

## Spanish Academic System

The Spanish academic system may be very different from a student's home system, and should be kept in mind when choosing courses. Students select their field of study at the beginning of their university career. Students follow a *plan de estudios*, which is a structured plan of study, leaving students with few elective units. For example a student obtaining an undergraduate degree in history, either a *licenciatura* or *grado*, will take around 90% of all of their classes in history, including electives.

As students begin classes in their field of study in their first year, fourth and fifth year classes of a degree may correspond to graduate study at your home university. You should make sure you have sufficient background for a fourth or fifth year course before enrolling.

## The Bologna Process

Spain is a member country of the European Higher Education Association (EHEA), and many ISEP members in Spain are changing their university structures to follow the guidelines set out by the Bologna Process. As a result of these changes, students will encounter two different systems of higher education in place, the older system, with degree titles of *diplomado*, *licenciado* and *doctorado* and the new system with degree titles of *grado*, *master universitario*, and *doctorado*. Due to this change, some course description availability may be limited. ISEP students may be able to take courses in both systems, but the academic calendar dates may differ slightly.

## The Licenciado (older) System

Under the old system, undergraduate work is completed in the primer and segundo ciclos, or first and second cycles, which comprises the degrees of *diplomatura* and *licenciatura* respectively. A *licenciatura* is earned after students complete five to six years of study in social sciences, law, humanities and other fields. Six year undergraduate study programs are also offered in medicine, pharmacy and veterinary science. Professional, technical degrees of *ingeniero* and *arquitecto* are given after five to six years of technical study in engineering and architecture. Similar to *diplomatura* degrees, students may earn the degree of *arquitectura técnica* or *ingeniería técnica* after three years of technical study.

## The Grado (new) System

Under the new system, most ISEP students will take courses at the *grado* level, equivalent to an undergraduate degree. Some ISEP members may permit students to take courses at the *master* level, but this is not a given, and will be addressed individually.

Some universities are converting all degrees into the new system, while others are changing a certain number of degrees and maintaining the *diplomado* and *licenciado* degrees in other fields. During this process it is possible that only certain years of different degrees will be offered.

## Navigating web sites

Please give yourself adequate time to navigate the sites in order to find the information you need. On each university's directory entry on the ISEP web site, there is a section entitled "Hints for researching courses" that provides directions for getting to course listings online. However, links change frequently. If the link doesn't work, you should go to the university's home page and look for *diplomaturas*, *licenciaturas*, *ingenierías*, *arquitecturas* and/or *grados*. Most sites will have a link to *oferta de estudios* which will list the offered degrees at that university. After selecting a degree title, look for *plan de estudios*, which is the curriculum or course itinerary for a particular program.

## Academic Calendar

If you will be there for the full academic year, you can choose *anual* courses (year-long) courses, or courses offered in either *cuatrimestre* (semester). If you will be there for fall semester, only choose courses offered in the *primer cuatrimestre* (Oct.- Feb.). If you are placed for spring semester, only choose courses offered in the *segunda cuatrimestre* (Feb. – June). **Please note that you will need to conform to the academic calendar of your host university. If you choose to study for the first semester, please note that exams may run through mid to late February, which may conflict with your home calendar.**



## TIPS FOR FINDING COURSES CONTD.

# SPAIN

### Course description availability

You will notice that not all Spanish universities will have course descriptions online. Instead, it will simply list the courses available in the degree program. If course descriptions are not available online, please contact your ISEP coordinator, and ask them to contact ISEP Central for assistance. If you are unable to get course descriptions prior to departure, upon arrival to Spain you should collect your syllabi from the courses you intend to take. You should then work with your home advisor to gain approval.

### Contact Hours/Credit Equivalency

To determine the number of contact hours you will have in a particular course, check the course hours listed on the website. Some universities use ECTS credit hours, while others have an institution specific system. Work with your advisor at home to determine how many hours you will need to take to maintain full time status.

### Additional Tips

At most universities, registration (*matrícula*) in Spain is a more flexible process than in the U.S. You may not have to officially register until 1-2 months into the semester. This gives you flexibility to try out several courses during first few weeks and then narrow in on which ones you will eventually register for. For example, if you know you have to fulfill a requirement for an upper-level Spanish literature course, get as many possibilities pre-approved as possible at your home university.

Remember to save all course syllabi, exams, papers, etc. from your time abroad. This can help you if there is any question about course approval or grade disputes.

### Glossary of Terms

**Anual:** A year-long course. Students may only take an annual course if on a full year program.

**Asignatura Troncal:** A requirement for a major determined by the Ministry of Education.

**Asignatura Obligatoria:** A requirement for a major determined by the university.

**Asignatura Optativa:** Subjects related to major of study. Student must complete a prescribed number of credits from this area. (Electives within major)

**Asignaturas de Libre Configuración:** Subjects designed for students from other majors of study. Student must take a prescribed number of these elective subjects from outside his/her major. *Asignaturas de libre configuración* are especially recommended for foreign students as they require no prior knowledge.

**Bachillerato:** This is the degree received for pre-University secondary school studies in Spain. It is approximately equivalent to a high school degree. It is not a "Bachelor's" degree.

**Cuatrimestre:** Primer cuatrimestre refers to first semester (September-February) and segundo cuatrimestre refers to second semester (February-June). Make sure to choose courses for the semester you will be on campus.

**Curso:** Frequently used to indicate a full academic year of programmed studies (i.e. Primer Curso corresponds to the curriculum for first-year studies in your degree program)

**Diplomatura:** Three year degree achieved after completing the primer ciclo.

**Facultad:** Refers to a College or School. *Facultad de Medicina*=College of Medicine

**Primer Ciclo:** The first portion of a *licenciatura*

**Licenciatura or Grado:** Bachelor's degree.

**Matricula:** Registration for your courses for a particular year

**Plan de Estudios:** The "curriculum" or course itinerary for a particular degree program

**Segundo Ciclo (Second Cycle):** The second and final portion of a *licenciatura* or *grado* degree. Coursework completed in the *primer ciclo* provides a foundation for courses undertaken in the *segundo ciclo*.

**Tercer Ciclo (Third Cycle):** Graduate level coursework.

*Some information obtained from Universidad de Navarra's web site.*