillas, Spain***

#### ***What is the best resource that helped you find your way at your host university?***

I researched all my information ahead of time, so I knew that students who are in the Faculty of Arts were registered in Comillas' Humanities and Social Sciences faculty. The Humanities and Social Sciences faculty is not located in downtown Madrid, it is further away and will require you to take the train (cercanias in Spain). Comillas sends an email about orientation in July, it's in this email they explain how you can get to campus (or you can also look at their website). However, if you attend orientation, there will be student representatives that show you the way. Orientation was definitely the best way to figure out how to get to campus.

The Humanities and Social Sciences campus of Comillas (which is called the Cantoblanco campus) has its own train station called "Universidad P. Comillas". Do NOT get off at the "Cantoblanco Universidad" station, that it a completely different university. Comillas highlights this point very clearly in their emails as well.

#### ***What was the campus environment like at your host university? Please describe your experience on campus with regards to safety, social opportunities, accessibility, etc.***

The Cantoblanco campus can be considered its own village for how small it is. It is also adjacent to a highway, there's nothing around the campus. It only has 2 buildings as a campus, much smaller than McGill's. In terms of accessibility, it has its own train station so it will be very easy to get there, and then you take the outdoor pedestrian bridge that connects the train station to the campus, it is very safe and sturdy. Since the campus is in a remote area, the train station is only filled with students and staff members. It will take 10 minutes to walk from the train station to campus (maybe less). It has security guards, but nothing has ever happened on that campus. In terms of social opportunities, it does have social clubs that you can join. During orientation, they really encourage you to join (a good way to befriend Spanish students instead of only having international students as friends). It does have a chapel, a newly renovated library and 1 cafeteria.

#### ***Where did you live? Was it easy to find housing? Did you receive any support from your host university?***

Although the campus is far, I lived in downtown Madrid and I would recommend you do the same. I lived in the area called Plaza de Espana, it is very central, and the metro station was a block away. I basically walked everywhere or took the metro.

Comillas doesn't have student residences, so they mainly sponsor a company called Students Global Relocation (SGR). They also sponsor Aluni.Net and MadridEasy.com, however for some reason they only mentioned SGR in their orientation emails. I opted not to use these services, however I had friends who did, and they told me it was easy and they found reasonable accommodation. Keep in mind if you do this, you book an apartment online and pay a fee without visiting the apartment beforehand. In essence, Comillas doesn't assume the responsibility to really help you find your apartment, but they do offer you the tools and trusted companies.

Since I opted to find my solo apartment, Comillas didn't offer any help as this was my own decision. I knew someone who lived in Madrid who stated many people use Idealista to find a



## **Exchange Experience Reports**

### **Pontificia Comillas, Spain**

solo apartment or a room. Since I was very keen on having my own apartment, as well as see the apartment before I paid for anything, I arrived in Madrid early and looked for an apartment on site through Idealista. This was not easy. It is very hard to find an apartment in downtown Madrid if you are staying less than 6 months. If you are staying 6 months or more, you have better chances. You can also find rooms through Idealista, but that wasn't my goal. Rooms are easier to find than apartments if you are staying for 1 semester only. However, now knowing how easy the online website was (and how many people actually did this), I would probably book the apartment online through SGR or Aluni.Net.

In the end, I got very lucky but also because I got help from an agency. This was costly, but I was limited in time so I kind of had no choice. I was still very happy with my apartment and its location, even after all the hassle and stress.

#### ***What advice would you share with students travelling to your host university? Briefly give up to 3 tips!***

Get a public transportation card, as you will need one to get to campus. You can order one online (need a residential address) or make an appointment with a Management office to get one. If you go to an office, you need to make an appointment beforehand at [www.tarjetatransportepublico.es](http://www.tarjetatransportepublico.es). Sol is the best office station for this, they treat any kind of inquiry.

If you are between the ages of 7-25, you're in luck because the monthly cost of your card will only be 20 euros/month, for bus, metro and train.

Madrid is infested with people who like to pickpocket, something that Montreal isn't familiar with. Everyone in Spain, even Spaniards, place their bag on one shoulder and hold it in front of them. I suggest you do the same. Make sure your bag is closed at all times. You don't need those knife-proof bags (this is exaggerated and not necessary) but keep an eye on your belongings at all times, especially in the metro.

Depending on which neighbourhood you live in downtown Madrid, it can take up to 30-60 minutes to get to the Cantoblanco campus. Most international students live in downtown Madrid, and Sol is the main station that many people use to connect to get onto las cercanias. For example, I took the metro from Plaza de Espana to Sol, and then connected within Sol metro station and followed the signs to get onto las cercanias. It would take me approximately 45-50 minutes to get to school.

#### ***What advice would you share with students who will live in your host city? Briefly give up to 3 tips!***

Live downtown even if the campus is far. I live off-campus in Montreal, so I am used to the long commute to school. However, even if you are not used to the long commute, you will get used to it and the benefits of living downtown outweigh the time it takes to get to campus.

Also, if you are a Management student, I would expect you study at the Business faculty of Comillas, and their faculty is downtown. So again, living downtown is your best bet.

Depending on what your goal is on your exchange, think about whether you want to live in an apartment or a room with shared space thoroughly. If your goal is to travel, you won't



## *Exchange Experience Reports*

### *Pontificia Comillas, Spain*

necessarily be in your apartment many times, so why pay more per month for an apartment you will barely live in? Even if this isn't your goal, you and your friends will want to go out and do things as much as possible, since you will only be in your host city for 1 or 2 semesters. So again, why would you pay more if you will be out of the house? Having a room and sharing space does have its challenges (like your roommate not cleaning her dishes when she told you she would) but try to really factor in your main goal on your housing choice. In the end, this is a learning experience and you won't always get everything right! Everything is a lesson.

Research Madrid know the neighbourhoods like the back of your hand (especially the areas you should avoid) and you will be seen as less "foreign". Become a true Madrileño/a and learn about the city as much as possible before you even get there. Each neighbourhood also has its own "vibe", so research on what neighbourhood you would live to live in.



# Exchange Experience Reports

## Pontificia Comillas, Spain

**Name:** Maissa B. **Term Abroad:** W'19 **Faculty :** Management  
*Academic life*

**How easy was it to figure out your course selection at your host university?**

- Super simple!
- Relatively straightforward
- Pretty difficult to navigate
- It was complicated and frustrating

**What did the process look like? Was it easy to register in your preferred classes?**

The process was pretty difficult because there weren't any online program that we could use to

**Were your courses as academically rigorous as your McGill courses?**

- Yes, they were as rigorous as my McGill courses
- They were similarly rigorous to my McGill courses
- No, they weren't as rigorous as my McGill courses

**We'd love to know more about the academic level of your courses compared to McGill. Please explain your answer to the previous question using examples, ex: assessments, readings, labs.**

Our classes were difficult because we had to do readings every week, participate in class, hand in a couple of assignments and take midterm and final exams. However, the tasks weren't as difficult as McGill courses. I believe that is because our classes were mostly made up by exchange students, the teachers knew that and wanted to make our experience a bit more enjoyable and less stressful than usual therefore they were a bit more lenient in the course load and in grading.

**How did the teaching quality at your host university compare to what you're used to at McGill?**

- It was better!
- Pretty similar
- It was much worse



# Exchange Experience Reports

## Pontificia Comillas, Spain

**Tell us about it! How did it differ from the teaching quality at McGill? What can other students expect from their profs and course work?**

Teachers were very knowledgeable, and I feel that I learned as much as I would have at McGill but without the added stress and pressure. The only thing was that sometimes teachers weren't very clear in their requests for some of the assignments. They also weren't always punctual but that is just a cultural aspect of living life in Spain!

**What were the main evaluation methods in your courses?**

It depends from courses to courses. Mainly, i had to write essays, present group projects, solve cases and take midterm and final exams.

**How would you describe the evaluation and grading methods at your host university? Please select as many adjectives as applies!**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Unfair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Transparent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Complicated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Easy to understand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Difficult to understand
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Similar methods to McGill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Different methods from McGill

## Student Life

**Were you satisfied by the welcome and orientation services provided to you by your host university?**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Very satisfied, everything was clear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Pretty satisfied
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	I was able to figure things out, but it took some time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Pretty confusing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La partie de l'image avec l'ID de réaction	Very confusing, I was lost		

**What is the best resource that helped you find your way at your host university?**

The international office of my host university really helped and orientation day as well

**What was the campus environment like at your host university? Please describe your experience on campus with regards to safety, social opportunities, accessibility, etc.**

The environment was very friendly and welcoming, I never felt unsafe in the school premises. There were many clubs to choose from and many ways to get involved

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## **Exchange Experience Reports**

### **Pontificia Comillas, Spain**

***Where did you live? Was it easy to find housing? Did you receive any support from your host university?***

I lived 30 minutes away from school by bus and metro. There are many options that are close to school to choose from on Airbnb and SpotAHome which are the websites I used to try to find housing, but the prices tended to be very high in those areas since the school is close to the downtown area. The school gives some housing options but none of them interested me. The prices were too high for the value of the room they were offering

***What advice would you share with students travelling to your host university? Briefly give up to 3 tips!***

I would suggest looking over the classes that are available to you before even going to Spain and making your schedule in advance. It will save you a lot of headache and time.

Also, I would suggest going to the school before the start of classes just to locate the room for your class on different days. Ask the front desk if you need any help, sometimes they do speak English.

Definitely go to the orientation session and to the free Madrid tour they offer the next day. Go to the many events they have. You can meet your fellow classmates in enjoyable settings (rooftops for example!)

***What advice would you share with students who will live in your host city? Briefly give up to 3 tips!***

I would say that it is worth paying a little more and living close to the center (downtown) rather than farther away and having to take buses and metros to get to where you want to go. It is much better to experience Madrid that way.

There are so many beautiful neighborhoods in Madrid, don't limit yourself to only visiting the downtown area!

The metro system is very easy to use. There are night buses that can get you almost anywhere after the metro's are off for the night (from 1am to 6am). I would suggest finding the nearest night bus from where you live so that you have an option to get home after a late night out