

**Exchange Report:  
The National University of Singapore  
Fall 2016-17**

**Akhil Rajpal- Information systems and  
marketing**



Hi I am Akhil Rajpal. Over the course of this report I would like to introduce you to the National University of Singapore(NUS). It is in my best intention that this exchange report will help you in any way possible from deciding, to understanding what happens during the exchange and before it. My semester experience was memorable, as I made lifelong friends and some valuable connections. I would recommend you to make the most of yours as well.

### **About:**

NUS is a leading school in Asia, much like HKUST. It aims to be a top institution globally, and puts in a lot of resources to develop strong alumni connections around the world. More factual information such as rankings, can be found online.

NUS being in Singapore, which like Hong Kong is one of the main hotspots in Asia, tends to attract a lot of foreign students and you may find yourself in that mix very soon. You will definitely meet people from a lot of cultures, backgrounds and ethnicities. The school however is dominated by Chinese, Malaysians, local Singaporean's and Indians. It would be especially useful of picking up their local slang/dialect to get along better as they are quite impressed with people who can pick up their slang fast.

### **Orientation:**

NUS provides great opportunities to get familiar with your surroundings before the actual semester begins. There will be a lot of emails regarding university wise orientation talks and specifically some for the business school students. I highly recommending checking your inbox during the month of June to register for such activities. Some of the activities I was invited to was a hiking day around Singapore, also a food hopping activity, where some students ambassadors will help you get familiar with your surrounds. Certain university wide exchange tours offer tourist like experience around the cities main hotspots such as marina bay and Dhoby Gaut.

### **Course Registration:**

Couple of months before your term begins, you will receive an email regarding course registration. This will be a link that will allow you to choose up to 10 courses to study at NUS. However, out of the 10 courses they will only allocate 4-5 courses to you depending on the quota. The email will clearly state the guidelines to follow and will also provide the relevant links to each module description. I suggest filling out 8 if you want to transfer over 4 courses and 10 if you want to transfer over 5. The course codes are relatively similar as MARK becomes MKT and usually is easy to understand which course code belongs to which department. Make sure during this part of the process you have checked the HKUST database and are clear on what courses to take because the swapping of courses once in Singapore is very hard due to the long waitlist, all of which is very similar here at HKUST.

We will then be assigned to classes considering: our majors, fulfillment of prerequisite courses, timetable availability, class quota, and our ranking of priority. NUS is very quick in assigning these courses to you, and if you really need to change a course, the add drop deadline is only one day for me, which was the first day of classes. **Remember to solve any course related issues using add drop forms on the first day of classes.**

Also, if you see certain courses that are not on HKUST's database, immediately contact ARRO about this as early as possible and then ask them for the approval. It is not wise for you to wait till you get into that course and then because the ARRO requires time to process your request. However, due to similar type of courses most of these cases are successful.

### **Courses I was enrolled in:**

Marketing Promotion, Brand and product Management (highly recommended), Consumer behavior and Investment and Portfolio management. I was initially enrolled in one more course, but the course was cancelled early in June due to some reasons at NUS. However, such occurrences are very rare.

NUS will contact you regarding websites, and files you can look at to make the best a decision. Google is your best friend, remember to have all the information of when courses are offered and do they match or not. Most resources are quite accessible by NUS's website.

### **Teaching Methods:**

The teaching methods in the business school are quite similar to HKUST. The classes are conducted in an interactive seminar style lecture. The professors are very proactive in student participation and usually for marketing and management courses, participation will be at least 20%. NUS is also graded on the curve, however their business school is strict on the % of students that will receive an A or B grade. Competition is usually high in class as students are quite eager to learn and they will participate. The tests however weigh equally with assignments. A special note when being graded on presentations, students will have highly prepared Q and A question beforehand and Q & A will be highly marked in presentation grades. Usually getting one SD above mean will guarantee an A range score, however assignment marking can be vague, hence I recommend contacting the teacher to ask specific questions about what they prefer. The grades are usually handed out on the physical paper submitted and are later uploaded onto the website.

### **Climate:**

A big myth attached to Singapore is that the weather is usually hot in Singapore for most part till December. This is not true, the weather does tend to be on the hotter side during the beginning of the semester, however frequent showers occur in October and from November the weather comes down to an acceptable level, so much so that if the sun is out on a normal day, it will be described as a beach

worthy day here in Hong Kong. I always recommend having an umbrella on you, as the weather towards November can be very much like Hong Kong. I also recommend having a strong enough ventilation in your room to avoid discomfort during your time of settling in.

### **Social Club:**

I have mentioned more about this during my monthly logs, however let me reiterate a few points:

- IF you are staying in the colleges, there are camps held for specific Interest group.
  - An interest group is basically where like-minded people come to together to play the sport or do the same activity. Interest groups range from coffee-making to playing basketball.
- I highly recommend joining the relevant WhatsApp groups as the students will keep you updated about the registration details.
- If you have a strong athletic bug, NUS business school offers exchange students an opportunity to play for the school in the inter-faculty games, an email regarding this will be sent early out in the semester, please keep an eye out for this. These games usually last the whole semester, however from what I heard the experience is very rewarding and helps you socialize more with the local students.

### **Monthly Log:**

#### **August:**

You are expected to start your semester a month earlier than HKUST, which is in August, this also means you finish earlier and you actually have an additional month of holidays as UST students are still working towards their finals in December. It would be useful for you to plan out any internship opportunities before you head for exchange and contact companies' HR offices beforehand, or maybe look for internships in Singapore, my friend from HKU was able to work through December and January in Singapore for a consulting firm. I arrived in Singapore the weekend before, semester started. The immigration process is quite smooth and just make sure you have all the required documents including the IPA letter with you at arrival. Upon reaching NUS and officially checking in, you will find the staff and the students very helpful and very welcoming. I stayed in the colleges and would recommend staying there if possible, to be the best thing about my exchange. The first week, classes started and it was usual university business. There will be Facebook groups made online for exchange students to go explore the city as tourists and would recommend for you to join such groups and meet fellow exchange students. In my first month I visited places such as Marina Bay, Bugis, Chinatown, Little India and Dhoby Gaut. All these places are wonderful hotspots and are very lively. If you live in colleges, there will be a lot of interest groups turned out to join such as boxing, hockey, badminton, baking, coffee academy. I personally joined hockey and badminton and was very active in playing for the college in sports competition.

#### **September:**

In August, the academic intensity isn't very high and time seems to go by quickly. However, classes pick up steam as in the business schools, most courses have presentations to give during this time as their first assignment is due in September. I had my first presentation to give now, and I found the experience quite enriching as the Q &A part was tougher and longer than I expected. Also, the sports activities, will recruit teams to play for the colleges, so be sure to keep on track with that. Furthermore, make sure to also enjoy the night life of Singapore and the hawker centers before the end of the month, as midterm start soon.

### October and November:

October and November flew by due to heavy assignments and midterms and presentations. I also played in the college sports, and won gold for hockey. I think this was quite useful to get my mind off from the work. Furthermore, during the end of October, I had more local friends who were very helpful and it was more enriching to hang with them, we ended up travelling to Malaysia for the weekend. There are multiple options for you to do so, as some buses provide day trips to Malaysia.

During the end of November, final weeks usually begin and you will usually have one week off to study for these finals. Luckily for me most of my courses did not have finals except one. So, my workload was quite low, however the activities really tend to die off in November as everyone is engrossed by their work.

### December:

Being my final month in Singapore, I was quite sad to leave and mostly spend the time with my local friends travelling to Bantam, Indonesia and having fun with them before I left Singapore in early December to come back to Hong Kong for my winter term at HKUST. There are some end of semester surveys exchange students must fill at NUS from the school, so don't forget to fill those surveys out before you depart the country. I would recommend staying on until your visa is expired to enjoy Singapore one last time and the surrounding countries.

For exchange students, they follow a separate route compared to the local guys. ***A month before you arrive in Singapore***, NUS would request you to go through an online system to select the 10 courses you wanted and rank them in the order of priority. You will highlight, on the online system, up to 10 courses that are necessary for you to take, e.g. required major courses. For those courses, you theoretically would stand a better chance to get enrolled.

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### **Visa Procedure:**

This was the part I was the most nervous about but the part that went most smoothly. NUS will email you a pdf with a detailed set of instructions, all you should do is just simply follow them and the process is very streamlined. You need to apply for a student pass through the official immigration website. NUS will provide you with the details, necessary to do so. You need to submit identity information and passport information. Once you successfully do the immigration process, you should be issued an IPA letter. This letter along with the NUS acceptance letter and your passport is all you need to enter NUS. For you to get the Student pass (PHYSICAL card). NUS has registered dates for you to do the formalities on campus. However, I missed these dates. That is not a problem as NUS will email you that you can register with the immigration department to do the formalities with the office on that day. You click on the link, look at the calendar and sign up for the best time slot and just like that it is done.

On the day, you must have IPA letter( stamped by the authorities at the checkpoint), NUS acceptance letter and your passport to fulfill the formalities. It takes up to an hour at the office just like HKUST immigration office and you will receive the student pass on that day itself. However, to receiving your student card, you can contact the department at NUS and ask your exchange buddies. Trust me, going to the ICA to complete formalities will not take that long, a standard one hour time was taken. Remember to carry passport size photos of yourself, per the ICA guidelines.

### **Accommodations**

You can choose and rank 3 options of student housing, these vary from colleges to residences ( All the name of the halls). I seriously recommend staying in the colleges with an AC room, yes it more costly but true me you will need it in Singapore during the heat and the humidity. I also would say that the colleges provide a better environment and more activities for you to get into.

## **Food:**

The best places to eat in Singapore are the hawker centers, which are like the local food courts, they are both cheap and very reliable. They are a cluster of 10 ~ 20 small counters of different style of food, selling Chinese, western, noodles, and all sorts of categories of food. Every food court will have a counter for drinks, ranging from various juice to milo (chocolate milk) or my favorite lime juice that I miss till date Calamansi. I personally really like the foodcourts in Utown and the one in the business school. The foodcourt in the business school may not seem that new but the food is still very good. McDonald's and Starbucks are present as well. If you stay in the college, the food is provided in a meal plan in the dining hall of every hall.

## **Transportation**

The Metro and bus covers most regions of Singapore and it is quite similar to the system in Hong Kong regarding the routes. The bus also has an app that will notify you when that bus is coming to pick you up at your current stop, I recommend downloading this app.. There are internal free school buses in NUS, linking to the nearest metro station, these are very useful getting from one end of the campus to the business school. I recommend downloading the NUS bus app for the timings as this saved me a lot in the mornings knowing exactly when the next 2-3 buses are arriving. There is also a big influence of using car apps, such as uber, and I would personally recommend downloading the app called grab as it very cheap for taxi.

<b><i>Expenses</i></b>	SGD	HKD
Items (Estimates)		
Air tickets	400	1750
Accommodation	2300	12600
Food	2000-3000	11000 -1200
Transport	300	1200
Travelling	800	4300
Others	1200	6600
(Groceries, telecom)		
Grand Total	7,500	41,230

*\*Optimistic, spending could be lower on a case to case basis. This is just the most expensive scenario if you chose to go for the more expensive route such as, airlines, where you go and where you stay.*

## **Health and Safety:**

From my experience for both males and females, Singapore is a very safe city where almost everyone follows the laws. Moreover, the laws in Singapore are very strict and you seldom will hear examples of students getting into trouble. I did happen to get food poisoning, but there is a clinic at every part of the campus and they are very efficient in handling your sickness and I was fit again in 2 days. Travelling late night is usually not an issue, as public transport runs till late and there are several apps to call taxis, as mention I recommend downloading Uber or Grab.

**What To Bring:**

I would recommend bring summer clothes, Hong Kong summer clothes with fit just fine. Bring a suit as well as business students there will be a presentation at the end of the semester in your courses. Also bring sports equipment that you like playing. Other than that just pack normally, as if you were going for a holiday but obviously a very long one.

I would like to wish you all the best for your exchange, embrace the local culture and really make the most of out of this, and maybe like me you can make some life-long friends and for that this exchange was worth it.