Visa Application:

Reasonably easy process – the Visa consulate for Spain is only located in Melbourne so you need to correspond with them to get the application form and also check off a list of items including travel itinerary, insurance, letter from the university, proof of funds, accommodation details etc before you are able to apply for the student visa. The consulate should send you a copy of the required list upon request. The cost is about $80 payable only by cheque or money order. In addition, if you do not live in Melbourne you will need to send your passport in the mail to the consulate to receive your visa so should take this into consideration if you need to use your passport for any other travel in the meantime. However they are able to turn it around reasonably quickly – within at least a couple of weeks.

Be sure that if you are considering travelling throughout Europe whilst you are at the school the application form will have a question regarding Single or Multiple Entry – in this instance you would be best off applying for a Multiple Entry visa.

Enrolment Procedure and recommended subjects:

The great thing about the IE Business School electives is there is such a wide variety of electives to choose from – particularly compared to the reasonably limited selection available in the MBA (Executive). Yes you will end up enrolling in more than the two electives required by AGSM for the MBA (Executive) in terms of classes but it is an opportunity to broaden the horizons and learn some things you may otherwise not be exposed to. In addition you will have the opportunity to have a variety of different lecturers/professors which provide a different and sometimes more international perspective again to the largely Australian point of view we receive studying at AGSM.

Enrolment itself is reasonably easy – you don’t make use of the bidding system that the full time students use for the electives period but instead make your selections based on the list that the school will provide to you and then I think email your options through. As the elective period runs over Terms 4 and 5 you can either opt to just take all your classes in one term or spread them out over both terms. Depending on how you structure your timetable you may find you have quite a bit of free time to travel or alternatively you can select to enrol in more units.

Depending on your experience and interest in the area the Renewable Energy Business unit was a worthwhile class to take if you would like a basic understanding of the different types of technology and an overview of the project development process. Corporate Venturing can give you an appreciation of the factors involved with pursuing innovative developments. Leadership, Power and Influence will challenge you to consider how you perhaps approach particular situations although be aware that the professor has a somewhat aggressive teaching style which may not suit all. Finally Organisation Design has a particularly engaging professor who will provide some insight into what designs may suit what type of organisations.

Workload at exchange school:

Given I am studying the MBA (Executive) my work load only translated to 60 sessions – depending on which electives you opt for this can be as few as 3 units (Classes range in weight from 5 – 20 sessions each). On average 60 sessions would probably translate to about 4 units (2 x 20 sessions and 2 x 12 sessions). I can’t comment on what the workload for the AGSM full time program is although I certainly didn’t find the workload at IE to be particularly challenging compared to studying the core units at AGSM part time – I’m not sure if this is just a product of it being the electives period though. Classes will have some pre-reading which would maybe take you a few hours and then in terms of assessments most units are reasonably heavy on class participation and assignments. There is quite a bit of group work involved depending on which classes you take so the biggest challenge there is coordinating schedules and priorities. Depending on which classes are selected will also determine how they are delivered – for example some of the 5 session classes may be over after just one full day of classes. Others may be delivered over one full week, 3-4 weeks or throughout the entire term.
Accommodation options:

There is no on campus student housing, however the Student Office can assist in finding accommodation through their housing database and they can also assist you with reviewing the lease contract if it is in Spanish. Depending on when and how long you will be at the school for you might have the opportunity to rent the apartment of one of the full time students that may be going on an internship/exchange during Term 4 &/or 5.

I went through www.idealista.com to find a shared apartment which was reasonably easy. The school is very well located although is in the more expensive part of Madrid so if you’re looking at staying close to the school you can expect to pay a bit more in rent, particularly if you’re looking at living by yourself. Having said that, Madrid is a reasonably compact city so very walkable and you probably wouldn’t have to live more than a 45 minute walk from school – the great weather also makes this a very viable option. In addition, Madrid has a fantastic, cheap, clean, quick and efficient metro system with a stop reasonably close to the school.

In terms of budget you can expect to pay anywhere around 300-500 euro a month for a shared apartment – although these may be tiny rooms and sharing with at least 2 or more people, or alternatively if you’re looking at renting on your own anywhere upwards of about 800 euro a month.

Many places will also provide wireless internet which may or may not be inclusive of utilities which all up should not cost more than an additional 50 euro per month.

Campus Facilities

Not having a campus to attend as a part time student I can’t compare to the AGSM Sydney campus. As already mentioned the campus is very well located although buildings are spread out across three predominant streets and then the library is located on another street a little bit further over – all are accessible within 10-15 minutes.

There is no cafeteria as such available on campus although there are many food options/restaurants available within 5-10 minutes walk from campus.

There is wireless internet available throughout all the buildings on campus as well as printing, scanning, copying machines which you can connect to from your own personal computer.

They have a range of meeting rooms available throughout the building although you can only make room bookings 24 hours in advance – this can be challenging to get a room when some of the other intakes may have exams to study for.

There are no gym or shower facilities on campus if that is what your preference is – although Green Canal is a running track and soccer fields about 10-15 minute walk from IE if you are keen to do some exercise.

Careers Services:

Personally I did not make much use of the Career Services although they have been forward about making themselves available to students for any questions or queries.

You also become IE alumni after finishing at the school so continue to have access to their services.

Student life:

Get ready to shift your body clock forward at least 2-3 hours. Lunch occurs between 2-4pm, and some shops still observe siesta time during these hours but consequently stay open later as well. Heading out to dinner is very usual at 10pm and if you’re looking at going out to a discoteca – don’t expect to get there anytime before midnight (which is still considered reasonably early). To make the most of out Madrid and IE life you will definitely be having some very late nights/early mornings.

Don’t be shy in getting to know the full time students, it may be a bit difficult at first as they have shared 9 months of the core units and the same experience but people will be generally be open to getting to know new people. This is also a great way to get to know what events are being organised and where the good spots to hang out are. The exchange crew also do typically stick together a bit as we’re all in the same position but make sure you do chat to your other classmates!
Like the IE Social Club page on Facebook to get an idea of the events that have been organised, also a lot of the clubs will post ads around the school for upcoming events which you should also try to get along to.

**Best Practice observed:**

Search online in Facebook for the relevant intake that you will be joining and request access to the group. It will be a useful introduction to the full time students and you can post any questions you might have in here and at least someone will generally be pretty happy to respond.

Make an effort to attend some of the presentations that are hosted on campus – there can be some pretty big name guest speakers that come to the school and other really interesting speeches that you may be able to attend almost on a weekly basis.

Being well located in Europe there is the temptation to travel almost every weekend which is quick and reasonably cheap so definitely make use of your spare time to explore other countries but by the same token make sure you spend some time in Madrid to really get to know the city. It can be hard if you are skipping away every weekend to really get a feel for the full spectrum of the Spanish lifestyle (eg. La Latina on a Sunday! Go to Txirimiri for pinchos!).

Embrace the football passion! Try to get along to a Real Madrid match…even if you don't know a lot about the game the atmosphere and crowd definitely make it worth it.

Make an effort to learn and speak Spanish. It can be really easy to get away with not speaking a word of Spanish as the classes are in English and all the students will typically speak in English with each other but the Spaniards don’t speak a lot of English and so to communicate in your everyday life having some basic understanding of Spanish can make your life a little bit easier. If your schedule permits it I would highly recommend taking Spanish classes external to uni, you can just search online for a number of different options ranging from 1.5 hours a week to intensive classes of 4 hours every day. If you are keen to practise Spanish there will be no shortage of Spaniards seeking to practise their English – check out www.conversationexchange.com for a site where you can set up intercambios with native Spanish speakers to really help your language skills.

**Things AGSM MBA students should consider/be aware of when applying to this school for exchange:**

You can probably expect that academically you won’t be challenged hugely in the electives period at IE. The range of electives is impressive although the short nature of a lot of the courses means that the depth of content may leave you asking more questions than receiving answers.

Also, if you’re vegetarian, you may struggle to find vegetarian food in Spain in general – not intended as a deterrent but something to be wary of considering you would be looking at living in this environment for several months.

**Highlight:**

Diversity! IE attracts a huge range of students from all around the world – as an indication I think the year group I went into was about 250 students and about 100 different nationalities. The exchange group was also reasonably diverse – majority of the other students were from the US but also some from around Europe, Canada, Latin America and a few from around Asia as well.

Hence you should have the opportunity to meet people from other countries that you would not otherwise have had the opportunity to in your own program or everyday lives.

Madrid! It is an amazing city to live in and discover. Embrace the lifestyle – go home for siestas before heading out at night for tapas, cañas, bar hopping, hitting jazz clubs, piano bar or discotecas…you really can go out and do something different on any night of the week. If you’re not opposed to the bullfights it is definitely an experience to witness the matadors in action.

Check out the Museo del Prado between 6-8pm every night and the Reina Sofia between 7-9pm every night or all day Saturday and Sunday when both are free for visitors.
Visit the Temple de Debod, the Royal Palace and Retiro Park to see a different side of Madrid. Sit by the fountain in Puerta del Sol or in Plaza Mayor for some curious people watching.

Travel around Spain to check out the different regions, it is a big country and there is much to cover but each region is very different. A couple of quick day trips to Toledo, Segovia and Salamanca are easy to get to and a nice break from the city. Rioja region has some fantastic red wines which are easily available in your local supermarket for about 5 euro per bottle!!