



**1. Short description of the experience (name, university, study course, age, activity carried out, length of the experience)**

Nuno Regadas, UOC – Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Postgraduation course on Human Computer Interaction, 27 years old, 1 year.

**2. Why did you choose this experience?**

It was one of the few courses I found on this area. First and most importantly, time constraints. Being a full time worker makes it difficult to enrol on a physical mobility course.

**3. Did this online experience help you to improve your intercultural awareness (did you gain a better understanding of another culture)? Can you explain how?**

In some way, this is true. Given that the course was held in a different country, and having colleagues from various places, the opportunity to learn about new cultures and traditions is always present. By interacting with tutors and other fellow students, we can engage in conversations about cultural traditions such as cuisine, for instance.

**4. Did your language skills and ICT skills improve through participation in this online experience? How?**

Virtual Mobility is a great way to improve not only personal but professional skills as well. I have used Virtual Mobility courses to improve language skills and technical skills.

Mostly the language skills have improved largely. Being a Spanish institution, there's always the need to speak and write the language. My proficiency level has largely increased even though I had already received formal classroom Spanish lessons.

**5. What kind of communications tools did you use? ( synchronous/asynchronous, written/oral: email, forum, video conference, web 2.0 tools, blog, chat, social networks...). Did you find any of these tools difficult/easy to use?**

Our platform has all the tools we need to interact with teachers, other students and other staff. The tools most widely used were forums. But blogs were also used. In Spain, at least in the HCI area, professionals use LinkedIn a lot. So, this experience was also useful to make and establish new contacts that can be of use in the future.

**6. Did you have any problems? ( difficulties to organise, too different to face to face experience, lack of time/motivation/ support from institution, problems with the ICT tools used...)**

The main problems were felt at an early stage of the course. Of course having no face to face is teachers and specially fellow students is a problem. Nonetheless, there are ways to overcome this problem, just by sharing our personal contacts, just like we would do on a physical mobility course. My experience was and has always been satisfactory. Teachers, help us to overcome problems and the university has a very useful platform that allows students to interact with university offices, just like one would expect on a physical university.

**7. Taking part in an online intercultural exchange was a positive experience for you? Would you recommend the same experience to your friends?**

Scientific materials had amazing quality, and all the staff was very well prepared. Teachers worked on HCI for a long time and shared not only academic contents but most importantly their own experiences. This creates a more engaging environment in which students feel eager to learn. Based on my experience, I would recommend a Virtual Mobility course to my friends. There is still a lot of disbelief associated with these courses, but nowadays, there are a lot of excellent VM courses available. It is important to understand that some things will be lost, mainly things associated to interpersonal relationships, because face to face interaction can be replaced. But, if the course has a good and solid scientific basis and if teachers are well prepared professionals, there is no doubt on my mind that a VM course is a very valid alternative. I would recommend it to my friends and family. Nevertheless, I wouldn't recommend this method to university first timers. My personal opinion is that only people who have a prior university degree or, if not having one, have a lot of professional experience and background will truly take advantage of the course's materials and shared knowledge.

***TAGS: time flexibility, intercultural skills, language skills, lack of physical contact***