



# WUR Goes Abroad

## 1. Student information

<b>Study programme WU</b>	BSc Environmental Sciences
<b>Exchange semester</b>	24/01/2024 until 18/06/2024
<b>Exchange destination: University</b>	Catholic University of Valencia
<b>Faculty</b>	Marine Sciences; Business Administration
<b>Country</b>	Spain
<b>City</b>	Valencia

## 2. Motivation for exchange

### **Why did you choose to go on a study exchange?**

I think going on an exchange is a wonderful opportunity for anybody. You can meet so many amazing people, broaden your knowledge, and experience super different things to what you are used to both academically and socially. I have to say I was already planning to do my Master's in WUR, so I felt like I needed some time out of Wageningen and the Netherlands, just to see some good weather and see what student life outside of my little Wageningen world is like.

### **What is the reason you chose this country?**

I learnt some Spanish in high school and in WUR and was excited to practice that. Spain is very accommodating for this; the locals are very friendly when you are trying, and many people do not speak English. It has great weather and what was even better for me was that Valencia is right at sea. Spain is absolutely beautiful, and you would not regret coming here on exchange.

### **What is the reason you chose this university?**

I chose it because of the large variety of courses in English and because the campus buildings are in the center, I thought that was cool. I still recommend looking for housing around the other universities though!

## 3. Accessibility to reach destination

### **Do you have any advice about reaching your exchange destination?**

I travelled from my home country straight to Spain, but whoever visited me and came from the Netherlands flew from Brussels, so I can recommend. You must keep in mind that the second semester exchange period at UCV starts earlier than in other universities.

## 4. University and studying

### a. Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	Contents	Appreciation 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	Marketing I [6 ECTS]	Strategic marketing, so a lot of theory (but nothing that felt counterintuitive) that, since I am not super involved with this, made me feel like I am simply a more informed customer now.	3 – This course was enjoyable overall, but not super impressive or anything.	The final exam was a multiple-choice test and there were some tests throughout the semester + a small, nice project. Participation is important.
2	Macroecomics [6 ECTS]	Principles of macroeconomics and a lot of theory – the exam has an easy format with theoretical questions and a practical problem (which you would have studied how to solve throughout the whole semester).	2 – This course was stressing me so much because of the volumes of theory and the lack of proper communication.	Attendance was part of the grade. There was a midterm necessary to attend, but the grade was not counted anywhere. There was then another exam for which the professor gives you a final grade, making the actual final exam an opportunity to raise your grade only.
3	World Economy [6 ECTS]	A very practical course teaching you about different economic models – Balance of Payments, Standard Trade, Heckscher-Ohlin, Monopoly, Tariff/Quota. You solve 4/5 problems on the final exam and have continuous assessments throughout the semester and a project report and presentation about a country.	4 – This course was very enjoyable for me in particular but I have heard very bad feedback from other students.	This is a course with a very low pass rate but was the only one in which what we were supposed to know was clearly outlined and easily accessible. I would suggest you attend everything, since most classes are about solving problems just like the ones on the exam – if you understand and take notes you will be fine at the end.
4	Marine Ecology [6 ECTS]	The course was focused on teaching us about different models in ecology and their application in marine ecology (think Lotka-Volterra, logistic growth, and	3	There were many small assignments throughout the semester, literally every class. So attendance was not important as long as you submitted the assignments

		metapopulations). There was one field practical at sea and we then used the data we acquired for computer practicals, that was fun.		successfully. The exam was an open answer + a practical report (again based on an Excel of data, but you submit it written on paper).
5	Fisheries [6 ECTS]	We learned to recognize fish in the lab using a guide (so I also learnt fish physiology), that was part 1. Then, we mostly focused on fisheries management and different fishing methods (in lectures). We had one group and one individual project.	3 – This course was fun and educational overall. I have a favorite fish now and I know how to recognize many species. But I feel like the exam ruined it all.	The 2 projects are nice, but the exam is the type where you will be tested on remembering random things the professor said once. And if you memorized a list of fish. A lot of memorizations in general, which brings down a perfectly fine course at the very end.
6	Spanish C1 [6 ECTS]	I am 100% sure that the professor was largely catering to the content of the course to the students as we were going. Things that were the same for everyone were that we were stimulated to talk a lot and we had a museum visit, oral presentation, and project (video). In UCV, there is no need to take a starting exam for Spanish courses, but you can go up or down if you feel like it after the first few lessons.	5 – I am so happy I took a language course even though it was super on top of everything and WUR does not give you real credits for it. It was tiring but in a nice way.	The UCV is the only university in Valencia that offers free Spanish courses for us at every level possible. You would not receive credits for this in Wageningen, so I took a very high level that I then passed and am very proud about.

**b. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses that were taught in English:** Yes.

**c. I had sufficient possibilities to select suitable courses in my field of interest:** Yes. For some reason everyone loved the fact I study environmental sciences so much.

**d. I am satisfied with the level of the courses that I followed:** No. The courses counted on a lot of self-study, but at the same time attendance was mandatory or a part of the grade. All lectures were 2 hours long without a break, but they did not maintain the same intensity throughout different weeks or between different subjects.

**e. I am satisfied, in the end, with the selection of courses I followed:** Yes.

**f. What is it like to study there?**

*E.g. Study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material?*

**g. What is the culture of the university?**

I feel like students here are treated completely differently than what we are used to and that was something I didn't like at all – checking attendance all the time, holding you in class without breaks, not giving you enough information/instructions/feedback for anything or on time, etc. And just in general the constant weekly schedule was not working for anyone – some weeks the lecturer will present a whole chapter of the textbook and so much theory and concepts and others they would be like “so what do you wanna do now?” and letting you go early, and there is no way for you as a student to know what kind of lecture you are going to. The whole academic atmosphere was just very high-schoolish and brought me back to it. That's just something to keep in mind. And for some reason they penalize wrong answers on tests “because of medicine” – this was very weird for me.

**h. What does the university offer students additionally?**

There are vending machines. This is literally it. The campus buildings my courses were in were small. The “library” was not super nice, but there were study places. What is important about this university is that everything is in the center, so it is super easy to go to Turia park or a cute café in the center to chill or study.

## 5. Housing-traveling-living

**a. What are the possibilities for housing?**

I know many people rent through Idealista, I rented with Flats2Enjoy, but I do not recommend this company. Housing in Spain is not hard to find, but I prioritized finding it extremely early and fast. Rent rates are variable, renting in the very center can be manageable pricewise with the grant. I recommend something like Mestalla, Blasco, or Albors (roughly where the other universities are) since student life is mostly there. I decided to rent a room at the same price of the room I was subrenting in Wageningen (in a corridor of 16 people), which led me to a big apartment in Albors with 2 other girls. For sure there are possibilities for self-contained rooms, but most people live with other people, and I recommend that.

**b. What is the culture like?**

People in Spain are very kind and welcoming. I guess especially if you are Dutch the eating times would confuse you a little bit – we had lunch breaks at 2:30 and the typical dinner starts at 10. You have to remember from me you must eat paella only at lunch (if they are selling it for dinner, they are probably a very touristy restaurant) and anything besides paella Valenciana is apparently not to be called paella at all.

**c. Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure?**

At the time of my exchange, public transport was completely free if you are under 30. I travelled to university by metro which took me around 20-30 minutes together with the walks to and from the metro stops. The taxis here are with the FreeNow app and are not super expensive, but I only used a taxi once from the airport to my house (it cost me 25 euros).

## 6. Expenses

### a. Can you give an indication of your expenses for/during your exchange?

Category	Expenses
Travelling there	150
Visa - if applicable	no
Vaccinations - if applicable	no
Insurances (extra) - if applicable	160 – I got a private one
Daytrips/sight-seeing	around 35 for the average trip with Happy Erasmus (the best association)
Housing costs per month & type of housing/accommodation	475 for an apartment with 2 girls in Albors
Grocery costs per month	I didn't keep track, it is okay
Public transport costs per month	0
Restaurant/going out for dinner costs	around 20 euros

### b. The price levels were in general lower in comparison to in the Netherlands.

### c. Additional remarks regarding expenses?

When I was in Valencia, public transportation was free for everyone under the age of 30. It is likely that this was a temporary thing and would be changed in the future. I also chose to get private Spanish insurance with a company the UCV recommended, but you don't have to.

## 7. Free time

### a. What are must-sees in the area?

My favorites are the Albufera (a small lake near Valencia that is super interesting ecologically) during sunset, Xativa (a small city nearby with a castle where they shot some Star Wars movie), Sagunto (another nearby city with a castle). I absolutely recommend going to the Ibiza trip with ESN, it is an extremely beautiful place (especially the island of Formentera) and was exceptionally fun at night as well. I also went to Morocco, which I absolutely recommend as well – it's not in the area, but I doubt any of us would be living much closer to the country in the future, so take advantage of it. I went there in the catholic Easter vacation by ferry. The Albufera is reachable by city buses, while Xativa and Sagunto by trains. We went to Ibiza by ferry, but I went back by plane (for 15 euros) since I got veeeery sick while I was there.

### b. What does not appear in a travel guide, but is definitely worth seeing/doing?

The Oceanographic and Umbracle (coolest club I've seen). And making sure you are in the city during Fallas, that's a once-in-a-lifetime thing. Also San Juan, which you should keep in mind when planning your flight home.

## 8. Challenges & best moment abroad

### a. Any challenges? How did you deal with them?

Honestly, I feel like you should not be taking 36 credits if you can afford not to do that – I regret not making more time for purely social activities, but I don't think I could have done it much better given my circumstances. I had requested the total course schedule months in advance, so at least I had no overlapping courses throughout my stay, but that doesn't mean they didn't clash a lot in other ways.

### b. Best memory?

I can't decide! But I have to say I learnt to appreciate the going away events of the friends I made, they were all so bittersweet. My best memory is at one of my friends' last day here when he invited us for a volleyball tournament at the beach right before my last exam. My best friend was also visiting me at the time, we drank at the beach and stayed way longer than we should have (considering that exam) and went into the sea just as the sun was setting. Absolute core memory. I also really loved going to Ibiza with ESN as well as my trip to Morocco with Happy Erasmus.

## 9. Contact details

<b>Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?</b>	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
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