

Exchange Report

| Fall, 2017 |

NOVA
School
of Business
& Economics

Shaping
powerful
minds

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I. Monthly Activity Log

September, 2017

Arriving Lisbon on the 6th of September, I had settled down in Airbnb before I could move in the school accommodation on the 8th of September since there was a group booking before my check-in date. An orientation day in NOVA was held on the next day of my arrival, I had then joined a membership in the Erasmus Life Lisboa (ELL) which provides a lot of welcoming activities for exchange student over the semester. My friend and I had participated in the welcoming dinner held that day as well. Since the semester started on the 14th of September, we had approximately a week for us to familiarize ourselves in this wonderful city and to explore those famous attraction districts. During the month, we had been to Belem, Lumiar, Cascais, and many other places, as well as joining different activities held by ELL such as street arts appreciation, etc. because Lisbon has a lot of artistic graffiti around!



^ Famous Bridge in Belem - Ponte 25 de Abril



^ Cascais - Boca do Inferno

October, 2017

As the semester had started a few weeks already, there were a bit of projects and one mid-term for me to handle. While having Friday as day-off, the workload was fairly acceptable to me so I had extra time to explore more on Lisbon and even other cities in Portugal during the month! Being ranked as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, Porto's wine tour and night view are amazingly awesome! A friend of mine was having her birthday in October, so we went to Cascais again for cycling activities. Even though we spent more than an hour to go there, the weather was again so nice that worth so much for the time we spent. Sunshine in October is really rare to be seen in other European countries, and that explains why Portugal is so mesmerizing in its own way, with all beautiful cultures and bracing weather.



^ Porto - Vila Nova de Gaia



^ Cascais - Cascais Natural Park

November, 2017

Stepping into the toughest month for students studying in NOVA, there were a lot of projects, assignments and presentations for me to finish. That said, I had still planned to go to Belgium with my friends in HKUST during one of the weekends. We went to Brussels, a place full of waffles and chocolates, it is literally just a heaven for someone who has a sweet tooth like me! The weather was cold already and especially when it compares to Lisbon. It was enjoyable to take a short break and return back to NOVA to prepare for the remaining assignments and presentations.



^ Waffles in Brussels



^ Friends in one of my projects

December, 2017

In a blink of an eye, the semester had come to an end in early December. Since final exams would be taking place in January, I have about one whole month to travel other than only studying for the exams. Besides, there was a Winter Wonderland near the campus for us to chill, so we went there on the last day of lessons. Before I flew from Portugal, I had been to Obidos, a city near Lisbon, and a group of my HKUST friends had come to visit us in Lisbon too. Therefore, after having stayed here for about 3 months, we managed to bring them around, to Sintra, etc. as if we were

locals there (haha 😊). After that, I have been to Germany, UK, Denmark, Norway, etc. and travel within the countries, and most importantly I could fly to meet my best friends! It was quite a long trip but time had gone very quickly. It was so unforgettable and exciting that all of the trips were planned by ourselves and what we did were just completely enjoy our lives! I had my trips ended before the last day of the year, and that I could come back Lisbon and celebrate the new year ahead with my friend! It was really my first time celebrating new year overseas, and it had been lit. Yes, really.



^ Obidos - Santa Claus Village



^ Sintra - The Pena Palace



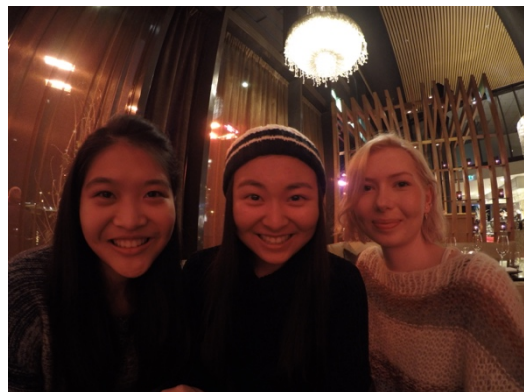
^ Famous German food - Eisbein



^ London Winter Wonderland



^ Copenhagen - Nyhavn



^ Oslo with Norwegian friend

January, 2018

It was the last month of my exchange semester, as well as the final exams season in NOVA. I had four exams to prepare and they were spread out for about two weeks. I went to school library to study for my exams and after all, I scored good in the exams thankfully. After I had finished my last exam on the 18th of January, I went to Switzerland and Austria for my last exchange-trip, and back to Lisbon on 23rd of January to pack my luggage and try again the Portuguese food before I headed back to Hong Kong on the 25th. I would definitely miss the time here in my 20s! ☺



^ Zurich - Jungfrauoch



^ Zurich - Jungfrauoch



^ Vienna - Classical music concert



^ Hallstatt



^ NOVA - Last day of school ☺



^ Farewell with friend in accommodation

II. General Exchange Information

i. **Visa Application Procedures**

The application process is complex and time-consuming which will take about 3 months to get your Visa successfully, provided that you have submitted all the required documents to the Portuguese Embassy in Macau as there is no Portuguese Embassy in Hong Kong. I had contacted the Consulate ahead for me to have a letter proving the need of applying a Certificate of No Criminal Conviction before I went to Macau, so I had just been there twice, which should be the minimum number of transportation already. It was really lucky for me to have spared a lot of time to do the Visa, because for the Certificate of No Criminal Conviction, it had already taken 1 month to the Embassy. So, a friendly reminder is to apply your Visa as early as you can so that everything could be on schedule.

ii. **Orientation Activities**

There was an orientation day in the campus one week before the semester officially started. It included a welcoming speech by staff from International Office, introduction to NOVA, collect your NOVA student card, useful tips on life in Lisbon and ways to apply for our own student monthly metro card, whereas there were diversified booths of students' associations, clubs, etc. for us to choose which to join because there were a series of orientation activities in the coming semester.

iii. **International Services**

There is an International Office in NOVA for any enquiries during the exchange semester, or you can simply email them. The staff there are so nice that they would help you with your course registration if you have problems. As HKUST requires exchange-out students to apply for Credits Transfer within 1 month of studying the semester here, it is urgent for me to get the transcript as soon as possible. Once I had all my exam grades shown on Netpa, I had screenshot it and sent them an e-mail regarding the issue, very quickly they managed to handle my case first and send the hard copy of my transcript back to HKUST SBM within a week. They are so nice that they would really accommodate into each of the exchange students' specific

needs.

iv. Accommodation

I was lucky to live in the student accommodation near NOVA, with only 5 minutes walk from campus. In spite of being convenient, it is also cheaper than the accommodations offered by different agencies outside. For a single room that I had lived, it only cost me 225 euros per month. It was fairly comfy though the furniture was a bit old. There are two shared kitchens in one floor, and I had to share a toilet and a bathroom with a double-room neighbors. Living in school dorm was really good that you could meet different local and exchange students, and helped avoided many troubles in dealing housing issues with landlords, as how some of my friends had experienced the frustration.

v. Courses Registration Procedures & Courses Taken

In about June, NOVA had sent courses information for us to register courses in Netpa. There were 2 rounds of add-drop period, one in about August, and the other in late-September, when the semester had started. The maximum credits for exchange students to study are 32 ECTS, which equal to 4 courses (7.5 ECTS each).

As I found that there are no much Marketing courses could be transferred back to HKUST. So, I had mainly taken Management courses there. In total, I had taken 4 courses during the semester, as briefly explained below.

1200 Principles of Management

It was out of my expectation that it required quite a lot of economics concepts, yet it was just equivalent to a common-core SA course in HKUST. The content of the course was diverse, with finance, management, economics, marketing, etc. There were 3 reports, namely finance, marketing and strategy base on one chosen Portuguese company, and a presentation at the end. Besides, there was 1 mid-term exam and 1 final exam.

1206 Organizational Behavior

It was my favorite Management course in NOVA with a group of efficient

exchange friends. The workload was quite many though, which required continuous efforts. However, it required hardware and software skills, for instance SPSS, present in consultancy style, etc. It was indeed quite interesting in doing the project, with a group of foreign students from Italy, Belgium, Portugal, Germany, etc. Without any mid-term exam, there was individual essay, yet it was easy for me to handle.

1210 Entrepreneurship

This Management course required a lot of creative thinking that you have to initiate a business idea within your group and throughout the whole semester, weekly presentations on “lessons learnt” would be done. The final presentation was graded by 6 professional judges, whom came from different fields such as specialists in technology, professionals in finance, etc. It was indeed practical yet the workload was accordingly heavy. Preparation for every week’s work was essential.

1211 International Management

It provided me the global perspective on management, and enhanced our cultural sensitivity. It was quite conceptual in theoretical lessons, while in practical lessons, the lesson slides were not included in final exams, it just required us to do a comparative case study of whether or not the two companies that our group had chosen could enter a market in another country together. It was insightful to do the researches and collaborated with my group mates.

vi. Teaching & Assessment Methods

NOVA requires much more practical works than in HKUST, and the students here are all very hard-working. They did not tend to use laptops or cellphones during classes, and were all eager to participate or jot down notes. The power distance of professors and students are lower.

Assessments include mid-terms, final exams, as well as projects, presentations, reports, individual assignments amid a semester. There are often specific minimum grades required for passing a course, if you have failed any of the components or the final exams, there is a resit-exam period

for you to improve your grades, yet it must be done in NOVA.

vii. Finance & Banking

Initially, I did not plan to open a bank account in Lisbon because I thought it would be much more convenient and easier to withdraw cash in ATM machines. However, for each transaction that I would like to make in ATM machine, only a maximum of 200 euros could be withdrawn. In order to save some transaction fees, I had then applied Activo Bank since with ELL membership, the application fee was just 5 euros. However, you have to get used to the low efficiency of European's working styles that it would take a long time to finish the whole application process.

viii. Sports & Recreational Facilities

There is no gym room on campus, but with ELL membership card, there are discounts offered by several fitness centers, such as Time to Fitness 24, Vertigo, etc. Sports classes like climbing and surfing are organized as well. It is a good chance for you to pick up a new hobby if you are a sports lover!

ix. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I had joined ELL as mentioned previously, which is the largest student-run association for all exchange students in Lisbon, as well as the NOVA Students' Union since there are a lot of membership discounts in trips, catering, entertainment, etc. All these were designed to make sure all exchange students here would have great exposures to various activities and its local culture. There were several Career Fairs held in the semester for students and companies to mingle as well.

x. Food, Transportation & Living Expenses

Portugal is known for its seafood, especially Sardine, and Pastel de Nata! The most famous shop selling Pastel de Nata is Pasteis de Belem, which is the origin of those mouthwatering egg tarts! There are Western and Asian food too, while bakery shops are literally everywhere. Locals there love sitting outside of the restaurants to chill, so there are usually a plenty of seats inside. One point to note that appetizers like bread, butter, etc. need to be charged per item, if you do not want them, just tell the waiters and it would be fine.

Transportation in Lisbon is very convenient, I had applied a student monthly viva card, which just cost me 27.15 per month but then I could take any public transportation (within Zone 1) for any number of journeys. However, the flights from Portugal are relatively more expensive than other places, most likely due to its geographical location.

Living in Lisbon is comparatively cheaper than living in some other European countries. To save money for travelling, I had cooked with my friend during weekdays and we usually bought ingredients in supermarkets, such as Continente, Pingo doce, Lidl, etc. Milk there is very cheap, with just 0.8 euros you can get a 1-litre milk. Spaghetti sometimes only costs about 0.5 euros too. In total, including travelling costs, I had spent roughly about 80000 HKD during my exchange period.

xi. Climate

It is warm and dry in Lisbon, whereas the temperature is just similar to Hong Kong. It seldom rains in September to November, and the temperature is at around 20-25 degrees Celsius. From December onwards, it rains more frequently and the floor would be very slippery because it is made of tiles. The temperature goes down to 8-15 degrees Celsius and becomes windy.

xii. Communication

The first language in Portugal is Portuguese. There are some people who could not understand English, but normally there would not be a big problem because you could seek help from others for the translation purposes. Classes in NOVA have also divided by Portuguese-speaking and English-speaking, so that it does not affect our learnings. It is indeed interesting for us to be able to pick up some Portuguese words too!

III. To-bring-list

- Student Visa
- Passport
- NOVA acceptance letter (in case airline requires it to check your student tickets)
- Insurance proof
- Cash
- Credit card
- Battery chargers and adapters
- Laptop
- Medicines

Lastly, I hope you would enjoy your exchange as I really did! 😊 Treasure every single moment because in a blink of an eye, it will be over. The memories are going to stay with you forever. And now, I really miss my carefree time there!