



Exchange Report

Stockholm School of Economics (SSE), Sweden

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Management and Marketing

Fall 2017

Part I – Monthly Logs

August 2017

I arrived at Stockholm, Sweden on the 17th of August. The rationale behind this timing was because the University provided accommodation begins on the 15th of August (more on accommodation will be described later). As the orientation date for me was the 28th I had several days to get accustomed to the environment. The school is located at the centre of the city on the main street of Stockholm, Sveavägen, and so finding the school was extremely easy. I settled in, bought all the missing items, and taken part in the orientation from the SSE where I began to meet with all other exchange students and was given a short tour of the school premises. I highly recommend future exchange students to also arrive much earlier to take time to get accustomed.



September 2017

The semester begins on the first day of September. By then I learned that SSE splits the semester into two periods each of about two months. The first period (Sept – Oct) you take around 2 to 3 courses you have enrolled in and another 2 to 3 courses in the following period of two months to complete 4 to 5 courses per semester. It was a completely new experience to have short yet intensive and focused courses. Around this time I also gotten used to the city itself and locations to get food and etc.. Living expenses, especially food, was unexpectedly expensive unless you do them yourself (cook, make coffee, etc.).

October 2017

Around this time the first period will approach its end and I had exams and/or presentations and papers to hand in. Once again, I am intrigued by the short yet focused method of learning in this city. The exam period is usually the last 2 or so weeks of October, if you don't have any exams, such as me, you will get a 2 week mid-term break. This was a nice opportunity for you to explore the rest of the city, country, or continent and experience intense cultural exchange. People of Sweden, and Europe in general, were extremely hospitable, English savvy, and keen to speak with you for cultural exchange experience.

November 2017

This is when the second period of the semester begins and you will take the remaining courses for the next month and a half. By this time, I am already fully accustomed to the way of life in Stockholm city and even was able to converse, with limited vocabulary, in the local Swedish language! People of Stockholm enjoy relaxed coffee time during the day and vibrant party time during the night. Apart from school work, you will be busy with parties held by the SSE at their own campus grounds or even your local friends inviting you to their home for dinner.



December 2017

This is when my courses approached the end as the semester ends. Aside from the significant temperature drops as the winter season rolled in, I experienced, for the first time, a sunset at 2 P.M.! The days were significantly shorter than before and most of the time I moved about in darkness. Most local Swedes started the annual complaining about the cold and dark weather of Sweden but as a foreigner experiencing this for the first time I couldn't hide my excitement and amusement at this phenomenon.

January 2018

After the new year break the last of the assignments or exams are held before the academic results for the semester began to roll out to officially mark the end of the semester. The student accommodation ends immediately after the new year. At this time, I packed my bag and left to return to Hong Kong, with a few stops on the way...

Part II – General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

You will be applying for resident permits which allows you to stay in the country until a set date. You will receive a card along with the permit of which you will need to visit the Consulate General of Sweden in Hong Kong. To apply for the permit you simply have to follow the application on this website: <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Studying-inSweden/Universities-and-university-college/How-to-apply.html>

For the application you will require: Copies of passport, admission decision letter from the school in Sweden, proof of medical insurance, proof of affordability (bank statement).

I highly recommend one to apply for visa at least 4 months in advance. After the application has been sent the Swedish Consulate will continue to send you emails notifying you for status and with instructions for additional steps before you finally get your card. Start early and follow instructions word by word.

Orientation Activities

There are two days of orientation activities 28th and 29th, this may vary from case by case but usually there are two days. The first day you will be introduced to the SSE academic systems (grading, enrolling, campus access, library access, advisors, etc.) and will be given a tour around campus. Note that SSE is a *single* building and so the campus is not at all big so the tour did not take long. In addition, they will take portrait photos of you for their records and will be given a few forms to sign for you to hand in before the classes begin. You will also be notified about your student ID card that works in across Stockholm which proves you are indeed a student; the only practical thing of note about this ID card is that you will get student discounts or even free entries to certain events across the city and given the high living expenses this is very valuable. Finally, you will also receive a sim card for your phone for free with 2.5 GB of mobile data and a number. It is, however, important to note that this is not a regular thing and not every exchange semester they will have this kind of giveaways.

On the second day, you will be taken on a bus tour of Stockholm city showing you important locations in terms of useful shops, historical landmarks, and important buildings of the Swedish capital. The afternoon after the tour, you will be taking part in a scavenger hunt organised by the SSE exchange committee where you will get the opportunity to explore the city. Afterwards, you will be officially introduced to the SSE exchange committee who are SSE students who will further have more optional activities for you to join throughout the semester.

International Services and Activities

As mentioned before, SSE has a student committee for interacting with exchange students, of course you are not limited to them to interact with at the SSE but they will constantly planning activities for you and notifying you of any school wide or city wide activities that you might want to join. Not all of them are free, but the city is expensive to begin with and it is futile to try to be frugal. Located on a major road in Stockholm the school is surrounded by pubs, night clubs, and open bars where majority of the young adults like to gather, it is where most of the activities will take place (as mentioned the campus itself is very small), and where you will get to make the most new friends.

Apart from this, the city itself is extremely diverse and open minded and always with activities. On specific days, students will get free entry to vast amount of museums just 10 to 30 minutes away. There will be activities such as triathlons and Santa runs (picture above). Everyone in the city speaks near perfect English and extremely hospitable. You will never run out of activities to do. Proactively look around and you will definitely find some. I even ran into a famous Youtuber and got his autograph!

Accommodation

You will have to apply to accommodation at SSE (look out for emails and deadlines). There are two main accommodations 'Saltis' and 'Lappis.' I stayed at the apartment called Saltis though I heard that Lappis is just 30 minutes away and it is a large student housing complex with students not only limited to SSE students but also students from other universities in the city as well. Saltis, although more expensive (6,300 SEK a month for single apartment (1 SEK = .98 HKD)) it is located just 100m away from SSE. It is, therefore, also located on the main street of Stockholm with access to all kinds of markets, shops and etc.. In Saltis, you may be in double apartment or single apartment, regardless you will have one hot plate and kitchen utensils, bed, desk, wardrobe, and private bathroom with showers; the fridge, however, is shared among the floor. Aside from the fact that it is only SSE students there, it is simply an apartment. I would highly recommend Saltis as your top choice for accommodation mainly due to its proximity to SSE but also that it is at the heart of the city (you can walk to anywhere in the city from Saltis). You should not need anything for the room except the consumables (detergent, food, etc.), but if you are missing certain things, IKEA is just 30 minutes away.

Courses Registration

Few months prior to your exchange studies you will receive an email giving you instructions on how to use the SSE portal and enroll in courses. As mentioned above, the semester in SSE is split into two periods. For the entire semester, you will take 30 ECTS (credits). Usually you will try to aim to get 15 ECTS per period but it can be flexible. A typical course is around 7.5 ECTS and so taking two of these courses will give you 15 ECTS. Some courses might be less at around 4 ECTS. There will be course descriptions to every course you can register for so be sure to check them out. Usually your courses should be settled long before the start of your semester and if you do run into any troubles there will also be a coordinator who can help you.

Teaching and Assessment Methods

Before I go on, I must mention that at SSE, I noticed there are two types of courses. SSES courses and SSE courses. SSES is Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship and is a collaboration between multiple institutions in Stockholm such as Stockholm University (SU), KTH, SSE, etc.. If you take SSES courses you may have classes at one of these university campuses and not necessarily at the SSE campus so take good care to note the classroom venue. SSE courses are simply courses for SSE students only. On that note, in SSES courses you will not only be working with students from these various institutions but also Masters level students and CEMS students as well as from different disciplines such as engineering and sciences. The courses, as you may have already guessed, revolve around entrepreneurship.

Teachings are in lectures, tutorials, and seminars. As it is a short but intense course you are expected to finish one to three papers in the period of 1.5 months and/or exams. Grading is mostly absolute grading and it tends to be very fair. At SSES especially, you may often be taught, not by professors but by experienced professionals from all over the world.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

As mentioned repeatedly, SSE has a single building as their 'campus' and so they do not have any particular activities. They do have underground 'common room' areas where usually you can find different committee rooms and where most in-house parties will be held. There are, however, many different kinds of gyms to choose from around the school, there is a small park with a mini football pitch just 10 minutes walk away and several more sports gyms you can find. It would be the easiest to ask one of the local students affiliated with your desired sports about the whereabouts and school team related sports activities to get the best sports and recreation experience. Although the school itself does not have these facilities the students of SSE are still very active in sports and recreations.

Finance and Banking

Stockholm is a cashless city. Although you can get SEK bills and coins but there are more and more shops and restaurants who **ONLY** accept credit card payments. You can expect to go buy coffee at around 12 SEK using a credit card. And so, it is advised that you take note of your credit card billing policy on international usage before you head to Sweden. There are quite a few banks all on the same major street as the school so you can opt into getting an account option as well.

As mentioned before, living expenses are quite expensive in Stockholm. The city is one of the most expensive cities in Europe. If you choose to eat at a restaurant or even fast food you can expect to spend at least 80 SEK for a meal. SSE does not have a canteen but does have a cafe that closes at 5 PM. As the student accommodation has a kitchen ready, I recommend cooking for yourself as it can significantly reduce your food expenditures during your stay. The entire city is walkable for the most part so there shouldn't be too much burden on transportation but the metro, the easiest and most commonly used means of transport, I find to also be more expensive than MTR at Hong Kong, though pricing is also quite different.

Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

SSE has an extremely active and diverse social clubs available such as the German students club, Japanese students club and more. They are also party animals, and so there will always be weekly parties and fests to look forward to, to get to know more people. The school is also the only privately funded school in Stockholm, mostly funded by corporate partners. As such, there will be plenty of events where firms such as McKinsey come to the school to have a small fair where you get to know professionals. Finally, Stockholm is a very active city with fairs and fests happening about once a month where you get to know different kinds of celebrations and fests to know about and really mingle with the locals and non-locals alike.

Climate

This largely depends on which semester you go. For the fall semester, August is still quite warm and you may enjoy a couple of weeks of shorts and t-shirt weather. Stockholm can get very cold however, even at December it stays around

-4 degrees to 4 degrees celcius. You will most likely see more rain than snow at least until January. All indoors are very well heated however. The most shocking factor is the short daylight times. For the most part of November and December, it will be 'evening dark' at around 3 PM. Daylight gets increasingly precious as the fall semester goes by. If you want to reduce your luggage as much as possible I would suggest only bringing winter clothes as their warm August is not that hot either.

Health and Safety

Stockholm is generally a very safe city. Of course as long as you stay savvy and not take unnecessary risks you will be in no danger. It does get cold and wet in the Fall so you might get colds. I, however, don't recommend you visit a clinic or see a doctor unless you absolute must, as it can get very expensive. If you are not extremely sick then there are pharmacies around every corner and so getting medication should not be a problem at all.

Food

As mentioned in finances, food can get very expensive unless you cook for yourself. There are, however, plenty of choices for you to choose from. Stockholm have all kinds of fastfood restaurants, food chains, cafeterias around the city. You can also get Italian, Mexican, or even Chinese food. Yet, once again, I would recommend reserving eating out to special occasions only unless you can afford to do so daily.

Transportaion

Unless your accomodation is at Lapis or anywhere not located near the school, you should be able to walk to most places in Stockholm. If anything you should avoid Taxis as they can get extremely expensive. Buses and trams are also common but the most common public transport is the metro. You can get a 'Access Card' at the airport or at any Pressbryon (Swedish 7-11). This is a rechargeable card like the Octopus card in HK and you can use this card for buses, trams, or metro. As the city is very walkable I have not used the metro very often, but as far as I know you pay anywhere from 20 to 50 SEK for a ride to any destination. The pricing isn't quite clear. People also use bicycle a lot in Stockholm and that is definitely another option until Winter when it is too cold to do so. However, in general, Stockkholm is a very beautiful city and you should be perfectly happy to stroll through the city while enjoying the views.

Communication

Students in their first orientation day will receive a free sim card for your mobile phone with mobile data of around 2.5 GB. You may also go around and buy pre-paid sims in just about any convenience store or telecom stores, they are all over the city and are hard to miss. Internet and wifi are readily available in most of the stores, cafes, and malls where you can surf the net or send emails while enjoying one of the fastest internet speeds in the world.

Cautionary Measures

Stockholm is a relatively safe city but as is with any place in the world you should practice safety and be smart and not take unnecessary risks. Everyone speaks perfectly fluent English so you do not have to worry about language issues. Stockholm is also rains quite a bit even at temperatures around 0 degrees celcius and so it is recommended that you bring enough warm and water proof clothing. You can also consider bringing an umbrella, however, it very rarely rains hard enough and usually a water resistant jacket or coat will do the trick. You do not necessarily need to bring cash but you most definitely will want to bring/have a credit card. Finally, learn to cook, it will save you **a lot** of money.

Part III – Items to Bring

- Warm winter clothes for weathers below zero degrees celcius
- Rain jacket or coat
- Credit Card
- ID card (for verifying age and credit card name)
- Slippers
- Towels
- Laptop
- Mobile Phone
- Insurance card
- Travel adapters (enough for all of your devices)

- Shoes (including ones that won't slip on snow or ice)
- Black tie optionalattires (for school banquet you won't want to miss)

Part IV – Useful Links and Contacts

<https://portal.hhs.se/>

<https://www.hhs.se/>

<https://www.hhs.se/en/education/study-at-sse/housing/>

<https://sweden.se/>

<https://outlook.com/student.hhs.se>

<https://www.sasse.se/>

Part V – Best Practices of Host Institution

- They have an entire committee of students dedicated to catering for exchange students
- Encouraged speaking English for inclusiveness of students from all backgrounds
- Transparent and absolute grading