

Experience in Madrid at ESCP Europe

A) Academics

Everyone has to take the Master in Management program (year 1), which includes 5 mandatory courses. It is possible to get a waiver for up to 2 of those courses and you might want to consider doing this as some of the courses I was doing were quite similar to ones I already had taken at Telfer. You will need to compensate the credits that you would get waived with more elective classes.

The 5 mandatory courses gives you 25 credits and if you need to obtain 30 credits in total (this is the equivalent to our 5 course - 15 credits), you will need to take elective courses, seminars or third language courses. Please note that the Master in Management has an English and Spanish track, which I did not get notified of by ESCP. Had I known about the Spanish track, I would probably have wanted to study in that track, so if it is your case, make sure to talk about it to ESCP during the inscription process.

The course load here is higher than what we usually do at Telfer as it is for a Masters degree. In general, we had small assignments to do every week, for every nearly every course. Those weekly assignments are not that long and were group work in most cases. Depending on the course, I would say that most of them are regular lectures, without much class participation and only a few teachers actually made the classes interesting. Here is a list with all the courses I took, with their equivalences - if any - with Telfer courses and the number of credits and hours per week/total. Please note that the calendar of the semester changed a lot throughout the weeks, leading to some courses starting later in the semester than others and others finishing earlier in the semester.

Mandatory courses

All of those courses were worth 5 ECTS each, with 3 hours per week for 10 weeks (30 hours each).

- Economics for Managers - Advanced Economics: This course was separated in 2 parts; advances microeconomics and advanced macroeconomics.
- Strategy (similar to Strategy : ADM4311 / ADM 7711)
- International Marketing Decisions (similar to International Marketing : ADM 4328 / ADM 4728)
- Financial reporting under IFRS (I do not recommend this class)
- Operations Management (similar to Operations Management : ADM 3301 / ADM 3701)

Electives, language courses & Seminars

- Relaciones entre Europa y América Latina (Relations between Europe and Latin America). 2 ECTS, 6 hours per week for only 2 weeks (12 hours total).
- Spanish (they have different levels of Spanish courses and you will do a placement test at the beginning of the semester). 1 ECTS, 2 hours per week, total of 20 hours.

- Research Methods Seminar (taken at the end of the semester, after final exams). 2 ECTS, 3 full days of seminar.

The schedule was quite heavily packed, with minimum 3 days of classes per week. Elective courses added more class time every week, giving me 4 days of class per week. Since we have a lot of mandatory classes, the schedule was not flexible at all.

Communication within the school was not very organized and there were a lot of last minute news. Expectations on assignments, exams and projects was not properly communicated to students, leading us to have more freedom, but also to not quite know what was expected of us.

I only had final exams, one for each course (no partial/mid-term exams) and had projects/papers for 4 out of the 5 mandatory courses, most of them being group projects (3 courses with group projects, some courses involving 2 projects or projects with several steps/deadlines). However, I did not consider the courses to be hard.

B) Calendar

We were given a good calendar for the whole semester, but it changed at some occasions.

However, semesters begin at different dates each year and the dates I had been given initially were not correct (in the inscription and initial process). I would recommend to directly ask ESCP about the beginning dates for the Madrid Campus, as they differ from the campus in Paris.

C) Procedures to follow upon arrival

International students are not guided, nor provided with a student ID. However, since the campus is small, the program director and the academic advisors are always available and happy to help with any concerns that students have (especially Laura Garcia and Alberto Martinez). There was not a proper orientation week, as the semester started with a seminar on career orientation and employability skills development.

I recommend getting a SIM card with a local number. Prices are very affordable for monthly plans, as you can get some data (around 1 GB and calling time) for between 7 to 15 Euros per month. I personally went with Tuenti (a low cost subsidiary of Movistar). You can go directly to a Movistar store and they will show you the different plans that they have within their Tuenti division. Prices are lower for those with a NIE (national identification number) but don't worry because you have a NIE appearing on your student visa!

Next step should be to get yourself a transport pass. They have a great offer for anyone under 26 years old, 20 Euros for monthly pass including all busses, subways and trains in the Community of Madrid.

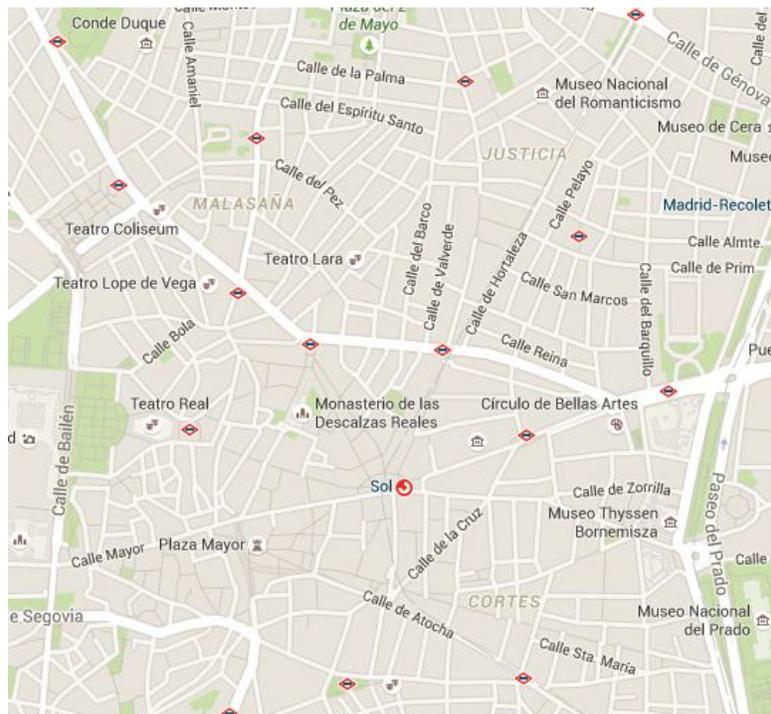
I would recommend opening a bank account here if you wish, I opened one with Bankia. Some banks will give you a hard time for documents you have to show them in order to get an account, but do not try to do all the things they ask you, just go check another bank. You can easily use credit cards in a lot of commercial places, however, it is not as commonly used as in Canada. ATM's are easily accessible everywhere in the city.

D) Budget and costs of living in Madrid

First of all, I would not be able to provide an idea of a price for flying from Ottawa to Madrid as I arrived from Asia. Obviously, I recommend to purchase a few months in advance for better prices.

The housing prices in Madrid are cheap for a western European capital. If you live downtown (in the area included in the map below), expect to pay higher prices than outside of that zone. You could easily pay 200 Euros per month if you lived on sectors far from the city center, but I do not recommend this. Living downtown Madrid is truly amazing and you can have a normal apartment (mostly shared apartments) from 300 to 500 Euros per month (some include the fees for hot water, heating, electricity, internet, etc.).

I paid 350 Euros for a perfectly well situated apartment, in the heart of Madrid's young district full of bars, restaurants and cafes; Malasaña, within walking distance of 7 subway stations (from 2 to 10 minute walk). I basically had access to all the lines passing downtown. I had to pay around 20 to 30 Euros per month for all utilities.



Daily expenses are mostly only for food and this can vary a lot depending on if you do grocery shopping (very cheap prices compared to Canada) or if you eat in restaurants all the time (real restaurants are expensive). However, a lot of places like Mercado Provenzal, 100 Montaditos and small places in areas less touristic offer great prices (it is more expensive around Sol).

Groceries: around 25 Euros for a full week

Restaurants: daily menus offered in afternoon can be around 10 Euros, but generally, restaurants will cost you 15 Euros or more for a good meal (although a lot of bars, tapperias, etc. offer cheap prices).

Transportation is 20 Euros per month for unlimited monthly pass. I never had to take a taxi as everything is very well connected.

Mobile phone plan: I paid 15 Euros for the first month and then paid 7 Euros each month afterwards.

Sightseeing and touristic activities in Madrid are often free or very cheap. Most museums have free visiting hours.

I have travelled quite a lot around Europe during my exchange and the costs of each trip (including the flight tickets) ranges from about 170 Euros (4-5 days trips to Eastern European countries; Slovakia, Poland, Romania) to 350 Euros for a 6 day trip in Germany and Austria (prices there are high for restaurants, transportation and lodging). I also did very cheap smaller trips around Spain that I consider as non factors (around 100 Euros for a few days). Flying around Europe is very cheap as there are a lot of low cost airlines (Ryanair, Vueling, etc.) if you are flexible with the dates/times and with your destinations. Booking a few weeks in advance also helps a lot!

E) Application procedures before arrival

Although ESCP will not communicate that much with you to give information on the school, they will get in touch with you when they will need you to complete further steps in the registration. First of all, an application document will need to be filled in and sent to ESCP so that they properly accept your candidature. That document contains some questions about yourself and your background, requires you to send a picture and asks for your resume and a cover letter. Afterwards, the school will send you a list with mandatory and elective courses and you will be given a period of time to do the elective courses selection (1 to 3 months before the exchange). The school will also ask for proof of insurance.

ESCP does not take care nor assists you with a lot of things before your arrival. Once you will have your letter of acceptance, you will have to get information on the visa procedure for Spain (easily found online) and will have to deal with the process on your own through the

consulate/embassy nearest to you. Make sure to start the process a good 2 months in advance so you don't feel too rushed by the delays at the end. The visa of short duration (less than 6 months) requires letter of acceptance from the school, insurance arrangements, flights confirmation, letter of motivation and your passport of course.

Additionally, you should think about waiving your U-Pass fees for the semester you will be abroad and to apply for additional mobility scholarships.

F) Housing

Address : 20 calle del Pez, Madrid.

Since ESCP does not provide student residences, in order for you to find an apartment, I recommend you to use the website Idealista or to check out Help Madrid (association for international students). I found my apartment through Idealista, which has a great platform where you can find a room in a shared apartment and get in touch with others looking for roommates.

I lived on the top floor (4th floor) of a downtown building. As they are all very typical European/Spanish buildings, the streets are very nice, but in a lot of cases, your apartment will not have a modern interior. My room was not too big, but it was just what I needed and the apartment was very spacious in general, with 2 bathrooms/showers for 4 people.

The apartments you will find through Help Madrid or other student associations are usually shared with a lot of other people (it is not rare to see 8 to 12 people living in the same apartment). Their apartments are more expensive than what you would find on Idealista or other online platforms, but they include all utility fees and you get the assistance of the Help Madrid association for other questions you might have and the search for an apartment will be simplified if you choose to go with them. They also have agency fees that are equal to one month's rent, which can be quite irritating to pay.

For example, I pay; 350 Euros per month, plus 20-30 Euros for utilities/fees for a 4 person apartment and people with Help Madrid pay a higher amount (450 and higher) per month for apartments in similar zones.

G) Other comments or recommendations

Madrid has a great dynamic lifestyle, with a lot of nightlife activities to do and a lot of restaurants, bars and cafes all with unique elements. It is a city where things happen all day and all night. There are a lot of great parks within the city. The city transit network is very well developed. Also, you might want to check the weather in advance because winter months (January, February and March) might not be as warm as you might expect.

I highly recommend considering this city for an exchange as it is a great city to live in when you're young in my opinion!

H) My experience

I have enjoyed my experience studying and living in Madrid. It was amazing to have my apartment downtown and it added a lot of value to my experience as I was very close to a lot of great areas.

The Spanish people are very friendly and the city is very cheap, even if it has the Euro as its currency. The possibilities to travel around Europe from Madrid are varied and not expensive.

Although I had more hours of classes and had assignments more frequently at ESCP than what we would normally have at Telfer, but I would not say that the requirements and difficulty level was as high as what we would have at Telfer with 3rd and 4th year courses.