

Exchange Report—National University of Singapore

Part 1 - Monthly Activity Log

Jan 2017

The flight from Hong Kong to Singapore is quite short (about 3 hours). Since I arrived at the residential college quite late, around 8pm, I have called the management office to arrange for an after-office hour check in. The rooms in the college are clean and spacious. Also, since they are one-person rooms, you can have enough privacy to rest and work on your own.

The NUS courses are relatively demanding. The lectures are usually 3 hours long, and some courses requires you to read about 70 pages of readings every week. Moreover, the earliest lectures start at 8, meaning you have to wake up very early. Moreover, the NUS campus is much larger than HKUST, thus you will have to reserve some time for intra-campus travelling.



Feb 2017

I started to get to know the local students, and joined them for DOTA and bridge. Being a new player, they were very kind and patient with me, and taught me the basics of the games. It was a very enjoyable experience playing with them and talking about their habits and customs.

I also went to visit a local's home on Chinese New Year. I have learned that just like Hong Kong people, Singaporeans celebrate Chinese New Year by giving out red pockets and decorating the house with red ornaments.



Mar 2017

It was my first clubbing experience. First, we had some pre-drinks in a friend's room at the college and played drinking games. Then, we took Uber to Clarke Quay to visit 2 clubs, one of which was called "Zouk". Singaporeans really do live up to the "work hard, play hard" motto, as they really enjoyed themselves and had so much fun in the clubs.



Apr 2017

The locals brought me to Marina Bay, the central business district of Singapore. I really enjoyed the spectacular skyline and the extravagant hotels. The iLights event showcased the lights artworks of different artists and added much color to the collage.

I also visited the homes of 2 locals, in which I made dumplings with them, played mahjong and chatted about the differences of Hong Kong and Singapore. I have noted that Singapore housing (called HDB), are very spacious and looks much more comfortable than Hong Kong flats.



Part 2 - General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

Permanent Hong Kong residents do not need a visa to enter Singapore. The application of a student pass will take place within 1 week of arrival to Singapore.

NUS has provided ample support to the application process, e.g. photo-taking room. The one thing to take note of is you have to pay the application fees online via credit card, thus you are encouraged to apply for one before going to Singapore.

Orientation Activities

I have attended two orientation briefings, one being school-based and one being faculty-based. The school based faculty covers basic course registration, accommodation, Singaporean laws and clubs and societies. The orientation briefing held by the Business Faculty covers course registration for business courses. You are recommended to attend both to gain some basic knowledge of course registration, which is much more complicated and primitive compared to the convenient HKUST course registration system, and also special Singaporean laws, such as no alcohol consumption in public after 11pm.

Accommodation

Be sure to apply for on-campus accommodation before the application deadline. I recommend applying for residential colleges.

During my exchange, I stayed in the College of Alice and Peter Tan. The residential college is situated in University Town, which provides an array of facilities, namely supermarkets, a gym and restaurants. The College also has a compulsory meal plan which includes breakfast from Monday to Saturday and dinner from Sunday to Friday. The meals will be consumed in the College's dining hall, which is conveniently located on the ground floor of the college. Just remember to wake up before 10:30 am to grab breakfast.

The college is consisted entirely of single rooms, providing much needed privacy if needed. Moreover, Singaporean students, being very hardworking and diligent, often do not make much noise, thus guaranteeing a quite study space (if you really want to study). You are advised to visit the residential lounges, which are located near the lifts of every room. There, you will get to chat, play DOTA, mahjong, bridge, have supper or simply hang out with local students. Most of them are very nice.

Courses Registration

Course registration is a hassle in NUS. If you are not assigned the desired courses which you have applied before going to Singapore, you will have to go through several rounds of application and possibly a round of appeal. I myself found it extremely confusing.

You are advised to seek help from locals as for how to appeal for courses or what courses are easier to pass.

Teaching and Assessment Methods

The teaching methods of NUS is more or less similar to that of HKUST. The courses I have enrolled in mainly consisted of lectures, with some in-class activities to participate in (and check your attendance). Assessment methods are also similar.

Exams, projects and assignments. Students are graded on a bell curve.

One thing to take note is that local Singaporean students are extremely hardworking. In the residential lounges of my college, I often found locals studying, doing assignments, reviewing online lectures or engaging in extremely wordy readings. You are advised not to panic. Coming from an Asian University, HKUST, you still have the ability to pass the courses. Just study at your own pace.

For arts courses, be prepared that there will be lengthy, boring and extensive readings that may come useful in the exam. For me, however, I have not done any readings but still managed to get a B+ in the course "South Asia" by memorizing everything on the PowerPoint. Again, do not panic. If you are afraid of readings, do not take arts modules.

Sports and Recreation Activities

Being an exchange student, I believe it would be easiest to participate in sports activities by joining college teams or interest groups. Sports that my college offers include frisbee, basketball, soccer, captain's ball, tchoukball, netball and volleyball. Simply ask the student for instructions on how to join these interest groups.

There is also a gym and a swimming pool in University Town, which is a 5-minute walk from my college. The gym is similar in size to the one in HKUST and does not require an entry fee. Just remember to bring a towel and avoid going at peak hours, i.e. 6pm to 8pm.

Locals often hang out in the residential lounges. You can engage in a variety of recreational activities if you frequent the lounges. The list of activities are as follows:

- a) DOTA, a computer game similar to League of Legends. You will have more advantage if you are familiar with these competitive games.
- b) Bridge, a card game. Ask the locals to teach you.
- c) Mahjong. Note that Singaporean rules and Hong Kong rules are slightly different.
- d) Supper. If you join the neighborhood Whatsapp group, you will occasionally find that they will order supper from an Indian place at night. They call it "Ameens Open Jio". Search for the menu online.

Once you get to know the locals, you will be invited to other activities such as clubbing. Note that alcohol consumption is not allowed on campus. Clubs in

Singapore typically costs 20-30 Sing dollars.

Finance & Banking

I did not set up a bank account in Singapore and I believe you do not have to either. Currency is Sing dollars, and the exchange rate is approximately 1 Sing to 5.5 HKD. I have spent roughly 2000 Sing throughout the trip, which mainly includes food, transportation and drinks. Note that this amount does not include school fees and accommodation fees. I have also not visited neighboring countries (since I have been to most of them already).

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I did not join any official clubs in NUS. However, I often hanged out with the locals who frequent the Level 7 Lounge, who brought me to visit their homes and tour around Singapore for certain events, e.g. iLights at Marina Bay.

Health & Safety

If you fall ill, there is a clinic on campus called the University Health Centre (UHC). The provide doctor consultation and a pharmacy. The rates are acceptable. (Note: You can skip the consultation and just ask for medicine from the pharmacy to save money.) I also received a dental cleaning at the dental clinic, which is situated right below the UHC for 80 Sing. The dentist's skill is acceptable.

Singapore is pretty much like Hong Kong. It has an extremely low crime rate and is very safe for exchangers. Yet, you are still advised to keep a close eye on your valuables. Do not use your wallet to save seats.

Food

Singaporean food is very similar to Hong Kong food. If you stay at halls or residential colleges, you have the choice of Malay, Indian, Western or Chinese food for your dinners and breakfasts. There are also two food courts in University Town (and many more around campus) serving an array of cuisines at an extremely low price. If you get hungry at night, order Ameen's or Mcdonald's with your friends/neighbours.

Transportation

Public transportation is very convenient in Singapore. You can use the MRT, which is similar to Hong Kong's MTR or public buses. Consult Google Map/locals for directions.

Note that unlike Hong Kong, there is no midnight public transportation available. Luckily, Uber/Grab is readily available at an affordable price after you walk out of a

club at 3am. Share with friends to save cost.

Climate

Very similar to Hong Kong summers. 30 degrees Celsius all year round. Bring t-shirts and shorts. (Bring some long trousers if you intend to go to a bar/club.)

Communication

You can apply for a local SIM card at the airport upon arrival. I applied for a Singtel card in Changi Airport. Also, free WiFi is available on campus and cable connection is offered in your room.

Cautionary measures

Do not drink in public after 11pm.

Part 3 - Items to Bring

	Jacket
	T-shirts
	Shorts
	Shirt
	Trousers
	Suit
	Blanket
	Bed sheets
	Pillow (or buy over there)
	Laptop
	Chargers
	Medicine
	Singapore Dollars

Part 4 - Useful Links and Contacts

NUS Student Information System

<https://myisis.nus.edu.sg/psp/cs90prd/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&>

NUS course search

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/nusbulletin/search-modules/>

Google Map

<https://www.google.com.hk/maps/>

Ezbuy (Singapore online shopping site)

<https://ezbuy.sg/>