

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

<u>SPAIN</u>	<u>UNITED STATES</u>
-Provide training in a specific discipline.	-Provide knowledge in different disciplines.
<b>-Access to a Degree Program and University.</b> Students enter both to a specific degree program within a specific university by means of a college entrance exam and their high school grades.	-Access to a specific university is based on a college entrance exam and high school grades. However, the degree program is not necessarily determined at this time.
<b>-Degree:</b> From the beginning, the student focuses on an area of specialization and is affiliated to one specific school throughout the undergraduate period. Some degree programs have different majors or minors. Most university degrees are obtained in four years. Double degree programs usually require five years.	-Students do not have to choose a certain concentration when they start their university studies. Usually they define it by the end of their second year and even then, it can be modified. Students complete their undergraduate degrees in four years, and may include more than one major or minor.
<b>-Curriculum:</b> All students are enrolled in a specific school and follow a clearly defined curriculum designed by the university following government guidelines. They must begin with first year courses, and follow the pre-established order of classes in the degree. During the last years there is more course flexibility because of the electives, and potential international exchange opportunities.	-Students enroll in a college or university and take courses from different departments or schools with other students, even if these courses do not pertain to their degree. The majors and minors are determined by a series of required credits within the field. -There is more flexibility to construct a "tailored" university degree, combining different specialties.
<b>-Completion of the Degree</b> the student must have completed and passed a certain number of core and major elective courses, obtaining a set number of credits for the degree. -One ECTS credit represents the sum of class contact hours plus the estimated workload time outside the classroom, totaling 25 hours.	-The student also has to accumulate a number of credits determined by their chosen majors and minors. These are comprised of core, mayor and elective courses. -One credit represents 15 contact hours of class time.
<b>-Course Content:</b> Given the homogeneous nature of the educational programming, the professor expects all the students to have a similar base level. Thus, there are normally no pre-requisites outlined to attend an upper level class. As a result, knowledge from previous years may be taken into account in order to pass the course. <b>-A syllabus</b> is provided that explains the material to be covered, the work required by the student and the expected skills obtained upon completion. However, it may be an approximation and not as detailed.	-Due to a more flexible curriculum, upper level courses usually have pre-requisites to guarantee a common base level of knowledge from which the professor expands upon. However, this previous knowledge does not normally form part of the evaluation criteria in order to pass the class. <b>-A syllabus</b> is provided that explains the material to be covered, and specifies the lectures and work required of the student on a weekly basis. It specifies evaluation criteria. The syllabus is a contract and it is followed in its entirety.
<b>-The Responsibility for Learning</b> falls on the student. The professor teaches the subject matter through lectures and study group sessions. Normally, students are not required many small weekly tasks but are expected to study and research in the library. - Class attendance is mandatory, in both lectures classes and study group sessions.	-The professor has more responsibility in helping the student acquire knowledge. In addition to lecture classes, more emphasis is placed on student participation, papers, mid-terms, presentations, etc. -Attendance to classes and study groups are mandatory.

<p><b>-Professor Office Hours.</b> Professors schedule offices hours for students. However, it is recommended that students make an appointment first.</p>	<p>-Professor usually have office walk in hours to maintain contact with the student and address their questions.</p>
<p><b>-The Relationship among Students and with the Professor:</b> Students in class take on a collaborative attitude (notes are shared, study groups are formed, etc.), in part because of the strong bond created over the years of the degree. Students often negotiate exam dates or projects with the professor. However, the relationship between the professor and the students is usually distant.</p>	<p>-Different students attend each class of the degree program so there is not such a great bond. Individual effort is expected and there is more competitiveness among students. They do not normally share class notes or work. There is little group negotiation with the professor, though there is more at the individual level. The relationship between professor and students is usually closer and more friendly.</p>
<p><b>-Class Dynamics:</b> There are two types of classes: lectures classes, where the professor speaks and the students intervenes little, and study group sessions, where students are expected to participate with projects, presentations and debates. Students rely heavily on their notes. Bibliography is very extensive but not always mandatory. There is more weight placed on the final exam than on the work done during the semester.</p>	<p>-In class, dialogue and student participation are encouraged. The class relies on notes and mandatory readings specified in the syllabus. Usually there is more homework assigned, including papers. Each aspect of students' participation has a specific weight that is factored in to the final grade.</p>
<p><b>-Final Exams:</b> Local students have two final exam opportunities as failing grades are more prevalent and students tend to have a higher course load. Exchange programs do not always allow two final exam opportunities for their students.</p>	<p>-Students rarely fail a course as they tend to receive more help during the semester. In addition, students tend to have a lighter courses load each semester. A re-sit exam for a given course is not offered.</p>
<p><b>-Grading:</b> Students' grades are based on their performance throughout the semester, though there is significantly more weight placed on the final exam (60-70% of the grade). Student participation, presentations and papers affect the final grade proportionally less. Grading curves are usually not used. More importance is placed on demonstrating knowledge of the course material and not as much on critical thinking.</p>	<p>-Students are also evaluated on their semester long performance, The final grade is based on the sum of the student's participation, debates, exams, and papers, and not primarily on the final exam. Many professors grade on a class curve. Students are expected to show critical thinking or problem solving skills in their work. The percentage or degree of importance of each aspect is specified in the syllabus.</p>
<p><b>-Final Grades</b> are published on the student's web portal and are confidential. -Final exams and papers are not returned to students and are kept by the professor for a period of time in case the grade is contested.</p>	<p>-The final grades are published on the student's web portal and are maintained confidential. -Final exams and papers are returned to students with written feedback from the instructor.</p>
<p><b>- Exam Revision Date:</b> The professor establishes a specific time where students have the possibility to see their exam and question their final grade. This cannot be done by email or by appointment at another time. Students can also try to raise their grade by repeating the exam in the re-sit.</p>	<p>-The student can request an appointment with the professor to review their papers and final exams. It is usually easier to negotiate for a higher grade or ask for additional work to raise the mark.</p>