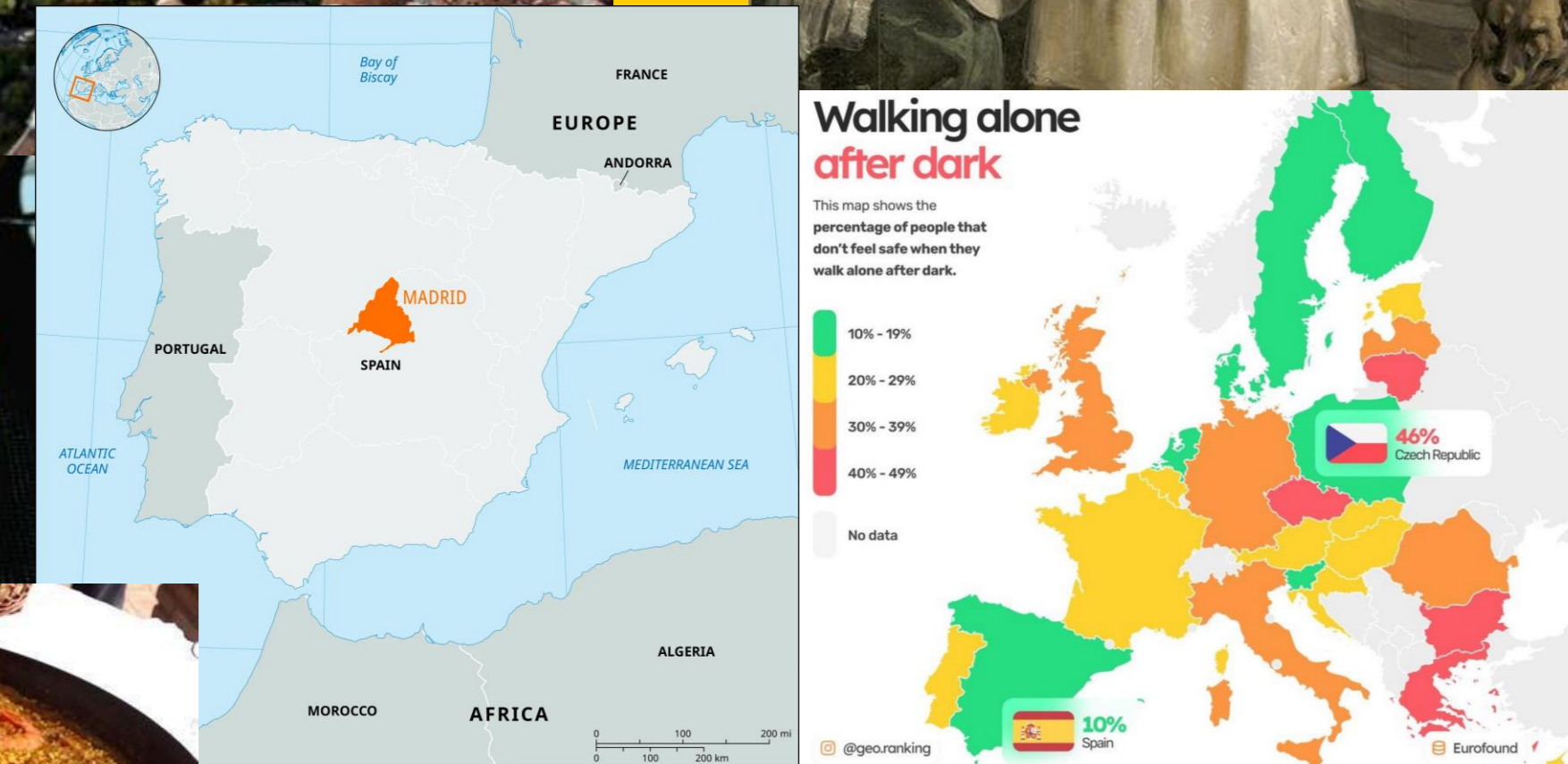


Exploring Study Abroad Options in Madrid: A Comprehensive Analysis

Prof. Dr. Miguel Buñuel, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

1. INTRODUCTION

Madrid, the vibrant capital of Spain, stands as a premier destination for international education, captivating students from around the globe with its rich cultural heritage, academic excellence, and unparalleled opportunities for personal and professional growth.



MADRID
One of the “Most Livable Cities” in the World!
Monocle's Quality of Life Survey 2023
#1 in Spain
#7 in Europe
#8 in the World

Renowned for its world-class universities, dynamic arts scene, and cosmopolitan atmosphere, Madrid offers a truly immersive experience that transcends traditional classroom boundaries. With its welcoming community, diverse student body, and strategic location, Madrid provides an ideal setting for students to broaden their horizons, deepen their understanding of global issues, and forge lifelong connections.



Join us as we delve into the myriad study abroad options available in this captivating city, unlocking pathways to academic achievement and cultural enrichment. Welcome to Madrid – where every corner is a classroom, and every experience is an adventure.

2. STUDY ABROAD MODELS IN MADRID

2.1) Full-Degree Programs

Enrolling in a full-degree program in Madrid offers foreign students a deep integration into the Spanish academic system, providing a profound cultural experience and language fluency. The challenges of language barriers and adapting to a different educational system exist but are outweighed by the immersive benefits.

Foreign students can choose between 6 public and 11 private Spanish universities to come to Madrid to study on campus. Sometimes aided by providers (e.g., Chinese students assisted by Chinese providers).

Other minority options:

- a) Foreign University Campus: 6 have established small campuses in Madrid, offering full or partial degrees locally, like [Saint Louis](#).
- b) Joint/Dual Programs: Between foreign and Spanish institutions, enhancing academic exchange and course options.

Public universities in the Autonomous Community of Madrid	QS World University Rankings 2024: Top global universities
U. Complutense de Madrid	171
U. Autónoma de Madrid	199
U. Carlos III de Madrid	319
U. Politécnica de Madrid	349
U. de Alcalá	538
U. Rey Juan Carlos	951



Type of Spanish universities in the Autonomous Community of Madrid	# students 2022-23
6 public universities	218,180
11 private universities	97,897
UNED in Madrid (distance learning, public, national)	29,497
UDIMA (distance learning, private, only Madrid)	7,701
TOTAL	353,275

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS >

Spain breaks the record for students from outside the European Union

The modification in the regulations of the immigration law, which allows simultaneous studies with a job, encourages the arrival of students, especially from Latin America. 122,460 training permits were issued (undergraduate, postgraduate, FP and other training) in 2023



European Commission @EU... · 28/3/24

The number of ERASMUS+ participants in 2022 traveling to:

- 🇪🇸 142.9K
- 🇮🇹 101.8K
- 🇩🇪 75.3K
- 🇫🇷 61K
- 🇪🇺 55.8K
- 🇮🇪 44.9K
- 🇺🇸 37.5K
- 🇬🇧 33.6K
- 🇮🇳 28.9K

- a) Exchange Agreements: Foreign universities form agreements with Spanish counterparts, enabling cultural immersion while keeping ties to home institutions.
- b) Foreign Universities' Programs: US universities like [Stanford](#) establish programs in Madrid for their own students, tailoring courses to their standards. Universities like [Boston University](#) offer both in-house programs and exchange agreements, providing diverse study abroad options.
- c) Third-party Providers: Some US universities partner with study abroad providers like [CIEE](#) for comprehensive programs, often at local Spanish universities.
- d) "Free Movers": Students may independently enroll as visiting students at Madrid universities, fostering autonomy in their study abroad journey.

2.2) Semester Programs

Semester programs in Madrid offer students a balanced experience, providing a taste of Spanish culture and academic life without the commitment of a full-degree program. Pros include cultural immersion and language acquisition.

- a) Spanish Universities: Some universities offer summer or winter courses, like [UAM Summer School of Economics and Business](#).
- b) Local Non-University Providers: Some offer summer or winter courses, like [SpaCIE Climate Change Summer School](#).
- c) Foreign Universities' Programs: Universities like [NYU](#) offer summer programs. Sometimes they are open to students from other institutions.
- d) Third-Party Providers: They offer summer or winter courses, often through agreements with local universities, like [ISA](#).
- e) Tailor-Made Courses: Some foreign universities sign agreements with local universities to organize these courses.
- f) Faculty-Led Courses: Some US universities organize faculty-led courses, combining their faculty's expertise with Madrid's cultural context.

2.3) Short-Term Intensive Courses

For those seeking a condensed but immersive experience, short-term intensive courses, such as summer schools, are available. These are ideal for students with time constraints, providing a snapshot of Spanish culture and academia. However, the brief duration may limit cultural immersion.



3. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EACH OPTION: A SURVEY

3.1) Intro and Sample

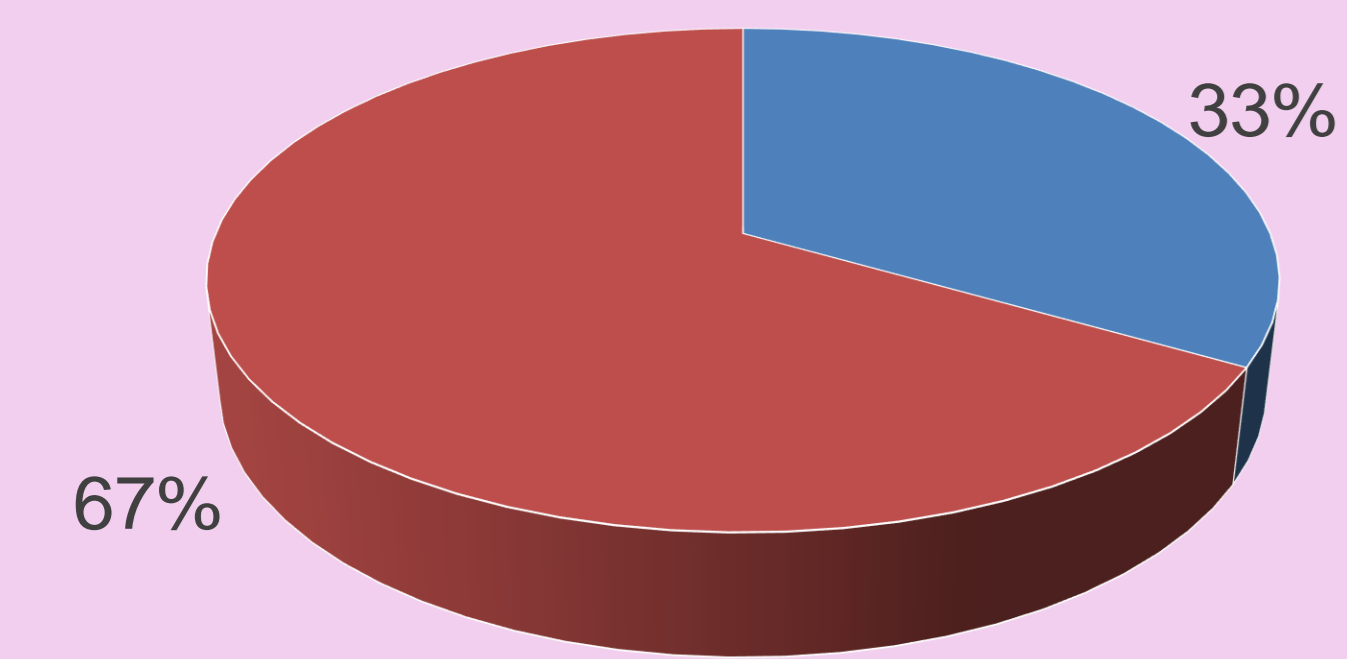
Anonymous survey among 93 members of academic and administrative or management staff involved in study abroad in Madrid on how they believe each of the options for a foreign student to study in Madrid performs on 7 attributes. In the survey, the options are shown in the rows of a table. The 7 attributes to be evaluated are in the columns. Respondents assign a value to each attribute on a scale of 1 to 5.

3.2) Meaning of the scale from 1 to 5:

	5	4	3	2	1
Degree of International Experience	Exposed to diverse nationalities		Mainly exposed to Spaniards		Primarily exposed to other compatriot students
Building independence and self-growth	Abundant opportunities		Moderate opportunities		Limited opportunities
Logistical Support and Guidance	Comprehensive		Adequate		Limited
Cultural Immersion	Abundant opportunities		Moderate opportunities		Limited opportunities
Academic Rigor	Extremely rigorous curriculum		Moderately rigorous curriculum		Limited academic challenge
Affordability	Significantly cheaper than studying at home		Approximately the same cost		Significantly more expensive
Managerial and regulatory easiness for the universities involved	Very easy to manage and/or not significant regulatory difficulties		Medium managerial and regulatory difficulties		Very difficult to manage and/or significant regulatory difficulties

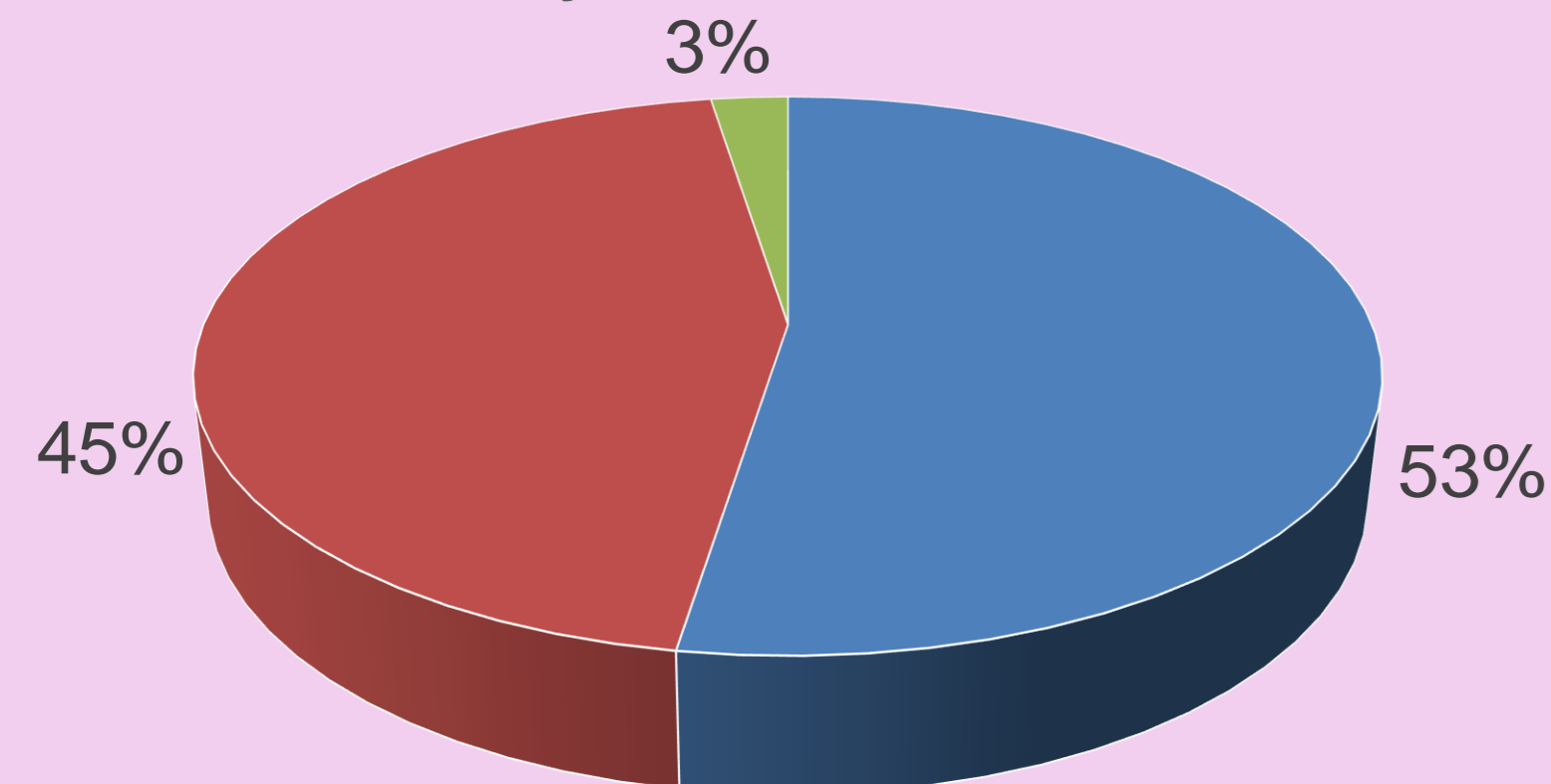
Foreign student enrolled in a semester program in Madrid							
	Degree of International Experience	Opportunities for Building Independence and Self-growth	Logistical Support and Guidance	Cultural Immersion Opportunities	Academic Rigor	Affordability	Managerial and regulatory easiness for universities
Through an exchange agreement with a Spanish university	4,1	4,3	3,4	4,3	4,2	3,4	3,7
At his/her home university's own program in Madrid	2,1	3,4	4,0	3,8	3,8	2,7	3,9
Through a third-party provider	1,7	3,0	3,8	3,8	3,6	1,7	3,7
Through his/her independent arrangement ("free movers")	3,7	4,8	2,3	4,5	4,8	3,5	1,8

What is the primary nature of your role in your institution?



- Academic (I'm a professor)
- Administrative or Management (I'm NOT a professor)

What type of institution do you work in?



- Spanish university
- Foreign university
- Third Party Provider

Foreign student enrolled in a short-term intensive course (summer and winter programs...)

	Degree of International Experience	Opportunities for Building Independence and Self-growth	Logistical Support and Guidance	Cultural Immersion Opportunities	Academic Rigor	Affordability	Managerial and regulatory easiness for universities
At a Spanish university	4,1	4,1	2,9	3,9	4,0	4,1	3,3
At a local non-university program	4,3	4,8	2,9	4,3	4,0	4,0	3,5
At a foreign university with Campus or program in Madrid	2,5	4,0	3,3	3,5	3,7	2,8	3,8
Through a third-party provider	1,8	2,8	4,0	3,8	3,0	1,3	3,8
In a tailor-made course at a Spanish university for his/her home university	1,0	1,5	3,8	3,5	3,3	2,0	3,8
In a faculty-led program led by his/her home university faculty members	2,0	2,6	4,0	3,0	4,8	2,8	3,4

3.3) Average answers

Foreign student enrolled in a full-degree program in Madrid (Grado, Bachelor, Master...)

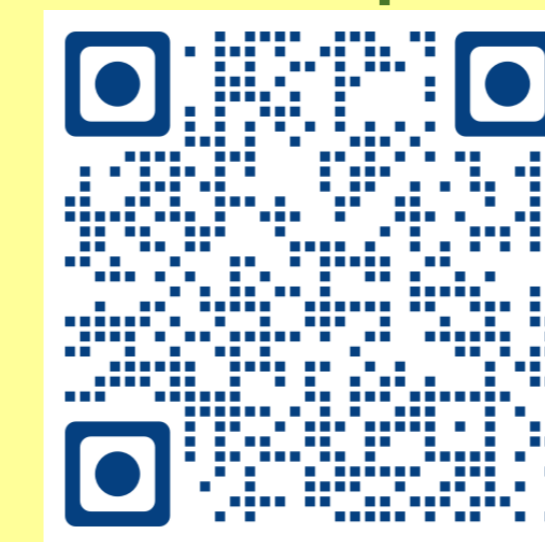
	Degree of International Experience	Opportunities for Building Independence and Self-growth	Logistical Support and Guidance	Cultural Immersion Opportunities	Academic Rigor	Affordability	Managerial and regulatory easiness for universities
At a Spanish university	3,9	4,4	2,5	3,9	4,5	3,9	2,9
At a foreign university with campus in Madrid	3,6	3,4	4,1	3,5	3,3	3,0	3,5
Through a joint or dual program between Spanish and foreign universities	3,4	3,7	3,3	4,3	4,3	3,0	3,0

4. CONCLUSIONS

Why Madrid is one of the best cities for study abroad?

- Beautiful parks, gardens & architecture
- Diverse, high-quality eateries
- Low cost of living, high quality of life & safe city
- Art & Culture
- Close to mountains and beach
- Non-stop nightlife
- Top universities...

Students' opinions



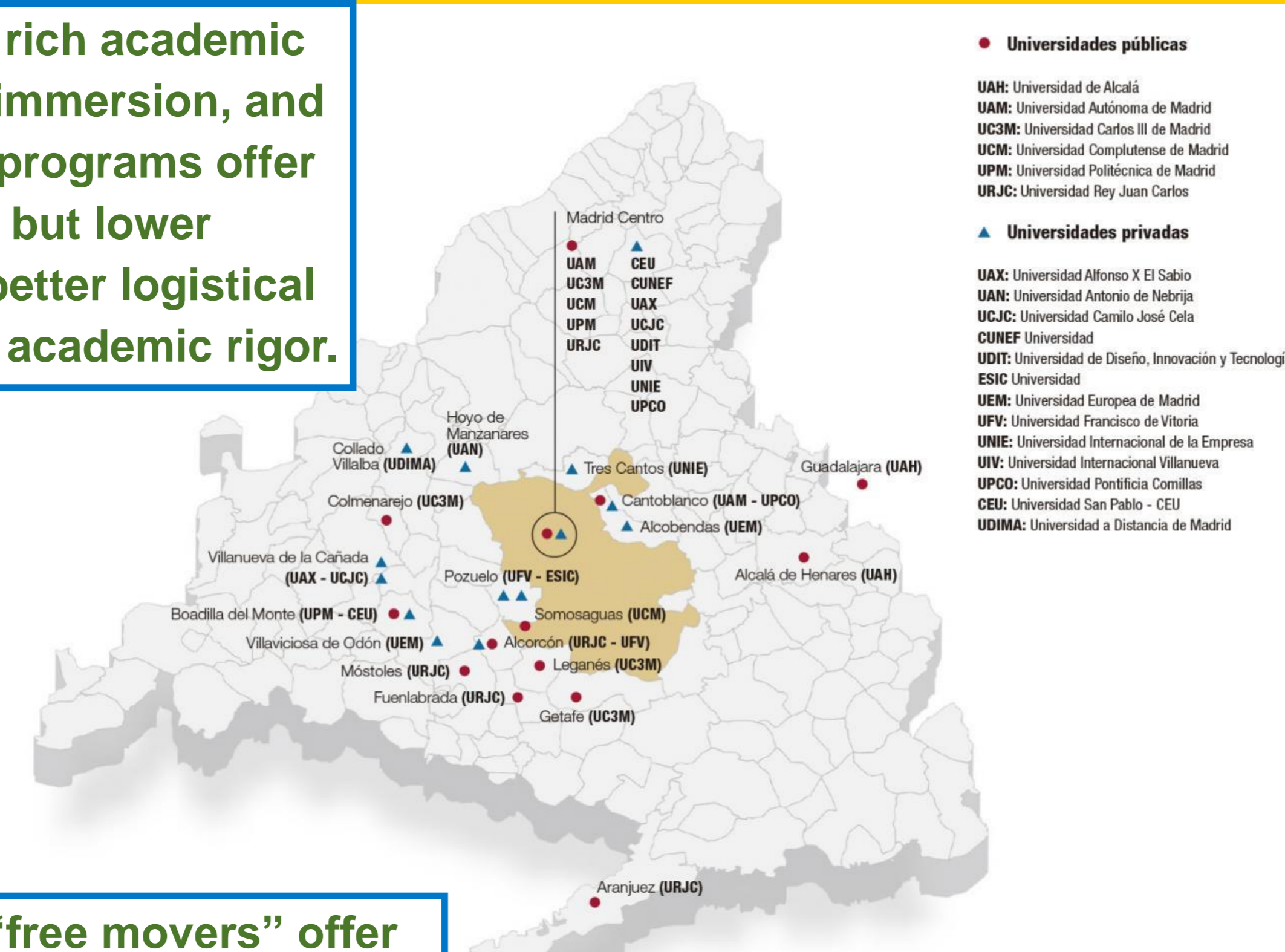
Podium winners!

For each of the seven attributes valued, the three options available for a foreign student to study in Madrid that score highest in the survey.

	1	2	3
Degree of International Experience	Short-term courses through non-university providers	Short-term courses through Spanish universities	Exchange agreements with Spanish universities
Building independence and self-growth	Semester programs by "free movers"	Short-term courses through non-university providers	Full-degree program at a Spanish university
Logistical Support and Guidance	Full-degree programs or semester programs at foreign universities	Short-term courses at third-party providers	Faculty-led courses
Cultural Immersion	Semester programs by "free movers"	Short-term courses through non-university providers	Joint/dual program or exchange agreements
Academic Rigor	Faculty-led courses	Semester programs by "free movers"	Full-degree program at a Spanish university
Affordability	Short-term courses through Spanish universities	Short-term courses through non-university providers	Full-degree program at a Spanish university
Managerial and regulatory easiness for the universities involved	Semester or short-term at home university's programs	Short-term courses at third-party providers	Tailor-made courses

University	Number of subjects in the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings by subject 2024 (of 55 subjects + 5 broad subjects)
Complutense de Madrid	15
Autónoma de Madrid	8
Politécnica de Madrid	6
Carlos III de Madrid	4
IE	1
Pontificia de Comillas	1

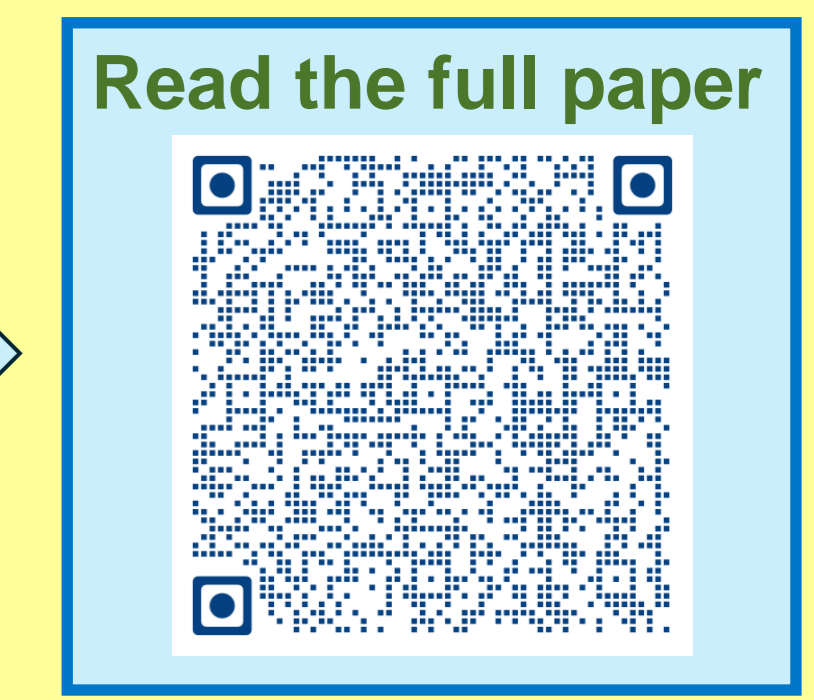
Full Degree Programs: Spanish universities offer rich academic experiences of high rigor, independence, cultural immersion, and international exposure at a lower cost. Joint/dual programs offer similar benefits with better logistical support but lower affordability. Foreign universities in Madrid offer better logistical guidance but less affordability, independence, and academic rigor.



How to enhance the overall study abroad experience for students in Madrid:

- Consider trade-offs like logistical support vs. independence, affordability, and cultural immersion.
- Different students prioritize attributes differently. Use our results to guide choices according to student type. E.g.:
 - Adventurous explorer: Independent student arrangement ("free mover");
 - Academic enthusiast: Full-degree program at a Spanish university;
 - Cultural connoisseur: Semester program via exchange agreement;
 - Budget-conscious traveler: Short-term intensive course via Spanish university or local non-university provider;
 - Career strategist: Full-degree program with internships; etc.

More info



Semester Programs: Exchange agreements and "free movers" offer superior academic rigor, independence, cultural immersion, and international exposure. Home university programs and third-party providers offer good support but lack international diversity. "Free movers" may cause administrative challenges, while third-party programs are typically the most expensive.

Short-Term Intensive Courses: Spanish universities and local non-university providers offer comprehensive programs with high rigor, independence, immersion, international exposure, and affordability. Other options provide better support but lack in international exposure and affordability. Faculty-led courses excel in rigor.



Interested in discussing more about studying abroad in Madrid? Reach out to me via email at: miguel.bunuel@uam.es