This report covers a 1-month semester at EMLYON Casablanca during the completion of the African Business and Social Entrepreneurship summer program. The program consisted of 5 modules ranging from Moroccan Culture to African and consisted of lectures, in-class assignments, tests and site visits.

**Preparation for Exchange**

Preparation for this 1-month exchange to Morocco is relatively simple. Due to the short length of the session, I did not need a visa to stay in the country. Additionally, all courses taken by students are fixed so there is no need to research course options prior to arrival. Finally, EMLYON Casablanca organizes student’s residences, site visits and meal plan.

**Packing**

When packing students should put special care into the clothing they bring both due to climatic and cultural concerns. The temperature in Morocco is typically around 35 degrees (Celsius) while the coastal Casablanca is more moderate at 25 degrees. Additionally, Moroccan culture places importance on dressing modestly. When in public places, I advise wearing clothing that is loose fitting and covers your skin to avoid negative attention. However, in private places (e.g. university campus, private beaches, shopping malls, restaurants) there is no expectation to dress modestly and western fashion is welcomed.

The university’s residences come equipped with a bed, desk, air conditioning, Wi-Fi, mini-fridge, private bathroom and a communal kitchen. However, the residence does not provide any bedding (sheets, pillows etc.) or cooking utensils. Therefore, I recommend that students either pack bedding and cooking utensils, or purchase them upon arrival.
Other than clothing and bedding, I recommend students pack all that they would need a month of school. This includes a laptop, backpack, papers and pens. Additionally, it would be wise to bring a backpack capable of carrying a weekend worth of clothing, as weekends are free to travel around the country!

Financial

The most important financial detail to note when preparing to visit Morocco is its cash based culture. Morocco’s currency is closed meaning Moroccan currency cannot be acquired outside of the country. Instead, you must bring cash to be exchanged at the airport baggage claim upon arrival. Inform your bank of your trip prior to departure, as cash must be withdrawn from regularly from ATM’s. These ATM’s dispense large bills which some stores cannot accept, so use large bills wherever possible and hold onto smaller bills.

Travel to Morocco is a long-haul trip which typically requires one transfer through Toronto or Montreal. This flight costs around $1200 CDN roundtrip and takes 16 hours in total. Due to time change and layovers, a flight leaving from Vancouver at 8am may not have you in Casablanca until 8am the following day. The airport nearest to Casablanca is the Mohammed V Airport which can be reached by train or by taxi. Both options take approximately an hour and cost 100 MAD and 300 MAD respectively.
During Exchange

Upon arrival, you should take a taxi or a train to the residence, but I personally recommend taking the taxi following a long flight. Additionally, I recommend arriving in Casablanca a few days before orientation in order to acclimate yourself to the time change and climate. Orientation is a brief meet-and-greet with fellow students as well as an introduction by the staff. Due to the small size of the program, there is no need for additional orientation activities.

Academic

EMLYON Casablanca’s campus is part of a brand new office building located in the Marina district of Casablanca. It boasts a view of the entire city, including the Hasan II Mosque and the iconic Casablanca Lighthouse. The staff and fellow students are extremely friendly, all lecturers are extremely knowledgeable and the local students are eager to have visiting students.

The course is conducted in 5 segments taught by a combination of local business-leaders and EMLYON professors. Evaluation for these classes were largely project based and most work was completed in class. Presentations were frequent and in-class participation was a requirement. Lecturers were informative and engaging and the content of this course is highly interesting.

2017 Summer Program Group Photo, Casablanca Campus
Accommodation and Living

The residences were of similar quality to the University campus, having been completed in late 2016. The residence building was located nearby numerous restaurants, supermarkets, banks and other necessities. Additionally, the residence was next door to the French Embassy and in a neighbourhood very friendly to foreigners. Security patrolled the grounds 24/7, ensuring only students could enter, and were very helpful and friendly. However, the residence was segregated by gender and forbade alcohol of any kind on the premise.

Casablanca is an extremely modern and livable city. During my exchange, my classmates and I would pass time by exploring new restaurants, museums, and markets. Beaches were a popular destination, as Casablanca has a variety of beach clubs within a short drive. Another popular destination was the Morocco Mall, the largest in Africa, which out-classed any of Vancouver’s shopping centers. Finally, my classmates and I were even able to participate in local nightlife, with a variety of bars and clubs open to visitors.

By far the best way to spend time in Morocco was traveling. EMLYON organized site-visits throughout the country allowing me to see cities such as Tangier, Rabat, Marrakesh, Fez, Agadir and Chefchaouen. Typically, the university would organize transportation and accommodation for the first night, afterwards students would have a few days off before returning home. This allowed for my classmates and I to customize or travels of Morocco around what we wanted to see and enhanced my visit immensely.
Country Information

The culture and history carries great depth and interest. Originally a territory of the semi-nomadic Berber people, Moroccan territory has passed in ownership from the Romans, to the Arabs, French, Spanish and finally to independence. The current regime of Morocco is a Democratic-Monarchy and dominated by Arabic culture and language. However, due to French protectorate, French and European culture is evident in day-to-day Moroccan life.

Unfortunately, the aspects of Moroccan culture most relevant to visitors are negative. Firstly, there is a large degree of sexism and misogyny in Morocco. Foreign woman walking alone can be subject to harassment and cat-calls from local men. Additionally, there is a restriction on what woman can wear in public. While this is not law, locals will harass woman for dressing in tight or revealing clothing and it is best to dress according to Moroccan standards while walking the streets. Moroccan culture also views foreigners as an opportunity for business. Locals will yell at you to visit their shop, coerce you take them as a guide, ask for handouts and attempt to over-charge you. At times this attention from locals can be overbearing, however learning to ignore and cope with frequent harassment becomes second nature very quickly.

Morocco is more than just its reputation for over-bearing and harassing locals. Casablanca especially is a hub for foreign trends and culture. In Casablanca, it is possible to find anything from McDonalds to Maserati within a 5-minute walk. However, what makes the country most interesting is the contrast of growing western trends and classical Arabic history. Whether it be iPhone dealers in ancient Medina markets, men in traditional attire at business meetings or the sound of the Islamic call to prayer to a backdrop of modern sky-scrapers, Morocco is a one of a kind experience.
Reflection

The greatest challenge I faced while on my exchange was the language barrier. Not only did I have trouble communicating with locals, but I had difficulty with my classmates and the administration staff. As the secondary language in Morocco is French it is very popular for French tourists and expats. This extended to my classmates, they were all from Quebec City and only half were fluent in speaking English. The result is that any activity outside the classroom was dominated by French. Often, I had no idea what the dinner conversation was until I asked someone to translate or decided to switch to English. The school’s staff, due to everyone else understanding French, spoke entirely in French as it was understood by the majority. Fortunately, all class material was in English.

The result of this challenge was an increased sense of social independence. I became comfortable in starting conversation, in English, and overall guiding group discussion. Additionally, I learned several French and Quebecois phrases (much to the delight of my classmates) in order to keep up. While I wouldn’t change my experience in anyway, it would have been preferable to know ahead of time of the language barrier. Therefore, my recommendation to any incoming student is to practice your French! Yes, all classwork is in English, but outside of that be sure to remember a few essential French phrases.