

Hi, I'm Sharna, an international mobility peer adviser for this year and, for my placement, I had the opportunity to do a 5-month teaching internship based in Cádiz in the south of Spain. This led to two of the most amazing months of that year when I finally had the opportunity to travel out there!

### What Did I Learn?

To try and tell you how much I learnt through this experience abroad would need more than this page as I learnt something new about myself or my surroundings every day. From a professional perspective, I was able to gain new skills that I had never considered a strength before, such as creativity and being able to motivate a whole class independently online, as well as learning how to communicate on a professional level in a variety of contexts. The department that I worked for was plurilingual which meant I was working with a variety of workplace cultures throughout, and it was really interesting to find out the different ways of thinking and see how the cultures blended in a professional setting. On a personal level, the list of things learnt gets even longer, from finding accommodation to learning about so many different aspects of Spanish culture, to navigating my way around Andalusia independently and learning how to communicate with the locals. Outside of the direct experience, I learnt how to travel in a pandemic and Brexit, two of the biggest recent changes, and now feel confident on finding out what I would need to do to travel anywhere in this current situation.



### My Most Valuable Takeaway

There are so many things that I took away from this experience that will continue to help me in the future, but the biggest takeaway has to be my increased self-confidence. This experience proved to me that I can solve problems independently in a completely different context to what I am used to as this is what I was most nervous about before travelling. Now I feel even more confident to put this into practise in other areas of my life. I am also proud to say that I am fully confident in the skills I put down on my CV. My internship really stretched me and showed me how I can adapt to any situation using the skills that I already have.



### Challenges:

Doing my placement year in a pandemic meant that it was not short of challenges to say the least. There was lots of tests and paperwork to prepare before even setting foot on the plane as well as research that needed to be done into the COVID regulations in Spain. But I can definitely say that all of the preparation, though long, was well worth it for the experience gained.



Another challenge was living independently in a foreign country. This inevitably meant time alone for longer periods than I was used to. To overcome this, it's really important to manage expectations and make the most out of having time to do what you want to do, because adapting to a new country is tiring!

Finally, the language barrier was a culture shock for me when I arrived. I am a Spanish student, but Cádiz is known for their notoriously difficult accent and slang that is native to the region. I needed some time to adjust to this, but once you are immersed in the lifestyle, catching onto the language comes very quickly and it wasn't long before I felt comfortable communicating with whoever I met. And, of course, it feels great to say that I can now talk to the people with one of the most difficult accents in Spain!

### Tips

If you're starting to plan your experience abroad, I would recommend putting you at the heart of your planning process over anything else. Consider your interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes as I believe it is more important to choose somewhere that you like, with an environment that you know you are going to enjoy for the year.

Make sure to research as much as you can and remember this includes talking to people that have already gone out there, this is how I found a lot of my opportunities!

I am excited to hear from you soon when you start planning your year!

