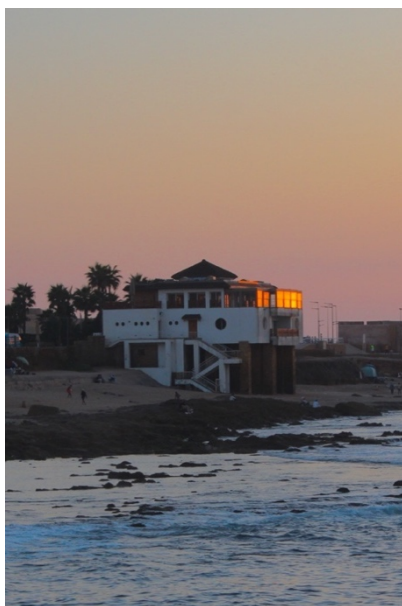


Experience report: Semester abroad – Winter semester 2025 at *Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P)* at the *Faculty of Governance, Economics, and Social Sciences (FGSES)* in Rabat, Morocco.

1. Motivation for the Semester Abroad and Why Morocco

The opportunity to spend a semester abroad was one of the main reasons why I applied for my current degree program, *Economics of the Middle East*, at Philipps University Marburg in the first place. The motivation behind this was fairly simple: getting out of Marburg, meeting new people, experiencing a new country and a new culture, improving my language skills, and having a good time.

Morocco as a destination had been a long-standing wish of mine. When I then learned through the exchange partnerships of the *Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS)* in Marburg that there was a concrete opportunity to study there, it was an easy decision for me. Even before formally applying, I was told that my chances of being accepted were quite good, as usually no more than one person per year applies for Morocco. Another student applied alongside me, and in the end we both traveled together to UM6P in Morocco.



I was accepted for my first-choice university. The other universities I applied to were Université Mohammed V (UM5), also in Rabat, as well as to Université de Tunis in Tunisia. While at UM6P, a Moroccan student told me that UM6P far outperforms UM5; he had completed two bachelor's degrees simultaneously at both universities. I cannot personally comment on the university in Tunisia, but based on the websites alone (UM6P, UM5, and Université of Tunis), I would choose UM6P again without hesitation.

Formally, my degree program is affiliated with *Fachbereich (FB02) Wirtschaftswissenschaften/School of Business and Economics*. However, I completed most of my coursework at the CNMS, where my program director also has his office. I believe this is also the reason why I had access to the CNMS exchange opportunities in the MENA region in the

first place. As far as I know, this is usually not the case for other business and economics students.

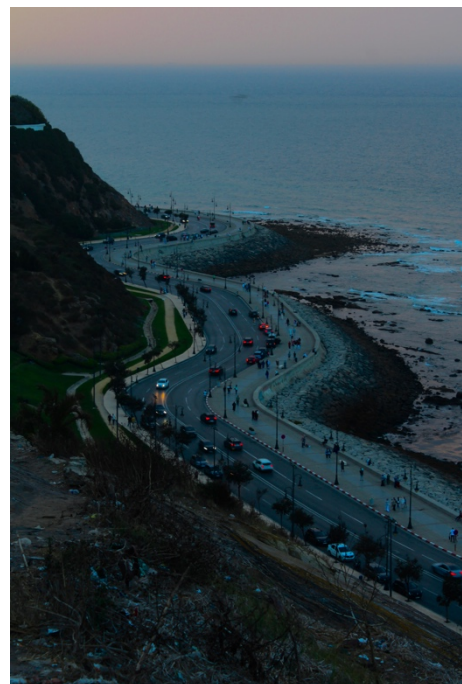
2. Information and Support from the University of Marburg and UM6P

In November of the previous year, I attended an information session held by Dr. Dr. h.c. Tramontini (General Manager of CNMS), during which she explained in detail the study abroad opportunities offered through the CNMS. She also helped me weigh my university priorities, and I submitted my application for the semester abroad to her. For a detailed overview of the application process, from applying for the exchange spot to course selection on site, I refer to a [separate report](#) where I detail my application process for the semester in Rabat.

After receiving formal confirmation from Dr. Tramontini at the end of March, I began preparing the documents required by UM6P. From that point on, I was mainly in contact with FB02 and its exchange coordinator, Mr. Lawrence Brown, as my degree program is administratively attached there and they are responsible for credit recognition. Together, we finalized my Learning Agreement.

At the same time, I applied for financial support and received a PROMOS scholarship. This required submitting additional personal documents.

Over the following weeks and months, I received regular emails from Morocco regarding enrollment procedures, student ID cards, insurance matters, and Q&A sessions. The staff at the International Office at UM6P in Rabat generally responded quickly. On site as well, I consistently received support from the International Office staff. Other campus offices, particularly finance and the health center, were noticeably less helpful and efficient.



When I flew to Morocco at the end of August 2025, there was a three-day welcome program before the official start of lectures in September. During this program, all campus facilities were introduced, and on the final day we visited the Medina of Rabat and spent the afternoon at the beach.

3. Accommodation and Campus Infrastructure (incl. Campus Map)

I lived on campus during my stay, although I know several students who chose to live independently in the city. Some of them also moved during the semester.

UM6P guarantees every international student a dormitory room if desired. Male students can stay in Residences R1 and R8 (see on map), while female students are assigned to Residences R2–R7. Residences R1–R3 consist of apartments shared by two to three people with a private kitchen. In the other residences, the kitchen is shared with other students on the floor (often more than ten). Regardless of the residence, each

room is fully equipped (towel, bedsheets, desk) and has a private bathroom.

Residences R1–R3 are thus significantly more popular, and many Moroccan students put themselves on waiting lists. In my opinion, these residences and rooms inside are in better condition. The monthly rent for R1–R3 is €220, while R4–R8 cost €190 per month, circa.

One of the most important facilities on campus is the student restaurant (no. 2 on map), which has five

different food stations: Traditional Moroccan, Italian, Asian, fast food, and BBQ. The food is good but rather meat-heavy. The student restaurant offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In addition, there is a food truck, a bistro (“Moojood”), and a salad bar. The salad bar is excellent but relatively expensive (6€). There is a small supermarket (no. 12 on map) on campus where you can get a lot of stuff ranging from charging cables, personal hygiene material, food and drinks to laundry detergent.

All classes are given in Teaching Building A (no. 7) and Teaching Building B (no. 18)

Opposite the cafeteria is the campus library and the learning center (no. 10 and 11). With around 200 seats not very big, but it is easy to find a spot,. Moroccan students do not compete for library seats the way students in Germany do. The library is open 24/7 (yes you read that right), but after around 10 p.m. it becomes very noisy. For many Moroccan students the library is more of a social space than a quiet study environment. “Do not disturb” stickers on tables and regular announcements by the staff every 15 minutes make no big difference. In terms of equipment, the library is



adequate, with a limited number of books appropriate for the size of the faculty (around 1,200 students). However, online access to academic journals did not work. A particularly curious feature are the wooden socket covers on the tables: they look nice when closed, but unfortunately tend to fall shut on their own, I call them cable guillotines.

The health center (no. 9) is located in the same building as the library. I cannot recommend. When I went there once because of a sports injury, the doctor did not even look at my foot but prescribed painkillers so strong, that she prescribed stomach protection medication along with it. Another person was prescribed antibiotics for allergies. Overall, medication, especially painkillers, seems to be prescribed rather quickly.

In terms of sports facilities, the campus has an indoor gym (no. 19), a cardio/exercise room (also no. 19), a swimming pool (also no. 19), and a large multi-purpose sports hall (no. 5). Outdoors, there is a football field (no. 6 on map), a tennis court (no. 13), and two basketball courts (no. 14). Another tennis court, a handball field, and two paddle tennis courts outdoors were permanently closed during my stay, with no intention of opening soon. Swimming there requires wearing a bonnet and for girls a swimsuit; no bikini.

I arranged my health insurance in Germany through ADAC, though there are many providers. It is also possible to purchase health insurance on site via the health center, which quite some students did. However, I cannot comment on how exactly this works or how coverage functions in practice. I recommend to arrange the insurance beforehand, simply to be ready upon landing in Morocco.

4. Language Preparation and Language on Site

Morocco has two official languages: Darija (Arabic dialect spoken in Morocco and Tamazight (The „berber“ language family if you will) and). I speak neither.

However, I had taken Arabic courses in Marburg for two semesters beforehand, which was sufficient for basic conversations and everyday situations. In addition, I attended a French course at the *Volkshochschule* (VHS) in Marburg to refresh my French. Overall, this worked quite well. That said, one should not expect everyone to speak French, especially older people or those in less touristy areas. Among educated people in their twenties, this is usually not a problem; many speak Darija, English, and French fluently.

One thing I noticed in particular is that Moroccans are genuinely happy when you make an effort to use even one or two words in Darija. Exaggeratedly speaking,



any person who tries to say “Shukran” is received more positively than a person who only ever says “Merci”.

On campus, various language courses are offered, including Darija, Modern Standard Arabic, and French. Although I did not take a language class, you naturally pick up many everyday phrases both on and off campus. For example, “Hello, how are you?” is “Salam, kidayer?”

That said, linguistic preparation is by no means mandatory. I met quite some international students who spoke only English and had no problems at all. With gestures, Google Translate, and friendliness, they managed everything from ordering food in restaurants to booking train tickets.

5. Costs

As an exchange student, I didn’t have to pay university fees. For Moroccans or generally the full-time students there the fees amounted to roughly 7,000€ per year. Put that into perspective with an average monthly income of less than 500€.

Purchasing power in Morocco is higher than in Germany. I asked ChatGPT for realistic monthly expenses, but without travel costs:

- Rent: €220
- Mobile phone (SIM + data): €5
- Public transport / taxis: €30
- Food (e.g. cafeteria breakfast, lunch, dinner): €140
- Cheap eating out/street food: €20
- Cafés & restaurants (occasionally): €25
- Snacks, coffee, water on the go: €15
- Going out / social life: €40
- Activities (cinema, museums, small trips): €20
- Clothing, toiletries, household items, miscellaneous: €15



This adds up to roughly €530 per month. Depending on lifestyle, this amount can vary by about €50–100 up or down.

My PROMOS scholarship amounted to €450 per month for a total duration of 3.5 months, i.e. €1,575 in total. This would cover four months of on-campus rent, with approximately €695 remaining overall, or €174 per month.

In general, especially if you receive funding, you do not need more money in Morocco than in Germany. However, this strongly depends on whether, how, and how much you travel during the semester.

6. Personal Evaluation of the Stay Abroad

Personally, I would rate my time in Morocco as truly great. I met many wonderful international as well as Moroccan students and made good friends. Most people on campus, including students, academic and administrative staff and service personnel were extremely friendly and helpful, though some people really had bad experiences as well in that regard. For me, one semester was the perfect amount of time spent there. If I had to spend more time there, I would have moved to Rabat to live off-campus and commute the 25min to university instead. The campus is a closed off, guarded, and access-restricted area and after 2-3 months you really start to notice – which is understandable considering the crown prince and his sister study there.

Outside the university, I also really enjoyed the country itself. Morocco is incredibly diverse in terms of culture, people, language, architecture, and especially nature. I would recommend the country to anyone looking for a truly unique experience, as cliché as that may sound. Even compared to other Arab countries me and other students had visited before, Morocco is hardly comparable, it is too different despite the shared “Arab” label.

Of course, I also encountered strange or unfriendly people, but no more than one would in any European city. I did not have any genuinely negative experiences. As a man, however, my perspective may not be fully representative, particularly compared to the experiences of a (white) woman. In my opinion, Morocco remains a conservative and largely patriarchal society despite legal and formal progress, though strong distinctions must be made between urban and rural areas, as well as tourist and non-tourist regions.



One additional observation is that Moroccan students seem to rely heavily on ChatGPT and similar tools, maybe also to cope with the high workload. Especially younger bachelor's students often appear to trust AI outputs uncritically, which made group work sometimes annoying. Some Moroccan bachelor's students came off as really arrogant, perceiving themselves as *the* elite and studying arguably at the best university in the country. Although, that concerned mainly Moroccan political sciences students and less economics students.

What I particularly appreciated was how easy it was to strike up conversations with students and professors. Many showed genuine interest in who you are, what you do, and where you come from. The campus itself is more “strict” than in Germany: there are many surveillance cameras, strict access rules

for the residences, and security staff and receptionists always wear suits or uniforms. Nevertheless, I found the general atmosphere among students to be relaxed, and especially non-Moroccan professors to be very approachable and supportive. Alcohol is

forbidden on campus, although I heard that one or two students smuggled some stuff passed the security scanners.

Even though I feel like I have not yet seen as much of Morocco as I would like to, I think the country is genuinely great and would definitely say that Morocco is well worth visiting.

7. Academic Evaluation and Final Course Selection

My final grades are slightly below my previous average in Germany, which is partly due to the grade conversion process at Marburg University at FB02 (I don't know if it's identical at other Fachbereiche). E.g. receiving a 16/20 grade in Morocco would make you one of the best students there since practically no one gets in the range of 18-20 points. However, in Marburg only a Moroccan 20/20 would yield a 15/15 grade in Marburg. Other international students were luckier with grade conversions in their home countries.

Attendance in class is practically mandatory; unexcused absences result in lowering parts of the final course grade.

I found the workload during the semester quite demanding, but this seems to be the norm there. For example, in the course *Foreign Policy Analysis*, attendance and participation accounted for 5%. Almost every week, the professor posted a topic on the learning platform that required written commentary and discussion. In addition, there were a midterm and a final exam (30% each), a research proposal for a case study (15%), and a final presentation of the completed case study (20%). *That* course was not particularly difficult, but there was consistently something to do. That applies to almost all courses.

I only took four courses, while most students had to take more (5-7). In courses such as *Introduction to Public Policy Analysis*, apart from the workload, the content itself was also very challenging, albeit very interesting. This included midterm and final exams, and assignments during the semester involved presenting and discussing a paper on CGE modeling, as well as programming, running, and evaluating your own economic simulation.

What I also really appreciated was the different thematic focus compared to Marburg. My classes were still pure economics courses, but with a stronger emphasis on case studies, real world applications, policy analysis and issues related to the Global South. This was new and very exciting for me. However, the university offers also many technical and theoretical economics classes in French and English. Overall, the quality of economics teaching is very high and can easily compete with top European universities.

The courses I ultimately took in Morocco were:

- International Political Economy (ECO520, master's level)

- Poverty and Social Policy Reform in the Global South (ECO607, master's level)
- Introduction to Public Policy Analysis (ECO503, master's level)
- Foreign Policy Analysis (INT201, bachelor's level)

Not everything worked smoothly with course selection at the beginning. I strongly recommend clarifying all course choices and changes immediately and closely with your responsible ECTS coordinator in Marburg.

Tip: Avoid the courses *Advanced Topics in Development* and *Choice Theory and Behavior*, and generally anything from the master's program *Quantitative Economics*, unless you are very comfortable with DSGE models, optimization, and are explicitly looking for a academic challenge. They are very difficult.

8. Additional Information and Links

- Semester period: The semester starts and ends relatively early, in my case: 28.08.-21.12.2025.
- [Course list](#) for bachelor's and master's programs at UM6P's FGSES faculty.
- For female students: Pads are sold on campus, tampons are practically not sold at all in Morocco.
- Residency management is not particularly reliable, and I had the impression that UM6P places much emphasis on appearance and not enough on functionality. I reported a leaking shower multiple times reception, but nothing happened. On the other hand, staff immediately sent someone to my room because it was visible from outside that I was drying a towel in my window. Meanwhile, the cafeteria, library, and lecture halls are cleaned almost hourly (!) until as late as 2 a.m.
- Here again the [link](#) from CNMS's website to a document in which I describe my application process for the semester abroad. I also added it again on the next pages for easy access.



Guide – Applying for and Spending a Semester Abroad

This guide is based on my own experience of applying for and completing a semester abroad at *University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P)*, and more specifically at the *Faculty of Governance, Economics and Social Sciences*, in Rabat, Morocco.. This document aims to help other students to understand the process, important steps, and timing. Please note that procedures can vary depending on the host university and faculty.

General Notes

Feedback and communication with partner universities abroad can vary significantly. For instance, UM6P responded quickly, while others, such as AUC in Cairo, may have longer response times.

Visa requirements depend on your nationality. Make sure to check visa requirements early in the process or perhaps make your university choice dependent on your visa requirements, if necessary.

Before Mobility (the preparation phase before going abroad)

1. Attend information sessions in Marburg:
 - At CNMS with Ms. Tramontini for universities in the MENA region (November)
 - Or at FB02/*School of Business and Economics* for other European or global exchange opportunities
2. Submit your application (by the end of January):
 - CNMS application form (incl. up to three preferred universities)
 - Curriculum Vitae (CV)
 - Letter of motivation
 - Bachelor's degree certificate
3. Apply for scholarships or financial support:
 - It is strongly recommended to apply for multiple scholarships or other types of funding early on, as deadlines differ. You can later withdraw other applications once you are accepted.
 - Examples include, but not limited to:
 - Erasmus (for Europe)
 - PROMOS/DAAD (worldwide)
 - Auslandsbafög
 - Be mindful of deadlines! PROMOS ends May 1st, and Auslandsbafög can take up to six months to process.
 - Make sure to obtain necessary documents early (e.g. professor's recommendation letter, language certificates).
4. Nomination and acceptance:
 - End of March – Ms. Tramontini nominated me to UM6P in Rabat, Morocco.
 - End of April – Welcome email from UM6P including:
 - Information about upcoming Letter of Acceptance (June).
 - Link to UM6P's course overview for Bachelor and Master programs.
 - Link to platform for formal UM6P application (upload transcripts, passport, photo, and proof of health/travel insurance).

- Note: Don't be surprised, some documents (like passport scan or health insurance) may need to be submitted multiple times on different platforms.

5. Learning Agreement (mid-May):

- Contact your faculty's Exchange Coordinator at FB02 (for me: Mr. Lawrence Brown) to start course selection and credit recognition.
- Select multiple courses and alternatives in case a course is unavailable or not recognized. I listed 8–10 options even though I was only going to take four classes.
- This step can be quite time-consuming, but providing detailed course information helps the coordinator assess credit transferability faster.

6. Official acceptance (mid-June):

- Receive official acceptance letter from host university.
- Get student email credentials (communication moves there by July/August).
- Receive information about on-campus housing and related deadlines.

7. Scholarship confirmation and further preparations:

- End of June – PROMOS scholarship confirmation and signing of the scholarship agreement.
- Mid-August – Begin final preparations: attend online Q&A meeting with UM6P's International Office, select courses, receive credentials for the university's platforms and applications (intranet, ...), and reserve on-campus housing. Don't forget to book your flight!

During Mobility

You might need to change your Learning Agreement after arrival. This is possible only during the first week at UM6P (the "Add and Drop" week). Personally, I dropped/changed two courses that turned out to be too challenging.

- My final course selection included:
 - International Political Economy (ECO520)
 - Poverty and Social Policy Reform in the Global South (ECO607)
 - Introduction to Public Policy Analysis (ECO503)
 - Foreign Policy Analysis (INT201)
- Overall, I was happy with the classes, and the teaching at master's level economics is really good.
- Classes on master's level are quite small (10-20 students).
- ... and most importantly – **go outside, make new friends and travel the country!**

After Mobility

- Total semester times at UM6P: 28.08. -21.12.
 - Introduction period: 28.08.-31.08.
 - Academic period: 01.09.-21.12.
- After finishing your Mobility, you have to write a study report about your semester abroad. Be aware of submission deadlines.