

UPC-Barcelona Tech offers the most Erasmus Mundus master's degrees

In the 2010-2011 academic year, UPC-Barcelona Tech will offer ten master's degrees and two doctorates under the Erasmus Mundus program, which is aimed at improving the quality of education in Europe and fostering cooperation between different geographical areas. The brilliant students who receive Erasmus Mundus scholarships complete their studies at many different universities.



Students enrolled in the Master of Science in Computational Mechanics. From left to right: Shi Yee Lim from Malaysia, Sebastien Terrana from France, Hannes Schumann from Germany, and Sujith Sukumaran from India.

Since being set up by the EU in 2003, the Erasmus Mundus program has become an attractive option for holders of undergraduate degrees who wish to further their studies in privileged settings. Next year 118 masters will be offered under the program, in which 224 universities in 51 countries participate. These joint master's programs take between one and two years to complete depending on the total number of credits.

According to Pedro Díez, UPC-Barcelona Tech's vice-president for International Policy, being the European university that offers the most Erasmus Mundus master's degrees is a "quality label" that provides the institution with a high level of visibility in Europe and around the world. Díez says that there is strong demand for the program among non-European students, particularly those from Asia and South America. Díez, who is also the coordinator of the Master of Science in Computational Mechanics, one of the two master's programs coordinated by UPC-Barcelona Tech, adds that students awarded Erasmus Mundus scholarships have excellent academic records. This is largely due to the rig-

orous selection process: in some cases 400 applications are received for courses for which only 12 scholarships are available.

INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIA

Students who receive Erasmus Mundus scholarships earn credits at various higher education institutions. For instance, the master's degree coordinated by Díez, from UPC-Barcelona Tech, is organized by a consortium that also includes the École Centrale de Nantes (France), Swansea University (United Kingdom), and the Universität Stuttgart (Germany).

One of the participants in this master's degree is Sujith Sukumaran, a 29-year-old student from India who is currently writing his final thesis. Sukumaran completed his first term at Swansea and the rest of his studies at UPC-Barcelona Tech, where he thinks the program is much more demanding. The Indian student is proud of the effort he has made over the last two years and says he has learned a lot from his international peers, particularly "tricks and ways of working" that he would not have learned in a conventional program.

Alejandro Rodríguez, coordinator of the Master of Science in Research on Information and Communication Technologies (MERIT), says the fact that the program attracts students from different countries makes it a very enriching experience for both students and professors because the standard of participants is very high and they bring different approaches.

MOBILITY AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT

All the master's degrees end with the presentation of a thesis, which gives students an opportunity to gain their first research experience with a university group. Students must also go on work placements to companies or institutions in the sector. According to Díez, many of the participants in the master's degree he coordinates have completed their placements in other European countries, so mobility is an essential requirement for Erasmus Mundus scholarship holders.

In addition to the two master's degrees coordinated by Díez and Rodríguez, UPC-Barcelona Tech is involved in eight other masters consortia: the European Master in Agricultural, Food and Environmental Policy Analysis; Data Mining & Knowledge Management; the Master in Photonics Engineering, Nanophotonics and Biophotonics; the European Master in Hydroinformatics and Water Management; Environmental Pathways for Sustainable Energy Systems; the European Master in Distributed Computing; the Master in Coastal and Marine Engineering and Management; and Advanced Masters in Structural Analysis of Monuments and Historical Constructions.

"The standard of the students selected by Erasmus Mundus is very high"

For the first time, Erasmus Mundus scholarships will also be given for doctoral programs. UPC-Barcelona Tech will participate in two of the thirteen programs that will start around Europe in the 2010-2011 academic year: the Doctoral Program in Photonics Engineering, Nanophotonics and Biophotonics, and the Doctoral Program in Interactive and Cognitive Environments. The duration of these programs is three years.

In conclusion, the coordinator of MERIT says that ultimately all universities must aspire to have the best students and that programs like Erasmus Mundus are taking the lead when it comes to applying this principle.

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ON THE COVER

Anup Dhital, from Nepal, Barbara Schael, from Venezuela and Abhishek Dangol, from Nepal, students of the MERIT Master, in front of the Montjuïc Telecommunications Tower, in Barcelona.



Liang Yang from China, a student enrolled in an Erasmus Mundus master's degree coordinated by UPC-Barcelona Tech.