

IE Masters in Advanced Finance (MIAF) – “Made it to halfway!”

In June'08 I've received my first life success, when I've received an email on a placement to IE's MIAF program with a Young Talent Scholarship. On 1st Nov2008, I've arrived in Madrid yet to find a place to stay I've moved into a hostel in the city centre. Just by mentioning my quest of arriving at a place without accommodation, our friends gasped in amazement. However, given the wide network of IE, I did not have to worry and quickly found a nice place to stay within 3 days to start travelling around Spain before the course starts.

This marks the start of an exciting learning journey of a year. In the class of 18 different nationalities from Latin America, Asia, and Middle East to European citizens, we were a group of well selected individuals with humanity, curiosity and creativity.

The course started with a 3 day ethics and cultural sessions while most of us were already looking forward to start the hard and fast financial analysis. The next three months was a totally intriguing experience with subjects from financial maths that involves minimal programming (VBA) to Portfolio management where we appraise different investment strategies including LTCM. Other subjects such as negotiation and financial modelling are the ones which I have enjoyed the most, where we had a practical simulation of producing a model within 1.5hours and had to apply the concepts such as power negotiation discussed immediately in class to principled negotiation. As group of cohesive, young and energetic individuals we have never fail to drown the professors in debates and discussions even with such "cold subjects" as Financial Accounting. The 3 months of harsh winter conditions was compromised by group works and exams almost every single week on the last month of the schedule, these were scheduled to adequately expose us for the real finance slogging probably as M&A or Investment bankers after a year.

Despite having got used to the heavy schedule, I was all exhausted when the next semester started after 3 day break from the previous. I was already looking forward to the long sought summer holidays as I thought i have been pushed to the extreme, studying quantitative material, historical evidences, and also programming all day long. Nevertheless, such subjects from the next semester as making money in financial markets, fixed income, hedge funds, M&A, securitization and creating value through corporate change again acted as my power driver to strive for the best position. Results of the class for the second semester were over the top, while I've almost given up hope of getting an A+, I am convinced that competition and the "Normal distribution" assignment of our grading system have pushed me to limits that I have never known to have achieved and simulated solution driven - fast thinking habits on class discussions. As summer approaches, many of us were already headhunted by banks from Italy, London and Spain for a full-time position in respective positions such as project finance, corporate finance - restructuring and Islamic finance.

While I did not have same luck, my applications did payoff when a largest private wealth management company in Spain expressed interest for an interview, followed by a hedge fund for a research position, and another opportunity with a dynamic financial institution that offers Fund selection opportunities to institutional investors. After 9months in Madrid, I have enjoyed life so much that I've put on 5kgs! Nevertheless I will I love to stay here, for Madrid is a good place to continue learning Spanish, enjoy life and at the same time develop my career being one of the major financial centres in Europe.

IE's brand name and my course that offers a deep knowledge of finance have provided me an incredible promise of good future in finance. It's almost impossible to infer that rumours of the Singaporean complacent culture have eased my worries on a good job prospect given the possibility of receiving an internship this summer.