

National University of Singapore Exchange Report



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Spring 2018

Monthly Activity Log

January 2018

Semester generally starts in mid-January in NUS, which is half a month earlier than HKUST. For those of you who are planning to do winter internships in Hong Kong, be advised that you are most likely not going to have the whole January to complete a 4-week internship program. You will be added to a Facebook group and receive emails from NUS student groups a couple weeks before semester starts, where you could be connected to other exchangers and discuss housing and module add/drop problems with. I was not given on-campus housing in the first round of housing selection, so I ended up renting a condominium with 5 other exchangers I met in the Facebook group. I arrived Singapore on the 8th of January, and the mandatory first orientation is on the 10th. Business module add/drop information was not provided on the general orientation for all exchangers, but the business school will organize another orientation trip shortly after. I spent most time of January exploring Singapore and took a weekend trip to Penang at the end of the month.



February 2018

Academic intensity in the beginning of February is not very high. Midterm exam schedules and assessment deadlines were given at the very beginning of the semester, and midterm exams are mostly after recess week in late February. I visited Kuala Lumpur at the beginning of the month, and then went back home to Beijing during Chinese New Year. This is the month I scheduled most of my travelling, as most of my assignment deadlines were in March. I spent most of my recess week in Vietnam, and used the last few days to revise for midterm exams. I took the advantage of NUS Business School library, which is always quiet and empty. It was very easy to find a spot to study even during exam seasons.



March 2018

March is the time where I started to get busy with projects and assignments. I got to work closely with local students, and personally this was when I started to make friends with local students because we spent so much time together working on projects. For a few weeks in a row, I spent the whole weekends in UTown or the library to work on group projects. Moreover, I dedicated some time to explore the local & non-touristy neighbourhoods recommended by local friends.



April 2018

The semester ended on the 20th of April. Most people (myself included) were very busy meeting deadlines and preparing for project presentations. I had in-class exams for all my courses, which means that I spent a lot of time in the library in this month. It was After the semester ended, I took a trip to Bali. However, if you have exams during exam week in early May, I suggest you spend some time of the study break in Singapore to study.



General Information

Visa Procedure

NUS would send you an email 2-3 months before semester starts. All you have to do is to follow the procedures stated in the email and pay the fees. The processing time is generally very fast, but in case of unforeseen issues, it's suggested to complete the online procedures as soon as you receive the email. When you get to NUS, you will be informed to complete registration on campus, and you will receive your student pass within a week after arrival. However, if you miss the on-campus registration day, you will have to go to immigration by yourself to get the student pass.

Orientation Activities

There is only one mandatory orientation activity for all exchange students organized by the university where you will be informed of general rules of the university and Singapore (e.g. drinking in public is not allowed after 10pm), and other orientation activities (with limited quota) that you could sign up. There is also an orientation for business students specifically where you will be informed of course selection processes. Then you will be assigned to a group and have a tour around the business school.

International Services and Activities

There are many activities for exchange students to meet each other and explore Singapore, such as city tour, exchanger night out, biking tours, etc. Most of the events have limited quota, it's important to sign up early if you are interested. In terms of international services, I mainly reached out to the business school admin office for academic related matters.

Accommodations

Accommodation is not guaranteed in NUS. There are two rounds of selections, and most people would suggest you find off-campus accommodations if you are not provided with on-campus housing in the first round. However, most exchangers would be given housing in the second round. One thing to keep in mind is that Singapore has the typical hot weather of Southeast Asia, and most on-campus housing does NOT have air-conditioning. I chose off-campus housing after receiving hall offer in the second round because the room I was given did not have AC. I personally think staying off-campus is as convenient as on-campus, because the condominiums on Pasir Panjang Road are within walking distance to the business school, and you could take NUS shuttle bus from the business school to any other lecture buildings.

Courses Registration

Courses registration takes place in 2-3 days. Before the semester starts, you will have to choose 10 classes you would like to take in NUS. You will be enrolled into 2-3 of chosen courses. If you would like to take non-business school courses, you will follow the university's general module enrolment system, and your likelihood of getting into the course depends on course quota. However, for all business courses, add/drop/swap has to be done by submitting a physical copy to the business school. The processing time is quite slow, and you will have to line up outside of the admin office in the morning to talk to the person in charge and confirm your enrolment.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Assessment methods in NUS are very similar to UST where grades are curved. Most modules have midterm/final exams which in total determine ~50% of your grade, and the other 50% is determined by assignments, attendance, participation, etc.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There are a lot of sports facilities on campus including swimming pools, gyms, basketball fields, tennis court, etc. It is especially convenient if you live in UTown where there is a small infinity pool, and a gym next to the dormitories.

Finance & Banking

There is a DBS bank on campus where you can open an account. You will have to complete an online form, and bring your proof of residency & student pass to open an account. It is necessary if you have the needs of making local transfers, which avoids overseas transaction fees. I did not open an account, and I mainly used cash, visa, and union pay; Alipay and apple pay are accepted in most stores too. Bring some cash with you because some of the local food courts accept cash only. The currency used is Singapore dollars, and expense varies depending on travelling and food choices. Eating on campus could be as cheap as 4~5 SGD (~30 HKD) per meal, and dining out could easily be ~40 SGD (~240 HKD) per person in a nice restaurant.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are plenty of opportunities for you to network and join social clubs. At the beginning of the semester, one of the orientation activities is introducing the social clubs where each club has a booth in a sports hall, and you could walk around to see which one you want to join. During the semester, there are networking sessions/recruitment events almost every other week on the ground floor of the business school.

Health & Safety

Singapore is very safe. I do recommend you travel in groups at night, but in most areas, you could be out in the middle of the night by yourself without having to worry personal safety. In terms of health, there is a health centre on campus where you could get diagnosis & medicine for minimal charges. There is also a public hospital (NUH) on campus, but the wait is general very long (similar to public hospitals in HK).

Food

There are many canteens on campus with food choices ranging from local to western. My personal favourite is the salad bar in business school café, and the food court in UTown which is newly renovated; it is very clean and there are a variety of choices. Outside of campus, NUS is near Holland village where you could find nice pubs and western restaurants, and VivoCity, a big shopping mall with many different restaurants.

Transportation

The Singaporean version of Octopus card is EZlink card. You could either buy it in the airport along with a local SIM card or buy it on campus. The metro and bus system in Singapore is very convenient. It's fast and air-conditioned, and it goes to most places in the city. The only inconvenient part of taking buses is that the buses do not announce what the next stop is, and you would have to keep track of where you are going on Google maps so that you don't

miss your stop. In terms of transportation on campus, NUS provides free shuttle bus to all the halls and main academic building, as well as the sports facilities. There is an app called NUS NextBus where you could check when the next bus is coming. Since Uber is acquired by Grab in Singapore, there's almost no driver on Uber. Downloading Grab is highly recommended.

Climate

The weather in Singapore is hot and humid. It rains most everyday from January to March. Normally the rain lasts for 30mins to an hour in the afternoon, but I highly suggest you bring an umbrella with you all the time just in case. Other than the rain, I would suggest you wear sunscreen if you are out for a long time, because when it doesn't rain, it could get very sunny and you might burn a little without sunscreen.

Communication

Most exchange students got a 6-month contract with Starhub, which is the shortest contract available in the market. They have counters in the airport, and all over the city. You may have to top up your account to buy data plans on a regular basis, but the most basic phone plan is very affordable.

Cautionary measures

Stay safe when you travel around Southeast Asia! Not all places are as safe as Singapore. Be precautious with insects, street food, and travelling alone at night, but most importantly, have fun!

Items to bring:

- Passport
- Summer clothes & swimsuits
- Umbrella & sunscreen
- Bed sheets, pillow, blankets (not provided in dormitories)
- Laptop, phone, chargers, international adaptors
- Cash, credit/debit card

Useful links and contacts

- Course Catalog: <https://bschool.nus.edu.sg/marketing/modules/bba>
- Campus Map: <http://map.nus.edu.sg>