



UNIVERSIDAD  
DE GRANADA

Vicerrectorado  
de Internacionalización  
Oficina de Relaciones Internacionales



Report on staff mobility training under the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility  
programme 2023.

Where: University of Granada, Spain

When: 10 to 14 July 2023

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## Table of Contents:

	Introduction	pg 3
Part 1 :	<b>“We’re not in Kansas anymore...”</b>	pg 4-5
	The culture absorbing factor and finding my UWC place in all of this.	
Part 2 :	<b>“We’re not that different after all”</b>	pg 6- 8
	Registration and welcome from the UGR Vice Rector of Internationalisation	
Part 3:	<b>“In every way possible”</b>	pg 9 -11
	Why Internationalisation? Presentations by UWC staff.	
Part 4 :	<b>“Trust Factor with neighbouring Universities Is important”</b>	pg 12 -14
	International Mobility, students and the cycle that drives it all.	
Part 5 :	<b>“We hope you feel at home then”</b>	pg 15-16
	Erasmus+ Project: Digipass and Unisafe	
Part 6 :	<b>“Quality research makes a University competitive”</b>	pg 17 - 18
	PhD research stays and staff mobility.	
	<b>Conclusion</b>	pg 19



## INTRODUCTION

On 26 June 2023 I was offered the opportunity to attend a Mobility Training for professional support staff focusing on Internationalisation. The training was presented from Monday 10 July 2023 until Friday 14 July 2023 at Granada University in Spain.

The below report is written as feedback on the training, experiences and lessons learned during my training in Granada. To encapsulate the overall teaching experience my report will be separated into six parts with an introduction and conclusion.

Each section will give insight into the teaching sessions for the day, my personal application of the learning to UWC and how the information learned can be beneficial to my specific Faculty and/or my role in the Faculty.

## PART 1

### *“We’re not in Kansas anymore...”*

The culture absorbing factor and finding my UWC place in all of this.

#### Overview

Between boarding the magnificent KLM buoying airplane, landing in the vast sized Amsterdam Schiphol airport, seeing the aerial view of Malaga from the connecting flight and finally taking a bus ride to hotel Macia Condor in Granada, one line struck me as I stood in the middle of the city park gazing at the sun blistering over the dreamlike architecture around the city “...we’re not in Kansas anymore....”

#### Applying this to UWC:

Just as magical as the 1939 Wizard of Oz movie is where that line is quoted from, the distinct feeling as a UWC professional administrator being afforded this kind of opportunity gave a sense of renewed worth from the institution you work for. The desire to ,in return, be a worthy UWC representative in such a setting was vital. What we as individuals ,or, as a group represented in Granada the rest of the week ahead was important for both the host and our University. The financial investment in getting us to the training spoke volumes about this.

As a representative of UWC and my Faculty , I felt that being respectful of the cultural experience was vital in connecting with the aims of the project's training. UWC thrives best when it shares its cultural and communal aspects with stakeholders.

The objective was clear, staring as the night sky exchanged with the previously seen sunshine across this beautiful city streets. You've arrived, this is no longer a “maybe” invitation and Monday this city will meet equally beautiful UWC.

#### Small anecdote:

*Getting off the bus in Granada our group was confronted with the realism that no booked bus was available from the bus stop to the hotel. Looking like strangers in foreign territory, we banded together to solve the matter each with a task. One ordered the uber whilst another protected the luggage as other members kept abreast of time and checking for alternative transport. One even acting as a bodyguard if it was needed. UWC, as always, solving problems as a team.*



## PART 2

### *“We’re not that different after all”*

Mondays are, seemingly, the same for us all

Overview:

#### **Registration and welcome from the UGR Vice Rector of Internationalisation.**

The itinerary for the day started with the UGR administrative staff conducting their administrative and financial checks. What struck me observing the staff was the interaction between the UGR colleagues and how similar they interact with one another, from a support staff perspective, to UWC staff [more so similarities within my own Faculty Office]. The buzzing of the office as it aimed to arrange all final details required teamwork and collaborative interaction all with the aim to get us as visitors comfortable and ready for the day ahead. Particularly interesting to me was the Monday factor. I took the initiative to ask Esther , one of our organisers, if I could have a look at their office. The pacing, stern faces and the coffee smell of the office made me realise that even 9000kms away from home Mondays are, seemingly, the same for us all as professional support staff. I jokingly commented to her that “We’re not that different after all.”

In meeting the Vice Dean for Internationalisation who gave a stellar presentation of the University and its current goals , below were highlighted points during the sessions:

- UGR commenced in 1526 starting in the 5<sup>th</sup> century
- 4<sup>th</sup> highest ranked in Spain and in the top 300 in the world.
- It is an Intercontinental campus being the first of its kind [first to have 2 campus on 2 continents and 7campuses in 3 cities]
- How culturally rich the campus is open to the world
- It boasts 46334 undergraduate and 10 000 postgraduate students
- 8% of the city ties into the University structure
- The University generates 6.12% GDP for the city of Granada
- It has 27 Faculties , 124 departments and 500 research groups
- Offers over 100 masters and 28 Doctoral degrees [from a postgraduate view to me this was impressive] and 36 different degrees in Law and Social Science
- Agreements with 800 Universities

- Arqus European University Alliance ARQUS project is idea of one gigantic universally open University aiming for integration.

During the presentation the Vice Dean explained that the University had recently finalised its selections for the new Rector further explaining that a new rule for appointment was agreed giving a new Rector only one term of six years. The previous rule was two terms each being four years. The Rector selection would often be mentioned during the week giving a sense to me that management was about to change throughout the University.

The session ended with a magnificent, guided tour of the Rectorate Building giving us a detailed historic guide that gave me a mental roadmap on how the beautiful University architecture and art came to be. Most interesting was the Rectorate room which had huge canvases of previous Rectors hanging across the room. It was eye opening to see how celebrated the Rectors were in UGR.

Applying this to UWC and the Faculty:

As much as I found the history of UGR so interesting and rich in context of how much it drives the city around it, I couldn't help but be more respectful of UWC's own history and what our University similarly means to the surrounding area and its people. Similarly, we have goals for the future that stem from the previous regime of UWC personalities and staff who wanted better for the University. What we contribute as support staff daily is not insignificant. Looking at UWC from a global aim perspective we must learn to think bigger than just the daily work, but what we want to produce for growth from a business perspective.

This is how UGR is operating to achieve their goals. The technological and administrative bases have been set well which is how they are able to aim for growth of having two campuses on two continents. For me I took the lesson that in the Faculty Office I want to drive the sense that what we do has meaning towards a future goal. Especially when it comes to targets. Without the targets growth can't be made at a University. We may not be five hundred years of age; however we have grown so vast in sixty years who knows where UWC could be in the future years from now.

#### Small anecdote:

*I asked the Vice Dean during his session how many graduation ceremonies in an academic year takes place? To which he responded that Faculties handle their own graduation due to the immensity of awardings in the year. Seeing our newly met foreign colleagues watch UWC members react in disbelief to that answer was hilarious to me. It was such a simple point but spoke volumes of the magnitude of the University.*







## PART 3

### *“In every way possible”*

Being international requires an open mind.

Overview:

#### **Why Internationalisation? Presentations by UWC staff.**

At this stage I made introductions with the delegates from other universities joining us. When speaking to Artion from Albania he was very shocked when we compared class sizes sharing that one of our second-year classes is the size of the entire physics department in his home University. He also shared that their University numbers were declining, most recently by six thousand students. Growth was a challenge for them. The perspective I took was how grateful I was with UWC's healthy state built on the hard work and staff endurance to be a competitive University. Hearing the delegate from Albania express concern about his own University made me realise how often at UWC we tend to be narrowly focused on our internal issues not realising that many Universities, as business run entities, don't always have the same growth consistency as we have. Just because an institution is international doesn't necessarily mean it's in a better state than UWC.

Our presenter for the first session was Nacho Blanco who gave us a lesson on the importance of Internationalisation and why it's needed. He broke this into three sections of research, teaching and management at a University and how these drive being international. Focusing on these areas are about thinking abroad and maintaining that thinking. Granada applied the strategy to keep aware of what's trending in the social areas of studies to connect globally with its stakeholders. Being international requires an open mind further trying to look at avenues of growth from a transversal nature. Once understanding the geographical scope, the student mobility aims can be solidified with international partners. The aim is giving students and staff global experiences to push diversity with quality research and support output.

To answer the question on why international mobility? It boils down to institutional and personal benefit which in turn attracts talent at all levels of a University and quality output within the previously mentioned areas of teaching, research and management. How can we internationalise? “...in every way possible...”

#### **Presentations by UWC staff.**

Later in the session UWC delivered its group presentation which I was asked to introduce on behalf the group. UWC was well presented whereby the group put together an overall picture of the history of the institution, the current growth state of the University and its future goals. We highlighted to our classmates that what UWC



has as its greatest asset has always been its human capital and how our collaborative teamwork is the reason we have grown as an institution in sixty years. We concluded by driving the message that we are a University for the people by the people. 'Form hope to action through knowledge' was certainly carved in memory.

Applying this to UWC and the Faculty:

The presentation highlighted for me the importance of thinking globally . Not necessarily from a geographical point of view, but more so from a quality work output point. At postgraduate level specifically, the Faculty of Law has attracted international and interest across the rest of Africa. We have partnership programmes that have been fruitful for number of years. To attract further we may have to look at short period module offerings or even offer more research collaboration with countries in new agreements. Platforms like this are great opportunities for such networking. I also think we can do more Faculty specific to engage with international mobility type students in meeting staff members within the Administrative sections.

I took the initiative to introduce UWC Law Faculty to our classmates in conversation. Particularly engaging with Jonida Memetaj from the Law Faculty in Albania [Doctor of Science in Public International Law]. We had agreed to make contact and connect our departments in Law who may have research interests and, perhaps, some course offering opportunities on a non-degree basis.

Furthermore, the student experience to me was of highlight. Travelling to Spain with all the rush of the week prior I related more to the experience that some of our mobility type students must endure. Entering a strange land for the first time for purposes of study is daunting. It gave me new perspective in this regard.

#### Small anecdote:

*Our UWC organisers would be very happy to know that on the day of presentations it was very clear that some of our fellow classmates were not as well prepared as the UWC group was. We had our presentations and slideshow fully prepared from the night before, we had our sequence of presentation timing, we even had our presentations on a backup flash drive which ended up being used by the rest of the class to save their own documents. Even our UCT colleague had to depend on UWC for assistance. Perhaps University world rankings need to be recounted.*



## PART 4

### *“Trust Factor with neighbouring Universities Is important”*

Selections are important in Spain as well.

Overview:

#### **International Mobility, students and the cycle that drives it all.**

With mid-week came the procedural side of the mobility presentations. The topics focused on those administrative cycles that, to the outside world, seem very mundane however are the staple for professional support staff to learn about. Without understanding procedure flow, we can't keep our various Faculty work “engines” moving efficiently. Selections was an area I was interested to find out about and how the University assesses the best student candidates.

Considering that Granada receives two thousand undergraduate students into the mobility programme a year and sends one thousand nine hundred I expected a very stringent selection process. UGR selects students based mostly on the trust factor of the sending University In that UGR expects to receive the best academic candidates. I asked if students performances are monitored or agreements like MOUs are in place to which the presenter replied that this is not a practice. That the idea is to establish an understanding of trust with the host university and the student that they will adhere to the academic expectations and performances of the mobility agreement. I shared with the presenter the difference with UWC in that when students are offered such opportunities, we have strict monitoring and agreements that the students must adhere to [like MOUs or progress reports]. Bilateral agreements in place are thus very dependent on information exchange and trust at UGR.

The mobility cycle presentation was interesting in that it highlighted what was deemed the “jewel of the mobility programme” in blended mobility as a focus since 2015. The aim being in giving students with less opportunities and funds a chance to be part of the mobility experience. I learned how tricky multi-lateral agreements can be and that if the mobility project does not have at least fifteen student participants then blended mobility cannot take place. Institutions must have an Erasmus Charter within this bilateral agreement, however third world countries don't need the charter as they are not part of the European framework. In this case inter-institutional agreements are required , if the receiving university has funds.

Applying this to UWC and the Faculty:



The blended mobility agreement spoke to UGR's approach in keeping with global social challenges instead of just focusing on offering funding opportunities at random for profile reasons. The excitement in the presenter's face when she explained the blended mobility's aim to offer less fortunate participants, with great academic potential, a chance to succeed in a funded programme was evident. Our Faculty's use of our own growth bursary funds at postgraduate level came to mind. As our numbers grow, we can pay much more attention to offering less financially fortunate candidates with good academic performance the opportunity. This has been a factor we consider but perhaps we must allocate a specified percentage of our selections to students that fall under this category. I plan to highlight this to our committees back at Faculty to incorporate it more stringently in the selection process.

Furthermore, I took from this session that trust is a big part of the Erasmus agreements between the Universities. The relationships we have with our own international partners is based on similar levels of trust and it speaks to why we have been able to carry the title as one of the best Law Faculties in the country. I further felt that our approach in monitoring the performance of students when receiving special bursary opportunities was the correct approach after realising how easily students can misuse the opportunity when not needing to meet predetermined academic deadlines. Our agreements and monitoring of such opportunities highlights the importance to the student.

Small anecdote:

*I took a personal decision to book a session at the UGR library. It was an experience I was interested in having since our tour on the Monday. I had a once in a lifetime opportunity to sit in between the academic manuscripts that dated back as far as the eighteenth century. Writing some of the notes for the day I looked out at some of the students faces and how similar their expressions were to our UWC students. Different continent, but the same expressions. I must admit a small part of me missed our students, but not their complaints.*





## PART 5

### *“We hope you feel at home then”*

The day I stepped into another Law Faculty [Plaza de la Universidad]

#### **Erasmus+ Project: Digipass and Unisafe**

As the end of the week was approaching, I was quite excited about the venue that we were being hosted in for the day. During trips like these one tends to miss home at different levels, but you may also miss your “work home.” In my case it was very surreal to enter the beautiful UGR Faculty of Law building drenched in history within the architecture of the walls. We passed students writing in the hallway classroom [which I thought – this must be SDA students as it was academic holiday period in Granada, I must really miss home to be thinking this]. The venue we were seated in was magnificent. Law books, scrolls and manuscripts enclosed us within the venue, and one could not avoid appreciating the rich history that surrounded us. At one point I found where the administrative staff offices are and spoke briefly to one of the staff members. After a few shared lines about our similar environments, I was welcomed with the comment “we hope you feel at home then...” I will always fondly remember this visit during my training.

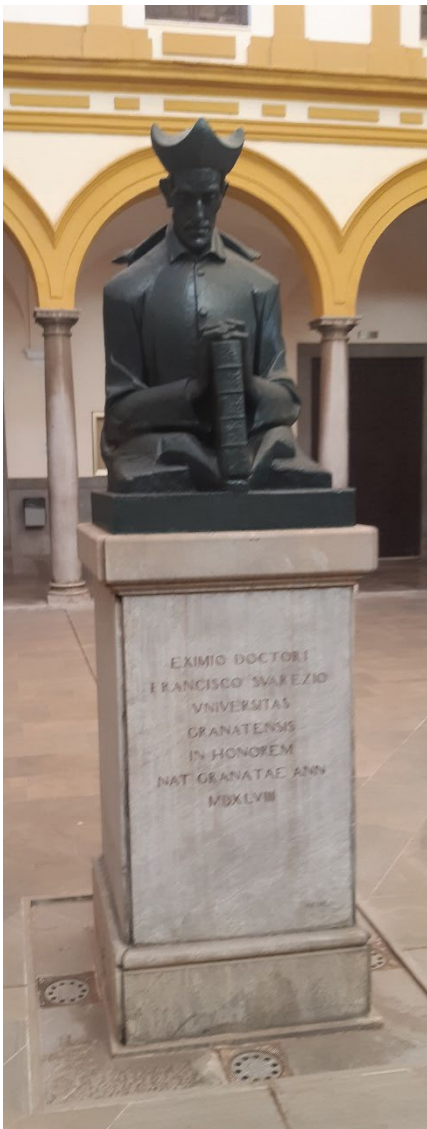
We were given a video presentation of the use of Digipass that is an online handbook and guide that serves as a virtual tour guide for incoming mobility students. It has offerings of budget calculators [euros currency is no joke], a decision table for students, a monthly academic planner and a culture guide to equip students on their behaviour when travelling around in the city.

Unisafe was additionally explained which is an EU funded operational tool to promote security and safety of students and staff moving abroad. It assesses international risk, gives cultural awareness tips and has crisis communication tools for students and staff travelling abroad.

Applying this to UWC and the Faculty:

Digipass gave me motivation for a video project idea I've put forward recently at the Faculty. My aim is to create a video life cycle guide to newly registered students to use which is electronically available. Watching the Digipass and UNisafe applications it showed that it was possible if you can hone the information to specific areas of importance for the student and 'trim the fat' of unnecessary information. The length time of the videos were short and to the point for the receiver. Imagery in the videos was vital and I'm taking a few tips from what I saw into the pre planning of the video project.





EXIMIO DOCTORI  
FRANCISCO SÁENZIO  
UNIVERSITATIS  
GRANATENSIS  
IN HONOREM  
NAT. GRANATAE ANN.  
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## PART 6

### *“Quality research makes a University competitive”*

Doctoral student experience from a bird's eye view

#### **PhD research stays and staff mobility.**

The area of topic presented I connected with as it directly related to the areas at Faculty that we work with. PhD studies through mobility had similar criteria as we do for doctoral study intake. In conversation with the presenter, I shared some of the faculty's' doctoral intake and assessment processes. UGR similarly had to have supervision guarantees for any mobility candidate to be considered. Mobilities are usually undergraduate focused so to attract and ensure the areas of a PhD studies are suited for the visiting candidate it's important to focus on flexibility, different ways to conduct research and connecting to other doctoral candidates.

It was clear that doctoral mobility studies are difficult to monitor, hence the importance of the support staff role in bridging the gap between supervisor and student. This resonated with me in terms of my experience and objectives for our office at a postgraduate level. Doctoral intakes have grown in our faculty and part of the success is the relationship building we at the Faculty Office conduct with the student and the department supervisors. I was pleased to learn that even at UGR this approach is necessary due to the mobility added aspect. Without tracking the doctoral candidates in a manner that doesn't feel overbearing to the student, the programme can inform the supervisors if the student is engaging with the environment and research goals of the mobility agreement.

Another interesting point raised was the initiative of UGR in PhD studies whereby they set specific research goals and use this as guide for career paths. Not only is research support given, but they are coached to assist them with career paths. There is a designated office with this specific task. What UWC and UGR have in common in this area was the approach to focus on research quality. Quality research makes a university competitive.

Applying this to UWC and the Faculty:

Quality versus quantity is a consistent topic when Faculties debate the aims for increasing numbers at postgraduate doctoral level. Because of the nature being research based, assessing the overall experience of the student can be tricky. I took from the presentation the idea to have a better monitoring of some of our doctoral students who may not necessarily be employed or have a set career plan. Perhaps we could link these students with the career offices of UWC and indicate opportunities during the career expo events. These events usually are catered to an undergraduate audience and not as often marketed to the doctoral cohort. This



was an idea I plan to take back to our office for the second semester period. Furthermore, a better monitoring of our non-South African students and closing the relationship gap with the Faculty Office. I would like to get a sense of the experiences they are having administratively as UGR does with their mobility students.





## Conclusion

As the Friday afternoon session ended and we prepared to have our mini “graduation” ceremony to receive our certificates, the closing topic session was still fresh in my mind. The topic was staff mobility where it was highlighted during the session how institutions do not often support staff mobility for various reasons. The sense was what value it has in sending support staff on mobility opportunities.

As we received our certificates I thought about this topic and the rejuvenated feeling I was having to return to work with the many new ideas and knowledge areas I absorbed during my week in Granada. I believe that these opportunities for support staff are great as they aren't often afforded to administrators. The key to the success in investing in the selected support staff comes from connecting the right people with one another. It was such an added benefit to meet fellow administrators and support staff from other parts of the world and sharing experiences from a faculty management point of view. The wide view of working, and thinking, international was absorbed in my learning during my stay in Granada.

The subject areas gave an insight to the mobility aims of UGR, but more so how the processes can be adapted to what we perform in our Faculty Office life from an international point of view. I took many ideas that I plan to share with my colleagues, especially in the postgraduate field. On a personal note, this experience came at an ideal time for me as I recently have been placed in a more senior line role in the Faculty and the global perspective lessons in terms of management was of such benefit to my future plans for the office.

In closing, I'd like to convey my gratitude to the UWC International Relations Office, my Dean who nominated me, the University of Granada staff for hosting me and my fellow travelling colleagues whom I spent the week with. Lastly, I'd like to thank the University of the Western Cape as an institution and symbol of hope. My respect and appreciation for the history of the University and its future aspirations grew further during my time at UGR. We have a rich history and equally a rich culture to represent to the world and what we contribute daily, as professional support staff, has importance towards the future objective of this great institution.

Thank you.