



CASA BARCELONA ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



BROWN



Consortium for
Advanced Studies Abroad

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The objective of the CASA-Barcelona program is for students to gain maximum integration in the local community by offering a full-immersion experience in one of the leading cities of the world. Designed for students of all disciplines with advanced Spanish and/or Catalan language skills, the whole program including pre-departure and on-site orientations, classes and all cultural activities are conducted in Spanish. Students also have the opportunity of undertaking an internship or volunteering position throughout the semester to further integrate them into local life.

AT-A-GLANCE

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Students can enrol in modules (classes) in approved areas All students enroll in a required Pro-Seminar course, i

INTERNSHIPS AND RESEARCH

Students have the opportunity to participate in internship and volunteering placements with over 70 unique community partners.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The program curriculum offers meaningful opportunities to connect with local culture and history within Catalonia and across Spain.

FEATURE STORY

Students find ways to make local connections in Barcelona during their semester

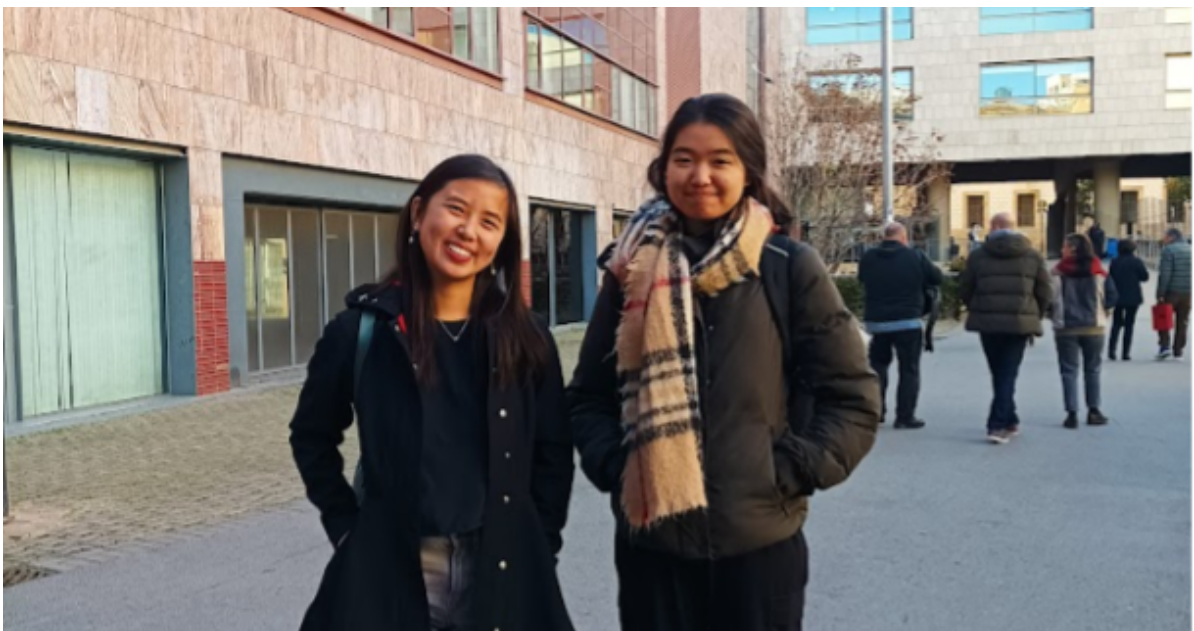
LOOKING AHEAD

Looking towards greater student engagement and connections between local communities and CASA Barcelona students

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

All students enroll in a total of 29-32 ECTS credits to receive full academic credit, choosing from a combination of courses offered through the CASA center in conjunction with its partner institutions as well as direct enrollment courses in undergraduate studies at the program's local partner institutions. In addition to the semester-long courses, all students undertake the frontloaded Pro-Seminar course that runs in conjunction with orientation sessions and that is aimed at adapting students to local university life.

- Students select from a range of two to four CASA-UB courses.
- Visiting professor from the University of Pennsylvania in the Spring 25 semester
- Opportunities for expanding linguistic skills and learning Catalan.
- Supportive academic environment through the UB Buddy Program (see Feature Story)



Students at the University of Barcelona History School "Patio"



On-site session in Colliure, France

250

Number of unique courses
at partner universities
CASA Barcelona students
have enrolled in the past
academic year

55%

More than half of our
studnerts in the past year
were from the Social
Sciences

46%

Almost half of each cohort
have participated in
internships

11

Distinct sending
Institutions

INTERNSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERING

As part of the program, CASA-Barcelona offers its students the opportunity to complete an internship or volunteer in the local community. Both activities help them not only gain valuable experience for their professional future, but also acquire a deeper understanding of local society and culture.

These opportunities cover a wide range of fields and institutions (research labs, schools, public and private institutions) and activities (researching, administration and teaching).

(1) **Universitat de Barcelona (UB) School of Medicine and Life Sciences's** Medical Psychology Unit: The student cited the most valuable aspect was participating in neuropsychological assessment observations. For legal/privacy reasons, such experiences are difficult to find in the United States, even though they are critical learning experiences.

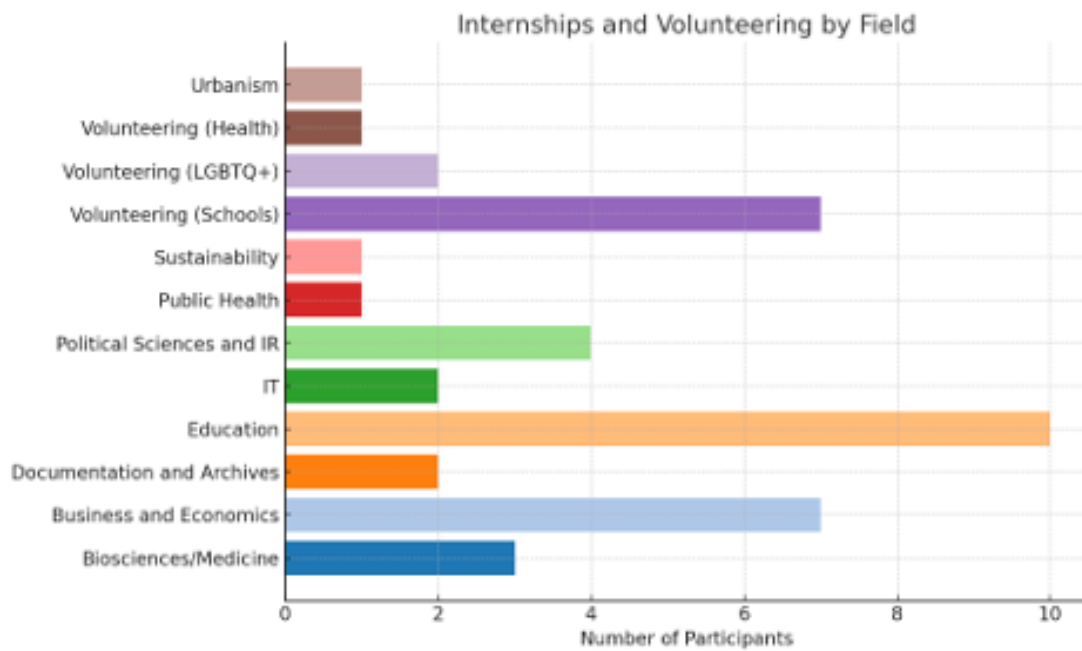
(2) **The UB Hub for Global Sustainability**, inaugurated in 2023, accepted the first CASA Barcelona intern in Spring 2025. The student produced a dossier that included the following topics: Sustainability Digital Badges, Sustainability Modules, Greening Research, Embedding ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) and Responding to the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) through Research and Innovative Formats. This piece of work will be a very useful tool for guiding the planning and design of future Hub events and initiatives.

(3) Volunteering **in public schools as an English Teaching assistant** continues to be one of the most popular options among students. Seven (7) students participated in the program throughout the year. One of them was a full year student who decided to extend his participation until the end of spring, even though he was only required to complete the placement in the fall semester.

(4) Resumption of our collaboration with **FAS - UAB, a university-based social organisation whose aim is to apply social, solidarity-based and cooperative policies** for the development and equality of opportunities at the UAB. Among many other activities, FAS-UAB coordinates social and healthcare volunteering, which contributes to improving the quality of life of people hospitalized or admitted to social and healthcare centers, as well as their families and caregivers. One student participated in the Spring 2025 semester.



Poblet Cloister Visit



CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The program offers a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities throughout the semester. The required Pro-Seminar course integrates guided tours of the local area; day excursions and weekend trips and the content of these activities is embedded in the History and Culture of Spain and Catalonia module.

In conjunction with these obligatory activities, students can also sign up for the extra-curricular activities on offer, such as a cooking workshop or a tapas night.

This academic year our focus was on promoting local culture, community and sustaining traditions:

- To strengthen conversation and connections, we launched a new edition of “Café en Español”.
- We also visited Torclum, a family-run olive oil producer deeply embedded in the local community. It bought previously privately-owned olive groves, established a cooperative, and by recuperating traditional, sustainable methods of production, creates a wide range of olive oil-based products. The business also reuses all by-products from the manufacturing process to reduce its environmental impact. Their aim is to cultivate traditions that benefit the whole community.
- Students enjoyed a traditional dinner at Las 4 Encinas, a restaurant which has been in the same family for generations.



Traditional Giants (from a local festival)

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- We also explored La Albufera as part of the weekend excursion to Valencia, where the connection between nature and the fishing community remains strong.
- Finally, during our trip to the South of France, a visit to the art museum in Ceret offered an intimate experience of both world-renowned and local artists, highlighting our shared cultural heritage.



Ceret (France) museum session

FEATURE STORY

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

An International Relations major who participated in the spring 2025 semester established connections with local and international students while in Barcelona through locally-based student associations.

Being assigned to the Universitat de Barcelona's School of Economics and Business Studies, the student took the opportunity of signing up to its buddy program at the beginning of the semester. Three local students are assigned a group of international and national students just starting at the institution and organise get-togethers to help orient the newcomers and build a sense of community. Through this connection, the CASA student was able to easily adapt to the new academic environment and got to know fellow UB students. He quickly built a network of friends both inside and outside of class that he could reach out to if he had questions related to his classes or the local university system and with whom he met regularly outside of class.

The second association that the student joined was the Barcelona International Model UN (BIMUN). Having already participated in a similar organization on his home campus, the student was motivated to search online prior to his arrival in Spain to see if there were similar opportunities available in Barcelona. After emailing the organization and passing an interview, the student was selected to be one of 23 directors of the annual conference. The directors were assigned to mediate groups of a total of over 500 high school students, so he met people of differing age groups. He established firm friendships with his fellow directors and was invited to their homes to meet their families.



Model UN Participation



Harshil with CASA Barcelona Team

Additionally, some of the students and his colleagues were involved in the same organization in different parts of the US where they discovered they had friends in common, thus further strengthening the connections.

According to the student, making friends with local students takes a pro-active approach and you must be prepared to make the first move. Once you make one friend, it opens you up to connections with many others, so his advice to future students is that they sign up to one of the many local clubs and associations the university and/or the city has to offer. Now back at his home campus, he is looking forward to returning to Barcelona where he has many local friends to visit.

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, these are some of CASA Barcelona's goals for the year ahead:

- 1) Simultaneously increasing program visibility and enhancing student engagement with the program - students will be invited to submit content for the program's Instagram account, thus making them owners of their semester, the activities and experiences. Future students will be able to see true student on-site experiences to get a taste of what's on offer.
- 2) Additionally, students will be invited to propose cultural activities they wish to incorporate into the program of activities already on offer. The objective of these additional program-sponsored activities will be to maximize their cultural experiences and ensure that cultural activities are open to all students equally.
- 3) A working group will be invited to fine tune the internal website that centralizes information that is needed once students are on-site. The main aim is to make the tool more student-centered and align it with students' needs.
- 4) Reinstate initiatives previously established with local partner institutions. Neither the Fellowship Program nor the Ambassadors Program have been reactivated since the pandemic limited student mobility and interaction. We aim to prioritize the tightening of partner relations with local institutions through the reinstatement of these specific agreements. The Fellowship Program sends post-doctoral students to the US for short periods of academic research at CASA-member institutions, thus fomenting collaboration and interconnectivity. The Ambassadors Program incorporates local undergraduate students into the program of cultural activities on offer each semester, thus promoting student engagement with local students through shared experiences.

LOOKING AHEAD

5) The semester-long CASA courses that are taught in conjunction with the UB and delivered by UB faculty or visiting professors from CASA-member institutions are now firmly consolidated within the elective credit course offering at the UB's School of Geography and History. Since their introduction, we have seen an increase in the enrollment of local students in the courses. While numbers remain small, our aim is to further promote local student enrollment in these courses in order to increase CASA students' connectivity with the local student body and bring to the classes an exchange of ideas to widen students' world view.

