

Istruzioni

Indicare di seguito tutte le informazioni che possano essere utili ad altri studenti che parteciperanno ad uno scambio. Preferibilmente in lingua inglese, lunghezza min. 2500 parole + possibili immagini, file di max. dimensione 2MB in formato PDF. Questo documento sarà pubblicato nel sito web della Scuola.

/ Instructions

Please indicate below any information that may be useful to other students taking part in an exchange. Preferably in English, length min. 2500 words + possible images, files of max. Dimension 2 MB in PDF format. This document will be published on the School's website.

Informazioni generiche / General informations

Anno Accademico di Scambio: <i>Academic Year of Exchange</i>	2020/2021	Nome della Sede in scambio: <i>Name of the Exchange School</i>	Universidad Politécnica de Valencia
Cognome e Nome: <i>Surname and Name</i>	Valerio Libardo	Stato: <i>Country</i>	Spain
Matricola: <i>Registration</i>	941513	Codice Sede: <i>Exchange code</i>	E VALENCIO2
Corso di studio: <i>Study course</i>	Product Design	Tipo di scambio: <i>Type of exchange</i>	Erasmus
Anno di corso: <i>Year of course</i>	Second	Semestre di scambio: <i>Exchange semester</i>	Second
Email: <i>Email</i>	valerio.libardo@mail.polimi.it	Docente promotore: <i>Promoter</i>	Maria Rita Ferrara

Racconta la tua esperienza di scambio / Tell us about your exchange experience:

I just spent the second semester of the second year of my Product Design career in Valencia. I attended courses at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. I arrived there on the last days of January, since the semester started few weeks earlier than Politecnico di Milano's. I chose the destination of my Erasmus specifically for the language, the country and the city. It looked very appealing, being one of the biggest and most populated cities of Spain, but way cheaper than the famous Barcelona and Madrid. I didn't know the university that well, but I trusted the information that I found on the Politecnico's website. It was also useful to get in touch with people that had already been there last year to get some extra info.

I must admit that UPV has a different system from the one I am used to at Politecnico di Milano. The evaluation system is very "mathematical", I mean, the final grade is the weighted average score of the grades you get throughout the semester. On the one hand it is a good thing, since you won't need to do all the work at the end of the semester, on the other hand, any low grade will affect the final one, even though the quality of your work increases throughout the months. One pro is the fact that exams are often partials, so the amount of things you have to study is distributed during time.

I was free to choose the courses, and I was happy with my choice. Selecting a course to replace the PoliMi's laboratory is risky, since as you may already know, you MUST pass it.

Here are some tips for you: during the application process at Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, ask for them to assign you a mentor. A mentor is a student that will help you at the beginning of your Erasmus. Personally, my mentor didn't help me that much, not because he didn't want to or because he didn't know how to do it, but since most of the information I needed was strictly related to the international relationships' office and

application forms, I mostly needed to solve my problems with the University's staff members through emails. Check the available courses in the "search for subject" section on the UPV website: in the course description read what you will learn, what you will be asked to design and how they will evaluate your work and give you the grade. Also check the requested previous knowledge to attend the course: most of them are from an engineering career so their previous knowledge might differ from ours and you might find some difficulties to keep up with the subjects. Make a list of possible options, since places are limited and if a specific course is full, you will need to replace it with a new one, changing your learning agreement. The AIRE system is a little tricky and messy, you will be asked to select the subjects and the "group", which is something we do not have at PoliMi and might be hard to understand. In that case, your mentor could come in handy.

I found it fascinating to attend classes of "Design for collective use" and "Graphic communication and corporate identity I": the projects were really interesting to develop and the professors were very nice and open to foreign students. The former dealt with different kinds of products used by different people and in public spaces, specifically, the final project is usually something related to trains, in collaboration with a real corporation. The latter shows you how to create a brand and its graphic identity, and as a final project, they ask you to redesign an already existing brand's identity. Teamwork was a little different, as far as I could experience, Spanish students tend to distribute the work among members and spend a limited time sharing and putting all the pieces together. I found it hard to give a meaning to the project, as there was not that much of place for discussion and idea sharing. Online classes were held through Microsoft Teams, and all the projects were uploaded to UPV's online services, called Poliformat (the equivalent of PoliMi's Beep).

I must admit that students at ETSID were a bit closed towards the international guests and I found it quite hard to socialise and collaborate with them. Nevertheless, if on the first class you publicly announce that you are an Erasmus, the most outgoing students will certainly volunteer to work with you on the projects. Classes are quite short and bearable, the longest one lasted 3 hours for me. As I mentioned before, the courses usually require a constant evaluation, so you will be asked to upload a research or an individual/group work after almost every class, or for the following week. Another main difference between polimi and upv is that you don't have multiple calls for the same exam, and you can't reject a grade. If you don't pass it on the first attempt you will have another and last opportunity later during the so called "recuperacion", when I was told the exam is usually even harder to pass. Do not skip classes, as some professors don't record the class or they forget to.

Sometimes you will be busy with Erasmus trips, I'd suggest you to ask the teacher if there will be any kind of deadline on those days. If there will be, they will probably excuse you and tell you that you can upload the work later. As I said before, most of them are nice and the relationship with the students is very informal that you can even call them by their first name and have little chats about anything.

Not everyone of course, some of them don't really consider your difficulties as an international student and ask you to do the same things Spanish students do, without giving you the actual opportunity to do so. I strongly recommend you to have some knowledge of Spanish before applying as English is not really well known from everyone and all the work they will ask you to do will be in Spanish.

The UPV campus is huge, there is any kind of service you could imagine, even the hairdresser or the optician. There are courts to play tennis and an athletic field to run. There was even a little rock to do climbing. It's full of grass and benches, bars, a printing shop (which is useful for designers), a bank and a giant library. I didn't really have the opportunity to visit or to use the laboratories of the Design Engineering's building since the access to some parts was limited due to covid.

Valencia is a city full of opportunities and it really meets the needs of the Erasmus people. It's very open minded. There is always some kind of event, such as concerts, parades or shows and the public transport is very efficient, although the metro line is slow, compared to the Milanese one. The price of the public transport is almost the same, sometimes cheaper, but unlike Milan, there is few options for student's subscriptions. One option is to buy the card and to charge it with bundles of 10 tickets, this way you are going to save a lot of money. Tickets for the busses can be bought both on board and on the app. The whole city is clean, and I have never travelled on a dirty, broken or uncomfortable vehicle. The city is surrounded by a famous park, the Turia, which is going to be the setting of many of your meetings with people. For the whole month of July, there's a famous fair with Luna Park right there.

It was very easy for me to find a room in the city centre. It took me just few days, there are some Facebook group, but also WhatsApp groups for the Erasmus people. In addition to that, the numerous Erasmus associations also help you with finding a place to stay. The rent is really (really!) cheap compared to Milan. Housing in the city centre is obviously a little more expensive, but it's worth the price since it's well connected to pretty much anywhere, although you might want to find a place near to the UPV. In that case I'd suggest the Blasco Ibañez neighbourhood: it's the student area and it's full of bars and pubs. It is also close to the beach.

The UPV area is not that far, and the metro system has stops right in front of the main buildings. Joining Valencia Erasmus associations' WhatsApp groups is the first thing I suggest you to do: they kept us updated with all the

covid restrictions in the city and organised plenty of experiences, meetings and trips.

My roommates were both foreign people and Spanish students. I found it very useful, not only did the Spanish people welcomed me as a brother in their house, but they also were a precious source of helpful information and tips, since they obviously knew more about the country than me. They can also help you with the language, since you will have to get in touch with the professors, telling them you are enrolled to their courses or for any kind of communication through emails.

A quick way to make friends is to join the Erasmus activities. Valencia is full of them, and you will never find yourself without any plan for the day.

On the first days you can join other people that already made plans, or you can simply send a message on the WhatsApp groups saying that you are new and you are inviting other people to visit the city, someone always joins. Also, you definitely want to visit the oceanographic and the city of arts and science. Both the oceanographic and the science museum have discounts for groups and for Erasmus students. You can also have lunch by the promenade, which is full of restaurants, enjoy the view from the rooftops in the city centre or right next to the City of Arts and Science, or go eating tapas and drink sangria. Eating tapas is basically the equivalent of our aperitivo, and it is typical Spanish tradition. You can visit the Central and the Colón Markets or go sightseeing the city centre: Plaza de Toros, Plaza del Ayuntamiento and the whole El Carmen neighbourhood are my favourites. Some of the Erasmus associations are ErasmusLife, HappyErasmus and ErasmusMundo. But you can search it up on Instagram and find more. Some of them even offer the possibility to buy a Spanish sim card and get a Spanish phone number. Not everyone needs it, but it can be convenient in order to have some more gigabytes for internet and to make online shopping easier. If you're planning to stay in Valencia during the second semester, I suggest you to visit the city in the first couple of months, or you might end your Erasmus with many secret spots and nice places you haven't seen. When the weather gets better and warmer you can start joining people in the trips to the Comunidad Valenciana and even to other regions of Spain such as Andalucia. I got to visit Sevilla, Cordoba, Granada and Malaga and I think it's something every Erasmus student should see too, as they have some of the most famous buildings and monuments of Spain, such as the Alhambra or the Cordoba's Mezquita. Malaga's red arena was stunning. Among all the cities nearby, Peñíscola is a must. My info is specifically based on my personal experience, you will need to find a balance between activities and study, considering the huge number of deadlines. Enjoy the beginning of the semester as it's going to be the easiest time of the academic year, you will also have some free time during two weeks of March as they celebrate the local holidays of "Fallas" (something like a big carnival). As I went on my Erasmus during the pandemic, the festivities were postponed to September so I can't really tell what the atmosphere in the city is during Fallas but I was told it's full of events and parties and parades. Regarding the measures against the covid situation, they have been very strict for some time with curfew for most of the months. If the Comunidad Valenciana closes its borders, see it as an opportunity to explore all the little cities of the region such as Alicante, Castellón, Cuevas the San Jose, Villajoyosa, Castel de Guadalest and Benidorm, where you can find some little places to try the most famous Spanish dishes (Valencia is generally full of restaurant with different types of food from all over the world, including Italian, so you won't really miss home that much).

Don't get scared, think of your experience at Polimi and you will find many examples of times when you had to work really hard to get the best results. Let me tell you it's not going to be as easy as they say, nobody gives you anything for free just for being an Erasmus student and you will likely second guess your choice to undertake this journey, but if you prove that you are there to work, they will certainly give you the opportunity to show them what you can do and your hard work will be rewarded. Thinking back of my experience I can say it was one of the hardest, but also the nicest I've ever done. You will get to know a lot of people, like A LOT, (you will forget the names of many of them) but after some weeks you will finally find your group and let me tell you it's going to be great, as you will basically do everything together. It's different from the Italian friends you have here, there they're just the same as you, new to the city and to the university system so you will have a lot to share. Spain might sound an obvious choice given all the similarities with the Italian culture, but you will get to know people from all over the world, and Valencia will provide you with all the fun activities you want to share with them. The experience is a risk: it's all new and you can feel alone at first. It made me ready to face bigger challenges, to see further than my own city or country, and I'm surely even more open to undertake an international career. I admit Valencia is a city where I would love to live in. I will definitely try to do such an experience again, and I'm glad to help other people evaluating the idea of doing the same as me. If you will find any negative part about it, let me assure you the good memories, the people, the cultural and academic baggage will outweigh it.

Plan your staying, select the right courses but be open to the unknown too. I'm sure you will enjoy it.

Firma / Signature: *Valerio Libardo*

Data / Date: 04/08/2021