

# Exchange Report

## *Stockholm School of Economics (Sweden)*



WAN Tsz Wai

2017 Fall Exchange

## Part I: Activity Log

### August

I arrived Stockholm two days before the orientation program. As the housing office was not opened at the time of my arrival, I asked my exchange buddy for help and he helped me to collect my room key beforehand.

I lived in Saltis, which was very near to the school campus (just a 5-min walk). It was very convenient and cost-effective as I could save a lot of transportation expenses. The room was big and tidy and I shared my room with another girl, a master student from Mainland China. During the two days before orientation, I simply settled down and unpacked my luggage.

The orientation program consisted of a welcoming speech given by the school and the exchange committee, a pub night, a city tracing game and a sightseeing tour of Stockholm. At first, I was quite worried that I might not be able to get new friends here. Luckily, I met a lot of people in the orientation program and befriended with them.





## September

The school started on 29<sup>th</sup> August and the whole semester was divided into two periods. For the first period, I took the course “Introductory to Swedish” (1001). The tutor was very nice and patient. As the course was designed for international students, I met a lot of exchange students there.

I travelled to Oslo and Bergen with my roommate. Oslo was quite boring despite it was the capital city of Norway. Besides, I went to Netherlands and stayed with my friend from UST, who was also having exchange in Amsterdam. Then, we travelled to Belgium together. Amsterdam and Brussels were nice and fun!



## October

The schedule of October was a bit tight as I needed to catch up with my study after travels. Still, I went to an island in Sweden, Gotland, with my Japanese friend and spent a night there. It was a quiet and pretty little

town. Sadly, many attractions and shops were closed as it was not the peak season. So remember - hang out and travel more in Sweden in August/September before summer season ends! Besides, I was the representative of UST in SSE's Exchange Fair. SSE set up a booth for us and we introduced our university to students who were interested to take an exchange semester in Hong Kong.

After exam, I went on a 8-day trip to Prague and Austria (Salzburg, Hallstatt and Vienna) myself. I prefer Salzburg and Hallstatt to Prague and Vienna as they were less crowded and noisy. Then, I travelled to Copenhagen with another friend from UST, who was having exchange in Ireland. It was nice to get a travel buddy again after staying alone for 8 days!





## November

In second period, I took two courses, “Financial intermediation” (645) and “Marketing in practice” (622). For 645, the final exam accounted for 100% of the grade, with no assignment and group project needed. For 622, the workload was quite heavy that students needed to complete 2 group projects and 1 individual assignment. Besides, there were guest lectures and seminars per week. Students needed to complete some mini group assignments in seminars and get the attendance scores. Still, I enjoyed attending the lectures as the learning atmosphere was great. Students were willing to raise questions and professors used a lot of real-life examples for teaching.

I participated in the Light Festival of Stockholm, which was a festival to “light up the darkness” during the winter time. Participants could buy torches and joined the procession. The festival ended with a traditional Lucia performance.

Besides, I travelled to Iceland with my roommate. The view was magnificent and wonderful! It is really a must-go destination and I strongly recommend it. (Ignore the extremely high price level) I also joined the school trip to Lapland organized by the Exchange

Committee. To be frank, the itinerary of the trip itself had nothing special. We simply lived in a village and were provided several winter activities to choose from (and you needed to pay for most of them). Most of the time we got nothing to do. Still, it was a memorable experience to go on trip with friends.





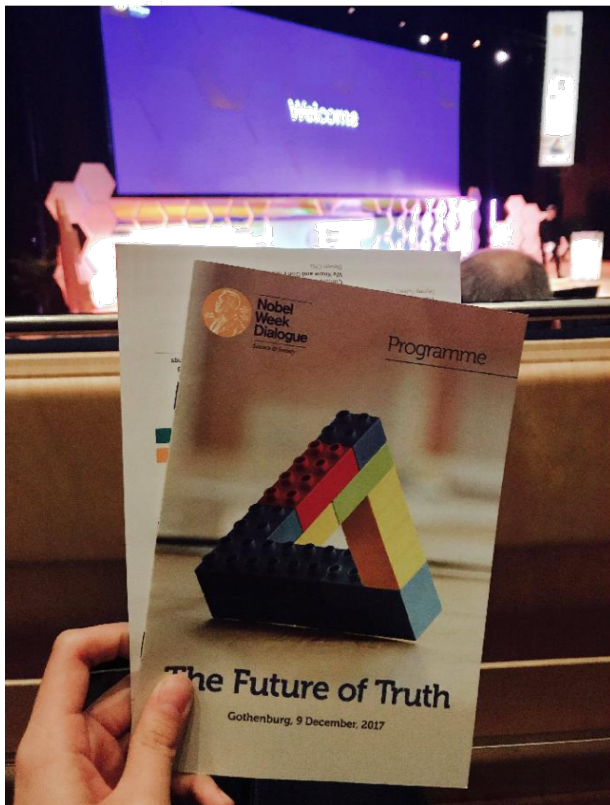
## December

Time flies and soon it was the last month of exchange. I travelled to Italy, which was the last trip within the exchange semester. Italy was really a fun city (with much warmer weather!) but it was comparatively dangerous (especially for Rome and Milan). Tourists should protect their belongings very carefully as there were quite a lot of pickpockets.

I also participated in the program “Nobel Week Dialogue - The future of Truth” in Gothenburg. A lot of well-known speakers (including scientists, Nobel Prize Laureates and government authorities) were invited to talk about topics related to Truth and democracy. It was very inspiring and I strongly recommend students to join it next year! (the program was free of charge)

My exams were on 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>th</sup> December. I spent a whole week staying in my room for revision. The format of the exams was slightly different from that of UST as students needed to make use of the knowledge learnt to answer questions of real-life cases. (No multiple choices or short questions) Right after my exam on 22<sup>th</sup>, I took the plane to Switzerland and went on my last trip to Switzerland and Germany before heading back to Hong Kong.





## Part II: General Exchange Information

### 1) Visa Procedures

International students need to apply for a residence permit to study in Sweden. I submitted the application online to Consulate General of Sweden in Hong Kong by filling out the application form and uploading

the required documents (insurance proof, acceptance letter, bank statement etc.). You should start the application once you get the acceptance letter from SSE as it takes time for the office to process your application. UST has bought insurance for all exchange-out students, and you can get the insurance proof from SFAO.

## 2) Accommodations

SSE provides two off-campus rental housings for exchange students, Saltis and Lappis. Saltis is very near to the campus while students who live in Lappis need to take 20-min bus to reach the campus. I lived in Saltis as I prefer living in the city centre. I shared a room with another girl and the rent for 4months cost around 25000 SEK, which included a private washroom and kitchen (You can also live in a single room with more expensive rental fee).

Some exchange students I know did not get a housing offer from the SSE housing office. They needed to find accommodation themselves, which usually costs more and is far away from the campus. The housing office and exchange committee are very willing to offer help if you encounter any difficulties regarding the housing problems.

## 3) Courses Registration

The first round of course registration is opened in April, around half year before the semester. After that, you would have a second chance to amend the courses you registered in August, before the start of semester. To make sure that you can get credit transfer for the courses, you can visit HKUST course equivalent database. If you can't find the courses you want in the database, send an application form for assessment of new courses for credit transfer to school. (Do it earlier as it takes around a month for the school to process the application)

## 4) Orientation Activities

Before the start of semester, the exchange committee would hold a two-day orientation program for all the exchange students. It would be a great chance to meet other exchange students there. Students would be

given a Telia Sim card during the day and you just need to top it up in 7-11 or other Telia stores. Besides, there would be a city-tracing game, a pub-night and a welcome banquet organized by the exchange committee.

#### 5) International Services & Activities

The exchange committee organizes a lot of activities during the semester, which include the Lapland trip, pub-nights, welcome and farewell banquets. Information of the activities would be posted on the Facebook page (the exchange committee would invite you to join it). You may also join activities organized by other societies including yoga classes and recruitment talks.

#### 6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

For me, I think SSE's courses have less workload than that of HKUST's (only for bachelor students' courses). The assessment methods are mainly composed of class participation, seminar groups, group projects and final exams. Still, many courses require intensive reading (I got more than 10 reading passages in my Mark course) which may be tested in exams.

#### 7) Sports and Recreation Facilities

SSE does not have its own gym room or badminton/basketball/football court. If you want to go to the gym, there are quite a lot of choices nearby which provide student discount. Besides, you can also join SSE's sports teams and join their regular team practices.

#### 8) Social clubs & Networking Opportunities

As mentioned above, the exchange committee organizes a lot of activities of exchange students, which would be a great chance for you to socialize. To meet more local students, you may also join activities organized by the Student's Union and other school societies.

#### 9) Finance & Banking

Use of credit cards is very common in Northern Europe. You may use credit card everywhere including convenient stores and markets. (No Union Pay! Use cards with “Mastercard”, “VISA”, “PLUS” etc.) I brought a Hang Seng Credit card and a BEA ATM card. However, although my BEA ATM card had a “PLUS” logo on it, I could not use it to withdraw money in Sweden (and in many parts of Europe). Make sure that your bank has connections in Sweden before bringing it to exchange.

I spent around 90000HKD for the whole exchange, which includes the housing fee, flight tickets and other daily expenses. I saved a lot of money by cooking at home, buying budgeted airline tickets and staying in hostels. The round trip flight ticket cost around 6000HKD and the accommodation cost around 25000SEK.

#### 10) Transportation

In Stockholm, the railway connections are well developed. You can reach a lot of places by taking the metro/commuter trains. The one-way ticket is valid for 75 minutes and costs 43 SEK (for adult without SL access card). You can make it to 20 SEK by simply buying a SL access card (student) and load money into it. The metro, commuter trains, buses and certain ferry lines are operated by a single company, SL. Therefore, you can take any public transportation using the SL access card.

#### 11) Climate

The weather in August and September is relatively warm (around 18-22°C). It is fine to wear a T-shirt with a thin jacket outside. However, in October, the temperature drops significantly and you should wear thicker jackets. There are heaters in the room, still, mine were not functioning well that I needed to wear a lot of clothes indoor.

In November, it gets colder and colder and the sun sets at around 4:00pm. There will be a switch of time zone (from GMT+2 to GMT+1)

and the temperature can get down to 0°C. Be prepared for snowing as it may happen starting from November.

## 12) Health & Safety

Stockholm is a relatively safe city compared to many countries in Europe. Still, be careful of pickpockets and stay aware when going out at night. As the temperature drops significantly in October and November, wear more clothes so as not to get sick so easily.

## 13) Food

The price level of Sweden is higher than that of Hong Kong. It costs around 70-90 SEK for a McDonald meal and usually it costs more than 110 SEK for a lunch in restaurant. Most of the time, I cook with my roommate using our private kitchen so as to save money. You can buy food of fair prices in Lidl, a discount supermarket located downstairs of Saltis. COOP, Hemköp and ICA supermarket provide wider range of options which are more expensive.

## 14) Communication

Swedes speak good English and you should be able to communicate with them well. You are also welcomed to join the language course to learn more about Swedish. Still, people from different countries may speak English with totally different accents (which is fun to observe!).

## 15) Others

You can buy budgeted airline tickets for travel. Examples include Ryanair, Easyjet and WOWair. SAS youth ticket and Norwegian airline are also good choices as sometimes they provide discounted tickets.

## Part III: Checklist

As there is limited baggage allowance for airlines, I suggest that you can bring some important items and buy the rest of them in Stockholm. You

can easily buy clothes of fair prices in H&M. Besides, do not bring kitchen utensils as inside the room you would find almost everything you need for cooking.

- Snow pants, gloves and water-proof boots for snowy weather/snow activities
- Laptop, USB, camera, smartphone
- Business suits/formal dressings
- Debit card, credit card, ATM card, cash
- Passport, HKID, residence card and copies of the documents in case you lose them
- Stationary, calculator
- Hair dryer
- Bed sheets and bed linens
- Adaptors and chargers for electronic devices
- Clothes for summer and winter (you may just bring some and buy extra ones in Stockholm)

## Part IV: Useful links and Contacts

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

For applying residence permit in Sweden

<https://www.hhs.se/en/education/study-at-sse/global-opportunities/student-exchange/incoming-exchange-students/>

Information for incoming exchange students provided by SSE

<https://www.visitstockholm.com/>

Some activities to join in Stockholm

If more information is needed, you can get my contact from SBM Exchange Team by emailing at <mailto:bmugexch@ust.hk>